

Postgraduate Studies and Training

Faculty of Arts

Department of English

Investigating Students Attitudes toward the Impact of Peer Interaction on Language Development at the English Department of Sabratha University

A Dissertation submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for a Degree of Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics

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Abstract

In Libyan EFL classrooms, where English exposure outside the university remains limited, peer interaction offers a vital pathway for meaningful language practice. Yet, despite growing recognition of collaborative learning, little empirical attention has been paid to how Libyan students themselves perceive its role in their language development. This study investigates the attitudes of fourth-year EFL students at Sabratha University toward peer interaction and its impact on their language proficiency. Using a descriptive analytical design, data were collected through a questionnaire comprising twenty-four Likert-scale items and five open-ended questions. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively, while qualitative responses were thematically examined.

The findings reveal a strong positive orientation toward peer interaction, with students viewing it as an essential tool for building confidence, reducing language anxiety, and enhancing communicative competence. Speaking and listening skills emerged as the primary beneficiaries, whereas its influence on reading and writing was perceived as moderate. Nevertheless, students identified significant challenges, including fear of errors, shyness, proficiency gaps among peers, occasional reliance on Arabic, and time constraints.

The study concludes that peer interaction is not merely an instructional strategy but a socio-affective catalyst that can reshape the learning environment. To maximize its potential, educators must design structured collaborative tasks, train students in effective group work, and cultivate a supportive classroom culture that transforms psychological comfort into sustained linguistic growth.

Declaration

I hereby acknowledge that this study is my original work, with the exception of properly cited quotations and references. I further acknowledge that it has not been, and is not currently being, submitted to the University of Sabratha or any other institution.

Signatura _____

Date _____

Dedication

To my beloved parents,
For your constant love, your prayers, and everything you have done for me. You have always been there for me and given me strength to keep going.

To my dear husband,
for your constant support, patience and encouragement throughout this journey.

To my children,
you are my greatest motivation and the light of my life.

This work is dedicated to you all with love and gratitude.

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List of Abbreviations

EFL	English as a Foreign Language
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development
SN	Serial Number
SD	Standard Deviation
M	Mean
Q	Question

Chapter One: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the present study and sets the foundation for the research that follows. It begins by presenting the background of the study, which contextualizes the significance of peer interaction within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, particularly in the Libyan higher education setting. This is followed by a clear statement of the problem that identifies the gap this research seeks to address. The chapter then outlines the aims and research questions that guide the study, along with the significance of conducting such an investigation. A brief description of the methodology is also provided, explaining how the study was conducted and what instruments were used. The chapter concludes with an overview of the structure, offering the reader a roadmap of the chapters that follow.

1.1 Background of the Study

Language development is a central goal in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. It involves the progressive improvement of learners skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing. For many EFL learners, the classroom represents the main environment where they are exposed to English and where they can practice using the language in meaningful ways. Therefore, understanding how classroom practices contribute to language development is an essential concern for EFL teachers and researchers.

Among the various teaching strategies, peer interaction has gained significant attention for its role in supporting language learning. Peer interaction refers to the process in which students work together in pairs or small groups to complete tasks, discuss ideas and use the target language collaboratively. Researchers argue that this interaction allows learners to produce language, receive feedback, and notice gaps in their knowledge, which in turn promotes language acquisition (Gass, 1997; Swain, 2000). When students interact with peers, they often feel more comfortable and less anxious than when communicating directly with the teacher, which can lead to greater fluency and confidence.

In the context of communicative language teaching, peer interaction is viewed as an essential element that enhances students' communicative competence. Long and Porter (1985) emphasized that group and pair work increase opportunities for language input and output, leading to more authentic communication. Similarly, Ellis (2009) pointed out that through interaction, learners construct knowledge and develop their interlanguage systems. Thus, peer interaction can be seen as both a linguistic and a social process that supports the development of communicative competence.

In Libya, English is taught as a foreign language in schools and universities and it plays a vital role in higher education and professional life. At Sabratha University, the English Department aims to prepare students for careers in education, translation and communication. However, many students still face challenges in achieving advanced levels of language proficiency due to limited exposure to English outside the classroom. Consequently, the classroom remains the primary context where students can use English in real communication. Peer interaction, therefore, becomes an important pedagogical strategy to increase students opportunities for meaningful language use.

Understanding students' attitudes toward peer interaction is essential for improving teaching and learning. Even if teachers implement group work and collaborative tasks, the success of these activities depends largely on students' attitudes toward them; if students hold positive attitudes and believe that peer interaction enhances their learning, they are more likely to participate actively and benefit from it. On the other hand, negative attitudes may reduce their engagement and limit the potential outcomes. Investigating students attitudes can thus provide valuable insights for designing more effective learning environments and fostering motivation in EFL classrooms.

The present study addresses this gap by exploring the attitudes of EFL students at Sabratha University attitudes toward peer interaction in their language learning. The findings are expected to contribute to improving teaching practices, curriculum design and classroom interaction in Libyan universities.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Due to limited exposure to English outside the classroom and traditional teaching methods that focus heavily on teacher-centered instruction, many EFL students could face challenges in developing advanced language proficiency Peer interaction, which has been shown to support language development, may not be fully utilized in the classroom. The effectiveness of peer interaction as a pedagogical strategy for language learning remains unclear, as little research has been conducted on how students attitudes toward peer interaction impact their language development in the Libyan context. This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating students' attitudes toward the role of peer interaction in language development and understanding the factors that influence their participation in collaborative activities.

1.3 Aims of the Study

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To identify students' attitudes toward the impact of peer interaction on developing their language proficiency.
2. To explore how students' attitudes influence peer interaction in specific language skills such as speaking, listening, reading and writing.
3. To examine the challenges associated with peer interaction in classroom learning.

1.4 Research Questions

The study is guided by the following main research question:

1. What are the attitudes of EFL students at Sabratha University toward the impact of peer interaction on their language development?

To answer this question, the study addresses the following sub-questions:

1. What are students' attitudes toward the impact of peer interaction on developing their language proficiency?
2. How do students' attitudes influence peer interaction on specific language skills, such as speaking, listening, reading and writing?

3. What challenges do students face when engaging in peer interaction?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it provides empirical data about Libyan EFL students' attitudes toward peer interaction, an area that has not been sufficiently explored. Second, the findings would help language instructors and curriculum designers understand how students value collaborative learning and how these attitudes can influence their engagement and achievement. Third, the study may contribute to improving classroom practices in Libyan universities by promoting interaction-based teaching methods that enhance students motivation, participation and language development. Further, on a broader scale, the research adds to the growing body of literature on EFL learning in Arab contexts, offering local evidence that may inform regional educational policies and practices. Finally, it also aligns with international efforts to shift from teacher-centered instruction toward more communicative, learner-centered approaches.

1.7 Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive analytical research design, which was considered the most appropriate approach for exploring students' attitudes toward the impact of peer interaction on their language development. The study was carried out at Sabratha University during the 2025/2026 academic year. The sample consisted of 25 fourth-year undergraduate students from the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Education, selected through purposive sampling. This sampling technique was chosen because the study deliberately targeted students who had completed most of their required language courses and therefore had sufficient experience with EFL instruction and classroom peer interaction to provide informed and meaningful responses.

Data were collected using a questionnaire comprising 24 Likert-scale items and five open-ended questions. This instrument was chosen because it allows for the systematic collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, enabling the researcher to capture a comprehensive picture of students' attitudes and experiences. A detailed discussion of the research design, participants, instruments, procedures, and data analysis methods is provided in Chapter Three.

1.9 Structure of the Study

This thesis is organized into six main chapters, followed by a list of references and appendices. Each chapter has a specific function in addressing the objectives of the study.

- **Chapter One – Introduction-** presents the background, rationale, research question, aims and limitations of the study and provides an overview of the entire thesis structure.

- **Chapter Two - Literature Review**- reviews theoretical perspectives and empirical studies related to peer interaction and language development. It also identifies research gaps, particularly within the Libyan context, that justify the current study.

- **Chapter Three - Methodology**- discusses the methodology of the study including using both quantitative and qualitative methods, the participants, the research tools (a questionnaire and interviews) and the procedures used to collect and analyze the data.

- **Chapter Four - Data Analysis-** presents and analyzes both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data collected through the questionnaire are analyzed using descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, and frequencies. The qualitative data (from open-ended questionnaire) are analyzed by identifying themes and patterns in participants responses.

Chapter Five - Discussion and Conclusion- discusses the results, explains their importance, summarizes the main findings and gives recommendations for teaching, curriculum design and future research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive review of the theoretical and empirical literature on the impact of peer interaction on language development among EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students. The goal of this review is to examine the critical role that peer interaction plays in enhancing language acquisition and to explore the relationship between peer interaction and the development of key language skills such as speaking, listening, reading and writing.

The chapter is divided into several key sections, First, it provides an overview of language development in EFL contexts, highlighting the essential components of language acquisition and the significance of social interaction in this process, Next, it explores the role of peer interaction in language learning, emphasizing the value of collaborative and communicative activities in enhancing students language skills. Following that, the chapter reviews empirical studies conducted in Libya and the Arab world, offering insights into local and regional perspectives on peer interaction in EFL contexts. International studies would also be examined to establish a broader understanding of the subject. Finally the chapter presents the conceptual framework that underpins this study, integrating the key theories of second language acquisition (SLA) that guide the research.

A major focus of this literature review is to identify the gaps in the existing research, particularly those concerning the attitudes of Libyan EFL students toward peer interaction. Although much has been written about the benefits of collaborative learning, there is limited research specifically addressing how students in Libya value peer interaction in relation to their language development. This chapter aims to fill this gap by examining the attitudes of students at Sabratha University, thereby contributing valuable data to the field of EFL education.

2.1 Definition of Peer Interaction

Peer interaction—defined as the dynamic exchange of ideas, information, and experiences between individuals of equal status within social or educational settings—plays a vital role in language acquisition. Long (1996) and Swain (2000) contend that peer interaction provides indispensable opportunities for second language acquisition (SLA) by enabling learners to negotiate meaning, co-construct knowledge, and receive immediate feedback. Building on these foundational framework, Sato and Ballinger (2020) further stress that structured peer interaction strengthens communicative competence and willingness to communicate in modern language classrooms.

The conceptual framework for peer interaction draws heavily from Vygotsky (1978), who posits in his Sociocultural Theory that social engagement is fundamental to cognitive development. Vygotsky asserts that learning is an inherently social rather than solitary process, mediated by meaningful interaction with peers. In SLA contexts, learners scaffold one another's development by clarifying language usage, jointly resolving linguistic gaps, and discussing novel concepts within their mutual Zone of Proximal Development.Furthermore, Gass (1997) highlights that peer interaction shifts learners away from passive reception, impelling them to actively produce output, negotiate meaning, and support peers through communicative breakdowns. Expanding this view within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, Dao (2020) demonstrates that peer collaboration significantly boosts task engagement and output quality, serving as a crucial bridge when authentic external target-language exposure is limited.

2.2 Types of Peer Interaction

There are several types of peer interaction that can play a crucial role in language learning, each contributing to language development in different ways. These types of interaction can be categorized based on the nature of the activity, the structure of the interaction, and the level of involvement from peers. The main types of peer interaction in the context of second language learning are:

2.2.1 Collaborative Interaction

refers to the process where learners engage in joint activities, often working in pairs or small groups, with the goal of completing a task or solving a problem together. This type of interaction is essential in second language acquisition (SLA) because it allows students to exchange ideas, negotiate meaning, and learn from one another's perspectives (Swain, 2000). In language learning, collaborative interaction creates a dynamic environment that encourages students to produce and practice the language actively, rather than passively receiving information from a teacher. It plays a crucial role in helping students improve their linguistic competence by providing opportunities for meaningful communication in a social context.

One of the main benefits of collaborative interaction is that it promotes deeper cognitive processing. According to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, learning is a social process that occurs through interaction with others, particularly those who are more knowledgeable (Vygotsky, 1978). In a collaborative setting, learners can scaffold each other's learning, supporting one another in understanding and applying new language concepts. For example, "when one student struggles to understand a grammatical structure, their partner can provide clarification or an alternative explanation, this process not only strengthens their understanding but also reinforces the concept through repetition and application" (p.6).

Moreover, collaborative interaction encourages active participation, which is critical for language acquisition. Long (1996) suggests that peer interaction is beneficial because it provides immediate feedback, allowing learners to correct their mistakes in real-time, this type of immediate correction helps students internalize the language more effectively. In collaborative activities, students often provide corrections to each other's language use, thus reinforcing their own learning while assisting their peers. This feedback loop is a key component in the development of fluency and accuracy.

In addition to its cognitive benefits, peer interaction also fosters social and emotional skills. As students work together, they learn how to manage interpersonal relationships, negotiate meaning and resolve conflicts. These skills are particularly important in a language learning context as they help students feel more confident in using the language outside the classroom. Research has shown that when students engage in collaborative activities, they are more likely to feel motivated and less anxious about speaking in a foreign language (Gass, 1997).

In conclusion, collaborative interaction is a fundamental aspect of second language acquisition. By providing students with the opportunity to engage in meaningful communication, receive immediate feedback and support each other's learning, this type of interaction enhances both their language skills and social abilities. The benefits of collaborative interaction extend beyond language proficiency, contributing to a richer, more engaging learning experience.

2.2.2 Competitive Interaction

Competitive interaction in language learning entails students leveraging their skills against peers through interactive tasks such as educational games, contests, and gamified challenges. In second language acquisition (SLA), this framework stimulates energy as learners strive to outperform one another using the target language. Reeve and Su (2014) maintain that competitive dynamics drive intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, prompting learners to refine their language proficiency under controlled, engaging pressure. Dehghanzadeh et al. (2021) emphasize that integrating gamified competition ignites excitement and focuses attention, thereby significantly increasing target language output and accelerating vocabulary and grammar retention. High-stakes challenges, such as timed digital quizzes or speed-based language tasks, encourage learners to retrieve vocabulary rapidly and apply grammatical structures spontaneously.

Furthermore, competitive structures enable students to evaluate their performance relative to their peers. Engaging in friendly competition allows learners to assess their linguistic strengths and weaknesses, track personal development, and adopt effective strategies by observing others. Suh et al. (2021) note that this reflective self-assessment fosters metacognitive awareness and sustains long-term learning momentum.However, educators must manage competitive interaction carefully to mitigate potential drawbacks, such as excessive language anxiety or social pressure. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) argue that hyper-competitive environments can elevate foreign language anxiety, which ultimately hinders performance and diminishes learner self-efficacy. To maintain a psychologically safe classroom, instructors must balance competitive tasks with supportive feedback and collaborative elements. In addition to cognitive and motivational benefits, structured competition enhances classroom social dynamics. Constructive rivalries can cultivate social bonds and build a cohesive learning

community. Henry and Cliffordson (2021) observe that a supportive, competitively charged classroom environment fosters a sense of group belonging, encouraging students to take communicative risks and speak with greater confidence.In summary, competitive interaction serves as a dynamic tool in language pedagogy. When effectively implemented, it boosts motivation, deepens active participation, and drives linguistic development through reflective peer alignment.

2.2.3. Exploratory Interaction

Exploratory interaction happens when learners team up to dive into new ideas, test theories and tackle problems together. Unlike goal-driven competition or straight collaboration, it focuses on curiosity and discovery. In language learning this approach shines by letting students unpack tricky structures, negotiate meanings and grasp the language through active exploration (Pica, 1994).

A major strength is how it sparks deep thinking. Students face language puzzles like tricky vocabulary or grammar that push them to brainstorm with peers, guess meanings or try real examples. This links new info to what they already know, making learning stick longer (Swain, 2000). It also builds real-world language flexibility, through (trial and error chats). Students see how words shift in context rephrasing ideas or swapping structures, which boosts confidence for everyday communication (Long, 1996). In addtion, it fuels teamwork and shared discovery; learners swap insights, clear up confusion and co-create understanding, enriching everyone's grasp. Pica (1994) shows how joint problem solving sharpens both language skills and smarts.

On the social side, it creates a supportive vibe, open talks build community, cut anxiety and invite risks like messing up without fear, and this safe space is key for growth (Gass, 1997). In conclusion, exploratory interaction powers second language learning. It deepens thinking and skills, sparks collaboration and eases emotional hurdles, helping students gain confidence and a fuller language command.

2.2.4 Corrective Interaction

Corrective interaction is a type of interaction where learners help each other identify and correct mistakes in their language use. This process is crucial in language learning because it allows learners to receive real time feedback, which helps them improve both their accuracy and fluency in using the language. In second language acquisition (SLA), Lyster (2004) mentioned

that corrective interaction is especially valuable, as it provides immediate opportunities for learners to adjust their language and internalize correct language patterns .

One of the main benefits of corrective interaction is that it enables learners to address their mistakes as they happen. This immediate feedback is key to reinforcing correct language usage and ensuring that errors are not repeated. According to Long (1996), immediate correction prevents the reinforcement of incorrect forms, helping learners understand and apply language rules more effectively. For example, if a learner makes a grammatical mistake during a conversation, a peer can point it out right away, allowing the learner to correct it on the spot. This process enhances the learner's understanding of the language and helps them remember the correct structure.

Corrective interaction also encourages learners to engage more actively in their language learning by both receiving and providing corrections. Students become more attentive to language details, noticing patterns and rules they might have missed otherwise. This collaborative form of error correction promotes mutual learning, as students not only correct their own mistakes but also learn from the errors of others (Lyster, 2004). In this way corrective interaction fosters a supportive learning environment where students work together to improve their language skills.

In conclusion, corrective interaction is an essential part of language learning. By offering immediate feedback and encouraging learners to correct their own mistakes, it helps improve linguistic accuracy and fluency. Engaging in this type of interaction not only supports learners' development but also creates an interactive and cooperative learning atmosphere that enhances the overall language learning experience.

2.2.5 Emotional Interaction

It refers to the supportive and empathetic exchanges between learners, which are particularly important in language learning environments. It plays a crucial role in reducing anxiety and boosting the confidence of students who may feel self-conscious or insecure when using a new language. By providing emotional support, learners can feel more comfortable taking risks and engaging in communication, leading to greater participation and improved language acquisition (Sadeghi & Shafiee, 2020).

One of the primary benefits of emotional interaction is that it creates a supportive environment where students feel secure enough to make mistakes, an essential component of the language acquisition process. When learners receive emotional support from their peers, their fear of judgment or failure decreases significantly. MacIntyre and Mercer (2014) argue that positive emotional interactions within the classroom enhance active engagement, fostering intrinsic motivation and encouraging students to communicate more freely in the target language.

Furthermore, emotional interaction strengthens the relationships among learners, promoting a sense of trust and community within the classroom. This bond not only enhances the learning environment but also encourages students to collaborate and support each other in overcoming challenges. As a result, this contributes to a positive and productive learning experience, motivating students to continue their language journey with confidence. In conclusion, emotional interaction is a vital aspect of language learning. By creating a supportive environment, it helps reduce anxiety, build confidence and encourage active participation, all of which are essential for successful language acquisition.

Table 2. 1: Types of Peer Interaction

Type	Definition	Main Benefit	Examples
Collaborative Interaction	Interaction where learners work together on shared tasks or solutions.	Enhances mutual understanding and allows language learning through cooperation.	Group work, collaborative research projects.
Competitive Interaction	Interaction where learners compete to achieve a certain goal or win.	Increases motivation and active participation to improve language skills.	Language games, classroom challenges.
Exploratory Interaction	Interaction focused on exploring new ideas and concepts together.	Enhances critical thinking and encourages experimenting with language.	Open discussions, solving language-related problems.
Corrective Interaction	Interaction where learners correct each other's language mistakes.	Helps in reinforcing language accuracy through immediate error correction.	Correcting language errors in conversations.
Emotional Interaction	Emotional support where learners encourage each other.	Reduces anxiety and builds confidence, promoting more active participation.	Encouragement, emotional support during activities.

2.3 Language Development in EFL Contexts

Language development in foreign language learning is a multifaceted process that involves not only the acquisition of grammar and vocabulary but also the ability to use language meaningfully and appropriately in a variety of communicative situations. In the context of EFL education, learners must develop communicative competence, a term coined by Hymes (1972), which emphasizes the ability to use language in context, understanding both the linguistic rules and the social contexts in which language is used.

In traditional language acquisition theories, such as those proposed by Chomsky (1965), language development was often viewed through the lens of grammar and syntax. However, more recent theories, such as those developed by Vygotsky (1978), emphasize the role of social interaction and collaborative learning in the development of language skills. According to Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, language is not only an individual cognitive process but also a social one, shaped by interaction with others. This highlights the importance of peer interaction in the process of acquiring language.

In EFL contexts, particularly in countries like Libya where exposure to English outside the classroom is limited, the classroom becomes the primary environment for learners to practice and develop their language skills. This makes classroom interaction, particularly peer interaction, a vital component of language development. As Ellis (2009) explains, language acquisition is a continuous process of acquiring, processing, and using linguistic input to achieve fluency and competence. for Libyan EFL learners, the opportunities to use English outside of class are minimal, which makes classroom-based interaction crucial for language growth.

Several researchers, including Long (1996) and Swain (2000), have highlighted the importance of interaction in the language development process. Long's Interaction Hypothesis posits that language learners acquire language more effectively through interaction because it provides opportunities to negotiate meaning, clarify misunderstandings, and receive feedback. Swain's Output Hypothesis takes this further by arguing that the act of producing language (speaking or writing) forces learners to process linguistic structures more deeply, helping them internalize new forms. Peer interaction, in this sense, allows learners to practice both their

speaking and listening skills in a low-pressure, supportive environment, which facilitates more meaningful language learning.

Peer interaction also encourages collaborative problem-solving. for example, when students work together on language tasks, they are more likely to negotiate meaning, explain concepts to each other, and correct each other's mistakes. These processes are vital for the development of language proficiency. As Varonis and Gass (2005) suggest, peer interaction often allows learners to practice explaining and justifying their use of language, which leads to a deeper understanding of the language itself.

For Libyan EFL students, classroom interaction serves as an essential opportunity for engagement with English in a more authentic and practical manner. As noted by Benyounes (2019), the lack of English exposure outside the classroom presents a significant challenge for developing fluency. This makes peer interaction within the classroom an invaluable tool for compensating for the limited opportunities to use the language in real-world contexts. Classroom activities that promote peer interaction, such as pair work and group discussions, create a dynamic and interactive environment where students can practice English in a more relaxed and natural way.

2.4 Role of Peer Interaction in Language Learning

Peer interaction plays a significant role in second language acquisition, particularly within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings. Unlike teacher-centered classrooms, where interaction flows predominantly from the instructor to the learners, peer interaction enables students to engage in a dynamic, collaborative, and less hierarchical environment. Philp et al. (2014) emphasize that such peer-led exchanges provide crucial opportunities for learners to produce target language output, receive immediate corrective feedback, and notice gaps in their linguistic repertoire—processes that are essential for sustained language development.

In the context of EFL, peer interaction involves students working together in pairs or small groups to complete tasks, solve problems, or practice language skills. This collaborative process facilitates the exchange of ideas, the negotiation of meaning and the co-construction of knowledge, all of which are critical for improving language proficiency. According to Long’s Interaction Hypothesis (1996), language learners benefit from interaction because it provides

contextualized feedback and opportunities for negotiating meaning. These interactions help learners notice their mistakes, modify their language output and integrate new linguistic structures more effectively.

In addition to providing linguistic input, peer interaction encourages language output, which is central to the learning process. Swain's (2000) Output Hypothesis argues that producing language forces learners to focus on the form and structure of their language, thereby promoting deeper processing and helping learners internalize new language forms. When students speak with their peers, they must articulate their thoughts, express opinions, and clarify their ideas in English, which leads to increased fluency and improved language accuracy.

Moreover, peer interaction promotes active engagement with the language, as students are more likely to participate in meaningful conversations with their peers than with the teacher. As Gass (1997) suggests, peer-to-peer interaction provides opportunities for students to negotiate meaning such as asking for clarification, repeating, or rephrasing language thereby facilitating language acquisition. These types of interactions also help learners develop listening skills as they need to understand and process their peers' language output in real-time.

Another advantage of peer interaction is the psychological impact it has on learners. Many EFL students experience language anxiety when speaking English, especially in front of their teachers. Peer interaction can alleviate this anxiety by providing a more supportive environment where students feel more comfortable taking linguistic risks without the fear of making mistakes. As Mackey and Gass (2005) note, working with peers reduces the pressure to perform perfectly and increases students' confidence in their language abilities. In cultures where students may be reluctant to speak in front of a teacher, peer interaction can create a space for learners to experiment with language more freely, leading to improved self-efficacy in language use.

Collaborative learning also has social and intercultural benefits. In addition to linguistic development, peer interaction fosters intercultural competence, as students are exposed to different communication styles, cultural perspectives, and ways of using language. Byram (1997) highlights that through peer interaction, learners not only improve their language skills but also develop a deeper understanding and respect for diverse cultures and communication practices. This is particularly relevant in EFL contexts like Libya, where students may not have

much exposure to native English speakers. Peer interaction allows them to practice using the language in real-world scenarios, albeit within a classroom context, and helps them become more adaptable in different social settings.

In the case of Libyan EFL students, the role of peer interaction in developing language proficiency cannot be overstated. Since these students typically have limited exposure to English outside the classroom, peer interaction becomes an invaluable tool for improving their speaking, listening, and even writing skills. Group activities, discussions and pair work provide opportunities for students to practice English in ways that are often more engaging and less intimidating than teacher-led instruction. Furthermore, these interactions give students the chance to learn from each other, share insights and receive feedback on their language use, which can help them refine their language skills more effectively.

Table 2. 2: Impact of peer interaction on language skills

Language Skill	Impact of Peer Interaction	Supporting Studies
Speaking	1. Increased fluency in speaking. 2. Opportunities to express ideas and opinions. 3. Improved pronunciation and grammatical usage.	Swain (2000); Gass (1997); Al-Fitouri (2020)
Listening	1. Enhanced listening skills through interaction with peers. 2. Improved comprehension through paraphrasing and clarifying ideas.	Pica et al. (1987); Long (1996)
Writing	1. Improved writing through participation in collaborative writing tasks. 2. Reduced grammatical errors through peer feedback.	Storch (2013); Al-Nasser (2019)
Reading	1. Enhanced reading comprehension through group discussions of texts. 2. Improved reading speed through peer interaction.	Mahmoud (2020); Al-Fitouri (2020)

2.5 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is grounded in the belief that peer interaction significantly contributes to language development through the processes of input, output, and feedback. This framework draws from several prominent theories in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), which suggest that social interaction plays a crucial role in shaping how learners acquire language.

2.5.1 Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996)

The Interaction Hypothesis, proposed by Long (1996), is central to this study. According to this hypothesis, language is best acquired when learners engage in interactive communication with others. Through interaction, learners are exposed to comprehensible input- the language that is slightly above their current level but still understandable. Peer interaction provides a rich source of this comprehensible input through collaborative tasks such as discussions, problem-solving activities, and group work.

In the context of EFL, peer interaction offers students the opportunity to negotiate meaning, which allows them to clarify their understanding, correct errors, and enhance their language proficiency. Long (1996) argues that when learners face communicative challenges during interaction, they engage in negotiation of meaning a process in which they adjust their language output to make it comprehensible to their peers. This process provides learners with crucial feedback that supports their understanding of linguistic structures and promotes language development.

2.5.2 Output Hypothesis (Swain, 2000)

Swain's Output Hypothesis (2000) further reinforces the importance of peer interaction by highlighting the role of language production in language learning. According to Swain, learners acquire language not only by receiving input but also by producing output, peer interaction, therefore, provides learners with opportunities to generate language through speaking and writing, which requires them to process and organize their thoughts in the target language.

Swain argues that producing language forces learners to process linguistic forms more deeply, which helps them internalize grammatical structures and vocabulary. This is especially important in the context of EFL learners who may not have many opportunities to use the language outside of the classroom. By participating in peer interactions, students practice using the language in a more meaningful and active way, leading to improved fluency and accuracy.

2.5.3 Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978)

The study is also grounded in Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which posits that learning is a socially mediated process. According to Vygotsky (1978), language development is not solely an individual cognitive process but is also shaped by interaction with others, he introduced the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to the difference between

what a learner can do independently and what they can achieve with the help of more knowledgeable others.

Peer interaction, within the ZPD, offers learners the opportunity to engage in tasks that they cannot accomplish alone but can complete with the assistance of their peers. Vygotsky's theory underscores the importance of collaborative learning, where learners support each other's language development by engaging in joint problem solving, sharing knowledge, and co-constructing language through interaction.

2.5.4 Learner Autonomy and Social Constructivism

In addition to these key theories, the framework incorporates the ideas of learner autonomy and social constructivism. According to Benson (2001), learner autonomy refers to the ability of students to take control of their own learning. Peer interaction encourages students to take responsibility for their learning process by actively engaging in collaborative activities and making decisions about their language use.

Social constructivism, as described by Vygotsky (1978) and Bandura (2001), emphasizes the role of social interaction in the construction of knowledge. In the context of language learning, social constructivism suggests that learners build their language knowledge through interaction with peers and by participating in authentic communicative tasks. This perspective aligns with the idea that peer interaction is not just a tool for practice but an integral part of the learning process itself.

2.6 Empirical Studies on Peer Interaction and Language Development

Long and Porter (1985) found that group discussions among non-native speakers significantly increased both their language input and output, leading to improved communicative competence. This finding is supported by Swain (2000), who emphasized that peer collaboration allows learners to notice linguistic problems, engage in dialogue to solve them and co-construct language knowledge. According to Swain, peer interaction encourages meaningful communication that goes beyond rote memorization, which promotes deeper learning.

More recent studies, such as those by Storch (2013) and Philp & Duchesne (2016), have further confirmed the effectiveness of peer interaction. These studies show that students engaged

in collaborative tasks tend to have higher accuracy, greater language output, and increased learner autonomy. Storch (2013) found that peer interaction, particularly in collaborative writing tasks, led to higher levels of language fluency and better overall performance on written assignments.

However, some studies highlight the challenges associated with peer interaction. For example, not all peer interactions are equally beneficial. The quality of the interaction depends on task design, group dynamics, and the language proficiency levels of the students involved. If tasks are poorly structured or if students rely too heavily on their first language, the potential benefits of peer interaction may be minimized (Storch, 2013). Thus, it is essential to ensure that tasks are appropriately designed to facilitate meaningful language use and to encourage students to engage actively in the process.

Numerous studies conducted in the Arab world support the notion that peer interaction can significantly enhance EFL learners language development. In Saudi Arabia, Al-Nasser (2019) conducted research on the role of peer feedback in EFL writing. The study revealed that students who participated in peer feedback activities demonstrated improved writing accuracy and increased confidence in their writing abilities. This reflects the broader consensus in the literature that peer interaction allows students to receive constructive feedback and engage in negotiation of meaning, which promotes language development.

In Jordan, Abu Rass (2018) investigated the effects of cooperative learning on students speaking performance and found that students who engaged in group work showed higher speaking proficiency and lower levels of communication anxiety. These findings suggest that peer interaction can reduce the fear of speaking in English, enabling students to express themselves more freely and confidently.

Similarly, in Egypt, Mahmoud (2020) found that group discussions in EFL classrooms resulted in better oral communication skills among students compared to those who studied individually. This study highlighted the value of peer interaction in facilitating not only language practice but also the socialization process that helps learners gain cultural insights and improve their overall communicative competence.

However, some researchers note that the effectiveness of peer interaction in the Arab world can be influenced by cultural norms, which often emphasize teacher authority and student

passivity. Al-Nasser (2019) argues that, in many Arab educational settings, students may be hesitant to engage in peer interaction due to cultural norms that prioritize teacher-centered instruction. Therefore, understanding students attitudes toward peer interaction is crucial to successfully implement collaborative learning strategies in Arab EFL contexts.

In Libya, research on EFL teaching and learning has increasingly recognized the importance of interactive approaches in language acquisition. A significant number of studies have focused on the effectiveness of collaborative learning and peer interaction in improving various language skills. For instance, Salem (2018) conducted a study at Misurata University, examining students' perceptions of collaborative learning in English language classes. The results indicated that students held positive attitudes toward peer interaction, particularly in terms of its impact on improving speaking fluency and motivating students to engage more actively in language practice. This supports the argument that peer interaction provides EFL learners with the opportunity to practice speaking in a low-pressure environment, which can increase confidence and reduce anxiety.

Similarly, Al-Fitouri (2020) explored the effect of pair activities on vocabulary acquisition among Libyan university students. The study found that students who engaged in peer interaction during vocabulary practice were able to retain new words more effectively compared to those who practiced individually. This finding aligns with research suggesting that peer interaction provides students with the opportunity to use language actively, reinforcing vocabulary retention through collaborative learning.

However, while these studies have demonstrated the benefits of peer interaction, they mainly focused on classroom techniques and performance outcomes, such as improved fluency or vocabulary retention. Few studies have specifically explored students' attitudes toward peer interaction as a factor influencing their language development. this gap in the literature indicates the need for further research, particularly in understanding how students view and value the role of peer interaction in their language learning process. This is one of the gaps that the current study at Sabratha University aims to address.

2.7 Gaps in the Literature

The literature reviewed above reveals several consistent findings. Peer interaction enhances opportunities for communication, promotes linguistic development, and improves students. The literature reviewed in this chapter reveals several key findings regarding the role of peer interaction in language development. It is well-established that peer interaction enhances opportunities for communication, facilitates the acquisition of linguistic skills, and promotes learner autonomy. However, despite these consistent findings, several significant gaps remain in the existing body of research, particularly in the context of Libyan EFL students.

First, there is a clear lack of research on students' attitudes toward peer interaction in the Libyan EFL context. While many studies focus on the benefits of collaborative learning or peer feedback (Salem, 2018; Al-Fitouri, 2020), few have directly examined how Libyan students attitudes impact peer interaction in their language development. Understanding students' attitudes is crucial because positive perceptions of peer interaction may lead to greater participation, higher motivation, and improved language outcomes. Conversely, negative attitudes could limit the effectiveness of peer-based learning strategies. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by exploring the perceptions of students at Sabratha University.

Second, most existing studies on peer interaction in Libya focus primarily on performance outcomes, such as improvements in speaking fluency or vocabulary retention. While these studies demonstrate that peer interaction can enhance language skills, there is a lack of research on the comprehensive impact of peer interaction on all language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing). Many studies in the Arab world, including those conducted by Al-Nasser (2019) and Abu Rass (2018), examine specific skills but do not provide a holistic view of how peer interaction affects overall language development. The current study aims to explore the impact of peer interaction across all language skills, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of its role in language development.

Third, there is a limited amount of research on peer interaction conducted specifically within the Libyan university context. While there have been some studies conducted in other parts of the Arab world, such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt, little empirical research has been done within Libyan universities. This makes it difficult to generalize findings from other countries to the Libyan context, which has its own unique educational and cultural

characteristics. The current study focuses on the specific context of Sabratha University, providing valuable insights into how Libyan EFL students engage with peer interaction in their language learning.

Fourth, many studies in the field have focused on teacher-led instruction or individual learning rather than the benefits of collaborative peer learning. In countries like Libya, where traditional teacher-centered methods dominate, there is a need for research that evaluates the effectiveness of shifting to more interactive, student-centered approaches. This study seeks to investigate how peer interaction can serve as an effective tool for language development in an educational system that is largely teacher-centered.

Lastly, while studies have acknowledged the role of culture in influencing the effectiveness of peer interaction, there is still a gap in understanding how cultural norms specific to Libyan and other Arab contexts may impact students engagement in peer interaction. Some studies, such as those by Al-Nasser (2019), have touched on the importance of cultural factors, but much more work is needed to explore how teacher authority and student passivity might affect the willingness of students to engage in peer-based activities. Understanding these cultural barriers could help in designing more effective teaching strategies tailored to the needs and preferences of Libyan EFL learners.

2.8 Summary of the Chapter

The literature reviewed in this chapter highlights the crucial role that peer interaction plays in second language acquisition, particularly in EFL contexts. The theories and empirical studies examined in this chapter demonstrate that peer interaction is not only a powerful tool for improving linguistic skills but also enhances learner autonomy, confidence, and social competence. Through engaging in peer-based activities such as group discussions, problem-solving tasks, and peer feedback, students are able to practice their language skills in a meaningful and supportive environment.

However, despite the widespread recognition of the benefits of peer interaction, several gaps remain in the literature. In particular, there is a lack of research focusing on students' attitudes toward peer interaction in Libya, especially regarding its influence on their language development. Most studies have focused on performance outcomes such as improved fluency

or vocabulary retention, but little attention has been paid to how students consider peer interaction and its role in their language acquisition process. This is a crucial gap that the present study aims to fill by examining the attitudes of fourth-year EFL students at Sabratha University.

Finally, while research from various Arab countries has demonstrated the positive effects of peer interaction, cultural factors may influence its effectiveness. In contexts like Libya, where teacher-centered approaches often prevail, the success of peer interaction may depend on students willingness to engage in collaborative learning. Understanding the cultural dynamics that shape students attitudes toward peer interaction is crucial for creating an environment where peer-based learning can thrive.

This chapter has established the theoretical and empirical foundation for the present study. It has shown that peer interaction is an essential component of language development and that understanding students' attitudes toward it is key to improving EFL instruction. The next chapter will present the methodology used in this study to explore the role of peer interaction in the language development of EFL students at Sabratha University.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology adopted in conducting the present study. It explains the research design, the population and sample of the study, the research instrument used for data collection, as well as the procedures followed to collect and analyze the data. The purpose of this chapter was to clarify how the study was carried out in order to address the research questions and achieve the stated objectives. The methodological choices were made to ensure that the data collected accurately reflected students attitudes toward the impact of peer interaction on their language development in the context of EFL learning at the University of Sabratha.

3.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive analytical research design, which Cohen et al. (2007) identify as particularly effective for systematically describing and analyzing participant attitudes within educational settings. Operating without the manipulation of variables, this non-experimental approach enabled the researcher to gather empirical data from a target sample and examine participant responses to identify prevailing patterns, trends, and general tendencies regarding classroom interaction (Dörnyei, 2007).

Creswell (2014) highlights that descriptive analytical frameworks are ideal when the investigation prioritizes exploring student perspectives rather than establishing cause-and-effect relationships or measuring the efficacy of an experimental intervention. Because the study sought to investigate how learners perceive the impact of peer interaction across all four core skill domains—speaking, listening, reading, and writing—this design provided an ecologically valid structure for capturing authentic student experiences within a natural educational setting (Cohen et al., 2007).

3.2 Population and Sample of the Study

The target population for this study comprised all fourth-year undergraduate students (Bachelor's degree level) enrolled in the Department of English across the Faculty of Arts and

the Faculty of Education at Sabratha University during the 2025/2026 academic year. Dörnyei (2007) defines the target population as the complete set of individuals who possess the specific characteristics required to address the research objectives.

Fourth-year students were purposefully specified as the target demographic due to their advanced academic standing and cumulative course completion. As Ary et al. (2010) observe, selecting participants with prolonged exposure to the phenomenon under investigation enhances data validity and yields richer, more reflective insights. Having experienced varied instructional methodologies and sustained classroom peer interaction throughout their degree programs, these senior students possessed the prerequisite experiential background to provide informed evaluations regarding the impact of peer collaboration on their language development.

To select the study participants, a purposive sampling technique was employed. Creswell and Creswell (2018) explain that purposive sampling enables researchers to intentionally select individuals who are information-rich and directly meet predetermined academic criteria. In this study, the primary criterion was the completion of upper-level EFL coursework and extensive engagement in peer-mediated learning activities.

Because the entire target population of fourth-year English majors across both faculties consisted of 25 students during the 2025/2026 academic year, the final sample encompassed all 25 eligible learners ($N = 25$). Cohen et al. (2018) stress that including the total accessible population eliminates sampling error and ensures complete coverage of the target group, thereby maximizing the representativeness, relevance, and credibility of the collected empirical data.

3.3Data Collection Instrument

To collect empirical data addressing the research objectives, a structured questionnaire served as the primary data collection tool. Dörnyei (2007) emphasizes that questionnaires represent the most efficient and reliable instrument for measuring learner attitudes, beliefs, and self-perceived language gains in applied linguistics research. Questionnaires provide a systematic framework that standardizes data collection, facilitating objective comparative analysis across participant responses (Cohen et al., 2018).

The questionnaire items were operationalized specifically to answer the core research questions. The conceptual design was informed by the sociocultural theoretical framework and relevant empirical literature on peer-mediated SLA in EFL contexts (Long, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978). A mixed-item approach was adopted, combining closed-ended Likert-type items with qualitative open-ended prompts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). While the closed-ended items enabled precise quantitative measurement of participant attitudes, the open-ended prompts permitted learners to elaborate on personal experiences, elaborate on observed learning benefits, and identify contextual challenges encountered during collaborative tasks. The instrument comprised a total of 24 items, balanced across three distinct thematic sections to ensure comprehensive coverage of the study variables:

- Section 1: Perceptions of Peer Interaction: Evaluated general student attitudes toward the importance and pedagogical value of collaborative learning in the EFL classroom.
- Section 2: Impact on Language Skill Development: Examined self-perceived linguistic gains across the four core skill domains: speaking, listening, reading, and writing.
- Section 3: Challenges and Instructional Obstacles: Identified specific interpersonal, affective, or operational difficulties experienced during peer activities.

To ensure construct clarity and reduce cognitive burden, all items were drafted in clear, unambiguous academic English aligned with the proficiency level of senior undergraduate learners (Ary et al., 2010). Additionally, five qualitative open-ended questions were embedded at the end of the instrument to solicit reflective insights and suggestions for optimizing future peer-interaction practices.

Measurement Scale and Administration A standard five-point Likert scale was utilized to measure participant agreement with the closed-ended statements, ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*). Dörnyei (2007) notes that a five-point scale offers an optimal balance between scale sensitivity and respondent ease, allowing learners to register fine-grained nuances in their attitudes.

The questionnaire was administered in a physical, paper-based format during regularly scheduled class sessions under uniform classroom conditions. Cohen et al. (2018) highlight that in-person administration yields significantly higher completion rates and ensures data integrity

compared to remote distribution. Prior to administration, participants received explicit verbal and written instructions detailing the completion procedure and confirming response anonymity.

3.4 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to evaluate instrument feasibility, establish construct validity, and verify internal consistency (Dörnyei, 2007). Cohen et al. (2018) emphasize that piloting identifies ambiguous wording, verifies completion timing, and confirms that items accurately measure target constructs. The instrument was administered to six senior undergraduate English majors ($n = 6$) at Sabratha University during the 2025/2026 academic year. Creswell and Creswell (2018) stress that pilot participants must mirror the target population while remaining excluded from the final sample ($N = 25$) to prevent response bias. Participants completed the questionnaire in 15 to 20 minutes and confirmed overall item clarity. Based on their feedback, two items in Section 2 were rephrased to distinguish speaking from listening gains, and the Likert-scale grid layout was formatted for better visual navigation.

3.5 Validity of the Instrument

The validity of the questionnaire was established to ensure that the instrument accurately measured what it was intended to measure, namely students' attitudes toward the impact of peer interaction on their language development. validity was an essential step in the research process, as it increased the credibility and scientific value of the collected data.

To achieve this, the questionnaire was subjected to face validity. The initial version of the instrument was reviewed by a group of specialists in the field of English language teaching and applied linguistics. These experts examined the clarity, relevance and appropriateness of the questionnaire items in relation to the objectives and research questions of the study. They also evaluated the linguistic accuracy of the items and their suitability for fourth-year undergraduate students.

Based on the feedback provided by the experts, necessary modifications were made to improve the wording, clarity and organization of some items, these revisions helped ensure that all questionnaire statements were clear, understandable and directly related to the variables

under investigation. As a result, the final version of the questionnaire was considered valid for measuring students' attitudes toward peer interaction in the EFL classroom.

3.6 Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the questionnaire was examined to ensure the consistency and stability of the instrument in measuring students' attitudes toward the impact of peer interaction on their language development. Reliability was a crucial requirement in this study, as it reflected the degree to which the questionnaire items consistently measured the same constructs.

To assess the reliability of the questionnaire, the internal consistency method was used. The reliability coefficient was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha, which is one of the most widely used statistical measures for assessing the internal consistency of questionnaires in educational and social science research. According to Cronbach (1951), the coefficient measures how closely related a set of items are as a group, and indicates the extent to which the items measure the same underlying concept.

Cronbach's Alpha values generally range from 0 to 1, where higher values indicate greater internal consistency, as suggested by Tavakol and Dennick (2011). A Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.70 or higher is considered acceptable for research purposes in the social sciences. The calculated reliability coefficient for the questionnaire indicated an acceptable level of reliability, which confirmed that the instrument was suitable for collecting consistent and dependable data. Therefore, the questionnaire was considered reliable for measuring students' attitudes toward the impact of peer interaction on their language development in the EFL classroom.

3.7 Procedures of Data Collection

The procedures of the study were carried out through a series of organized and sequential steps to ensure systematic data collection and accurate analysis. These procedures were implemented in a clear and structured manner to address the research questions and achieve the objectives of the study.

First, the questionnaire was developed in its initial form based on the research objectives, research questions, and the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter Two. Relevant literature

related to peer interaction and language development was reviewed to ensure that the questionnaire items adequately covered the main aspects of the study.

Second, the initial version of the questionnaire was submitted to a panel of experts in the field of English language teaching for validation. Based on their comments and suggestions, necessary modifications were made to improve the clarity, relevance and wording of the items. After these revisions the questionnaire was prepared in its final version.

Third, the questionnaire was administered in paper-based form to the selected participants. The distribution took place during regular class time to ensure that all participants completed the questionnaire under similar conditions. Before distribution, the purpose of the study was clearly explained to the students, and they were informed that their participation was voluntary and that their responses would be used for research purposes only.

Fourth, the data collection process was conducted over a (one week) period, starting from 28 December 2025 and ending on 1stJanuary 2026. During this period, all completed questionnaires were collected and checked to ensure that the responses were complete and usable for analysis.

Finally, the collected data were coded and organized systematically before analysis, the responses were entered into a spreadsheet and prepared for statistical analysis using appropriate data analysis techniques.

These steps ensured that the data collection process was accurate, reliable, and consistent with the methodological framework of the study.

3.6 Preparing Data for Analysis

The data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed using Microsoft Excel. This program was selected because it was suitable for handling the size of the dataset and effective for conducting the descriptive statistical analysis required for an attitude-based study. Excel provided practical tools for organizing data, calculating statistical values, and presenting results clearly in tables and charts.

After data collection, the responses were coded and entered into Excel spreadsheets, each questionnaire item was assigned a numerical value according to the five-point Likert scale used

in the study, ranging from (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree), this coding process allowed the researcher to convert qualitative responses into quantitative data suitable for statistical analysis.

Descriptive statistical methods were employed to analyze the data and answer the research questions. These methods included frequencies and percentages to describe the distribution of students responses, as well as means to determine the general tendency of students attitudes toward peer interaction. Additionally, standard deviations were calculated to measure the degree of variation in participants responses and to assess the consistency of their attitudes across different questionnaire items.

For the open-ended questions, the responses were analyzed qualitatively. The researcher read through each open-ended response to identify recurring themes, ideas and insights that students shared regarding their experiences with peer interaction. The data from these open-ended questions were coded into thematic categories to summarize and identify common patterns in students opinions and perceptions.

The analysis was conducted for each section of the questionnaire separately in order to provide a clear and detailed understanding of students' attitudes toward peer interaction. The results obtained from Excel were then organized and presented in the form of tables and charts to facilitate interpretation and discussion in the following chapters. The qualitative data from the open-ended questions were integrated with the quantitative findings to offer a more comprehensive understanding of students experiences and attitudes.

Using both descriptive statistics and qualitative analysis allowed the researcher to summarize the data effectively, draw conclusions related to students' attitudes toward the impact of peer interaction on their language development and provide deeper insights into how students perceive the benefits and challenges of peer interaction in language learning.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were taken into account throughout the research process to ensure that the study was conducted in a responsible and respectful manner. The researcher ensured that all participants were treated ethically and that their rights were protected during data collection.

Before administering the questionnaire, the purpose of the study was clearly explained to the participants. They were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to decline participation or withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. This approach helped create a comfortable environment in which students could respond honestly to the questionnaire items.

Participants were also assured that all information provided would remain confidential and would be used for academic research purposes only. No personal identifying information was collected and the responses were analyzed anonymously. The collected data were handled securely and were not shared with any parties outside the scope of the research.

These ethical procedures contributed to maintaining academic integrity and ensuring the credibility of the study by respecting participants privacy and autonomy, the research process adhered to accepted ethical standards in educational research.

3.8 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has presented a detailed account of the methodological framework adopted in the present study. It began by explaining the descriptive analytical research design, which was selected as the most appropriate approach for exploring students' attitudes toward the impact of peer interaction on their language development. The chapter then described the study's population, consisting of all fourth-year EFL students at Sabratha University during the 2025/2026 academic year, and the sample of 25 participants selected through purposive sampling based on clearly defined academic criteria. The methodological choices presented in this chapter ensure that the data collected are reliable, valid and ethically sound. The findings generated through these methods are presented and analyzed in the chapter that follows.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the data collected from fourth-year EFL students at the University of Sabratha. The purpose of this chapter is to display and analyze the data obtained through the questionnaire in order to answer the research questions of the study and to provide a clear picture of students attitudes toward the role of peer interaction in their language development. The analysis focuses on both quantitative and qualitative data so that the findings reflect not only general trends in students responses but also their personal views and experiences.

The quantitative data were obtained from the closed-ended questionnaire items and were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, including frequencies, percentages and mean scores. These measures were used to identify the general direction of students attitudes toward peer interaction and its influence on speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. At the same time, the qualitative data were collected from the open-ended questions included in the questionnaire. These responses were examined carefully to identify common ideas and recurring themes that could provide deeper insight into students experiences and perceptions.

The chapter is organized in a logical sequence to present the findings in a clear and coherent manner. It begins with an overview of the main results, followed by a detailed presentation of the findings and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. The chapter concludes with a summary that brings together the main results and highlights the most important points that will be discussed in the following chapter.

4.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

To provide a structured and coherent presentation of the findings, the quantitative analysis is divided into three main sections: first, students general attitudes toward peer interaction, second, the impact of peer interaction on specific language skills and finally, the challenges students face during peer interaction activities.

The data were organized into three tables, presenting the arithmetic mean to determine the general tendency of students' opinions and the standard deviation to measure the degree of variation and assess the consistency of responses. The analysis was conducted using Microsoft Excel.

4.1.1 Section One: Students General Attitudes toward Peer Interaction

As a Shown in Table 4.1 below, the section consists of eight items (1-8) designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of learners' attitudes toward collaborative activities. Specifically, such items were formulated to examine various psychological and educational dimensions, such as learners comfort levels, self-confidence, classroom engagement and their preference for peer-based learning.

Table 4. 1: Students Attitudes toward peer interaction

	Items	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std dev
1	Peer interaction played an important role in my English language learning.	41.67%	37.50%	20.83%	0%	0%	1.79	0.76
2	I felt more comfortable using English when interacting with my classmates.	37.50%	37.50%	20.83%	4.17%	0%	1.91	0.86
3	Peer interaction encouraged me to participate actively in classroom activities.	36%	40%	12%	12%	0%	2	0.97
4	Working with classmates helped me feel more confident when using English.	56%	36%	0%	4%	4%	1.64	0.97
5	Peer interaction made English classes more engaging and interesting.	56%	28%	12%	4%	0%	1.64	0.84
6	I preferred learning English through interaction with peers rather than working alone.	40%	24%	32%	4%	0%	2	0.93
7	Peer interaction helped create a positive learning environment in the classroom.	40%	44%	12%	4%	0%	1.8	0.80
8	I believed that peer interaction supported my overall language development.	28%	48%	16%	8%	0%	2.04	0.87

The responses to the first item, “Peer interaction played an important role in my English language learning.” indicate that students generally view peer interaction as a meaningful

element in their learning. A majority of the participants selected Strongly Agree (41.67%) and Agree (37.50%), while 20.83% remained neutral and none expressed disagreement. The mean score (1.79) reflects a clear tendency toward agreement and the standard deviation (0.76) suggests that students responses were relatively close, showing a shared understanding of the importance of peer interaction.

The findings also indicate that students view interaction with classmates as an important part of the learning process, particularly because it allows them to practice the language more actively and engage with learning in a more natural classroom setting.

Similarly, the responses to item (2), “I felt more comfortable using English when interacting with my classmates.” show a pattern that is consistent with the previous result. A total of 37.50% of the students selected Strongly Agree and 37.50% selected Agree, while 20.83% chose Neutral and 4.17% selected Disagree. This distribution indicates that most students felt more at ease when using English with their classmates, although a small number did not experience the same level of comfort.

The mean score of 1.92 reflects an overall tendency toward agreement, suggesting that peer interaction generally creates a more relaxed environment for using English. The standard deviation of 0.86 shows some variation in responses, which may be related to differences in students confidence, language proficiency or previous learning experiences. Despite this variation, the overall trend suggests that interacting with classmates helps many students use English with less hesitation and greater confidence, reinforcing the positive role of peer interaction in classroom communication.

In response to item 3, the results were relatively positive, with 36% strongly agreeing and 40% agreeing. This shows that peer interaction generally encourages students to participate more actively in classroom activities. However, there was some variability, as 12% were neutral and another 12% disagreed, indicating that not all students found peer interaction motivating in the same way.

The mean of 2.00 indicates that most students agreed that peer interaction encouraged them to participate more actively in classroom activities. However, the presence of students who selected neutral and disagreeing responses (as reflected in the standard deviation of 0.98)

suggests that peer interaction may not have been equally motivating for all students, pointing to a degree of variability in how students engage with peer activities.

For item 4, the results were mostly positive, with 56% strongly agreeing and 36% agreeing, suggesting that working with classmates boosted students confidence in using English. Only 4% disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed, indicating that confidence-building through peer interaction is seen as very effective by most students.

A mean value of 1.64 indicates that the majority of students strongly agreed or agreed that working with classmates helped them feel more confident when using English. This shows that peer interaction has a positive influence on building confidence in using the language. The standard deviation of 0.97 reflects some variation in the responses, but overall, peer collaboration appears to play a significant role in boosting students' self-assurance.

Similarly, item 5 responses revealed that 56% strongly agreed and 28% agreed, showing that peer interaction made the classes more dynamic and interesting for most students. A small portion of students selected “Neutral” (12%) or “Disagree” (4%), but overall, peer interaction was regarded positively in making the classes more engaging.

With a mean of 1.64, the results suggest that most students found peer interaction effective in making English classes more engaging and interesting. This indicates that students value the dynamic environment created through peer discussions. The standard deviation of 0.84 indicates a slight variation, with a few students possibly not experiencing the same level of engagement during peer activities.

Regarding learning preferences in item (6), the responses were divided; while 40% strongly agreed and 24% agreed, a significant portion, (32%), selected “Neutral” and 4% disagreed. This indicates that while many students prefer learning through peer interaction, there is a substantial group that either prefers to work alone or remains undecided.

The mean value of 2.00 suggests that while many students prefer learning through peer interaction, there is a balance in opinions, as some students may still prefer working independently. The standard deviation of 0.94 reflects this diversity in preferences, indicating that learning preferences vary among students, with some leaning towards peer interaction and others favoring solitary study.

Regarding item 7, the majority, with 40% strongly agreeing and 44% agreeing, believed that peer interaction played a positive role in shaping a collaborative and supportive classroom atmosphere, only 12% were neutral and 4% disagreed, further reinforcing the idea that peer interaction contributes to a positive learning environment.

The mean of 1.80 reflects that most students agree that peer interaction contributed to creating a positive learning environment in the classroom. This suggests that peer collaboration helps foster a cooperative and engaging atmosphere. The standard deviation of 0.80 indicates relatively similar opinions among the students, with only a small variation in how students experienced the classroom environment.

For the item 8 which is about overall language development, the results show that 28% strongly agreed and 48% agreed, indicating that most students believe that peer interaction supported their overall language development. A small portion (16%) was neutral and 8% disagreed, which suggests that while peer interaction is widely seen as beneficial, not all students felt it equally contributed to their language growth.

A mean of 2.04 indicates that a majority of the students agree that peer interaction supported their overall language development. The standard deviation of 0.87 shows some variation in how students perceive the role of peer interaction in language development. While most students found peer interaction helpful, the range of responses suggests that individual experiences may differ depending on the level of interaction.

Over all findings and analysis of section one show that peer interaction is not just a way to learn, but a key tool that builds students' confidence and makes them feel more comfortable in the classroom. What we understand from these results is that when students work together, they stop feeling afraid of making mistakes because they are talking to their friends instead of being tested by a teacher. This collaborative environment changes English from a difficult school subject into a natural way to communicate and share ideas. While almost all students agree that this interaction is important for their development, we also see that some students still value their own private study time, which means peer work should be balanced with individual learning. In short, this section proves that before students can improve their language, they first need to feel safe and confident, and interacting with their peers is exactly what provides this support.

4.1.2 Section Two: Impact of Peer Interaction on Language Skills

As shown in Table 4.2 below, this section investigates the impact of peer interaction on specific language skills. It comprises ten items (9-18) formulated to systematically evaluate the core areas of language learning: speaking, listening, reading and writing. The primary rationale for grouping these items is to shift the analytical focus from students' general attitudes to their practical language development.

Table 4. 2: Impact of Peer Interaction on Language Skills

	Items	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std dev
9	Peer interaction helped improve my speaking fluency in English.	40%	44%	16%	0%	0%	1.76	0.70
10	Discussing topics with classmates improved my ability to express ideas orally.	33.33 %	54.17 %	8.33%	4.17%	0%	1.83	0.74
11	Listening to my classmates helped improve my listening comprehension.	24%	36%	32%	8%	0%	2.24	0.90
12	Peer discussions helped me understand spoken English more clearly.	32%	32%	24%	12%	0%	2.16	1.00
13	Working with peers helped improve my understanding of reading texts.	16%	32%	40%	8%	4%	2.52	0.98
14	Discussing reading materials with classmates enhanced my reading comprehension.	17.39 %	26.09 %	39.13 %	17.39 %	0%	2.56	0.97
15	Peer interaction helped me improve my writing skills.	8.33%	25%	50%	0%	16.67 %	2.91	1.11
16	Receiving feedback from classmates improved the quality of my written work.	29.17 %	41.67 %	20.83 %	8.33%	0%	2.08	0.90
17	Peer interaction helped me use English more effectively in different situations.	28%	40%	28%	4%	0%	2.08	0.84
18	Peer activities supported the integration of different language skills.	34.62 %	30.77 %	15.38 %	15.38 %	3.85%	2.16	1.15

In terms of speaking fluency, in item 9 (Peer interaction helped improve my speaking fluency in English), the responses were highly positive, with 40% strongly agreeing and 44% agreeing, demonstrating that peer interaction is considered a valuable tool for improving

speaking fluency in English. Only 16% remained neutral, and no students disagreed, indicating a strong consensus on the positive impact of peer interaction on speaking skills.

With a mean of 1.76, most students agreed that peer interaction contributed to improving their speaking fluency in English. The standard deviation of 0.71 indicates a relatively high level of agreement among the students on this matter, with very few expressing neutrality or disagreement. This suggests that peer interaction is widely viewed as effective for enhancing oral communication skills.

Regarding the ability to express ideas orally in item 10, most students, with 33.33% strongly agreeing and 54.17% agreeing, indicated that discussing topics with classmates helped improve their oral expression. This shows that peer discussions are viewed as an effective way to enhance students' ability to articulate their ideas in English.

The mean of 1.83 reflects that most students found discussing topics with classmates improved their ability to express ideas orally. The standard deviation of 0.75 indicates that the majority of students had a similar experience with peer discussions, but there was still some variation in how much these discussions helped with verbal expression.

For listening comprehension in item 11, 24% strongly agreed and 36% agreed, while 32% were neutral, indicating that listening to classmates helped many students improve their listening comprehension, however, some students felt neutral, suggesting that the effectiveness of peer interaction for improving listening skills may vary.

The mean value of 2.24 suggests that while peer listening activities helped many students, there is some neutral opinion on this matter. The standard deviation of 0.91 shows a moderate spread in responses, meaning that while peer listening has had a positive impact for most, some students did not feel that it significantly improved their comprehension skills.

Regarding understanding spoken English in item 12, 32% strongly agreed and 32% agreed, with 24% neutral and 12% disagreeing, indicating that most students found peer discussions helpful in understanding spoken English. However, a small portion felt neutral or disagreed, pointing to possible individual differences in the benefits of peer interaction.

A mean of 2.16 indicates that peer discussions had a moderate positive effect on understanding spoken English. The standard deviation of 1.01 indicates some variability in how

students felt about the effectiveness of peer discussions, with some students expressing neutral opinions or disagreeing that peer interactions helped in this area.

When asked about the effect of peer interaction on reading comprehension in items 13 and 14, the responses were more mixed, for 13, 16% strongly agreed, 32% agreed and 40% were neutral, suggesting that while some students benefited from peer interaction in improving their reading comprehension, many felt neutral. Similarly, for item 14, the distribution showed that 17.39% strongly agreed, 26.09% agreed and 39.13% were neutral, highlighting that the impact of peer interaction on reading comprehension was not as strong or consistent as for speaking or listening.

The mean scores of 2.52 for item 13 and 2.57 for item 14 indicate a moderate level of agreement, suggesting that peer interaction had a positive but less pronounced effect on reading comprehension compared with other language skills, particularly speaking. The standard deviations (0.98 and 0.97) show a noticeable variation in responses, which suggests that the attitudes benefit of peer interaction in reading depended on individual experiences and possibly on the type of reading activities used in class. Overall, these findings indicate that while peer discussion may support reading comprehension for some students, its impact appears to be less consistent and less strong than its role in developing oral communication skills.

For writing skills in item 15, the responses were more divided, with 8.33% strongly agreeing, 25% agreeing, and a significant portion of students (50%) being neutral. This suggests that peer interaction had a limited effect on improving writing skills compared to other areas like speaking and listening.

A mean of 2.92 indicates that most students were neutral about the effect of peer interaction on their writing skills. The standard deviation of 1.11 reflects a high level of variability in responses, suggesting that peer interaction had a limited effect on improving writing skills for some students.

For feedback on writing quality in item 16, the results show that 29.17% strongly agreed and 41.67% agreed, indicating that peer feedback was seen as an important factor in improving the quality of written work. However, 20.83% were neutral and 8.33% disagreed, reflecting that peer feedback may not be equally useful for all students.

The mean of 2.08 suggests that the majority of students agreed that receiving feedback from classmates helped improve the quality of their written work. This indicates that peer feedback is seen as a helpful tool in enhancing writing skills. The standard deviation of 0.91 indicates a moderate variation in responses, with some students finding peer feedback more beneficial than others.

Regarding using English effectively in different situations in item 17, the majority of students, with 28% strongly agreeing and 40% agreeing, felt that peer interaction helped them use English more effectively in various contexts. However, some students were neutral (28%), suggesting that the impact of peer interaction on practical language use may vary.

With a mean of 2.08, most students felt that peer interaction helped them use English more effectively in different situations. The standard deviation of 0.84 suggests a relatively high degree of consensus among students about the positive impact of peer interaction on applying language skills in real-life situations. However, there was still some variation in responses, with a few students feeling neutral or slightly less confident about this aspect.

For integrating language skills in item 18, 34.62% strongly agreed and 30.77% agreed, indicating that peer activities supported the integration of different language skills. However, there were some students who were neutral (15.38%) or disagreed (15.38%), indicating that peer interaction might not have been equally effective in integrating all skills for everyone.

The mean of 2.16 suggests that while many students found that peer activities supported the integration of different language skills (e.g., speaking, listening, reading and writing), there was still some variation in the effectiveness of these activities. The standard deviation of 1.16 indicates significant diversity in responses, with some students strongly agreeing and others remaining neutral or disagreeing.

Over all findings and analysis of section two clearly show that the positive impact of peer interaction is not spread equally across all language skills. What we understand from these results is that working with classmates is a powerful engine for developing speaking fluency and listening comprehension, as it allows students to practice real communication in a natural way. However, this success in oral skills does not automatically move to text-based skills like reading and writing, where students expressed more neutral and mixed feelings. While peer feedback was seen as a helpful tool for improving written work, the overall data

suggests that interaction is most effective when it involves immediate, verbal exchange rather than solitary academic tasks.

In short, analysis in this section proves that peer interaction is a specialized environment for building "communicative muscle," helping students turn their knowledge into active speech, even if its role in traditional literacy remains limited.

4.1.3 Section Three: Challenges of Peer Interaction

As shown in the Table 4.3 below, this final quantitative section explores the challenges and barriers students encounter during peer interaction. It consists of six items (19-24) specifically designed to investigate the factors that might hinder the effectiveness of collaborative learning. The rationale for grouping these items is to provide a balanced and realistic perspective by examining obstacles from multiple angles: affective and communicative factors (such as discomfort and difficulty expressing ideas), linguistic barriers (including proficiency differences and reliance on Arabic) and logistical constraints (like limited time and classroom organization).

Table 4. 3: Challenges of Peer Interaction

	Questions	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std dev
19	I sometimes felt uncomfortable using English during peer interaction.	32%	20%	12%	32%	4%	2.56	1.32
20	Differences in language proficiency affected the effectiveness of peer interaction.	12%	28%	56%	0%	4%	2.56	0.85
21	Some classmates relied too much on Arabic during peer activities.	20%	32%	20%	24%	4%	2.6	1.16
22	Peer interaction was not always well organized during class.	8%	28%	32%	32%	0%	2.88	0.95
23	Limited time reduced the effectiveness of peer interaction activities.	12%	52%	20%	4%	12%	2.52	1.13
24	I faced difficulties expressing my ideas clearly during peer interaction.	8%	24%	40%	24%	4%	2.92	0.97

On the topic of discomfort during peer interaction in item 19, 32% strongly agreed and 20% agreed, indicating that some students felt uncomfortable using English during peer interaction. However, a significant portion of students felt neutral (12%) or disagreed (32%), suggesting that discomfort is not a universal experience.

The mean of 2.56 indicates that a significant portion of students felt uncomfortable using English during peer interactions. This suggests that language barriers, anxiety, or lack of confidence in speaking English may have affected their experience. The high standard deviation of 1.33 indicates a wide range of experiences, with some students feeling very uncomfortable and others not experiencing this issue.

Regarding item 20, 12% strongly agreed and 28% agreed, while 56% were neutral, reflecting that language proficiency differences were a concern for many students but did not significantly hinder the effectiveness of peer interaction for everyone.

The mean of 2.56 shows that many students felt that differences in language proficiency affected the effectiveness of peer interaction. This suggests that students with varying levels of English proficiency may have found it more challenging to engage effectively in peer activities. The standard deviation of 0.85 reflects a moderate variation in responses, with some students perceiving proficiency differences as a barrier, while others may not have found it problematic.

For reliance on Arabic during peer activities in item 21, 20% agreed and 32% agreed, with some students neutral (20%) and 24% disagreeing, indicating that reliance on Arabic during peer activities was a concern for some students but not for all.

The mean of 2.60 indicates that some students felt that their classmates relied too much on Arabic during peer activities, which might have hindered the effectiveness of those activities in improving their English. The standard deviation of 1.17 shows considerable variation in responses, suggesting that this issue was more noticeable to some students than to others.

For item 22, the results show that 8% of students strongly agreed, 28% agreed and 32% were neutral, with 32% disagreeing. This indicates that organizational issues during peer activities were seen as a concern by some students. A portion of students felt that the peer interaction activities were not organized well, while a significant neutral response (32%) suggests that some students did not feel that organization was a significant issue. This reflects

that organizational effectiveness may vary between different classroom settings or even individual experiences with peer interaction activities.

With a mean of 2.88, the results suggest that many students felt that peer interaction activities were not always well organized in class. This could indicate that lack of structure or poor planning affected the effectiveness of the activities. The standard deviation of 0.95 suggests a moderate variation in how students view the organization of peer activities, with some students finding them disorganized, while others did not have such concerns.

Moving on to item 23, the responses show that 12% of students strongly agreed, 52% agreed and 20% were neutral, with 4% disagreeing and 12% strongly disagreeing. These results suggest that time constraints were a major factor in limiting the effectiveness of peer interaction. The large percentage of students who agreed with this statement indicates that many students felt the time allocated for peer interaction activities was insufficient, thereby reducing their effectiveness. However, there is a small proportion of students who disagreed, suggesting that some students did not experience this issue.

The mean of 2.52 suggests that limited time was seen as a barrier to the effectiveness of peer interaction activities. A significant portion of students agreed that time constraints reduced the potential of these activities. The high standard deviation of 1.14 indicates that this issue was felt more acutely by some students, while others were not as affected by the time limitations.

For item 24, the responses show that 8% of students strongly agreed, 24% agreed, 40% were neutral and 24% disagreed, with 4% strongly disagreeing. This suggests that difficulties in expressing ideas clearly were a concern for some students during peer interaction activities. While 40% were neutral, indicating that many students did not feel strongly one way or the other, a significant proportion of students (32%) agreed that they faced challenges expressing their ideas clearly, this reflects that expressing ideas during peer interaction may have been difficult for some students, while others did not face such challenges.

The mean of 2.92 indicates that a significant number of students faced difficulties in expressing their ideas clearly during peer interaction. This suggests that communication challenges may have affected the flow of peer activities for some students. The standard deviation of 0.98 shows a high degree of variation, with some students finding this difficulty more pronounced than others.

Over all findings and analysis of section three show that while peer interaction is a powerful tool, its success in the classroom is not automatic and faces several real-world obstacles. What we understand from these results is that the true potential of working together is often limited by practical problems like strict time limits and a lack of organized structure in activities. The data also reveals a strong link between language levels and emotional comfort; many students still feel a fear of making mistakes and often slip back into using Arabic because they find it difficult to express complex ideas in English. This suggests that peer interaction cannot succeed on its own without careful planning and a supportive atmosphere that reduces student anxiety. In short, this section proves that for peer activities to be truly effective, they must be more than just group work, they require clear rules, enough time and teacher guidance to help students overcome their shyness and linguistic barriers.

4.1.4 Summary of Quantitative Findings

what are understood from these results is that while students have a very positive attitude and believe that working with others is a key to building their confidence and speaking skills, this success is not guaranteed without overcoming certain barriers. The data shows a clear divide: peer interaction is an excellent social engine for oral communication and classroom engagement, but it struggles to improve text-based skills like reading and writing on its own. Furthermore, the true effectiveness of these activities is often held back by practical challenges, such as the fear of making mistakes, limited class time, and the natural tendency to use Arabic. In short, these three sections prove that peer interaction is an essential strategy for creating a lively and communicative environment, but it requires careful organization and teacher support to transform this psychological comfort into overall language mastery.

4.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data, derived from the open-ended questions attached to the questionnaire, were analyzed using thematic analysis. To ensure a systematic and rigorous interpretation of the students' experiences, a structured analytical process was applied.

First, each response was carefully read multiple times to establish familiarity with the raw data. Next, the responses were systematically coded and similar underlying ideas were grouped

into broader categories. Finally, these categories were synthesized to identify recurring patterns and overarching themes.

To accurately reflect the prevalence of these themes among the participants, a frequency counting method was integrated into the qualitative analysis. The occurrence of each theme was classified into three distinct levels: “High” for dominant ideas expressed by a large portion of the sample, “Moderate” for recurring concepts mentioned by a notable segment but not the majority and “Low” for individual or less common perspectives. This combined approach allowed for a meaningful and structured summarization of the students' personal views, adding explanatory depth to the quantitative findings.

4.2.1 EFL Students' Attitudes Toward Peer Interaction and Its Role in Skill Development

When reflecting on the students' responses to the first question, a clear and practical narrative emerges regarding the skills they developed. Speaking skills were undeniably the highest and most frequently reported area of improvement and the qualitative data reveals exactly why. Students overwhelmingly chose speaking because peer interaction provides them with a practical training ground rather than just theoretical exercises. It creates a safe space to turn memorized vocabulary into active language. As one student explicitly noted, this interaction is highly beneficial *“because I practice using new words in real conversations.”* This transition from passive learning to actual verbal practice is deeply connected to their psychological readiness. By working with peers instead of facing formal teacher evaluation, students successfully break the barrier of fear, which is why another participant stated that the activities improved their *“speaking, pronunciation and confidence.”* Furthermore, a secondary but equally important theme emerged from the responses: the strong, natural connection between speaking and listening. Several students specifically highlighted this combination, with one explicitly noting that *“listening and speaking had helped me to improve my language.”* This recurring pairing shows that learners practically understand that successful communication is a two-way exchange; they realize that comprehending their peers is just as vital as expressing themselves.

Ultimately, the complete absence of reading and writing in these answers confirms our core conclusion: in this classroom context, peer interaction is not a general tool for all language

skills, but rather a powerful, dedicated environment specifically designed for building confidence and practicing real-life spoken English.

4.2.2 EFL Students' Attitudes Toward Peer Interaction and Its Role in Language Skill Acquisition

The analysis of the responses to the second question further reinforces the dominance of oral communication in peer learning. Speaking tasks were identified as the most beneficial context for interaction, primarily because they allow for the immediate exchange of thoughts and the co-construction of meaning. Students clearly feel that talking with their peers is where the most significant learning happens, as it provides a platform to "exchange ideas" and "share" knowledge in a way that feels natural. For instance, one participant justified their preference by stating that speaking is most helpful *"because we talk and shore share ideas,"* indicating that the social nature of the task is what makes it effective. Similarly, another student highlighted the practical advantage of this interaction, noting its benefit in helping them *"exchange ideas and understand different accents."*

Furthermore, the data shows that listening tasks are often viewed as inseparable from these speaking activities. A large number of students paired listening and speaking together, suggesting that they find the greatest value in tasks that require active, real-time engagement. This is reflected in the comment that certain tasks are more useful "because it needs more active involvement." Interestingly, while reading appeared in a few responses as a secondary area of benefit, writing was notably absent. This consistent trend across the data confirms that students find peer interaction most rewarding when it involves spontaneous, verbal engagement, where they can hear and respond to their classmates, rather than in more solitary or text-based academic tasks.

4.2.3 Key Success Factors in Peer Interaction

By analyzing the frequency of themes in the students' responses, it is immediately clear that "Respect and Cooperation" and "Active Participation" stand out as the two most dominant factors, both appearing with high frequency. This suggests that for these learners, success depends on a blend of a supportive social climate and energetic engagement. Students clearly believe that without a foundation of respect, no real learning can occur, as it unlocks their ability to participate. This is justified by a student who stated that *"respect, active participation and*

clear communication" are the essential ingredients for success. This emphasizes that when respect is established, it creates the necessary safety for students to stop being passive and start being active contributors to the "teamwork" effort.

Furthermore, “Clear Communication” emerged as a moderate theme in the data. While social bonds are vital, students also recognize that the ability to express ideas plainly is a key factor in making the interaction effective. This explains why phrases related to “clear communication” were mentioned as a necessary bridge between peers. Finally, the data revealed a few supporting factors with lower frequency, such as “Confidence” and “Mutual Support.” Although mentioned less often, these elements act as a psychological buffer for some students. For instance, one participant highlighted that *“confidence, cooperation and clear communication”* make learning successful, suggesting that for a minority of students, the internal feeling of confidence is what stabilizes their performance. Ultimately, the high recurrence of respect and active involvement proves that the human and social element is the primary engine of successful peer interaction in this context.

4.2.4 Factors Influencing Student Hesitation and Strategies for Overcoming Interaction Barriers

The analysis for this question reveals a deeply rooted psychological barrier among learners, with “Fear of making mistakes” and “Shyness and lack of confidence” emerging as the most dominant themes with a high frequency. The responses suggest that students are not just afraid of grammatical errors, but are specifically worried about the social consequences of these errors. For instance, one student explained this anxiety by stating, *“in my experience they fear to make mistakes or other students laughing about them.”* This indicates that the fear is tied to a perceived loss of face or social judgment, which significantly hinders their participation. Another participant admitted their own personal struggle, noting, *“I think I am not confident well,”* which further highlights that internal feelings of inadequacy are a primary cause of hesitancy in collaborative settings.

In addition to these personal psychological factors, “Classroom environment factors” were identified as a moderate theme. The data shows that the behavior of classmates plays a critical role in how comfortable a student feels; if the environment lacks encouragement, shyness is magnified. To address these barriers, students provided a variety of “Suggested

solutions," which also appeared with moderate frequency. The most common recommendation was the creation of a "supportive environment" and the use of "encouragement" to mitigate fear. For example, a student suggested that these feelings can be addressed by *"creating supporting"* atmospheres and that *"encouragement can help them"* overcome the dread of making mistakes.

Ultimately, the transition in the data from describing "fear" to proposing "support" proves that while students recognize their internal hesitations, they also believe that a positive, non-judgmental classroom culture is the key to unlocking their communicative potential.

4.2.5 Strategies for Integrating Peer Interaction to Enhance Future Language Development and Learner Confidence

The final set of qualitative data provides a forward-looking perspective on how students envision their ideal learning environment. A dominant consensus emerges around "Pair work and group activities" and "Group discussions," both of which appeared with high frequency as the preferred methods for future lessons. The data suggests that students have moved beyond traditional teacher-led instruction and are now advocating for a classroom structure where they are the primary actors. This shift is clearly reflected in the responses that call for more "group work" and "small group" tasks as a standard practice. One participant justified this by stating that interaction should be used specifically through *"group discussions, pair work and speaking activities,"* emphasizing that these are not just fun tasks, but essential tools for linguistic development.

Furthermore, the data identifies "Role play and interactive tasks" as a moderate theme, representing a more creative and simulated approach to learning. Students view these activities as a way to practice real-life scenarios, with one respondent highlighting that *"role plays to improve confidence"* should be integrated into the curriculum. This illustrates that for many, confidence is not something that happens naturally, but something that must be built through structured, interactive play. Interestingly, while the "Supportive and encouraging environment" appeared with lower frequency in this specific question, it remains a stabilizing factor in the students' vision. Some participants pointed out that successful interaction also depends on the teacher's ability to plan "mixed interaction" and understand "what they struggle from his own experience." This suggests that while students want autonomy in their groups, they still look to the teacher to act as a strategist who carefully designs the interaction.

Ultimately, the high frequency of requests for collaborative tasks proves that students are eager for a more communicative, student-centered approach, where the classroom becomes a dynamic laboratory for shared language practice.

4.3 Summary of Qualitative Findings

Through a deep look into the students' responses across all five questions, a compelling story emerges about the real value of peer interaction. It is clear that for these learners, working with classmates is much more than a classroom requirement; it is a vital bridge that connects their textbook knowledge to the real world. The most striking finding is how students consistently prioritized speaking and listening over any other skill. This is not just a preference; it is a practical necessity. They are looking for a safe harbor where they can transform the words they have memorized into active, living language without the constant fear of being judged.

The data also tells us something profound about the human side of learning: the atmosphere in the room is just as important as the lesson itself. Success in these tasks seems to be driven by a social engine fueled by mutual respect and active energy. When students feel respected, their affective filter drops, allowing them to communicate more freely. While barriers like shyness and the haunting fear of making mistakes are still very real, the students themselves have pointed toward the cure: a supportive classroom culture built on encouragement and creative tasks like role-plays.

Ultimately, the students' vision for the future is both clear and ambitious. They are not just asking for occasional group work; they are advocating for a fundamental shift toward a student-centered classroom. They want peer interaction to be a permanent fixture of their education a dynamic space where they can finally build the confidence and communicative muscle needed to use English authentically in their daily lives.

4.4 Summary of the Chapter

The findings of this chapter offer a profound and integrated narrative regarding the role of peer interaction in the English language development of EFL students at the University of Sabratha. By synthesizing the various dimensions of the study, a clear picture emerges of peer interaction not merely as a classroom activity, but as a critical psychological and pedagogical

catalyst. The results consistently highlight a strong positive consensus, with students identifying peer collaboration as a vital tool for boosting self-confidence and reducing the affective filter. These findings suggest that the classroom environment is transformed into a safe harbor when students engage with their peers, where the traditional fear of teacher-led evaluation is replaced by a sense of mutual respect and cooperation. This transition allows learners to move from being passive recipients of knowledge to becoming active participants in a dynamic communicative process.

The impact of this interaction, as evidenced by the results, is not uniform across all language domains, revealing a significant divide between oral and literacy-based skills. The findings indicate that peer interaction acts as a powerful engine for developing communicative muscle, with speaking fluency and listening comprehension showing the most substantial gains. These results are supported by a dominant focus on verbal exchange and spontaneous dialogue throughout the study. Conversely, the influence of peer work on reading and writing remains largely in a neutral territory, suggesting that while interaction facilitates immediate verbal communication, its transition into text-based academic tasks requires more structured intervention. Interestingly, specific findings regarding peer feedback were recognized as beneficial, indicating that the value of peer support in literacy is most effective when it involves direct, constructive dialogue rather than solitary academic exercise.

Despite the overwhelming support for collaborative learning, the findings uncover a complex layer of real-world challenges that hinder its full potential. The results reveal that the success of peer interaction is not an automatic byproduct of group work but is contingent upon overcoming significant linguistic and logistical barriers. Challenges such as the persistent fear of making mistakes, shyness, and a natural tendency to rely on the native language (Arabic) were highlighted as primary obstacles within the results. These factors are further compounded by practical constraints identified in the findings, including limited class time and occasional organizational deficiencies, which can reduce the effectiveness of interactive tasks. The variation in these responses suggests that the student experience is deeply individual, shaped by personal levels of proficiency and emotional comfort.

In conclusion, the integrated results prove that peer interaction is an indispensable strategy for fostering a student-centered learning environment that prioritizes authentic

communication. The findings clearly show that students envision a future where their English lessons are defined by pair work, role-plays and structured group discussions, advocating for a shift away from traditional teacher-centered models. For this instructional strategy to reach its maximum efficacy, the results suggest it must be supported by a non-judgmental classroom culture and careful teacher guidance that addresses both the emotional needs and the linguistic gaps of the learners.

Ultimately, the results of this chapter provide a solid empirical foundation for understanding how social interaction can be harnessed to transform psychological comfort into comprehensive language mastery, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application in the EFL context.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion

5.0 Introduction

This chapter brings together all the information collected to answer the main questions of this study. The goal is to understand how peer interaction affects EFL students at the University of Sabratha. To do this, the chapter connects the numbers from the surveys with the personal opinions of the students. By looking at the data from these different angles, we get a much clearer picture of how students really feel. These results are then compared with the ideas and previous research discussed earlier in Chapter Two.

Beyond the results, the chapter also looks at the challenges faced during the research and provides a final summary of what was learned. It ends with practical advice and recommendations for teachers, those who design courses, and other researchers who want to study this topic in the future.

To understand the discussion, we must remember why this study started. The main goal was to see how fourth-year English students at Sabratha University feel about working together and how it helps their language skills, specifically in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Additionally, the study wanted to find out what practical or emotional difficulties students face when they interact with their peers. By doing this, we can see the full picture of how students learn together in the Libyan context. Finally, the discussion answered the research questions by linking our results with previous studies and theories to make the findings clear and reliable, based on the research questions.

5.1 Discussion

5.1.1 The Role of Peer Interaction in EFL Classrooms: Student Attitudes, Impact on Core Language Skills, and Instructional Challenges

To answer the first research question, the findings reveal that students view collaborative learning not merely as an instructional technique, but as a transformative social experience that reshapes their emotional relationship with the English language. Rather than approaching the foreign language classroom with apprehension, students describe peer interaction as a source of psychological safety that allows them to engage with English more freely and authentically.

In traditional teacher-centered settings, students often experience language use as a performance to be evaluated. Every utterance carries the weight of potential correction or judgment from an authority figure. Peer interaction disrupts this pattern by replacing vertical evaluation with horizontal cooperation. When students communicate with classmates, they enter a relationship of equals where the stakes feel lower and the atmosphere feels more forgiving. This shift is crucial because it addresses what many scholars identify as the primary obstacle in foreign language learning: not a lack of linguistic knowledge, but a surplus of emotional inhibition. The data suggest that when students work alongside peers rather than under the gaze of a teacher, they experience a noticeable reduction in the affective barriers that typically suppress language production.

This emotional transformation aligns closely with Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory, which argues that learning is fundamentally embedded in social relationships. Vygotsky introduced the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) to describe the space between what a learner can do independently and what they can achieve with guidance. While the ZPD is often discussed in terms of cognitive scaffolding provided by a more knowledgeable other, the present findings highlight an equally important dimension: emotional scaffolding provided by peers. Classmates may not always possess superior linguistic knowledge, but they offer something that teachers sometimes cannot share vulnerability. When a student hesitates over a word or struggles with pronunciation, a peer who faces similar challenges is less likely to trigger feelings of inadequacy. Instead, the peer becomes a co-learner who understands the difficulty from the inside. This mutual recognition creates a unique form of psychological support that encourages risk-taking. The findings indicate that students at Sabratha University rely on this peer-based emotional scaffolding to build the confidence necessary for active participation.

The psychological benefits observed in this study find strong echoes in the regional literature. Salem (2018), working with Libyan students at Misurata University, found that collaborative learning created a low-pressure environment where learners felt motivated to engage more actively with language practice. Salem's participants described peer work as a welcome departure from the anxiety of teacher-led drills. The current study reinforces and extends Salem's conclusions by demonstrating that this emotional comfort is not limited to a single institution or a specific activity. Across the responses at Sabratha University, students consistently linked their positive attitudes to the feeling of being respected and supported by their peers. This suggests that the psychological advantages of peer interaction may be a widespread phenomenon in Libyan EFL contexts, cutting across different universities and student populations.

Similarly, Abu Rass (2018) investigated cooperative learning in Jordan and reported that students who engaged in group work exhibited lower levels of communication anxiety and higher willingness to speak. The present findings corroborate Abu Rass's argument from a different angle. While Abu Rass measured anxiety reduction through speaking performance, the current study reveals the attitudinal foundation that makes such performance possible. Students at Sabratha University do not simply perform better because they are less anxious; they are less anxious because they view the peer environment as inherently safer. This distinction matters because it shifts the focus from behavioral outcomes to the subjective experiences that drive those behaviors. In other words, the current study helps explain *why* cooperative learning reduces anxiety: it changes the emotional texture of the classroom from one of judgment to one of solidarity.

The international literature offers further theoretical support for these observations. Mackey and Gass (2005) have argued that peer interaction reduces the pressure to produce perfect language, thereby increasing learner confidence. This argument finds clear validation in the present context. Students at Sabratha University describe their peer groups as spaces where mistakes are tolerated rather than punished. This tolerance is not accidental; it is cultivated through the social norms that emerge within collaborative activities. When respect and cooperation are established as group values, the fear of losing face diminishes. Sadeghi and Shafiee (2020) emphasized precisely this point in their discussion of emotional interaction, noting that empathy and encouragement between peers create the conditions for genuine

language experimentation. The qualitative data from the current study resonate deeply with this perspective, as students identified mutual respect as the single most important factor for successful peer learning. Without this emotional foundation, they suggested, interaction collapses into superficial exchange or silent withdrawal.

It is also worth considering how the present study engages with the work of Al-Nasser (2019), who examined peer feedback in Saudi Arabian EFL writing classes. Al-Nasser noted that cultural norms in many Arab educational settings emphasize teacher authority and student passivity, which can make peer interaction feel unnatural or uncomfortable. While the current study acknowledges these cultural constraints, its findings reveal a more nuanced picture. Far from rejecting peer interaction, Libyan students at Sabratha University appear eager to embrace it as an alternative to traditional teacher-centered instruction. This eagerness does not mean that cultural barriers have disappeared; rather, it suggests that students are actively seeking pedagogical spaces where they can escape the rigid hierarchies that have historically dominated their educational experience. In this sense, the current study both supports and complicates Al-Nasser's argument. It supports the observation that cultural context shapes peer interaction, but it complicates the assumption that Arab students are uniformly resistant to collaborative learning. On the contrary, the data suggest that these students may be among the most enthusiastic advocates for peer-based pedagogy precisely because it offers relief from the pressures of teacher authority.

The connection to Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis also deserves attention here, though in a slightly indirect manner. Long argued that negotiation of meaning during interaction drives language acquisition by making input comprehensible and salient. While Long's theory is often applied to cognitive and linguistic processes, the present findings suggest that negotiation of meaning cannot occur unless students feel psychologically prepared to engage in it. At Sabratha University, students report that peer interaction encourages them to participate more actively in classroom life. This increased participation is the behavioral manifestation of lowered anxiety. Before students can negotiate meaning, clarify misunderstandings, or modify their output, they must first feel safe enough to speak at all. The current study therefore positions psychological comfort as a prerequisite for the very processes that Long describes. In this way, the findings do not contradict Long's hypothesis; rather, they illuminate the emotional conditions that must be in place for the hypothesis to operate effectively in real classrooms.

Furthermore, the study engages with Swain's (2000) Output Hypothesis, which stresses the importance of language production for deeper linguistic processing. Swain contended that producing language pushes learners to notice gaps in their knowledge and to experiment with new forms. However, production requires willingness a willingness that is often extinguished by fear. The present findings suggest that peer interaction cultivates this willingness by transforming the classroom into a community of practice rather than an arena of assessment. When students feel that their peers are collaborators rather than competitors, they become more inclined to produce language, however imperfect. This inclination is not captured by measuring output alone; it is an attitudinal shift that precedes and enables output. Thus, the current study adds an affective layer to Swain's framework, showing that the benefits of output are contingent upon the social and emotional context in which that output occurs.

The qualitative insights from the open-ended responses add depth to these theoretical connections. Students described peer interaction as a space where they could practice English without the haunting fear of formal evaluation. They spoke of respect and cooperation not as abstract ideals, but as lived experiences that determined whether they would speak up or remain silent. Some acknowledged that shyness still affected them, but they noted that the presence of supportive peers made this shyness manageable rather than paralyzing. These narratives reveal that peer interaction functions as what might be called an affective bridge a pathway that carries students from the safety of passive reception to the uncertainty of active production. Without this bridge, many students would likely remain on the side of silence, waiting for the perfect moment or the perfect sentence that never comes.

In synthesizing these findings with the existing literature, several important contributions emerge. First, the study confirms that the psychological benefits of peer interaction observed in other Arab and international contexts are also present in the specific setting of Sabratha University. This strengthens the generalizability of earlier findings while adding a distinctly Libyan voice to the conversation. Second, the study moves beyond simply noting that peer interaction reduces anxiety; it identifies the mechanisms through which this reduction occurs namely, the establishment of mutual respect, the sharing of vulnerability, and the replacement of hierarchical evaluation with lateral support. Third, the study challenges any simplistic assumption that students in teacher-centered educational systems will naturally resist peer collaboration. The data suggest that when given the opportunity, these students not only

accept peer interaction but actively prefer it as a means of emotional and linguistic empowerment.

In conclusion, the discussion of the first research question establishes that peer interaction is seen by Libyan EFL students as far more than a methodological tool. It is experienced as a psychological refuge a space where the fear of failure is softened by the presence of equals and where the foreign language becomes a medium of genuine human connection rather than a subject of academic scrutiny. These attitudes are firmly grounded in sociocultural theory, supported by regional studies from Libya and neighboring countries and consistent with international research on affect and anxiety in language learning. The current study contributes to this body of knowledge by demonstrating that in the Libyan university context, the emotional architecture of peer interaction is the foundation upon which all subsequent linguistic development is built. Before students can improve their English, they must first feel safe enough to use it. At Sabratha University, peer interaction appears to provide precisely that safety.

5.1.2 EFL Students' Attitudes Toward Peer Interaction: Skill-Specific Impact and Associated Classroom Challenges

In analyzing the impact of peer interaction on distinct language skills, a fascinating dichotomy emerges from the data, highlighting a clear divide between oral communication and text-based literacy skills.

As for the Dominance of Oral Communication (Speaking and Listening), the quantitative data exhibited a highly positive trend regarding the enhancement of speaking fluency and listening comprehension. Students overwhelmingly agreed that peer interaction serves as a primary engine for developing their communicative abilities. This statistical positivity is deeply mirrored in the qualitative responses, where speaking and listening were the most frequently reported areas of improvement. The students open-ended answers revealed that they view collaborative tasks as a practical training ground to convert passive vocabulary into active, spontaneous speech.

This overwhelming emphasis on oral proficiency strongly supported the findings of Abu Rass (2018), who noted that cooperative learning significantly enhances speaking performance

and reduces communication anxiety in Arab EFL contexts. Furthermore, these integrated results robustly corroborated Swain's (2000) Output Hypothesis. By engaging in peer-to-peer dialogues, students are forced to produce language actively, which, as Swain theorized, pushes them to process linguistic structures more deeply than they would through passive listening alone.

Regarding the Neutrality of Text-Based Skills (Reading and Writing), conversely, the impact of peer interaction on reading and writing skills presents a starkly different picture. The quantitative responses regarding literacy skills were highly scattered, trending heavily towards neutrality. This statistical ambiguity is entirely validated by the qualitative data, wherein reading and writing were almost completely absent from the students' narratives about the benefits of peer activities. From an analytical perspective, this suggests that students at Sabratha University view peer interaction strictly as a conversational tool rather than an academic or structural one. They utilize group work to chat, exchange ideas and break the silence, but when confronted with formal reading or writing tasks, they tend to revert to solitary, independent learning modes.

Consequently, while peer feedback was somewhat acknowledged, the overall findings of the present study do not fully substantiate the conclusions reached by Storch (2013), who emphasized the high effectiveness of collaborative writing tasks. While Storch found peer interaction highly beneficial for writing accuracy, the learners in this specific context clearly separate social verbal interaction from formal literacy tasks, indicating that text-based peer activities may lack the necessary structure or appeal in this educational setting.

5.1.3 Investigating Peer Interaction in English Language Learning: Perceptions, Skill Development, and Affective Barriers

The third research question examined the practical difficulties students encounter during peer interaction and the findings reveal a consistent gap between enthusiasm and execution. While students value collaborative learning, they also report obstacles that prevent it from reaching its full potential. These difficulties cluster around three areas: emotional discomfort, language limitations and classroom organization.

Students frequently describe feeling uncomfortable when speaking English with peers, not because the activity itself is unpleasant, but because the fear of making mistakes remains

deeply ingrained. In Libyan classrooms, as in many Arab educational contexts, learners have traditionally been socialized to view errors as embarrassing rather than natural. Al-Nasser (2019) observed a similar pattern in Saudi Arabia, noting that students hesitate to take linguistic risks because they dread social judgment. The present study confirms that this anxiety does not disappear when the teacher steps aside; it simply shifts toward peers. Shy students, in particular, find themselves retreating into silence while more confident classmates dominate the conversation. Dörnyei (2001) argued that such anxiety can override motivation, and the current data support this view. When students worry about being laughed at, the affective filter rises and participation drops.

Language barriers compound these emotional struggles. Students report that uneven proficiency levels often disturb group dynamics. When one member speaks noticeably better English, the interaction tilts: the stronger student leads, and the weaker one follows. Storch (2013) warned that wide proficiency gaps tend to undermine true collaboration, and this pattern is clearly visible at Sabratha University. Additionally, students admit to relying heavily on Arabic when English words fail them. While this keeps the conversation moving, it also removes the very pressure to negotiate meaning that Long (1996) identified as essential for acquisition. Benyounes (2019) noted that Libyan learners have limited English exposure outside the classroom, which explains why their linguistic reservoir runs dry during demanding tasks. Switching to Arabic becomes a practical escape, but it is also a lost opportunity for practice.

Organizational issues add another layer of difficulty. Students indicate that peer activities are often poorly structured and squeezed into insufficient time. When tasks lack clear instructions or are rushed, learners cannot engage in the slow, exploratory talk that genuine language development requires. Instead, they hurry to finish, and the activity becomes superficial. This time pressure also pushes them toward Arabic, since searching for English words feels like a luxury they cannot afford.

These three challenges do not operate independently. A shy student with weak English skills, given a rushed and unclear task, will almost certainly withdraw or revert to the mother tongue. Breaking this cycle requires more than simply asking students to work in groups. Teachers must attend to emotional safety, group composition and task design together. The present study contributes to the literature by showing how these barriers manifest specifically

in the Libyan context, where teacher-centered traditions and limited extracurricular English exposure create a unique set of conditions. Students want peer interaction to succeed, but they need the right support to make it work.

5.2 Conclusion of the Study

In conclusion, this study has provided a comprehensive understanding of the attitudes of fourth-year EFL students at Sabratha University towards peer interaction in their classrooms. The findings clearly showed that students generally hold a positive view of working together, especially when it comes to improving their speaking and listening skills. However, the results also revealed that this positive attitude does not apply equally to all areas; for instance, the impact on reading and writing skills was seen as more neutral. This suggests that while students enjoy the social and communicative aspects of peer interaction, more structured efforts are needed to make collaborative learning effective for academic literacy.

The research has also highlighted the significant challenges that can hinder successful peer interaction. Beyond the physical layout of classrooms, psychological factors such as the fear of making mistakes and a lack of confidence play a major role in how students engage with one another. Furthermore, the traditional reliance on the teacher as the primary source of knowledge remains a barrier to developing true learner autonomy. These insights are valuable because they show that successful collaboration requires more than just group work; it requires a supportive environment where students feel safe to practice and learn from their peers.

Ultimately, this study contributes to the field of English language teaching in the Libyan context by offering a foundation for future pedagogical improvements. The findings suggest that for peer interaction to reach its full potential, educators and curriculum designers must integrate collaborative training into the syllabus. Teaching students “how” to work together and provide constructive feedback is just as important as the academic content itself.

While this research was limited to a specific group at Sabratha University, it opens the door for broader studies across other Libyan institutions. Future research could benefit from using direct classroom observations to compare what students say in surveys with their actual behavior during group tasks. By continuing to explore these dynamics, we can work towards a

more interactive and student-centered educational system that better prepares Libyan students for the challenges of global communication.

5.3 Recommendations of the Study

Based on the synthesized findings and the overarching conclusions of this study, the following practical recommendations are proposed to optimize the implementation of peer interaction in EFL classrooms at Sabratha University and similar educational contexts:

1. **Cultivate a Non-Judgmental Environment:** Since the fear of making mistakes and peer judgment were identified as primary barriers, teachers must actively foster a classroom culture rooted in mutual respect. Establishing strict ground rules against mockery and providing continuous emotional supported are essential steps to lower the affective filter.
2. **Implement Interactive Task Designs:** Reflecting the students' qualitative preferences, educators should transition away from entirely teacher-centered models by integrating dynamic activities such as role-plays, structured group discussions, and pair-work. These activities must be carefully timed and monitored by the teacher to prevent students from reverting to their native language (Arabic).
3. **Shift to a Facilitator Role:** Teachers should embrace the role of a facilitator who orchestrates interactions and intervenes primarily to keep discussions focused and productive, thereby encouraging genuine learner autonomy.
4. **Structure Literacy-Based Peer Tasks:** Given the neutral impact of peer interaction on reading and writing skills, curriculum developers must design highly structured collaborative tasks specifically targeting literacy. Syllabus materials should include guided peer-review rubrics and joint problem-solving reading exercises, ensuring that text-based interaction becomes as engaging and effective as oral communication.
5. **Integrate Collaborative Training:** Curricula should include explicit training that teaches students how to collaborate effectively, providing them with the necessary language tools for offering constructive feedback and negotiating meaning appropriately.

6. **Adopt Observational Methodologies:** To overcome the limitations of self-reported data, future research should incorporate direct classroom observations and in-depth qualitative interviews. This approach will allow researchers to objectively measure the actual linguistic output, the quality of peer-to-peer corrections and the real-time dynamics of collaborative groups.
7. **Expand the Contextual Scope:** Future studies should investigate larger, more diverse sample sizes, including students from different academic years and various Libyan universities. This expansion will enhance the generalizability of the findings and help explore potential regional or institutional differences in how peer interaction is attitudes and utilized.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

While the present study provides profound and valuable insights into the attitudes of EFL students toward peer interaction, it is essential to acknowledge certain methodological and contextual limitations that frame the interpretation of these findings.

1- The research design relied exclusively on a self-administered questionnaire to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. Consequently, the findings predominantly reflect the students self-reported perceptions, beliefs and attitudes rather than objectively measured linguistic progress. The absence of direct classroom observations or follow-up qualitative interviews means that while the study successfully captures how students feel about peer interaction, it cannot independently verify the actual quality of the interactions or the tangible linguistic output produced during these collaborative tasks. Thus, the study measures attitudes improvement rather than practically tested language acquisition.

2- The study is geographically and contextually bound to a single institution, the University of Sabratha, involving a specific, purposive cohort of fourth-year undergraduate students. Because the sample size was limited to this specific group, the generalizability of the findings is inherently restricted. The unique educational dynamics, cultural nuances and logistical constraints of this particular setting may not fully represent the experiences of EFL learners in other Libyan universities or different regional contexts.

However, these limitations do not diminish the value of the research; rather, they provide a realistic framework for understanding the results and highlight critical areas that future empirical research should address to build a more comprehensive understanding of collaborative learning in the region.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, several recommendations are suggested for future research on peer interaction in EFL classrooms. First, future studies could adopt a longitudinal design to observe how students' attitudes and language skills develop over an extended period, rather than relying on data collected at a single point in time. Additionally, expanding the study to include larger sample sizes from multiple universities would help make the findings more generalizable to a broader range of EFL contexts. Methodologically, future research should consider combining self-reported surveys with direct assessment tools, such as speaking pre- and post-tests and classroom observations, to provide a more comprehensive measure of student progress. Finally, further investigation is needed to explore how different grouping strategies, such as pairing students of different proficiency levels, influence learner confidence and reduce anxiety during interactive classroom activities.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Questionnaire

Questionnaire: Investigating Students Attitudes toward the Impact of Peer Interaction on Language Development

Dear Students,

You are kindly invited to participate in this academic study, which aims to investigate students' attitudes toward the impact of peer interaction on language development. Participation in this questionnaire is entirely voluntary, all responses will be treated with strict confidentiality and will be used for academic research purposes only, you are not required to write your name and you have the right to withdraw at any time without any consequences.

Response Scale

Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement using the following scale:

(**1**=Strongly Agree), (**2**=Agree), (**3**=Neutral), (**4**=Disagree), (**5**=Strongly Disagree)

Section One: General Attitudes toward Peer Interaction

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	Peer interaction played an important role in my English language learning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	I felt more comfortable using English when interacting with my classmates.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	Peer interaction encouraged me to participate actively in classroom activities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	Working with classmates helped me feel more confident when using English.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	Peer interaction made English classes more engaging and interesting.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6	I preferred learning English through interaction with peers rather than working alone.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	Peer interaction helped create a positive learning environment in the classroom.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8	I believed that peer interaction supported my overall language development.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section Two: The Impact of Peer Interaction on Language Skills

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
9	Peer interaction helped improve my speaking fluency in English.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	Discussing topics with classmates improved my ability to express ideas orally.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11	Listening to my classmates helped improve my listening comprehension.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12	Peer discussions helped me understand spoken English more clearly.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13	Working with peers helped improve my understanding of reading texts.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14	Discussing reading materials with classmates enhanced my reading comprehension.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15	Peer interaction helped me improve my writing skills.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16	Receiving feedback from classmates improved the quality of my written work.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17	Peer interaction helped me use English more effectively in different situations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18	Peer activities supported the integration of different language skills.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section Three: Challenges of Peer Interaction

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
19	I sometimes felt uncomfortable using English during peer interaction.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20	Differences in language proficiency affected the effectiveness of peer interaction.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21	Some classmates relied too much on Arabic during peer activities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22	Peer interaction was not always well organized during class.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23	Limited time reduced the effectiveness of peer interaction activities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24	I faced difficulties expressing my ideas clearly during peer interaction.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Open-ended Questions

1. **What specific skills do you think peer interaction has helped you improve the most in learning English?**

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2. **Where do you find peer interaction most beneficial in your English language learning process, during speaking, listening, reading or writing tasks?**

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3. **When engaging in peer interaction, what factors do you believe contribute the most to a successful and effective learning experience?**

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4. **Why do you think some students feel hesitant or uncomfortable participating in peer interaction, and how can these feelings be addressed?**

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5. **How can peer interaction be incorporated into your future English lessons to further enhance your language development and confidence?**

