

AN INVESTIGATION INTO CLASSROOM INTERACTION IN ENGLISH SPEAKING CLASSES AT A HIGH SCHOOL

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ARTICLE INFO		ABSTRACT
Received:	13/02/2025	This study examines classroom interaction in English-speaking lessons at a high school, with primary objectives of (i) identifying the predominant interaction patterns and (ii) analyzing how these interactions occur in relation to teacher talk and student spoken output. The study involved four English teachers and 150 students across multiple classes. Observations and audio recordings were used to collect data for the present study. Data analysis, conducted using the Flanders' interaction analysis categories system, identified five predominant types of classroom interaction: teacher-whole class, teacher-student, student-teacher, student-student, and student-group. The findings indicate that teacher talk dominated classroom discourse, with teachers primarily engaged in lecturing, questioning, providing directions, and offering criticisms or justifications of authority. The results suggest that to mitigate teacher-centered instruction, English teachers should increase the use of indirect teaching strategies to foster a more balanced interaction dynamic. Additionally, enhancing student autonomy and providing more frequent praise and encouragement can further facilitate learner participation and engagement. These insights underscore the need for pedagogical adjustments that prioritize communicative competence and active student involvement in English language learning.
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KEYWORDS

Classroom interaction
Flanders' interaction analysis categories system
High school
Student talk
Teacher talk

NGHIÊN CỨU VỀ TƯƠNG TÁC TRÊN LỚP TRONG GIỜ HỌC NÓI TIẾNG ANH TẠI MỘT TRƯỜNG TRUNG HỌC PHỔ THÔNG

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THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO		TÓM TẮT
Ngày nhận bài:	13/02/2025	Nghiên cứu này tìm hiểu các loại hình tương tác trong lớp học trong giờ học nói tiếng Anh tại một trường trung học phổ thông, với hai mục tiêu chính: (i) xác định các loại hình tương tác phổ biến nhất và (ii) phân tích cách thức các tương tác này diễn ra trong mối quan hệ giữa lời nói của giáo viên và khả năng nói của học sinh. Nghiên cứu được thực hiện với sự tham gia của bốn giáo viên tiếng Anh và 150 học sinh. Dữ liệu thu được thông qua quan sát lớp học và băng ghi âm sau đó được phân tích theo Hệ thống phân tích tương tác của Flanders, qua đó xác định được năm loại hình tương tác chính. Kết quả nghiên cứu cũng cho thấy giáo viên chiếm ưu thế trong quá trình tương tác, chủ yếu tập trung vào giảng bài, đặt câu hỏi, đưa ra hướng dẫn, và phê bình. Từ những kết quả trên, có thể suy ra rằng giáo viên tiếng Anh cần tăng cường phương pháp giảng dạy gián tiếp, bên cạnh đó, việc gia tăng lời khen ngợi và động viên học sinh có thể thúc đẩy sự tham gia tích cực hơn trong quá trình học tiếng Anh.
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TỪ KHÓA

Tương tác trong lớp
Hệ thống phân tích tương tác của Flanders
Trường trung học phổ thông
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1. Introduction

Classroom interaction (CI) is a critical component for developing spoken language skills, particularly in English. It plays a multifaceted role in language classrooms by increasing students' linguistic resources [1], strengthening social relationships [2], enhancing communication skills, and building confidence [2], [3]. Given the significant benefits CI brings to students' English-speaking performance, it has become a focal point for researchers, educators, and linguists in understanding its impact on language acquisition.

CI is not only vital but also a challenging element in improving English language skills, particularly speaking, which Khadidja [4] describes as a complex skill requiring consistent effort over time. Effective speaking development necessitates frequent practice and exposure, especially in language classrooms where real-life communicative situations can be simulated. Brown [5] underscores that interaction is the essence of communication. However, several barriers - such as self-consciousness, shyness, and a lack of ideas - often hinder students' participation, leading to poor oral performance. For learners in non-English-speaking settings, experiencing authentic communicative interactions is essential for developing fluency, accuracy, and confidence in English communication. In this context, CI becomes an indispensable strategy for teaching and learning. CI manifests in various forms, supporting diverse teaching and learning dynamics. Thomas [6], as cited in [7], identifies eight types of CI in language classrooms. For this study, six primary types of interaction are emphasized: (1) Teacher speaking to the whole class; (2) Teacher speaking to an individual student with the rest of the class as hearers; (3) Student speaking to teacher; (4) Student speaking to student; (5) Student speaking to group members; and (6) Student speaking to the whole class.

CI is an essential factor in producing comprehensible output and facilitating language practice for students. According to [8], speaking activities in classrooms help learners manage their linguistic limitations through negotiation of meaning, such as slowing speech, clarifying ideas, or seeking agreement. This process enhances students' ability to produce comprehensible output and fosters their language development.

Besides, Allwright and Bailey [9] stated that through CI, the plan produces outcomes (input, practice opportunities, and receptivity). The teacher must plan what he intends to teach (syllabus, method, and atmosphere). Therefore, CI plays a vital part in teaching learning process. It can be seen from Figure 1.

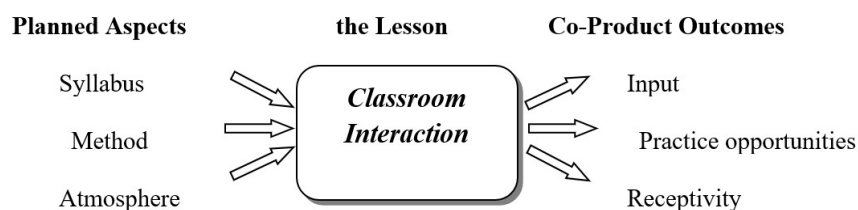


Figure 1. *The relation between plans and outcomes*

CI also enables students to practice language skills in simulated real-life situations. Rivers [1] (as cited in [5]) highlights that CI allows students to use language meaningfully and take risks in producing the target language. Through interaction, teachers provide feedback and praise, which motivate students and reinforce their learning [5]. Furthermore, Nurmasitah [10] notes that interaction exposes learners to language input beyond their current competence, enabling meaningful communication. In this study, CI is a critical measure of success in English-speaking classes. Observing CI provides insights into how opportunities for student spoken output and teacher feedback influence the development of speaking skills.

Communication, as defined by [11], is the exchange of ideas, feelings, or information. Effective communication involves ensuring that the intended message is understood. Lynch [12] notes that communication encompasses not only factual information but also opinions and emotions. In speaking classes, CI occurs as students and teachers interact to share information, clarify misunderstandings, and discuss problems. EFL/ESL classrooms often vary in their interaction styles. While some are teacher-centered, focusing on lectures and drills [13], others emphasize student involvement through active participation in discussions and activities. Lynch [12] highlights that while listening and reading provide valuable experience, active speaking practice with feedback is essential for faster progress. Speaking activities may include conversations, repetition drills, or role-playing. In this research, CI is observed throughout English-speaking classes, including teacher-student and student-student interactions. Teachers act as facilitators, delivering information and guiding discussions, while students participate by asking questions, responding, and collaborating with peers. This dynamic interaction is crucial for enhancing students' oral performance.

Verbal interaction between teachers and students is a cornerstone of effective learning. Teacher talk (TT) serves as a primary tool for instruction, providing input, directions, and feedback essential for student learning [14]. TT involves activities such as giving explanations, asking questions, and managing classroom behavior ([15], as cited in [16]). Interactive strategies like repetition, prompting, and prodding foster a collaborative learning environment.

Student talk (STT), on the other hand, involves students' responses to TT or their independent contributions. STT allows students to express ideas, initiate topics, and share opinions, promoting active engagement and knowledge co-construction ([17], as cited in [18]). Through both TT and STT, students develop linguistic and communicative competence.

Teachers play a variety of roles in EFL classrooms, including controller, assessor, prompter, and resource. Harmer [19] outlines these roles, emphasizing their importance in fostering CI and enhancing student performance. Teachers' ability to balance these roles is crucial for maximizing CI and encouraging student participation. This study investigates how teachers' roles influence interaction patterns and student engagement.

Despite its recognized significance, the identification of primary types of classroom interaction in speaking classes, as well as the examination of the relationship between teacher talk, student talk, and their respective characteristics, remains a considerable challenge for educators. Several studies have explored classroom interaction using Flanders' interaction analysis categories system (FIACS). For instance, Inamullah [20] observed differences in interaction patterns across secondary and tertiary levels, while Nugroho [21] analyzed teacher and student talk time in senior high school EFL classes. These studies highlight the importance of CI in fostering student engagement and improving learning outcomes.

In this study, FIACS is applied to analyze interaction in high school English-speaking classes. The findings contribute to understanding the correlation between teacher and student interaction and their impact on language learning outcomes.

2. Methodology

This research seeks to apply the FIACS technique to examine the CI in English speaking classes. The objectives are to identify the predominant types of CI occurring during these lessons and to analyze the interrelationship between teacher talk, student talk, and their respective characteristics. Specifically, the study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. *What are the predominant types of classroom interaction between teachers and students in English-speaking classes?*
2. *What are the characteristics of classroom interaction in those English-speaking classes?*

This study adopts a descriptive research design aimed at describing classroom interaction phenomena and their characteristics. The focus is on understanding what classroom interaction

entails, rather than investigating how or why it occurs. Data collection was primarily qualitative, relying on observation tally sheets and audio recordings. Quantitative analysis methods, such as calculating frequencies, percentages, and averages, were applied to analyze relationships among types of classroom interaction.

The primary data collection tool was an observation tally sheet, designed to record verbal interactions between teachers and students during lessons. Both the researcher and an assistant used this tool simultaneously to ensure data reliability. Before using the tally sheets, both observers were trained on the study of [20] whose interaction analysis guidelines to master the coding system. Pearson product moment correlation was over 0.99, indicating very strong reliability between the two observers' findings. Flanders interaction analysis was used to code and analyze verbal interactions systematically. Additionally, audio recordings of the lessons were used to complement observations. These recordings provided a detailed record of verbal interactions, enabling more accurate coding of teacher talk and student talk.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Types of classroom interaction

The observations revealed six main types of classroom interaction in English-speaking lessons including, teacher-whole class ($T \leftrightarrow WH$), teacher-student ($T \leftrightarrow ST$), student-teacher ($ST \rightarrow T$), student-student ($ST \leftrightarrow ST$), student-group ($ST \leftrightarrow STs$), and student-whole class ($ST \leftrightarrow WH$). Across eight lessons, the most common types of CI were teacher speaking to the whole class ($T \leftrightarrow WH$) and teacher speaking to an individual student ($T \leftrightarrow ST$).

a. Summary of classroom interaction by Teacher A

The results from Teacher A's classes are summarized in Figure 2.

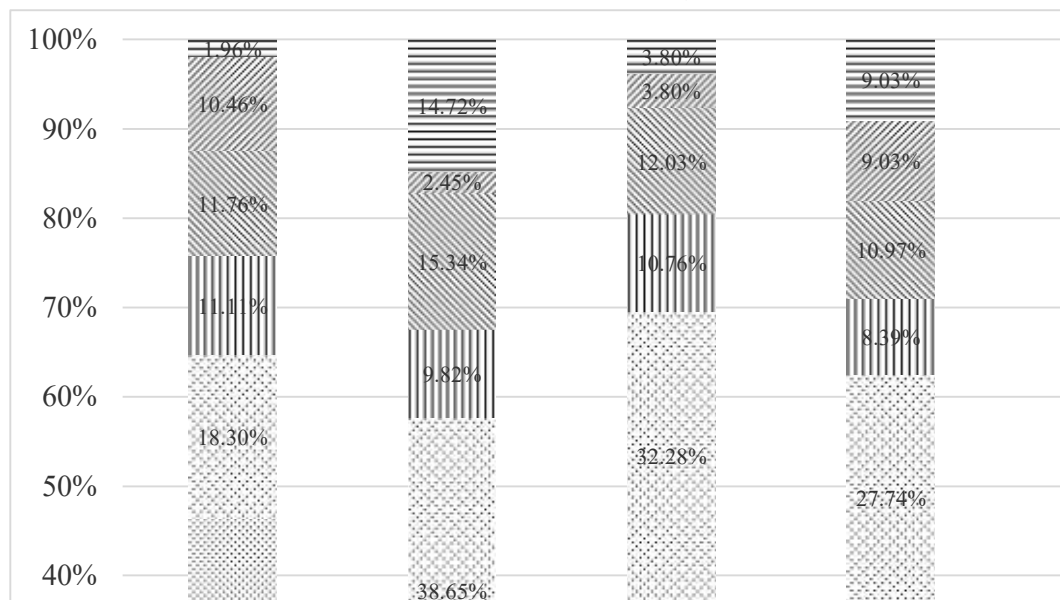


Figure 2. Summary of classroom interactions in each lesson by teacher A

The bar chart in Figure 2 summarizes classroom interactions in each lesson by Teacher A, highlighting a predominantly teacher-centered approach. Teacher speaking to the whole class ($T \leftrightarrow WH$) was the most frequent interaction, peaking at 46.41% in Lesson 1 and remaining dominant across all lessons. Teacher speaking to an individual student ($T \leftrightarrow ST$) was the second most common, reaching 40.76% in Lesson 7, indicating a strong reliance on teacher-directed questioning. Student participation ($ST \leftrightarrow T$, $ST \leftrightarrow ST$, $ST \leftrightarrow STs$, $ST \leftrightarrow WH$) was relatively

low, with student-student interactions (ST ↔ ST) peaking at only 10.97% in Lesson 4. Student speaking to the whole class (ST ↔ WH) was the least frequent, never exceeding 4.69%. These findings suggest that Teacher A’s lessons were heavily teacher-led, with limited opportunities for student-initiated discussions and peer interactions. Table 1 shows the summary of classroom interaction by teacher A.

Table 1. Summary of classroom interaction by teacher A

Coded CI	Total Quantity	Percentage (%)
T ↔ WH	54	34.92%
T ↔ ST	46.5	29.17%
ST ↔ T	17.625	11.12%
ST ↔ ST	14.625	9.48%
ST ↔ STs	13.875	9.42%
ST ↔ WH	9.125	5.89%

b. Summary of classroom interaction by Teacher B

The results from Teacher B’s classes are summarized below:

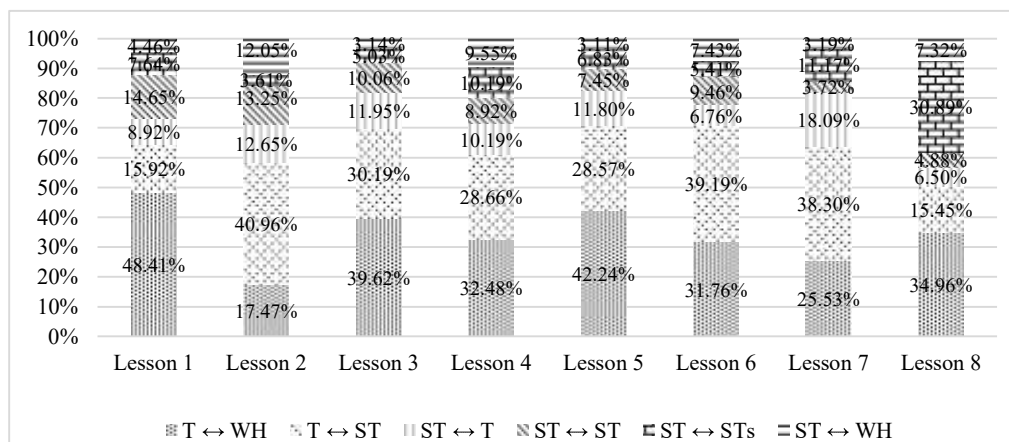


Figure 3. Summary of Classroom Interactions in each lesson by teacher B

The bar chart in Figure 3 illustrates classroom interactions in each lesson by Teacher B, showing a teacher-centered approach with teacher speaking to the whole class (T ↔ WH) as the most dominant interaction, ranging from 17.47% in Lesson 2 to 48.41% in Lesson 1. Teacher speaking to an individual student (T ↔ ST) was the second most common interaction, reaching 40.96% in Lesson 2 and remaining consistently high. Student participation (ST ↔ T, ST ↔ ST, ST ↔ STs, ST ↔ WH) was relatively low, with student-student interaction (ST ↔ ST) peaking at 14.65% in Lesson 1. Student speaking to the whole class (ST ↔ WH) was the least frequent, not exceeding 7.32%. These findings indicate that Teacher B’s lessons were largely teacher-led, with limited opportunities for independent student engagement and peer interaction. Summary of classroom interaction by teacher B is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of classroom interaction by teacher B

Coded CI	Total Quantity	Percentage (%)
T ↔ WH	53.125	34.06%
T ↔ ST	47.625	29.66%
ST ↔ T	17.625	10.86%
ST ↔ ST	14.25	9.05%
ST ↔ STs	15	10.10%
ST ↔ WH	9.75	6.28%

In sum, teacher speaking to the whole class was the most dominant type of classroom interaction, accounting for approximately 35% of interactions, reflecting a teacher-centered approach common in

EFL classrooms. Teacher speaking to an individual student was the second most frequent interaction, averaging 29%, primarily used to elicit individual responses or clarify lesson points. Meanwhile, student interactions, including speaking to the teacher, peers, or group members, made up roughly 30% of the total interactions, but student speaking to the whole class remained the least frequent, occurring only 6% of the time, suggesting limited student-led discussions or presentations.

3.2. Classroom interaction characteristics in English-speaking classes

3.2.1. Teacher talk and student talk

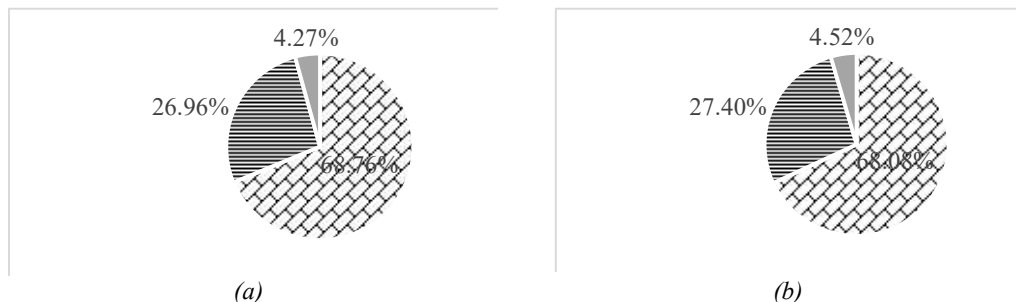


Figure 4. The results of teacher talk and student talk in total lessons by Teacher A (a) and Teacher B (b)

Figure 4 shows the teacher talk dominated the lessons, averaging 68.76% (Teacher A) and 68.08% (Teacher B), while student talk accounted for 26.96% and 27.40%, respectively. Silence or confusion made up the remaining 4%. The high percentage of teacher talk indicates a teacher-centered approach, with significant time spent on lecturing, questioning, and giving directions.

3.2.2. Classroom interaction patterns

a. Content cross

The content cross was the most dominant interaction characteristic, accounting for over 72% of all interactions. This highlights the reliance on teacher-directed activities, such as lecturing and questioning, to facilitate learning.

b. Teacher control and support

- Teacher control (commands and directions) accounted for approximately 6% of class time. Teachers were observed giving instructions frequently but rarely reprimanding students.

- Teacher support (praise and encouragement) made up around 7.7% of interactions. Teachers primarily accepted or built on students' ideas but offered limited emotional reinforcement or encouragement.

c. Student participation

Student participation, comprising both talk response and talk initiation, accounted for 27% of all interactions. Most participation occurred through responses to teacher questions, while independent contributions were limited to around 10%. Table 3 below presents a comparative breakdown of student participation types for Teacher A and Teacher B

Table 3. Participation type of Teacher A and Teacher B

Participation Type	Teacher A (%)	Teacher B (%)
Talk Response	16.64	16.07
Talk Initiation	10.67	11.84

In sum, the results indicate a teacher-centered classroom with limited student-initiated interaction. While teachers dominated classroom talk, students primarily participated through responding to questions. These findings align with previous studies ([14], [16], [20] and [21]), emphasizing the need for balanced teacher-student interaction to promote active student participation and language development.

3.3. Discussion

The analysis of classroom interaction in English-speaking lessons identified six interaction types, with five being notably dominant: teacher speaking to the whole class, teacher speaking to an individual student, student speaking to teacher, student speaking to student, and student speaking to group members. Among these, *teacher speaking to the whole class* was the most prevalent, characterized by *teacher-controlled discourse* such as lecturing, questioning, and feedback, reflecting a *teacher-centered model* consistent with previous studies [21], [22]. *Teacher speaking to an individual student* was the second most frequent, primarily used to *assess comprehension* and encourage participation, though largely *teacher-initiated*, reinforcing *passive student engagement* [20], [22]. The remaining types - *student speaking to teacher*, *student speaking to student*, and *student speaking to group members* - were considerably less frequent, suggesting *limited student autonomy*, although peer interactions in this study were slightly higher than in past research [21], [22]. *Student speaking to the whole class* was the least common of interactions, contrasting with findings from [22], where *student-led speaking activities* were more prevalent due to teacher encouragement. Overall, these results confirm the dominance of *teacher-led instruction* in EFL classrooms [20], [22] with *low student-initiated participation*, indicating a *strong reliance on teacher-centered discourse* compared to studies like [22], where student engagement was more balanced. The findings underscore the need for more student-centered strategies, including increasing student-led discussions, promoting communicative activities, and providing structured speaking opportunities, to create a more interactive and autonomous learning environment.

The findings indicate that content cross was the most dominant characteristic of classroom interaction, aligning with high teacher talk time and reinforcing a teacher-centered instructional approach [20] - [22]. Teachers primarily employed direct influence strategies such as lecturing, questioning, and giving directions, limiting student engagement and interaction autonomy. Within direct strategies, asking questions and giving instructions were the most frequent, mainly used for eliciting responses rather than encouraging independent exploration [21]. Student participation, though slightly higher than in previous studies, remained largely reactive, with student responses exceeding student-initiated talk [20], [21]. Many students hesitated to express ideas during pair or group activities, likely due to lack of confidence or experience [22]. Teacher support accounted for only 8% of total interaction, including accepting student ideas, providing praise, and encouraging participation; its low proportion may have contributed to students' reluctance to engage actively [22]. Overall, teacher-centered interaction continued to dominate, with limited opportunities for student-initiated discourse and insufficient teacher support to foster autonomy. Increased student-centered strategies, such as open discussions, collaborative learning, and greater teacher encouragement, would enhance students' communicative competence and active participation.

4. Conclusion

The primary objective of this study was to examine the types and characteristics of classroom interaction in English-speaking lessons at a high school in Thai Nguyen province. Using the Flanders interaction analysis categories system (FIACS), the study identified six main types of classroom interaction, with five emerging as significantly dominant: teacher speaking to the whole class, teacher speaking to an individual student, student speaking to teacher, student speaking to student, and student speaking to group members. The findings revealed a teacher-centered instructional model, with teacher-led whole-class discourse being the most frequent interaction type. Additionally, interactions between teachers and students predominantly relied on direct influence, including lecturing, questioning, and giving directions, whereas indirect influence, such as encouraging student participation, was observed far less frequently.

Moreover, the study found that content cross was the most prominent interaction characteristic, accounting for nearly three-quarters of total interaction time. The proportion of teacher talk was more than twice that of student talk, confirming that the classroom environment was primarily teacher-driven. Notably, student participation was largely reactive, with student responses making up over one-sixth of interaction time, while student-initiated talk accounted for only one-tenth. These findings address the research questions by providing clear insights into the dominant interaction types and characteristics in the observed English-speaking lessons.

From a practical perspective, these findings offer valuable implications for improving classroom interaction in English as a foreign language setting. Teachers should prioritize student-centered interactions, such as peer discussions, group activities, and student-led presentations, to foster active engagement. Additionally, integrating communicative language teaching and task-based learning strategies can help establish a more balanced classroom dynamic, promoting student confidence and communicative competence.

Future research should explore classroom interaction across diverse settings and assess teaching interventions like teacher training or interactive tools. Additionally, qualitative studies on teacher and student perspectives could uncover challenges and opportunities in EFL classrooms. Enhancing these aspects would foster more inclusive, communicative lessons, empowering students to engage actively and improve language proficiency.

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