

# **AN INVESTIGATION OF TEACHER-STUDENT VERBAL INTERACTION IN AN INDONESIAN EFL CLASSROOM: A FLANDERS INTERACTION ANALYSIS CATEGORY (FIAC) SYSTEM**

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## **Abstract**

This study aims to investigate the nature and extent of classroom interactions using the Flanders Interaction Analysis Category System (FIACS), a valuable tool for identifying, classifying, and monitoring verbal interaction in educational contexts. Specifically, the study seeks to analyze the interaction patterns between teachers and students, as well as the role of teachers in a public senior high school located in Medan, Indonesia. Participants in this qualitative inquiry included 36 eleventh-grade students and an English teacher. Utilizing an observation tally sheet, video recording, and interviews with the teacher and some students, the data were collected on the conversation between teacher and students during two 60-minute class meetings. The results reveal that the interactions that occur in the EFL class comprise a sum of 10 FIAC components. The pattern of interactions between teacher and students in the classroom is characterized by two-way communication. During classroom interaction, the role of the teacher encompasses that of a motivator, organizer, and prompter.

**Keywords:** *classroom interaction; Flanders category; student talk; teacher talk*

## **1. Introduction**

Classrooms are commonly identified as social settings where regular interpersonal exchanges occur. Throughout the educational process, there exists a continual exchange of ideas and communication between learners and their teachers or peers. This exchange of communication and engagement that occurs within a classroom setting is known as "classroom interaction." Classroom interaction has impacts on students' learning experience, learning process, and. Moreover, the interaction that takes place within the classroom setting has the potential to cultivate critical thinking skills and promote higher-order learning among students, ultimately contributing to their academic achievement and intellectual growth. Dagarin (2004) characterizes classroom interaction as a two-way process in which the teacher influences the students and vice versa.

Within the confines of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educational setting, there will be ongoing communication between teachers and students as they actively

engage in the study of a foreign language. The significance of interaction within an EFL classroom setting lies in its capacity to establish a connection between the teacher, who serves as the purveyor of knowledge, and the student, who serves as the recipient of knowledge. Effective interaction and communication during classroom sessions have been found to facilitate the process of knowledge transfer (Fithriani, 2021) and strengthen the relationship between teachers and students. The capacity of a teacher to communicate proficiently with their students has a direct influence on the academic performance of the students. The level of interest exhibited by students towards acquiring a foreign language is contingent upon the nature of their interaction with the teachers. EFL students are expected to attain language proficiency through self-directed and self-sufficient practice. To discern interaction patterns within classroom environments during the educational process, it is crucial to examine the verbal exchanges that occur between teachers and students in EFL classes.

The significance of interactions in the EFL classroom has prompted several researchers, including Lucha and Berhanu (2015), Sejtanic & Ilic (2016), Sharma and Tiwari (2021), and Ayunda, et al. (2021), to investigate this area of interest. These scholars have employed Flander's (1970) Flanders Interaction Analysis Category (FIAC) to scrutinize the interactions that transpire. Tichapondwa (2008) posits that the analysis of interaction activities can be conducted through the utilization of the FIAC approach. The purpose of the FIAC is to exclusively monitor oral exchanges that occur within the classroom setting.

Despite the extensive utilization of FIAC approach in prior research on EFL classroom interactions, the predominant reliance has been on data collection through observation and video recording, with a lack of supplementation through participant interviews. Alternatively, the researchers may opt to conduct unilateral interviews with either the teacher or the students, without engaging in further investigation through the interviewing of both parties. Through the utilization of in-depth interviews, researchers are able to acquire a greater amount of data that is not attainable through mere observation. The aforementioned assertion aligns with Ary et al.'s (2010) argument saying that interviews serve as a valuable means of acquiring information that may not be attainable through observations alone, and can also serve to corroborate observational data. To enhance the precision of the data, this current study integrates both observational and interview methods with teacher as well as students. Furthermore, prior studies employing Flanders theory to analyze EFL classroom interactions had rarely discussed the specific interaction patterns that transpire within EFL classrooms, as well as the respective roles of teachers within these interactions. Familiarity with interaction patterns and teacher roles during such interactions can assist teachers in gauging the academic potential of their students within the classroom setting.

Geared by the aforementioned empirical void, the present study endeavors to examine classroom interactions in an Indonesian EFL context with respect to their categories and patterns, and to scrutinize the extent to which the teacher is involved in these interactions.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Classroom Interaction**

Classroom interaction refers to the exchange of information and ideas that takes place within the confines of a classroom setting. This interaction may involve communication between teachers and students, students and their peers, or group

discussions that involve all students. It is worth noting that these interactions can be initiated by either the teacher or the students themselves (Shomoosshi, 1997). Siddig and al-Khudry (2018) posit that classroom interaction refers to the exchange of communication between teachers and students within the classroom setting, facilitating opportunities for mutual engagement. Dagarin (2004) explains that "class interaction" takes place between teachers and students during the instructional process. The term "classroom interactions" refers to all the exchanges that take place within the educational setting during the process of instruction. This interaction holds significant importance as it can impact the students' comprehension of the learning process. In addition, the interactions between teacher and students have an impact on the efficacy of the instructional process (Dahlia, 2019).

Classroom interactions can be classified into two distinct categories, namely verbal and nonverbal. Verbal communication between students and teachers is a crucial component of the teaching and learning process in the classroom. This interaction has been shown to have a positive impact on language acquisition and instruction within the classroom setting. Rustandi and Mubarak (2017) assert that interaction plays a pivotal role and confers benefits in this context, as it facilitates the enhancement of students' language proficiency through exposure to speech from other teachers or students. Furthermore, students can be motivated and encouraged to think, comprehend, and respond to the material presented by the teacher through classroom interactions, thereby creating an active and interactive classroom. Nasir et al. (2019) posit that classroom interaction can prove efficacious when a greater number of students if more students have the opportunity to cultivate their target language. For this purpose, teachers need to structure their instructional materials in a way that fosters active engagement from their students. Teachers must be able to coordinate how class discussions are conducted so that students are involved in the interaction process, as opposed to simply conveying information without involving students. (Giorgdze & Dgebuadze, 2017; Yanfen & Yuqin, 2010).

## 2.2 Flanders Interaction Analysis Category (FIAC) System

Tichapondwa (2008) asserts that the Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories System is a valuable tool for identifying, classifying, and monitoring verbal interaction in educational contexts. As per the present discourse, the utilization of interaction analysis facilitates the classification of classroom discourse into distinct categories, namely teacher talk, student discussion, and silence during the teaching and learning process. The classroom interaction patterns proposed by Flander (1970) is presented in the following tables:

Table 2.1 Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC) System

No.	Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC)
<b>Teacher Talk</b>	
A.	Indirect Talk
	1. Accepting Feelings Accepting and clarifying students' feelings in a friendly and open manner, feelings can be positive and negative.
	2. Praising or Encouragement In addition, when a student responds to a question posed by the teacher, the teacher provides positive reinforcement by using words like "good," "very good," "better," "right," "great," and "carry on."

	<p>3. Accepting or Using Ideas of Students If a student makes a recommendation, the instructor (teacher) may summarize it in his own words or manner. The instructor (teacher) may respond, "I get what you're saying." Alternately, the instructor develops, builds, or clarifies ideas or suggestions made by a pupil.</p>
	<p>4. Asking Question When a teacher poses a question based on his or her own thoughts and anticipates a student response, he or she is engaging in the practice of questioning the material or the methods.</p>
B.	Direct Talk
	<p>5. Lecturing Giving information or an opinion about the course material or method; expressing his own thoughts; providing an explanation; referring sources other than the students; or posing rhetorical questions.</p>
	<p>6. Giving Direction Students are required to follow the teacher's instructions, directives, or orders, including: A) Pick up your book; B) Get up; C) Finish the workout.</p>
	<p>7. Criticizing or Justifying Authority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This conduct is included in this category when teachers encourage their pupils not to interrupt with silly inquiries.</li> <li>• Teachers who question pupils on "what" and "why" also fall into this group.</li> <li>• Outlining the teacher's motivations for his actions</li> </ul>
<b>Student Talk</b>	
	<p>8. Student Talk Response It includes student comments in reaction to the teacher's speech. Student responds to a question posed by the teacher.</p>
	<p>9. Student Talk Initiation Students' comments in reaction to the teacher's remarks. Expressing one's own thoughts, posing a fresh question, having the flexibility to form an opinion or a line of reasoning, and moving beyond the confines of the framework.</p>
	<p>10. Silence or Pause or Confusion Pauses, brief intervals of quiet, and confusion that prevent the observer from understanding what is being said.</p>

### 2.3 Interaction Patterns

Interaction patterns are the method of work or form of directional communication carried out by the teacher with the students or the students with the teacher. Ur (1996) classified the interaction patterns into 10 sections, namely:

- a. Group Work: Students work together within a group to complete tasks, thus creating interactions that make the rest look more active.
- b. Close-end Teacher Questions (IRFs): Teachers have only one true or false answer.
- c. Individual Work: Teachers assign tasks and instruct students how to do those tasks.
- d. Choral Response: When the teacher delivers a model related to the material, it is repeated several times and responded to simultaneously by the student.

- e. Collaboration: Students work on the same tasks and help each other complete those tasks in order to achieve good results.
- f. Student initiates, teacher answers: Students think about questions to be asked, teachers answer questions. But the teacher will choose who to ask.
- g. Full Class Interaction: All students discuss and debate one topic given by the teacher; the teacher will occasionally join to stimulate student participation.
- h. Teacher Talk: The teacher explains and the students listen and note.
- i. Self-access: student-centric, where students can choose their own topics and assignments and work independently.
- j. Open-end Teacher Question: Questions that require answers with deep thought so that students think and offer according to the rules given

### **3. Research Method**

This current study utilized a qualitative methodology. McLaughlin, et al. (2012) defines qualitative research as an approach that employs methodologies intended to offer a comprehensive and contextual portrayal of educational or social phenomena. The research employed the Flanders Interaction Analysis Category (FIAC), a methodology first introduced in 1970, to examine classroom interactions.

The study involved the participation of an English teacher and 36 eleventh-grade students (23 females and 13 males) from a public senior high school located in Medan, Indonesia. This study focused on the conversations that took place between the teacher and the students over the course of two 60-minute instructional sessions. This research employs classroom observations as a means of uncovering authentic phenomena that occur within the educational setting. According to Chuntala (2019), the act of observing can be accomplished through various means such as visual, auditory, perceptual, and sensory modalities. Subsequently, in order to further investigate data that was not acquired through observations, the researchers conducted interviews with the teacher and six students. Furthermore, in the course of conducting observations and interviews, the researchers employed video and audio recording devices to capture the classroom environment with precision. As Burn (2000) asserts, video recording is a crucial method for augmenting research data, as it provides unbiased firsthand information when cross-checking information obtained from teachers during classroom observations.

Following the collection of observation data, video recordings of the observation and audio interviews were transcribed into written format. The results of the observations and video transcript were analyzed using the Flanders Interaction Analysis Category (FIAC) to designate the type of category of interactions that occurred in the classroom interaction, and then the percentages were tallied. In addition, the researchers analyzed observational data employing the theories of Ur (1996) and Harmer (2007) to determine the role of teachers in classroom interaction. Finally, the audio transcript of the interview was analyzed and coded in order to corroborate the findings obtained from the results of the observation.

### **4. Discussion**

#### **4.1 Category Classroom Interactions that Occur With Percentage Based on FIAC**

According to Flanders Interaction Analysis (1970), verbal interaction can be broadly classified into two categories, namely teacher talk, which encompasses both direct and indirect influence, and student talk. Presented herein is a tabular

representation of the distribution of speaking time between the teacher and the students in the classroom, along with its constituent elements based on FIAC framework.

Table 4.1. Classroom Interaction Percentage

Categories	Component	Percentage	Total Percentage
Teacher Talk Indirect Influence	Accepting feeling	4.03%	32,25%
	Praising or encouraging	10.48%	
	Accepting or using ideas of students	4.84%	
	Asking question	12,90%	
Teacher Talk Direct Influence	Lecturing	10.48%	23,38%
	Giving direction	11.29%	
	Criticizing or justifying authority	1.61%	
Student Talk	Student talk response	29.03%	44.36 %
	Student talk initiation	12.10%	
	Silence or confusion	3.23%	

Table 4.1 above shows the smallest percentage of classroom interaction is in the criticising or justifying authority section. Based on the results of the observation, the teacher will criticise the student directly if the behaviour of the student violates the order of learning, such as making trouble in the classroom, but the teacher will never directly blame the student for a wrong or less satisfactory outcome. In an interview with Mrs. RL, she said that "*I hardly ever criticise the outcome of the assignment or blame the student's answers directly if they are wrong, because if it is criticised, it will embarrass the student, who then becomes upset and is afraid to answer questions.*" Here is the criticism or justification of authority in the classroom interaction found in the observation:

*Teacher: Bardi, keep silent please. Jangan kamu ajak ngobrol temanmu si Fahri, biarkan dia mengerjakan tugasnya.*

The researchers also found that in the classroom, interaction was more dominated by teacher talk, where the question category occupied the highest percentage of 12.90%, followed by giving direction. In the interview, Mrs. RL always asks a variety of questions to gauge the student's activity, because if the student is not plunged with questions, then the student will tend to be passive. This is in line with what was said by Sundari et al. (2017), who explained that by asking questions of students, it can stimulate their participation in interacting throughout the teaching and learning process in the classroom. According to Behnam (2009), the most influential teaching actions are questions and things that are consistent from time to time.

This was demonstrated by the highest percentage of student talk, the student talk response, with a total of 29.03%. This shows that students are more active in responding to the teacher's questions or words than in taking their own initiative in asking. Based on the results of interviews with several students, they said that the reason they were happy to answer the questions asked by their teacher was because Mrs. RL always appreciates their answers, even if the answers are wrong. She always gives appreciation

and praise, such as "good job, very good," which makes students motivated and enthusiastic in answering questions. Conversation like below:

*Teacher* : nah, for the last part is resolution. So, what is the resolution about?

*Students* : problem solving *sampai akhir cerita* miss.

*Teacher* : okey, good. Now we will talk about past tense.

#### 4.2 The Pattern of Teacher and Students Interaction in the Classroom

This section discusses the findings of interaction patterns in the EFL class based on the Ur (1996) theory. First, the choral response pattern occurred when the teacher entered the classroom and greeted the students by saying "good afternoon dear, what your feeling today?" The student replied, "Good afternoon Miss, I'm feeling great today." The choral response pattern occurs, for example, when the teacher asks the student what the title of the text is, like is the conversation below:

*Teacher* : Please open your textbook page 28, *sudah*?

*Students* : sudah *miss*

*Teacher* : what is the title of the text?

*Students* : The Legend of the Crying Stone

Second, an open-ended teacher questioning interaction pattern where the questions given by the teacher have open answers with many possible answers, so that many students give varied answers. Here is a question from the teacher:

*Teacher* : What are the characteristics of narrative text?

*Students A* : Fiction

*Students B* : *author's imagination*

*Students C* : *dimulai dengan* once upon a time, one day.

*Teacher* : okey, *selanjutnya apa lagi*?

*Students D* : has three structure miss, there is orientation, complication the same resolution miss.

Third, the interaction pattern found in this study is teacher talk. In this pattern, the teacher will explain the material and the student will quietly listen and record the material in response.

*Teacher* : in the narrative text use simple past, this is because the narrative is a story *yang kejadiannya menceritakan tentang masa lalu*. Well for the simple past tense has two types formula, *yaitu* verbal dan nominal. *Rumus positifnya yaitu Subject + Verb 2 + Object*

*Students* : silent and writing

Fourth, the student initiates interaction pattern, that is, the pattern that occurs when students think that they are initiative to ask directly to the teacher and then the teacher gives responses and feedback.

*Student* : Miss, apakah saya harus dibuat keterangan bahwasanya kalimat tersebut termasuk verbal atau nominal *miss*?

*Teacher* : tidak perlu

*Students* : thank you Miss

*Teacher* : But, please *buat keterangan apakah kalimat tersebut merupakan kalimat positif, negative ataupun affirmative*.

The last is the individual work pattern, which is the interaction pattern in which the teacher gives instructions to do the task and how to do it.

*Teacher:* Now, please open your book page 32, *perhatikan teks yang berjudul The Goose Girl*

*Students:* sudah miss

*Teacher:* for your assignment, please try to find write the past tense sentences that are in the story.

#### 4.3 The Teacher's Roles in Classroom Interaction

In this section, we will discuss the findings about the role of teachers in class interactions. The first is the role of the teacher as a controller; in the observation, it is seen that the teacher always reviews the student's behaviour and language and advises the student, as in the following conversation quote:

*Student :* miss saya ingin bertanya

*Teacher :* In English, please

*Student :* Okay, sorry miss

Second, the role of the teacher as a prompter or motivator, where in the observation it is found that the teacher often motivates the student through the phrase of praise or encouragement, such as in the following conversation:

*Teacher :* Good job, *Widya*, let's go, any else? *Jangan mau kalah dengan Widya*

*Students :* me miss

Third, the role of the teacher as a resource is seen in the classroom interaction. This is evident when the teacher answers student questions and explains the material about simple past tense clearly and in detail. The role of the teacher as a resource is also visible when the student tries to ask questions directly, but the student does not know his English vocabulary, so Mrs. RL helps the students.

*Students A :* Miss, why I replaced by you?

*Teacher :* because, this is *kalimat tanya*. If you want to ask someone, so *kalian pasti menggunakan kata you (kamu) kan? Tidak mungkin kalian menggunakan kata I (saya), berarti kalian bertanya untuk diri sendiri dong.*

The next role of the teacher is as an assessor, that is, to evaluate, correct, and give feedback to students. Mrs. RL is always seen paying attention to students and making notes as a evaluation-speaking English student. When the student answered the question, Mrs. RL never directly blamed the result of the student's work, but Mrs. RL would help the student correct the mistakes and then explain them back to the whole class. The role of the teacher as an advisor is seen in the conversation quotation below:

*Student Reza:* I don't go to the market, miss?

*Teacher :* God, but masih belum tepat. *Reza, masih ada yang harus dirubah.* The correct sentence is I don't go to the market, because if the sentence is negative, and use verb 1 bukan verb 2.

The last role of the teacher is as an organiser, where the teacher gives a number of information and instructions, such as where students should start to work and when to stop.

*Teacher:* Now, please open your book page 32, *perhatikan teks yang berjudul The Goose Girl*

*Students:* sudah miss

*Teacher:* for your assignment, please try to find write the past tense sentences that are in the story.

## 5. Conclusion

The analysis suggests that within the context of classroom interaction, teacher talk is more prevalent than student talk. Notwithstanding, it should be noted that students are not entirely passive and reticent during classroom sessions, as there exist instances wherein they engage in communication by responding to questions and instructions from the teacher. The classroom is characterized by several interaction patterns, including choral response, teacher talk, student-initiated individual work, and open-ended teacher questions. Among these patterns, the open-ended teacher question stands out as particularly significant, as it has the potential to stimulate student engagement and activity. The present study identifies five distinct roles that teachers assume, namely: controller, motivator, resource, assessor, and organizer.

Since the percentage of teacher talk tends to be more dominant and students may not initiate discussions without prompting, the researchers propose that in classroom interactions, the teacher may act as a facilitator by maintaining control and organizing the classroom. Therefore, students have the potential to become more engaged in cultivating their skills and exhibit greater dedication. For future researchers, it is suggested to conduct research over longer periods of time by utilizing additional research instruments to enhance the precision of data.

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