

ENHANCING ACTIVE CLASSROOM INTERACTION: THE ROLE OF ENGLISH TEACHERS IN INQUIRY-BASED INSTRUCTION

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Abstract

This qualitative case study explores the roles and strategies of English teachers in promoting active speaking interactions among fourth-grade students at an International Elementary School in Bandung, Indonesia. The study aims to uncover how teachers employ inquiry-based instruction to engage students in speaking activities and identify patterns of classroom interactions that encourage active speaking. The research includes observations and interviews with two English teachers, focusing on their methods to enhance speaking skills among 18 multicultural students. The findings indicate that teachers primarily use inquiry-based instruction, incorporating memory, cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies to encourage student participation. Identified interaction patterns include Teacher-Student, Student-Teacher, and Student-Student interactions, with Teacher-Student interactions being the most frequent. This study highlights the importance of inquiry-based instruction in fostering active speaking interactions and underscores the critical role of teachers in creating a dynamic and interactive classroom environment to enhance English speaking proficiency. Findings revealed that the teachers effectively promoted three types of interactions: teacher-student (71%), student-teacher (17%), and student-student (12%). The study concludes that English teachers play a crucial role in enhancing students' speaking interactions through inquiry-based instruction.

Keywords – Active Classroom Interaction, Inquiry-Based Instruction.

Introduction

English is a global language spoken by millions worldwide. It is taught as a second language in several Asian countries, including Indonesia, China, Thailand, and Taiwan. Despite this, many learners find it challenging to master English as a foreign language. In China, for instance, Weizheng (2019) notes that many higher education students struggle with speaking English fluently even after ten years of study, primarily due to insufficient classroom interaction and natural language exposure. Effective classroom interaction is essential for successful EFL (English as a Foreign Language) instruction.

Mastering a language involves developing four key skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Speaking is the most fundamental, enabling oral communication. It allows individuals to understand and convey ideas, fostering interaction and information exchange.

Brown (2003) defines speaking as an oral communication process where speakers and listeners transfer information, ideas, and feelings. Speaking reflects one's ability to organize thoughts and express them coherently through language.

Several researchers have explored strategies to enhance speaking skills. For example, Ririn Putri Ananda (2021) examined active interaction strategies used by lecturers to promote speaking in the classroom. These strategies included improving questioning techniques, adapting to learners' linguistic levels, implementing cooperative learning, fostering positive teacher-student relationships, and reducing classroom anxiety. The study highlighted the importance of these strategies in creating an active classroom environment that enhances students' speaking skills.

Another study by Basalama (2020) investigated students' learning strategies in English-speaking classes. Focusing on

fourth-semester English Department students, the study used questionnaires and interviews to collect data. Findings revealed that students employed a range of metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies, with note-taking being the most common (51.4%) and translation the least common (19.6%).

In addition, Sri Wuli Firiati et al. (2020) examined reinforcement strategies used by English teachers to support positive classroom behavior. Conducted in a public secondary school in Semarang, the study involved observations, interviews, and audio-video recordings. Results indicated that teachers used verbal praise, material rewards, and symbolic rewards, with verbal praise being the most frequent. Teachers emphasized the importance of reinforcement in enhancing teacher-student interactions.

This research focuses on the role of English teachers in fostering active classroom interaction among elementary students. Specifically, it examines the role of English teachers and types of classroom interaction in a multicultural fourth-grade class at an international school in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia. The study aimed to describe the teacher's role and the nature of classroom interactions. The population included 18 multicultural students, and the objectives were to describe the role of the English classroom teacher and the types of classroom interactions.

Overall, these studies underscore the significance of interactive and strategic teaching methods in improving students' speaking abilities in EFL contexts. Effective classroom interaction, combined with tailored strategies and reinforcement techniques, plays a crucial role in fostering an engaging and productive learning environment. By understanding and implementing these methods, educators can significantly enhance students' language proficiency and confidence.

Inquiry-Based Instruction

A unit of inquiry represents an in-depth exploration of significant and overarching ideas or concepts. Students delve into a central idea, guided by overarching inquiries and specific teacher questions, over a period of 4 to 12 weeks. In the International Baccalaureate (IB) framework, a Unit of Inquiry encompasses essential elements such as knowledge, concepts, skills, attitudes, and actions. These elements are crucial for preparing young students for successful lives both in the present and future. Units of inquiry are designed to cultivate attitudes and dispositions that reflect values, beliefs, and feelings about learning, the environment, and interpersonal relationships. This curriculum framework is employed by most international schools that are part of the IB World Schools network.

Inquiry-based instruction is a student-centered approach where the instructor guides the students through questions posed, methods designed, and data interpreted by the students. Through inquiry, students actively discover information to support their investigations (Edutopia.org). Inquiry-based learning involves students acquiring knowledge and skills through self-exploration rather than mere memorization of facts. Teachers play a critical role in designing lessons that emphasize discovery, incorporating steps such as observation, questioning, hypothesizing, data gathering, and drawing conclusions. The National Education Department (2002) outlines several key steps in the inquiry process:

- (1) Formulating a problem
- (2) Conducting observations
- (3) Analyzing and presenting findings in various formats such as written reports, pictures, and tables
- (4) Communicating or presenting findings to peers, teachers, or other audiences

The inquiry process begins with observation, followed by generating questions for both teachers and students. These questions lead students to formulate

hypotheses, gather data, and draw conclusions. If the conclusions are unsatisfactory, the cycle is repeated. This iterative process helps students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Inquiry-based activities provide teachers with valuable insights into students' thought processes, allowing them to create a conducive learning environment. By encouraging students to explore and discover, teachers help them develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter. This approach not only enhances knowledge acquisition but also fosters a sense of curiosity and a love for learning. The Unit of Inquiry framework emphasizes the importance of attitudes and dispositions that are essential expressions of values and beliefs about learning. These attitudes influence how students approach their studies and interact with others. The framework integrates these attitudes with the curriculum, ensuring that students develop not only academically but also emotionally and socially.

In implementing inquiry-based learning, teachers design lessons that encourage students to observe, question, hypothesize, gather data, and draw conclusions. This method helps students develop essential skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication. By engaging in this process, students learn to construct knowledge actively rather than passively receiving information.

Inquiry-based learning also promotes collaboration and communication among students. As they work together to solve problems and explore concepts, they develop social skills and learn to appreciate diverse perspectives. This collaborative approach helps students build a sense of community and fosters a supportive learning environment.

Furthermore, inquiry-based learning aligns with the principles of student-centered education. It places students at the heart of the learning process, allowing them to take ownership of their education.

This approach empowers students to become independent learners, capable of directing their own learning and pursuing their interests.

The iterative nature of the inquiry process ensures that learning is dynamic and responsive to students' needs. By continually refining their hypotheses and seeking new information, students engage in a continuous cycle of learning and improvement. This process helps them develop resilience and adaptability, essential skills for success in an ever-changing world.

In conclusion, the Unit of Inquiry framework and inquiry-based learning are powerful tools for fostering active and meaningful learning experiences. By encouraging students to explore, question, and discover, teachers help them develop a deep and lasting understanding of the subject matter. This approach not only enhances academic achievement but also nurtures a lifelong love for learning. Through inquiry-based learning, students acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to succeed in school and beyond.

Classroom Interaction

The classroom is a dynamic environment where teachers and students interact, allowing students to acquire new knowledge and information from their teachers. It is a critical space for learners to develop their target language skills and engage in socialization (Ellis, 1984). In this setting, communication interactions are essential, as defined by Brown (2001), involving the exchange of actions and reactions among individuals. Classroom interaction, therefore, encompasses the transfer of ideas, knowledge, and thoughts between teachers and students.

This study explored five patterns of classroom interaction as identified by Van Lier (1988):

1. Teacher/Learner-Learner/Teacher (T/L-L/T): This pattern involves both teachers and learners taking active roles,

facilitating a balanced exchange of dialogue and knowledge.

2. Teacher-Learner (T-(L)): Here, the teacher predominantly leads the interaction, while learners occasionally contribute, often in response to prompts or questions from the teacher.

3. Teacher-Learner (T-L): In this scenario, the teacher directs the flow of information, and learners primarily receive and process the knowledge imparted.

4. Learner-Teacher (L-T): This pattern shifts the focus towards the learners, who take the initiative to interact with the teacher, often by asking questions or seeking clarification.

5. Learner-Teacher/Teacher (L-T/(T)): This involves a more collaborative approach where learners lead the interaction, but the teacher provides necessary support and guidance to facilitate learning.

These patterns highlight the various ways in which classroom interactions can be structured to enhance the learning experience. Each pattern serves a different purpose and can be utilized based on the specific objectives of the lesson and the needs of the students.

Effective classroom interaction is vital for language acquisition and overall academic success. By understanding and implementing different interaction patterns, teachers can create a more engaging and productive learning environment. This approach not only helps in the transmission of knowledge but also encourages active participation, critical thinking, and the development of communication skills among students.

In summary, the classroom is a crucial setting for learning and interaction. The five patterns of classroom interaction outlined by Van Lier (1988) provide a framework for understanding how teachers and students can effectively communicate and engage with one another. These interactions are essential for fostering an environment where

students can thrive academically and develop the skills necessary for success in their target language and beyond.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research method, focusing on discourse analysis and a case study approach. The participants were a foreign teacher and an Indonesian teacher teaching Grade 4 at an International Elementary School in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia. Data collection methods included classroom observations, field notes, video recordings of lessons, and post-lesson interviews with the teachers. Observations involved 18 multicultural students and were conducted once.

Data sources consisted of observation sheets, semi-structured interviews, and audio-visual materials. Classroom observations aimed to gather information on the role of English teachers in promoting active student interaction during lessons. Semi-structured interviews with the two teachers provided additional insights. As described by Bernard in Cohen (2008), semi-structured interviews are particularly useful when a researcher has limited opportunities to interview participants. These interviews were preceded by observations and informal discussions to develop relevant and meaningful questions.

The researcher used triangulation to ensure the reliability of the data, combining classroom observations, interviews, and audio-visual materials (Heale & Forbes, 2013). Data analysis followed a referential method, which involves analyzing data based on established theories. The analysis process included four steps: transcribing, identifying, classifying, and interpreting (Rahayuningsih, 2020).

In summary, this qualitative case study investigated the role of English teachers in fostering active student interaction in a Grade 4 classroom. Data were collected through various methods, including

observations, interviews, and audio-visual recordings. The analysis was conducted using a referential method, ensuring a thorough examination of the collected data.

Finding and Discussion

Question: How do English classroom teachers foster active student interaction in speaking?

First: Observations and interviews revealed that English teachers utilize inquiry instruction to promote active speaking interaction. This approach integrates memory, cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. Through inquiry instruction, students explore central ideas or main understandings, guided by teacher questions and general inquiries.

Second: The study describes the role of English teachers in creating active speaking interactions. Van Lier (1988) identifies five patterns of classroom interaction: Teacher/Learner-Learner Teacher (T/L-LT), Teacher-(Learner) (T-(L)), Teacher-Learner (T-L), and Learner-Teacher/(Teacher) (L-T/(T)). However, this research identified three primary patterns:

1. Teacher-Student Interaction:

This involves direct interaction between the teacher and students. The teacher plays a crucial role by asking questions, facilitating discussions, providing explanations, praising, correcting mistakes, offering information, clarifying points, and encouraging participation. For instance, in the Unit of Inquiry (UOI) lesson, the teacher asked students about their weekend plans, checking and engaging with each student's goals through questions and responses.

2. Student-Teacher Interaction:

Here, students initiate interactions with the teacher, seeking guidance, clarification, and feedback. This pattern encourages students to take a more active role in their learning process, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility.

3. Student-Student Interaction:

This involves peer interactions where students discuss, collaborate, and learn from each other. Such interactions promote cooperative learning and help develop communication and social skills. In conclusion, English classroom teachers play a vital role in fostering active speaking interactions through inquiry-based instruction. By engaging students in meaningful dialogue and encouraging various interaction patterns, teachers enhance students' speaking abilities and overall language proficiency.

3.1.1. Teacher-Student Interaction

Teacher-student interaction involves direct engagement between the teacher and students, where the teacher plays a crucial role. The teacher poses questions, facilitates discussions, and conducts personal dialogues to enhance students' speaking abilities. This includes providing explanations, praise, corrections, information, clarifications, drills, and encouragement. For example, in a Unit of Inquiry (UOI) lesson, the teacher asked students about their weekend plans and individually reviewed their goals by engaging each student with questions and feedback, prompting active student participation and response.

Extract 1

Teacher : That's a... I don't know, I haven't actually get a ... There's some students in my community school and they are really fan with this fun dance and they're really do that stuff up. It's so fun cause, and they have set up that dancing stuff up. So, what's today's date? Let's stand up. Nov 21,2023. We're almost ending the weekend. How was your weekend, Hagan?

Student : Good.

Teacher : Giyono, how was the company? Do you like for your company right? Good?

How was it? Good? Did you enjoy?

Student : Yeah...

Teacher : Good! Okay.

(Observation on Nov 21st, 2023)

When students presented their ideas in class, the English teacher reinforced their efforts with praise such as "Good!", "Okay," "Well done," and "Excellent." This verbal reinforcement boosted the students' confidence in speaking English. Praise, as a form of instructional reinforcement, plays a significant role in encouraging student participation and fostering a supportive learning environment (Cotton, 1988 in Fitriati, 2020). Such positive feedback helps students feel more confident and motivated to engage actively in class discussions.

3.1.2. Student-Teacher Interaction

To enhance students' speaking skills, teachers play a crucial role in motivating, encouraging, and praising students to boost their confidence in speaking English. This interaction creates a dynamic classroom atmosphere. After explaining the lesson, teachers typically ask if students have any questions, facilitating student-teacher interaction.

According to Moskowitz (in Brown, 2001:170), student-teacher interactions can be categorized into three types: student-initiated, student confusion, and student response. In student-initiated interactions, students take the initiative to respond or ask questions, demonstrating their engagement and understanding. For example, during a lesson, a student might proactively ask for clarification or offer an answer, indicating their active participation and interest in the subject matter.

In these interactions, the teacher's role is to provide supportive feedback and further encourage students to express their thoughts. This approach not only helps in improving language skills but also fosters a positive and interactive learning environment where students feel comfortable and motivated to participate actively. By recognizing and responding to students' efforts, teachers can significantly enhance the effectiveness of language learning.

Below are the extract of Student-teacher interaction: students' initiated. In this category the student was initiated to respond firstly to the teacher.

Extract 2

(One student is raising his hands)

Teacher : So, what is Jayden?

Student : Yesterday was my dad's birthday

Teacher : Oh... Okay.

(Observation on Nov 21st, 2023)

If the students did not understand the lesson, then the student could ask the teacher, and the teacher will explain the lesson clearly. These are some extract about Students' confusion:

Teacher : Yesterday was Jayden's had shared what's his daddy's doing, okay? What's

your goals for this week? You have to recording to the flip, you do share to us what's your goals for this week?

Student : Oh, I forgot about it. I did a wrong thing.

Teacher : It's okay.

(Observation on Nov 21st, 2023)

Below are the extract of Student-teacher interaction: students' response. In this category the students gave response to the teacher's question.

Teacher : What's your goals for this week? What are you ticking off achieving this week?

Yes, Freya.

Student : She has a good goal to become slimmer.

Teacher : Okay, What's your goals for this week? Let's sharing your goal for this week,

come on. Let's quick, let's go fast! Your goals to be a target to be achieved, a goal that something that you really want to do for a long time, but you hasn't have to do this week.

Student : Practising presentations at home.

(Observation on Nov 21st, 2023)

3.1.3. Student-Student Interaction

Interaction among students is often limited in the classroom. To address this, the

teacher assigned group presentations to encourage student-to-student engagement. During these activities, students

collaborate, discuss ideas, and present their findings to the class, fostering peer learning and communication skills. This method not only enhances their understanding of the material but also builds teamwork and confidence. By creating opportunities for students to interact, teachers can promote a more dynamic and participatory learning environment, crucial for developing speaking and social skills.

Below are the extract of Student to student interaction:

Extract 3

Teacher : Okay, now you could present your group presentations.

Student 1 : Hai

Student 2 : Hello, What's your name?

Student 1 : My name is Jayden. What's your name?

Student 2 : My name is Hagan.

Student 1 : Where are you come from Hagan?

Student 2 : I come from Japan. Where are you come from Jayden?

Student 1 : I am Indonesian. Yesterday was my daddy's birthday. We celebrated his

birthday on a restaurant. He turns into 45 this year.

Student 2 : What present did you give to your daddy?

Student 1 : I bought him a birthday cake.

Student 2 : That's nice.

(Observation on Nov 21st, 2023)

Based on the observation, three patterns of classroom interaction were identified. These patterns are outlined in the table below:

Table 3.

Types of Classroom Interaction

No. Types of Classroom Interaction
Number of InteractionPercentage

1. Teacher – Student 47 71%

3. Student -Student 8 12%
Total Interactions 66 100%

The observations revealed three primary types of classroom interactions: Teacher-Student, Student-Teacher, and Student-Student. Teacher-Student interaction was the most prevalent, accounting for 71% of the interactions. This was followed by Student-Teacher interaction at 17%, and Student-Student interaction at 12%. These findings indicate that while direct engagement between teachers and students is predominant, there is still a significant amount of interaction initiated by students and among peers, contributing to a dynamic classroom environment.

Conclusions

Two English classroom teachers employed inquiry instruction to foster active student interaction in speaking. Inquiry instruction is a comprehensive approach that involves exploring transcendent ideas, knowledge, concepts, skills, attitudes, and actions, which are essential for students' success now and in the future. By guiding students through general inquiries and teacher questions, this method encourages active speaking engagement.

The study identified three patterns of classroom interaction: Teacher-Student, Student-Teacher, and Student-Student. Teacher-Student interaction was the most prevalent, constituting 71% of classroom interactions, followed by Student-Teacher interaction at 17% and Student-Student interaction at 12%. These findings highlight the significant role of the English classroom teacher in creating an environment conducive to active student interaction, particularly in speaking. Through the implementation of inquiry instruction, students' speaking interactions improved, demonstrating the effectiveness of this teaching approach. By engaging students in meaningful dialogue and fostering various interaction patterns,

teachers can significantly enhance

2.	Student -Teacher	11	17%
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students' language proficiency and confidence in speaking.

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