



An analysis of students' classroom interaction in English Language teaching and learning at MTs Terpadu Berkah Palangka Raya

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ABSTRACT

This study examined classroom interaction in English Language Teaching and Learning at MTs Terpadu Berkah Palangka Raya through a qualitative case study. It aimed to identify the interaction patterns occurring during lessons and the factors that influenced interaction in improving students' English skills. The subjects of this study were an English teacher and a class of eighth-grade students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, then analyzed using the Flanders Interaction Analysis Category System (FIACS). The findings showed that teacher talk dominated the classroom, while student was relatively limited and silence/confusion appeared frequently. Student participation was mainly in the form of short responses, with very few initiations. Interviews revealed that psychological and linguistic barriers such as shyness, lack of confidence, and limited vocabulary combined with external influences including teacher-centered strategies, curriculum demands, and the cultural setting of madrasah, contributed to these interactional patterns. The results of the study conclude that interactions in English classes in this context remain teacher-centered, thereby limiting opportunities for students to develop their communicative skills. The study highlights the need for more student-centered approaches to enhance participations and support language development.



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INTRODUCTION

Teaching English at the secondary school presents particular challenges, especially when it comes to sustaining active classroom interaction. Students' short attention spans, varied levels motivation, and diverse linguistic backgrounds often influence how communication unfolds during lessons. As a results, many teachers report feeling exhausted after class, since they must both deliver content and at the same time handle classroom management (Ani, 2017).

According to Wulandari et al. (2020), teaching English effectively requires teachers to design strategies that maintain students' engagement and motivation. In addition to mastering the subject matter, teachers also need sound pedagogical skills to create interactive activities. Without such strategies, learning tends to be dominated by the teacher, leaving limited opportunities for students to practice the language. Consequently, lessons should be designed to be enjoyable and stimulating, as students are easily distracted and may quickly lose interest (Ani 2017).

Classroom interaction is a central component of the learning process because it involves both verbal and nonverbal exchanges between teachers and students. Verbal interaction includes dialogue and questioning, while nonverbal communication takes place through facial expressions, gestures, and body language. These interactions play a crucial role in helping teachers elicit student responses, encourage critical thinking, and build active participation (Putri & Putri, 2021). Beyond knowledge transfer, effective interaction fosters collaborative learning and strengthens students' ability to engage critically. In the Indonesian EFL context, researchers have also examined related issues such as corrective feedback in writing (Sabarun, 2020) and the integration of Islamic values in English

classrooms (Mukarramah et al., 2021), demonstrating that pedagogy and cultural factors strongly shape interaction.

Arima (2020) further points out that nonverbal elements in communication are not only about delivering messages but also about expressing emotions and attitudes. These cues allow teachers to better understand classroom situations and student needs. Similarly, Soraya et al. (2022) argue that effective classroom management is vital for creating an environment where interaction can thrive. For meaningful exchanges to occur, teachers should not only convey material but also motivate students to participate. By doing so, learners gain more opportunities to demonstrate understanding and practice language use in authentic situations.

However, as highlighted by Novianti et al. (2023) and Mubarok et al. (2023), most studies on classroom interaction have focused on public schools at the senior high level, leaving Islamic junior high schools (Madrasah Tsanawiyah/MTs) underexplored. The blended curriculum in madrasahs, which integrates religious and secular education, may create distinctive classroom dynamics that differ from public schools (Mukarramah et al., 2021).

Furthermore, earlier research has mainly described interactional patterns without thoroughly exploring the underlying reasons behind them. While studies consistently report that teacher talk dominates the classroom, only a few attempt to investigate why students remain passive or what contextual and pedagogical factors affect their involvement. For example, Mubarok et al (2023) found that teachers often dominate discussions but did not analyze the factors discouraging student participation. This study seeks to move beyond pattern description by examining the reasons behind students' levels of engagement, including aspects such as teaching approaches, learners' motivation, classroom environment, and learning challenges.

Methodological issues are also noticeable in previous research, since many studies relied solely on interviews or observations. These methods may not fully capture spontaneous interactions that occur naturally during lessons. To address this limitation, the present study employs video recording to obtain more authentic data and applies the Flanders Interaction Analysis Category System (FIACS) for a systematic analysis. Although FIACS has been used in prior studies (e.g., Novianti et al., 2023), its application in madrasah settings is still rare, and its relevance for analyzing Islamic school contexts requires further examination. Additionally, little research has linked interaction patterns to students, language interaction patterns to students' language learning outcomes, particularly in terms of speaking and listening.

Pratiwi & Fithriani (2023) that classroom interaction is one of the key elements determining the success of teaching and learning. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to ensure that interaction patterns are aligned with the objectives of the curriculum. Interaction involves the exchange of ideas and communication between teacher and students or among students themselves. By understanding these patterns, teachers can help learners achieve the intended goals of English language education.

Although many scholars have investigated classroom interaction at both elementary and secondary schools' levels, research focusing on madrasahs contexts, especially at MTs Terpadu Berkah Palangka Raya remains limited. Moreover, much of the existing literature employed only one method of data collection, which restricts the depth of analysis. This study addresses these gaps by employing a triangulation of methods (observation, interviews, and documentation) to provide a more comprehensive picture of how interaction occurs between teachers and students in an Islamic school setting. The study also introduces FIACS as the primary analytical tool, which has rarely been applied in madrasah contexts, thereby contributing both theoretically and practically to English language pedagogy in Islamic education institutions.

Based on these studies, it can be concluded interaction patterns and factors that affect classroom interaction in improving students' English during English learning at the madrasah level, especially at MTs Terpadu Berkah Palangka Raya, which has not received much attention in academic studies so far. Most previous research focused on public schools and used a single approach in data collection. This research is different because it uses a data triangulation approach, namely observation, interviews, and documentation. So as to provide a more comprehensive and in-depth picture. In addition, this study

applies the Flanders Interaction Analysis Category System (FIACS) in the context of madrasahs English, which is still rarely used as the focus of the study, so that it can enrich understanding of the dynamics of teacher-student interaction in Islamic-based educational institutions. The findings of this study are expected to not only make a theoretical contribution, but also offer practical recommendations for teachers in creating a more interactive and effective learning atmosphere.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study approach, as the aim was to describe and interpret the interaction patterns that emerged during English teaching and learning. A qualitative design was considered appropriate because it allows for an in-depth exploration of classroom dynamics and provides descriptive insights (Kapoe, 2021). The analytical framework applied was the Flanders Interaction Analysis Category System (FIACS), a tool commonly used to classify communication between teachers and students.

The subjects of this study were one English teacher and 28 eight-grade students at MTs Terpadu Berkah Palangka Raya. This class was selected through purposive sampling technique, based on its relevance to the research focus and on the teacher's recommendation. Data were obtained from two observed classroom meetings.

Three techniques were used to collect the data: observation, interview, and documentation. Classroom observation was conducted to capture real-time interaction, while semi-structured interviews with the teacher and several students were used to gain further insights, particularly for the second research question. Supporting documentation, such as field notes and photographs, was also used to support the findings.

Although FIACS produces numerical outputs in the form of frequencies and percentages, in this study those numbers were not treated as statistical measurements. Instead, they were used as a descriptive indicator to illustrate which interaction categories appeared more frequently. The emphasis remained on qualitative interpretation, where the meaning behind the dominance of certain categories (e.g., teacher talk) was analyzed and explained in relation to the classroom context.

To ensure the credibility of the data, this study applied triangulation by comparing information obtained from observation, interview, and documentation. The data were analyzed descriptively, focusing on identifying which categories of classroom interaction were more dominant rather than quantifying them in percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The purpose of this study was to analyze the interaction between teachers and students in English learning activities using the Flanders Interaction Analysis Category System (FIACS). This research was conducted through two classroom observations on May 19 and 24, 2025, in class VIII of MTs Terpadu Berkah Palangka Raya. To support the findings from the observations, the researcher also conducted interviews with teachers and several students to answer the second research question, which was to identify the factors that influence the interaction between teachers and students. The use of FIACS allowed the researcher to identify the proportion of interactions in the form of teacher talk (coded as T), student talk (S), and moments of silence or confusion in the classroom (Silence/S). The FIACS categories used in the observation included T1 (Accepts Feeling), T2 (Encouraging or praising student), T3 (Accepting or using students' ideas), T4 (Asking question), T5 (Explaining/lecturing), T6 (Giving Instruction), and T7 (Criticizing or asserting authority). Meanwhile, student interactions were classified into S8 (Responding to the teacher), S9 (Speaking on their own or initiating talk), and S10 (Moment of silence or confusion).

The observation data showed that classroom interaction was dominated by teacher talk, especially in the form of lecturing (T5) and giving directions (T6). Indirect teacher talks such as praising (T2) and accepting students' ideas (T3) appeared but with lower frequency. Student talk was present

mainly as responses (S8), with only limited initiation (S9). Silence or confusion (S10) also appeared regularly, reflecting hesitancy and comprehension difficulties.

Table 1. The Summary of Observation in Classroom Interaction by Using FIACS

FIACS Category	Sub-category	Frequency	%
Teacher Talk	Accept feeling	54	5.05%
	Praise or encourage	65	6.07%
	Accept or use ide of students	35	3.27%
	Ask questions	116	10.84%
	Lecture	251	23.46%
	Giving direction	164	15.32%
	Criticize or justify authority	25	2.34%
Total			66.35%
Student Talk	Students talk response	143	13.37%
	Students talk initiation	77	7.20%
Total			20.57%
Silence	Silence or confusion	140	13.08
	Total		13.08%
TOTAL		1.070	100%

Based on the table 1 above, shows that interaction in the classroom was dominated by teacher talk. Out of 1.070 total recorded interactions, teacher talk covered 66.35%. this included lecturing (23.46%), giving directions (15.32%), asking questions (10.84%), and a smaller proportion of indirect talk such as praising (6.07%), accepting feelings (5.05%), and using students' ideas (3.27%). In contrast, student talk made up only 20.57% of interactions, mostly through brief responses (13.37%), with fewer instances of student initiation (7.20%). The remaining 13.08% consisted of silence or confusion, when students did not respond or hesitated.

The distribution is also illustrated in Figure 1, which provides a visual overview of the proportions.

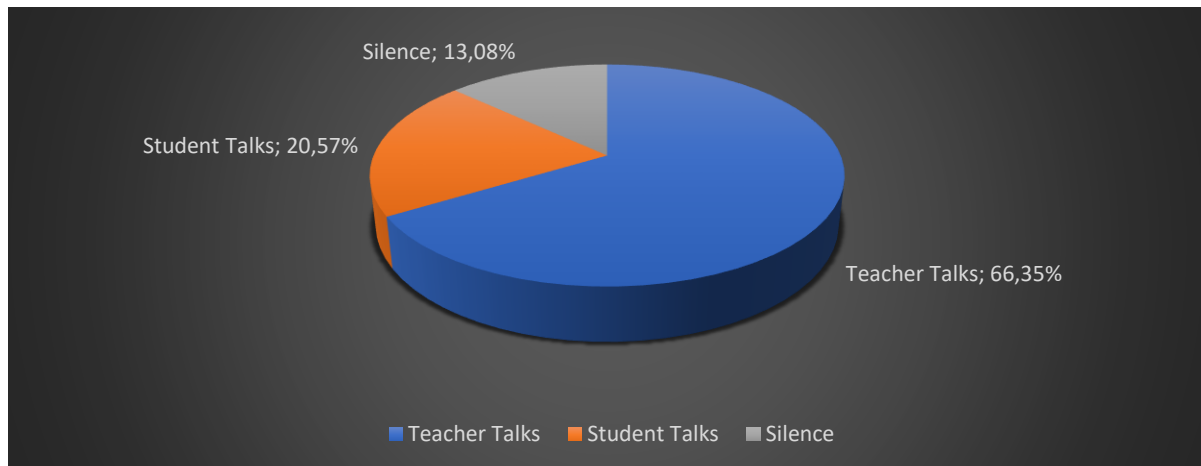


Figure 1. Percentage of Teacher Talk, Student Talk, and Silence

Figure 1 highlights the imbalance in classroom communication, with teacher talk far outweighing student contributions, thus suggesting a teacher-centered model of interaction.

To assess consistency, the two observation sessions were compared and the results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of Interaction Types in Two Observations

Interaction Type	Observation 1	Observation 2
Teacher Talk (T1-T7)	71%	70%

Interaction Type	Observation 1	Observation 2
Student Talk (S8-S9)	21%	19%
Silence/Confusion (S10)	14%	12%

Table 2 shows that the patterns of interaction was stable across both meetings. Teacher talk remained high (71% in the first observation and 70% in the second), student talk stayed around one-fifth (21% and 19%), and silence was consistently between 14% and 12%. This consistency shows that the dominance of teacher talk was not incidental but a regular characteristic of English teaching in this classroom.

The fact that teacher talk consistently reached around 70% suggest that the learning process was highly teacher-centered. The teacher controlled the majority of classroom communication, while students contributed relatively little. Moreover, the percentage of silence/confusion (12-14%) is notable, because in an ideal interactive class, silence should be minimized, and more time should be allocated to student talk. This data shows that many students were either confused or hesitant to speak, which limited the effectiveness of interaction.

The similarity of percentages across both observations also indicates that this pattern was not incidental, but rather a consistent characteristic of the classroom interaction at MTs Terpadu Berkah Palangka Raya.

To complement the observation, interviews were conducted with four students to explore their perspectives on classroom interaction. The coding of interview results is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Coding of Students Interviews

Student	Key Data	Coding	Theme
P01	<i>Jarang menjawab</i> (Rarely answer); <i>takut salah</i> (afraid of making mistakes); <i>jarang dipuji</i> (rarely praised)	Low participation, Affective factor, Limited teacher feedback.	<i>Partisipasi rendah</i> (Low participation), <i>hambatan afektif</i> (affective barriers), <i>dukungan guru terbatas</i> (limited teacher support).
P02	<i>Bahasa Inggris sulit</i> (English is difficult); <i>gugup</i> (nervous); <i>sering diam</i> (often silent)	Language difficulty, Affective factor, Silence/confusion.	<i>Hambatan linguistik dan afektif</i> (Linguistic and affective barriers).
P03	<i>Jarang menjawab karena guru jarang bertanya</i> (Rarely answers because the teacher rarely asks questions); <i>gugup</i> (nervous); <i>jarang dipuji</i> (rarely praised)	Teacher strategy, Affective factor, Low participation.	<i>Strategi guru terbatas</i> (Limited teacher strategies), <i>dukungan</i> (minimal support).
P04	<i>Aktif menjawab</i> (Actively answers); <i>kadang inisiatif</i> (sometimes takes initiative); <i>lebih percaya diri</i> (more confident)	High participation, Student initiative, Confidence growth.	<i>Partisipasi aktif</i> (Active participation), <i>peningkatan kepercayaan diri</i> (increased self-confidence).

Table 3 shows that three out of four students (P01, P02, and P03) admitted that they rarely spoke up in English lessons. Their reasons were mostly psychological, such as shyness, nervousness, and fear of making mistakes. They also mentioned linguistic difficulties, such as limited vocabulary, which made it hard to respond to the teacher. One student said: “*Bahasa Inggris sulit, jadi saya lebih sering diam*”. Furthermore, some students felt that the teacher rarely used their ideas or gave praise, which reduced their motivation to participate.

Interestingly, one student (P04) reported a different experience. He described himself as more confident and active, often answering questions and sometimes speaking English without being prompted. However, even he acknowledges that vocabulary limitations sometimes prevented him from expressing his ideas fully. This contrast highlight that while most students were passive, there were individual differences in how learners engaged with the classroom interaction.

Overall, the interview result confirms the observation data: students talk was generally low, and students' initiation was rare. The main barriers were affective (shyness, nervousness) and linguistic (vocabulary limitations).

An interview with the English teacher was also conducted to gain her perspective. The coding is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Coding of Teacher Interview

Key Data	Coding	Theme
<i>Siswa pemalu</i> (Shy students), <i>kurang percaya diri</i> (lack of confidence), <i>banyak belum punya dasar bahasa Inggris</i> , (many do not have a foundation in English)	Low participation, Affective factor, Limited teacher feedback	<i>Hambatan psikologis dan linguistik</i> (Psychological and linguistic barriers)
<i>Strategi guru</i> : speaking practice (Teacher's strategy: speaking practice), <i>lagu</i> (songs), <i>bercanda</i> (jokes)	Pedagogical strategy	<i>Upaya meningkatkan partisipasi</i> (Efforts to increase participation)
<i>Guru fleksibel sesuai suasana kelas</i> (Teachers are flexible according to the classroom atmosphere)	Flexibility	<i>Penyesuaian metode</i> (Adjustment of methods)
<i>Faktor pengaruh interaksi: materi dan suasana kelas</i> (Factors influencing interaction: material and classroom atmosphere)	Classroom environment	<i>Faktor eksternal</i> (External factors)

From table 4, the teacher acknowledged that many students were shy, lacked confidence, and had weak foundations in English, which limited their participation. Thing aligns with the student interviews and explains the high frequency of silence/confusion observed during class.

The teacher also explained her strategies, such as using songs, humour, and speaking practice to create a more engaging atmosphere. She emphasized that she often adjusted her teaching approach depending on the classroom situation, showing her awareness of students' needs. However, despite these strategies, observation results showed that teacher talk still dominated, which suggests that the strategies were not fully effective in shifting the classroom to a more student-centered interaction.

In addition, the teacher mentioned that interaction was influenced by external factors such as the type of material taught and the classroom atmosphere. For example, difficult material made students more hesitant, while a supportive atmosphere encouraged more participation. This highlights the complexity of factors shaping classroom interaction, beyond just teacher talk and students' willingness.

Discussion

The findings of this research indicate a consistent pattern of classroom interaction that was largely dominated by teacher talk. This tendency appeared across both observations and was supported by the results of student and teacher interviews. The discussion is presented by linking each set of findings with existing studies.

Teacher Talk and Student Talk

Analysing using FIACS showed that teacher talk accounted for 66.35% of all classroom interaction, while student talk was only 20.57%, and silence/confusion reached 13.08%. The most frequent categories of teacher talk were lecturing (T5) and giving directions (T6), while indirect forms of talk such as praising, accepting students' feelings, and using students' ideas appeared much less frequently.

According to FIACS theory (Flanders, 1970, cited in Shahi, (2010), teacher talk can be categorized into indirect influence (accepting feelings, praising, using ideas, asking questions) and direct influence (lecturing, giving directions, criticizing). A balanced classroom ideally combines these two forms, with greater emphasis on indirect talk to stimulate participation and creativity. However, the dominance of direct talk in this study suggest that the teachers' role was more oriented toward transmitting knowledge and maintaining control rather than facilitating learner-centered interaction

These results point to the persistence of a teacher-centered classroom model, where students' opportunities to initiate communication are limited, thus constraining the development of communicative competence.

Students' Perspective

The interviews with students provide valuable insights into why student talk was low. Three of the four students (P01, P02, P03) admitted that they often remained silent due to shyness, nervousness, or fear of making mistakes. They also reported difficulties with vocabulary and comprehension, which limited their ability to respond in English. This confirm the FIACS findings, where student talk mostly occurred as short responses rather than extended or self-initiated contributions.

Interestingly, one student (P04) reported being more active, sometimes answering without being asked. However, even he acknowledges challenges with vocabulary. This variation among students suggests that while most learners face psychological and linguistic barriers, some are able to overcome them and engage more actively.

These findings align with studies emphasizing the role of affective and linguistic factors in classroom interaction. Martina et al., (2021) highlighted that student passivity is often rooted in anxiety and lack of confidence, while Ihsan (2024) stressed that students need more opportunities for meaningful communication to overcome these barriers. Thus, the student interviews in this study not explain the FIACS data but also emphasize the importance of addressing learners' affective needs.

Teacher Perspective

The teacher interview complements the student perspectives and confirms many of the observed patterns. The teacher acknowledge that most students were shy, lacked confidence, and had weak English foundations, which hindered their participation. This recognition reflects an awareness of the affective and linguistic barriers faced by learners.

The teacher also reported using strategies such as song, jokes, and speaking practice to increase engagement. While these strategies are consistent with communicative teaching approaches, the observational data showed that teacher talk still dominated. This suggests that the strategies were not fully effective in shifting the interaction balance, possibly due to the teacher's reliance on lecturing and giving directions.

Moreover, the teacher emphasized that interaction was influenced by external factors such as lesson material and classroom atmosphere. Difficult materials tended to produce more silence, while a supportive atmosphere encouraged participation. This resonates with findings from Sainyakit & Santoso, (2024) who argued that classroom interaction shaped by both teacher strategies and contextual factors.

Synthesis and Implications

Taken together, the findings from FIACS observation, student interviews, and teacher interview paint a comprehensive picture of classroom interaction at MTs Terpadu Berkah Palangka Raya. The consistent dominance of teacher talk (Tables 1-2) reflects a teacher-centered approach. Student

interviews (Table 3) revealed affective and linguistic barriers that explain low student participation, while the teacher interview (Table 4) highlighted both the challenges faced by learners and the teacher's efforts to address them.

The synthesis of these data sets suggest that four major factors influence classroom interaction:

1. Pedagogical factors – heavy reliance on lecturing and instructions.
2. Psychological factors – shyness, nervousness, fear of mistakes.
3. Linguistic factors – limited vocabulary and comprehension.
4. Affective/environmental factors – classroom atmosphere and teacher feedback.

These findings are consistent with prior research in Indonesian EFL contexts, but this study contributes novelty by examining interaction in a madrasah setting, where relatively fewer studies have been conducted and by using triangulated methods. The implication is that teachers need to increase indirect talk (praising, using student ideas, asking more open-ended questions) and implement more student-centered activities (e.g., group discussions, role play, project-based tasks) to balance classroom interaction and promote students' communicative competence.

The findings of this study reveal a clear pattern of classroom interaction dominated by teacher talk. Teacher talk accounted for 66.35% of all classroom interactions, while student talk represented 20.57% and silence/confusion made up 13.08%. This indicates that the classroom interaction was strongly teacher-centered.

This result is consistent with previous research in Indonesian EFL classrooms. Rizkiyah & Salamah, (2023) reported that teacher talk dominated 77% of EFL classroom discourse, and Charisma & Defalni (2019) observed a similar with 86.65%. On the other hand, Abdusyukur et al., (2022) found that online EFL classes were largely teacher controlled due to low student participation. These studies suggest that teacher talk dominance remains a recurring pattern in Indonesian EFL contexts.

However, the findings of this study also show that student talk while limited, was present at 20.57% with responses more frequent than initiations. Meanwhile, the proportion of student talk in this study was lower compared to Supriadin et al., (2024) who reported student talk dominance (50.64%), indicating that under certain classrooms conditions, students may be more active and interactive. This finding resonates with Sinarti et al., (2023) who emphasized that student initiation is a strong indicator of interactive learning but often remains minimal in Indonesian EFL classrooms.

The presence of silence and confusion 13.08% also highlights the effective and linguistic barriers faced by students. Student interviews confirmed that fear of making mistakes, shyness, and limited vocabulary constrained their participation. Similar barriers were highlighted by Rizkiyah & Salamah, (2023) noted that students often avoided interaction due to fear of making mistakes. In this study, both teacher and student interviews confirmed that psychological and linguistic factors limited participation. This supports Kusumayanthi & Nuroniah, (2020) who argued that English teachers must implement engaging strategies to overcome such barriers. Although the teacher in this study reported using songs, humour, and speaking practice, these methods were not sufficient to balance classroom talk.

Furthermore, the teacher's strategies were observed not fully effective in shifting the classroom toward student-centered interaction. The dominance of the "giving direction" category in teacher talk is in line with Nasir et al., (2019) who emphasized that directive talk remains one of the most common teacher practices in Indonesian classrooms. While these strategies aimed to motivate students, they did not substantially increase student initiation or reduce silence.

This condition highlights the crucial role of teachers' pedagogical competence and reflective teaching practice in shaping classroom interaction. As highlighted by Miftah et al. (2024), teachers who reflect on and adjust their instructional strategies tend to create more engaging and transformative learning environments. Consistent with Qamariah et al. (2023), community-based English learning activities have been found to build learners' confidence and willingness to communicate. These insights align with the present findings, suggesting that psychological and linguistic barriers such as shyness and limited vocabulary can be reduced through supportive, student-centered classroom interaction.

Overall, the results suggest that classroom interaction at MTs Terpadu Berkah Palangka Raya remains teacher-centered. The findings of this study confirm that such a pattern also exists in Islamic Secondary high schools. Therefore, teacher's need to adopt more student-centered approaches that reduce silence and increase student initiation, such as collaborative tasks, peer interaction, and communicative activities that build confidence and lower affective barriers.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that classroom discourse is highly teacher-centered, with teacher talk and teacher initiative remaining limited. Silence or confusion also occurs with considerable frequency. Interviews with students and teachers confirm that psychological aspects (such as shyness, lack of confidence, and fear of making mistakes) and linguistic barriers (limited vocabulary and poor comprehension) contribute to low student participation. Although teachers use various strategies, such as humor, songs, and speaking exercises, these approaches are not sufficient to transform the classroom into a more interactive and student-centered model. Integrating interactive methods such as blended learning or community-based learning highlights a path toward more student-centered interaction.

In conclusion, the study emphasizes the importance of adopting more student-focused strategies that allow learners to express ideas, collaborate, and build confidence in using English. Theoretically, the research contributes to the literature on classroom interaction in madrasah settings, which remain underexplored. Practically, it offers insights for English teachers seeking to balance teacher and student talk, reduce silence, and create more engaging classroom environments.

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