

## **Teachers' Instructional Language and Student Response in EFL Classroom: A Discourse Analysis**

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### **Abstract**

Classroom interaction is a crucial component of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning because teachers' instructional language significantly influences student participation, comprehension, and communicative development, particularly in Indonesian contexts where English exposure is largely limited to classroom settings. Grounded in Sinclair and Coulthard's classroom discourse theory and Walsh's framework of instructional interaction, this study investigates the types of teachers' instructional language and patterns of student responses in an EFL classroom within the context of Introduction to Basic Instruction (IBI) and Qualitative Research Methodology. Using a qualitative research design with discourse analysis, data were collected through classroom observation, audio recording, and field notes, then analyzed by categorizing teacher language into directive, elicitation, clarification, and feedback forms, alongside student responses in verbal, non-verbal, and silence-based patterns. The findings revealed that directive language was the most dominant instructional strategy, functioning both as classroom management and pedagogical modeling, while elicitation promoted critical engagement and language production. Student responses varied according to linguistic competence, confidence, and academic readiness, with silence often reflecting cognitive processing rather than disengagement. The discussion highlights that teachers' instructional language serves not only as pedagogical communication but also as a model for future teaching practice. This study concludes that strategic instructional language is essential for fostering interactive EFL learning, enhancing student participation, and supporting pedagogical development in teacher education contexts.

*Keywords: instructional language, student response, EFL classroom*

### **INTRODUCTION**

English has become one of the most influential global languages in education, communication, science, technology, and professional development. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) in schools and universities to prepare students for participation in an increasingly interconnected world (Goctu, 2016; Ja'ashan, 2020; Nabhan & Hidayat, 2018). However, because English is not widely used in everyday communication for most Indonesian learners, opportunities to practice the language outside the classroom remain limited. As a result, the classroom becomes the primary environment where students receive meaningful exposure to English. In this situation, teachers hold an essential role because they not only deliver academic content but also function as linguistic models whose language use directly influences students' learning experiences. The way teachers communicate during classroom interaction affects how students understand materials, respond to instructions, and develop confidence in using English. Therefore, teachers' instructional language becomes a crucial element in the success of EFL learning because it shapes both classroom communication and students' language development.

In EFL classrooms, instructional language refers to the language used by teachers to explain lessons, provide directions, ask questions, manage classroom activities, and deliver feedback during teaching and learning processes. Instructional language serves not only pedagogical functions but also acts as authentic language input that students can

observe, imitate, and internalize. Through daily classroom interaction, students learn pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, expressions, and communication strategies from their teachers' language use (Chun et al., 2016; Sukanto et al., 2021; Zuhairati et al., 2022). Effective instructional language can create interactive learning environments that encourage participation and support comprehension, while unclear or overly directive communication may limit students' opportunities to engage actively. Classroom interaction often follows structured communication patterns in which teachers initiate discussions, students respond, and teachers provide feedback or evaluation. Although such structures help maintain classroom organization, excessive teacher dominance may reduce learner participation and interaction. Therefore, teachers need to apply communicative strategies such as clarification, elicitation, scaffolding, encouragement, and constructive feedback to create more student-centered learning environments that support active language use and meaningful communication.

For students in English Language Education programs, especially in courses related to teaching practice such as Introduction to Basic Instruction (IBI), teacher communication becomes highly important because it provides models of how instructional language should be used effectively in classroom settings. Future teachers need to understand not only what to teach but also how language can be strategically used to manage interaction, support learning, and encourage student participation. From the perspective of qualitative research, classroom interaction also provides rich naturalistic data that can reveal patterns of discourse, communication strategies, and pedagogical practices in authentic educational contexts (Haqpana & Tsouroufli, 2023; Ludji et al., 2021). Discourse analysis is therefore an appropriate approach for examining classroom communication because it focuses on how language functions in real interaction. Through discourse analysis, researchers can identify how teachers organize classroom talk, how students respond to instructional language, and how communication patterns shape the teaching and learning process. Such analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of how classroom interaction influences both pedagogical effectiveness and language acquisition in EFL settings.

In Indonesian EFL classrooms, students demonstrate various response patterns during interaction with teachers. Some students respond actively by answering questions, asking for clarification, or participating in discussions, while others show non-verbal responses such as gestures, silence, or passive compliance. Silence itself is an important phenomenon because it may reflect anxiety, lack of confidence, cognitive processing, or limited language comprehension rather than simple disengagement. Understanding these different response patterns is essential because they provide insights into how students experience classroom communication and how teachers' instructional language affects participation (Alias et al., 2021; Muslih et al., 2021; Paramita, 2022; Zheng & Qiu, 2024). Recent discussions on classroom discourse increasingly emphasize the importance of teacher-student interaction in promoting learner engagement and communicative competence. However, there is still limited qualitative research focusing specifically on teachers' instructional language and student responses in Indonesian EFL classrooms, particularly in contexts related to teacher training and instructional practice. Therefore, this study investigates teachers' instructional language and student responses through discourse analysis to examine how classroom communication operates in EFL learning environments. The findings are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically by providing a deeper understanding of classroom discourse and by demonstrating how strategic instructional language can support interactive, effective, and student-centered English learning.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Classroom discourse refers to the patterns of communication that occur during teaching and learning activities between teachers and students. In instructional settings, classroom interaction is often structured through sequences in which teachers initiate communication, students provide responses, and teachers deliver feedback or evaluation. This interaction pattern demonstrates how teachers play a dominant role in controlling the flow of classroom communication and shaping opportunities for student participation. In EFL classrooms, teacher language becomes particularly important because it functions not only as a tool for delivering lessons but also as the primary source of language exposure for students (Bacus & Alda, 2023). Through classroom discourse, teachers guide learning activities, manage interaction, maintain classroom organization, and support students' understanding of materials. The structure of classroom communication therefore influences not only the effectiveness of instruction but also the quality of interaction that students experience during the learning process.

In instructional contexts related to Introduction to Basic Instruction (IBI), teachers' language use is closely connected to pedagogical effectiveness because communication strategies influence how students engage with learning activities. Teachers use different forms of instructional language such as giving directions, asking questions, clarifying explanations, encouraging participation, and providing feedback (Soori et al., 2025; Wiboolyasarini et al., 2024; Xu & Wang, 2025). These communication strategies are essential because they shape classroom atmosphere and determine whether interaction becomes teacher-centered or student-centered. Effective instructional language can motivate students to participate actively, express ideas confidently, and interact meaningfully in English. On the other hand, overly directive communication may limit opportunities for learners to develop communicative competence. For future educators, understanding how instructional language functions in classroom interaction is highly important because it provides practical models for managing communication effectively in educational settings. The way teachers use language reflects not only pedagogical competence but also their ability to create supportive and interactive learning environments.

From a qualitative research perspective, student responses during classroom interaction provide valuable insights into learners' cognitive, social, and emotional engagement. Student responses may appear in verbal forms such as answering questions, asking for clarification, or participating in discussion, as well as non-verbal forms including gestures, facial expressions, silence, or passive compliance. These responses reflect how students interpret instructional language and respond to classroom communication practices. Silence, in particular, should not always be interpreted as disengagement because it may indicate thinking processes, anxiety, lack of confidence, or difficulties in comprehension (Yeung et al., 2023). Qualitative classroom research emphasizes the importance of observing naturally occurring interaction because authentic classroom behavior can reveal deeper meanings behind participation patterns and communication dynamics. Through discourse analysis, researchers are able to examine how teachers and students negotiate meaning, construct interaction, and create learning experiences within classroom settings. This approach helps provide a more comprehensive understanding of how communication influences language learning processes in EFL classrooms.

Recent studies on classroom discourse increasingly highlight the importance of balanced instructional communication in improving learner participation and engagement (Abramenka-Lachheb et al., 2021; Aini, 2019; Budianto, 2023; Irwansyah, 2019; Sani,

2016). Interactive communication patterns that encourage questioning, clarification, and feedback tend to create more active and collaborative learning environments. Teacher discourse structures strongly influence students' willingness to participate, the quality of responses, and overall classroom interaction. In EFL contexts, effective instructional communication is particularly significant because language learning depends heavily on interaction and exposure to meaningful input. However, there is still limited qualitative research focusing specifically on classroom discourse in Indonesian EFL settings, especially studies examining both teachers' instructional language and student responses simultaneously. More context-specific studies are needed to understand how communication practices operate in real classroom environments and how they affect learning experiences. Therefore, discourse analysis of classroom interaction can contribute both theoretically and practically by providing insights into effective instructional communication strategies that support interactive, student-centered, and meaningful English language learning.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative research design using discourse analysis to examine teachers' instructional language and student responses in an EFL classroom. This design was selected because qualitative research emphasizes natural settings, contextual meaning, and in-depth understanding of social interaction (Elo et al., 2014; Morgan, 2022). The participants consisted of one English lecturer/teacher and students in an EFL classroom. The teacher was selected because their instructional language served as the central object of analysis, particularly in relation to IBI principles of instructional communication.

Data were collected through classroom observation, audio recording, and field notes. Classroom sessions were observed to capture authentic teacher-student interaction (Mirhosseini, 2020; Zevalkink, 2021). Recorded data were transcribed, coded, and categorized according to instructional language functions and response patterns. The analysis focused on identifying four categories of instructional language: directive, elicitation, clarification, and feedback. Student responses were categorized into verbal, non-verbal, and silence-based forms. Data analysis involved reduction, coding, thematic categorization, and interpretation (Miles et al., 2014).

## **FINDINGS**

### ***Types of Teachers' Instructional Language***

The classroom observation revealed that the lecturer, who teaches Introduction to Basic Instruction (IBI) and Qualitative Research Methodology, consistently employed several dominant forms of instructional language throughout the EFL learning process. Based on the analyzed classroom discourse, four major categories emerged: directive language, elicitation, clarification, and feedback. These patterns directly answer the first research question regarding the types of instructional language used in classroom interaction. Directive language was the most frequently identified category. The lecturer regularly used directives when managing classroom procedures, organizing learning activities, introducing tasks, or guiding students' academic focus. Common expressions included "Open your module," "Pay attention to the concept," "Repeat the instruction," and "Analyze the example carefully." These utterances indicate that directive language functioned primarily as a classroom management tool. However, because the lecturer's instructional context involved IBI, directive language also reflected pedagogical modeling,

demonstrating how effective teachers structure classroom interaction. This suggests that students were not only receiving instruction but also observing practical examples of instructional discourse relevant to their professional development as future educators.

Elicitation language also appeared frequently during classroom sessions. The lecturer used questioning strategies to stimulate critical thinking, conceptual understanding, and language production. Questions such as “What is the meaning of this concept?”, “How do you interpret this from a qualitative perspective?”, and “Can you provide another example?” encouraged students to actively participate in both linguistic and analytical dimensions. Since the lecturer also taught qualitative research methodology, elicitation often extended beyond language comprehension to academic reasoning, indicating that classroom discourse was designed to promote reflective learning rather than passive reception. Clarification language emerged when students demonstrated hesitation, misunderstanding, or difficulty responding to instructions or theoretical concepts. In these moments, the lecturer simplified explanations, repeated instructions, rephrased concepts, or used more familiar examples to bridge comprehension gaps. This pattern suggests that clarification served as an important scaffolding strategy, helping students understand both English language input and academic content.

Feedback language was observed in the form of praise, correction, reinforcement, and academic guidance. Expressions such as “Good analysis,” “Almost correct,” “Try again,” or “Connect it with the theory” were frequently used. Unlike purely linguistic correction, feedback in this classroom often combined language evaluation with pedagogical or methodological direction. This indicates that feedback functioned not only to improve student responses but also to model evaluative teaching practices relevant to IBI.

### ***Patterns of Student Responses***

The analyzed data revealed that students responded to the lecturer’s instructional language through three dominant patterns: verbal responses, non-verbal responses, and silence or delayed responses. These findings directly address the second research question concerning how students respond to instructional language. Verbal responses occurred when students answered conceptual questions, repeated lecturer instructions, responded to elicitation prompts, or attempted to explain instructional or methodological concepts. Students with stronger English proficiency, greater academic confidence, or familiarity with pedagogical discourse were more likely to produce verbal responses. These students often engaged more actively during elicitation sequences that required explanation or analysis.

Non-verbal responses included nodding, note-taking, raising hands, following procedural instructions, or performing assigned tasks. Such responses were particularly common during directive sequences, where students demonstrated understanding behaviorally rather than verbally. This suggests that non-verbal participation served as an important indicator of engagement, especially for students who may have understood instructions but lacked confidence to respond orally. Silence or delayed responses were frequently observed during cognitively demanding tasks, particularly when students were asked to analyze theoretical concepts related to IBI or qualitative research in English. Silence often occurred when students were uncertain about vocabulary, lacked confidence, or required additional processing time. Rather than simply indicating disengagement, silence appeared to function as a reflective response shaped by cognitive and linguistic challenges.

Overall, the findings indicate that directive language tended to generate immediate behavioral responses, while elicitation produced more varied verbal, non-verbal, or delayed responses depending on students' language competence and academic readiness. This demonstrates that the type of instructional language used significantly influenced the form and depth of student participation.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings demonstrate that teachers' instructional language plays a central role in shaping classroom discourse, student participation, and pedagogical development within EFL learning contexts. Directive language emerged as the dominant form of instructional communication because teachers frequently used it to organize classroom activities, maintain procedural order, provide instructions, and ensure that learning objectives were clearly understood (Rizqy & Ardi, 2020). In classroom interaction, teachers often function as the primary controllers of discourse flow, guiding communication patterns and determining opportunities for student participation. However, within the context of Introduction to Basic Instruction (IBI), directive language served not only managerial purposes but also pedagogical modeling functions. The teacher's communication demonstrated how future educators can strategically use instructional language to manage learning effectively. This finding indicates that teacher talk in EFL classrooms functions simultaneously as a medium of content delivery and as an example of professional instructional practice (Cox & Mullen, 2023; Eslit, 2025). As a result, instructional language becomes an important pedagogical resource that influences both immediate classroom interaction and the development of future teaching competence among students.

The frequent use of elicitation strategies further demonstrates the importance of interactive teacher talk in promoting learner participation and engagement. Teachers used questioning techniques not only to check comprehension but also to encourage students to think critically, express opinions, and participate actively in classroom discussion. In the observed classroom interaction, elicitation strategies created opportunities for students to produce language, negotiate meaning, and engage with academic concepts more deeply (Bekou et al., 2024). This finding suggests that instructional communication becomes more effective when teachers use questions strategically to stimulate higher-order thinking rather than focusing solely on factual recall or procedural responses. In addition, clarification language played an important role in helping students overcome linguistic and conceptual difficulties. Teachers frequently simplified explanations, restated ideas, or provided additional examples to support student understanding of complex pedagogical and qualitative research concepts (Rahayu et al., 2023). Such clarification strategies functioned as scaffolding that enabled students to bridge gaps between language comprehension and academic interpretation. Therefore, adaptive communication strategies appear essential in EFL classrooms because they support both language development and conceptual understanding simultaneously.

Student response patterns also reveal that classroom interaction is strongly influenced by multiple contextual factors, including language proficiency, confidence, familiarity with academic discourse, and cognitive readiness. Some students actively responded verbally by answering questions, participating in discussions, or seeking clarification, while others relied more heavily on non-verbal responses such as gestures, facial expressions, compliance, or silence (Ronsani Thamrin & Darsih, 2023). Verbal participation was generally more common among students who demonstrated greater confidence and familiarity with academic communication, whereas silence often

characterized students who required additional time for cognitive processing or emotional adjustment (Berke et al., 2024; Clemente-Suárez et al., 2024; Slamet, 2019). Importantly, silence should not simply be interpreted as disengagement or lack of competence. In classroom interaction, silence may represent reflection, uncertainty, anxiety, comprehension difficulties, or active cognitive processing. Particularly in discussions involving theoretical concepts such as instructional discourse and qualitative methodology, students may remain silent while organizing thoughts or interpreting complex information internally. Consequently, silence should be recognized as meaningful interactional behavior that reflects deeper dimensions of the learning process rather than passive absence of participation.

Overall, these findings emphasize that effective instructional language in EFL classrooms requires a balance between classroom control and interactive communication. While directive language remains essential for organizing instructional processes and maintaining classroom structure, excessive dependence on directive forms may limit opportunities for communicative development and active student engagement. Integrating elicitation, clarification, encouragement, and constructive feedback can foster more reflective, collaborative, and student-centered learning environments. In teacher education and IBI contexts, instructional language becomes particularly important because teachers' communication practices directly influence students' understanding of effective pedagogy and classroom management (Marashi & Naghibi, 2020). This study contributes to academic knowledge by demonstrating that instructional language functions both as classroom discourse practice and as pedagogical modeling for future educators. Through qualitative discourse analysis, the research highlights the importance of examining naturally occurring classroom communication to understand how teaching effectiveness is constructed through language use. The findings also provide practical implications for EFL teachers, teacher educators, and qualitative researchers seeking to improve instructional quality, learner participation, and classroom interaction in multilingual educational settings.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study examined teachers' instructional language and student responses in an EFL classroom through a qualitative discourse analysis approach, particularly within the context of Introduction to Basic Instruction (IBI) and Qualitative Research Methodology. The findings revealed that the lecturer consistently employed four dominant forms of instructional language: directive language, elicitation, clarification, and feedback. Among these, directive language emerged as the most frequently used strategy, primarily functioning to manage classroom procedures, organize learning activities, and establish instructional structure. However, in the observed classroom context, directive language also served as pedagogical modeling, demonstrating effective instructional practices for students as future educators.

The study also found that students responded through three major patterns: verbal responses, non-verbal responses, and silence or delayed responses. Verbal responses were generally produced by students with stronger linguistic competence and academic confidence, while non-verbal responses reflected procedural understanding and behavioral engagement. Silence, rather than indicating passive disengagement, often represented cognitive processing, uncertainty, or reflective thinking, especially when students encountered complex theoretical or linguistic demands.

These findings highlight that teachers' instructional language significantly shapes classroom discourse patterns, learner participation, and pedagogical development. The

study reinforces the idea that teacher talk in EFL settings functions not only as language instruction but also as a social and pedagogical framework that influences how students interact, interpret, and develop communicative competence. For IBI contexts, instructional language is particularly significant because it models practical teaching behavior that students may later apply in their own professional practice.

The study contributes to ELT practice by emphasizing the importance of balancing directive authority with elicitation, clarification, and constructive feedback to create more interactive, supportive, and reflective learning environments. Teachers should be aware that strategic instructional language can foster broader student participation while simultaneously developing both linguistic and pedagogical competence.

For future research, it is recommended that similar studies be conducted across different educational levels, classroom settings, or disciplinary contexts to compare instructional discourse patterns more broadly. Further studies may also explore the impact of specific instructional language strategies on learner motivation, critical thinking, or teacher identity development. Overall, this research demonstrates that analyzing natural classroom communication provides valuable insight into teaching effectiveness beyond formal lesson planning, particularly in EFL, IBI, and qualitative educational contexts.

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