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Teacher Talk and Student Talk: Classroom Interaction in Online CFL Class

Fatmawati Fatmawati^{1✉}, Wastri Pebriani², Ria Riski Marsuki³

¹Universitas Gunadarma, Indonesia

²Universitas Gunadarma, Indonesia

³Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study explores the interaction between “Teacher Talk” and “Student Talk” in an online Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) class. The goal is identifying methods to leverage these dynamics to create more effective and engaging online learning environments. This research uses a qualitative research design to understand the dynamics of interactions between teachers and students in CFL online classes. Data was collected through observation and video recording in four CFL online classes with the participation of 16 students and four teachers. Data analysis uses Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC) to identify interaction patterns and themes. The study findings show that effective interactions between teachers and students are critical in establishing collaborative and valuable online learning experiences. Effective student participation often depends on guidance and encouragement from teachers, who create a supportive and participatory learning environment.

✉ Corresponding Author:
E-mail: fatmawati@staff.gunadarma.ac.id

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INTRODUCTION

The development of online learning platforms, coupled with continuous technological advancements, has transformed the educational landscape significantly in recent years. According to Mulyawan (2020), online learning possesses distinct characteristics compared to traditional offline learning. Supporting this view, Belawati (2020) defines *online learning* as the process of teaching and learning that utilizes Internet technology as its medium. This type of learning should be distinct from merely accessing learning materials online. As Belawati (2020) notes, the key distinction lies in the interaction among three main components: the teacher, the student, and the learning material. This interaction is a fundamental aspect of the learning process, differentiating a dynamic educational experience from merely reading or watching educational content online. This shift towards online learning has introduced new opportunities and challenges in classroom dynamics, where the efficacy of learning relies heavily on the quality of interaction among participants, particularly in foreign language classrooms. In an Online learning environment, teachers and students are exploring innovative ways to engage effectively despite lacking physical presence, which requires adapting to new tools and methods for effective communication and learning.

Effective classroom interaction is crucial to the learning process as it fosters collaborative exchanges between teachers and students. This interaction conveyed through *teacher talk* and *student talk*, is especially critical in language learning class. It offers students direct exposure to the language taught, establishing an interactive language environment conducive to the learning process. Pamungkas et al. (2023) highlight the significance of this environment for effective language learning and point out the necessity of maintaining dynamic interactions within online classrooms.

Significant barriers that may occur in online learning, such as technical issues or limitations from students and teachers, can impede classroom interaction. Practical interaction patterns online must be developed to boost engagement, comprehension, and active student involvement (Alzahrani & Alhalafawy, 2022; Dennen & Jones, 2022). This endeavor is essential to ensure that online learning mirrors face-to-face settings to generate valuable interactions.

The Acquisition of a foreign language doesn't solely rely on delivering course materials; it also heavily depends on meaningful interactions within the classroom. As highlighted by Loewen and Sato (2018), successful classroom interaction plays a crucial role in enhancing language learning outcomes. Furthermore, through effective interaction, as asserted by Zhang and Zhang (2015), learners can also enhance their understanding of culture and communicative competence. The main idea shows that the importance of successful classroom interaction is not only the understanding of course materials but also the quality of learners' communication skills. This indicates that a classroom environment supportive of valuable interaction significantly influences the success of language acquisition, as suggested by Amiruddin and Zuhri (2021). Therefore, in the context of foreign language classes, teachers need to be able to cultivate effective classroom interaction, even in online learning settings. Well-established interaction within the classroom can strengthen students' understanding of course materials and their communication skills in the foreign language.

It is possible to replicate and enhance the interactions that take place in a traditional classroom using technology (Develotte et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2020). However, the complexities of adapting interaction strategies to the online environment, particularly in CFL (*Chinese as a Foreign Language*) classrooms, remain a topic that needs further exploration. Due to the lack of in-person connection, online CFL sessions bring distinct obstacles and opportunities for interaction. This condition requires teachers to develop strategic techniques for interacting within the classroom and how to engage the active students talk to sustain engagement and enable effective language learning.

The primary research objective is to examine how Teacher Talk and Student Talk interact within the context of online CFL classes. The study seeks to identify methods for improving their dynamics to create a more impactful and engaging online CFL learning environment. By analyzing

both Teacher Talk and Student Talk, the research aims to enhance academic understanding of optimizing interactions to foster an engaging and enriching online CFL learning atmosphere.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the dynamics of Teacher Talk and Student Talk within online Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) classes. Qualitative methods are employed to facilitate an in-depth understanding of the complex interactions occurring in this context. Data is collected through the online observation and video recording of CFL classes. This method enables the capture of real-time interactions between teachers and students, preserving both verbal and non-verbal communication cues essential for comprehensive analysis.

Sixteen high school students and four teachers participate in the study, engaging in four CFL online classes with the same set of students but different teachers. These classes consist of two pronunciation class sessions and two speaking class sessions, providing diverse perspectives within the online CFL learning environment.

Data analysis involves a thematic approach guided by the Framework for Interaction Analysis in Communication (FIAC). Observational data is gathered through detailed note-taking, while video recordings are transcribed to ensure accuracy. Thematic analysis is then applied to identify patterns and themes within Teacher Talk and Student Talk interactions, allowing for systematic interpretation and organization of observed interactions.

Table 1. Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC) (Flander, 1970)

Category	Section	Subcategory	Description
Teacher Talk	Indirect Influence (Response)	Accepting feelings	Acknowledging and accepting students' feelings
		Praising and Encouraging	Providing praise and encouragement to students
		Accepting or Using Students' Ideas	Incorporating students' ideas into the conversation
	Direct Influence (Initiation)	Asking questions	Engaging students with questions
		Lecturing	Delivering instructional content
		Giving directions	Providing instructions, commands, or orders
		Criticizing or Justifying Authority	Providing reasons or criticism for authority
Student Talk	Response	Student-Talk in Response to the Teacher	Responding to the teacher's prompts or questions
	Initiation	Talk Initiated by the Student	Students initiating communication (ideas, questions)
	Silence or Confusion	Periods of silence or pauses	Pauses, short periods of silence
		Simultaneous unclear interaction	Confusion periods of confusion in which two persons or more talk at the same time and interaction cannot be understood by the observer.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data analysis using the Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC) framework (Flanders, 1970), the following results were obtained:

Table 2. *Teacher Talk & Student Talk in Online CFL Class Presentation*

Class	Teacher Talk	Student Talk	Silence or Confusion
Pron. 1	62.27%	30.70%	7.01%
Pron. 2	63.12%	32.5%	3.125%
Speaking 1	66.74%	27.7%	5.55%
Speaking 2	61.78%	35.29%	1.96%

Table 2 presents a comprehensive overview of the distribution of interaction types, namely teacher talk, student talk, and instances of silence or confusion, observed across four distinct online CFL classes. These classes include two dedicated to pronunciation (pronunciation class 1 and pronunciation class 2) and two focused on speaking skills (speaking class 1 and speaking class 2). The table indicates that teacher talk has a high percentage in all online CFL classes, indicating that class interaction is predominantly led by the teacher. The percentage of student talk in pronunciation and speaking classes shows no significant difference, although speaking classes would be more effective if students engaged more in class interaction.

The interaction gap within pronunciation class 1, pronunciation class 2, speaking class 1, and speaking class 2 in online CFL can be observed through the bar chart below:

Light green color: *Teacher Talk*

Medium green color: *Student Talk*

Dark green color: *Silence or Confusion*

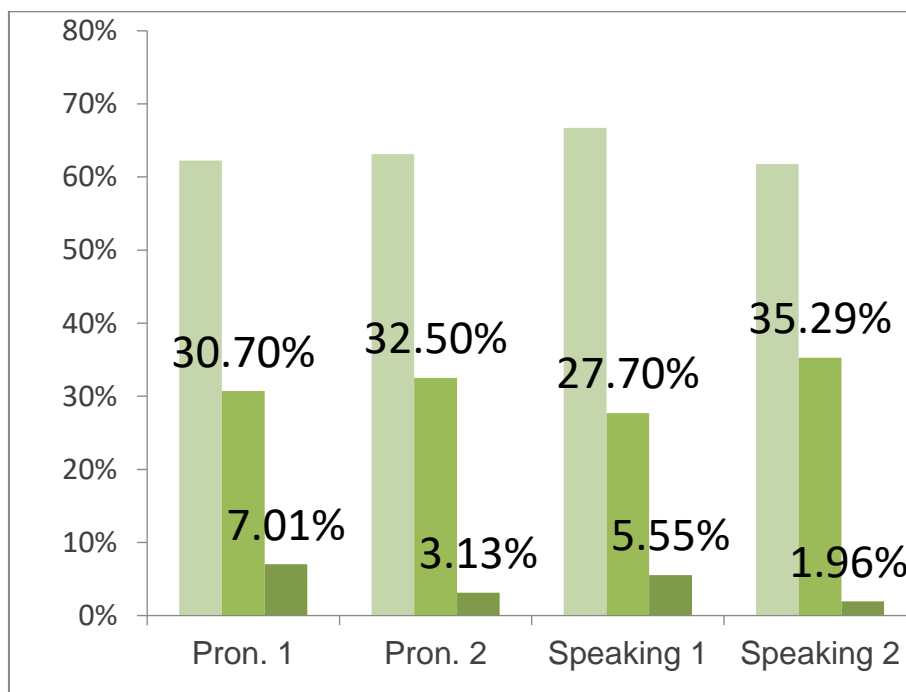


Figure 1. Bar Chart of Teacher Talk & Student Talk in Online CFL Classes

Pronunciation Class 1

Table 3. Teacher Talk & Student Talk in Pronunciation Class 1

TYPE OF SPEAKER	TYPE OF TALK	PERCENTAGE
TEACHER TALK	Accepting feelings	2.63%
	Praising and Encouraging	8.77%
	Accepting or Using Students' Ideas	1.75%
	Asking Questions	5.26%
	Lecturing	30.70%
	Giving Directions	13.16%
	Criticizing or Justifying Authority	0%
STUDENT TALK	Student-Talk in Response to the Teacher	17.54%
	Talk Initiated by the Student	13.16%
Silence or Confusion	Periods of silence or pauses	5.26%
	Simultaneous unclear interaction	1.75%

Table 3 provides a detailed depiction of the interactions occurring within Pronunciation Class 1 based on the Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC) framework. The percentage of teacher talk is at 62.27%, categorized as follows: (1) Indirect Influence (Response): Accepting feelings 2.63%, Praising and Encouraging 8.77%, Accepting or Using Students' Ideas 1.75%; (2) Direct Influence (Initiation): Asking Questions 5.26%, Lecturing 30.70%, Giving Directions 13.16%, and Criticizing or Justifying Authority 0%.

The percentage of student talk stands at 30.70%, comprising: (1) Indirect Influence (Response): Student-Talk in Response to the Teacher 17.54%; (2) Direct Influence (Initiation): Talk initiated by student 13.16%. Furthermore, the percentage of silence or confusion is at 7.01%, with periods of silence or pauses accounting for 5.26% and Simultaneous unclear interaction 1.75%.

Pronunciation Class 2

Table 4. Teacher Talk & Student Talk in Pronunciation Class 2

TYPE OF SPEAKER	TYPE OF TALK	PERCENTAGE
TEACHER TALK	Accepting feelings	1.875%
	Praising and Encouraging	14.375%
	Accepting or Using Students' Ideas	2.5%
	Asking Questions	6.875%
	Lecturing	22.5%
	Giving Directions	15%
	Criticizing or Justifying Authority	0%
STUDENT TALK	Student-Talk in Response to the Teacher	15%
	Talk Initiated by the Student	17.5%
Silence or Confusion	Periods of silence or pauses	2.5%
	Simultaneous unclear interaction	0.625%

Table 4. Displays the interactions occurring within Pronunciation Class 2. The percentage of teacher talk is at 63.12%, categorized as follows: (1) Indirect Influence (Response): Accepting feelings 1.875%, Praising and Encouraging 14.375%, and Accepting or Using Students' Ideas 2.5%; and (2) Direct

Influence (Initiation): Asking Questions 6.875%, Lecturing 22.5%, Giving Directions 15%, and Criticizing or Justifying Authority 0%.

The percentage of student talk stands at 32.50% with (1) Indirect Influence (Response): Student-Talk in Response to the Teacher 15%, and (2) Direct Influence (Initiation): Talk initiated by student 17.5%. Furthermore, the percentage of silence or confusion is at 3.13% with the distribution as follows: Periods of silence or pauses 2.5% and Simultaneous unclear interaction 0.625%.

Speaking Class 1

Table 5. Teacher Talk & Student Talk in Speaking Class 1

TYPE OF SPEAKER	TYPE OF TALK	PERCENTAGE
TEACHER TALK	Accepting feelings	3.70%
	Praising and Encouraging	12.04%
	Accepting or Using Students' Ideas	0%
	Asking Questions	11.11%
	Lecturing	25.93%
	Giving Directions	12.96%
	Criticizing or Justifying Authority	0%
STUDENT TALK	Student-Talk in Response to the Teacher	14.81%
	Talk Initiated by the Student	12.96%
Silence or Confusion	Periods of silence or pauses	1.85%
	Simultaneous unclear interaction	3.70%

Table 5. Represents the interactions occurring within Speaking Class 1. The percentage of teacher talk is at 66.74%, with (1) Indirect Influence (Response): Accepting feelings 3.70%, Praising and Encouraging 12.04%, and Accepting or Using Students' Ideas 0%. (2) Direct Influence (Initiation): Asking Questions 11.11%, Lecturing 25.93%, Giving Directions 12.96%, and Criticizing or Justifying Authority 0%.

The percentage of student talk stands at 27.7% with (1) Indirect Influence (Response): Student-Talk in Response to the Teacher 14.81%, and (2) Direct Influence (Initiation): Talk initiated by student 12.96%. Furthermore, the percentage of silence or confusion is at 3.13% with Periods of silence or pauses 1.85%, and Simultaneous unclear interaction 3.70%.

Speaking Class 2

Table 6. Teacher Talk & Student Talk in Speaking Class 2

TYPE OF SPEAKER	TYPE OF TALK	PERCENTAGE
TEACHER TALK	Accepting feelings	0.98%
	Praising and Encouraging	13.73%
	Accepting or Using Students' Ideas	0%
	Asking Questions	5.69%
	Lecturing	17.65%
	Giving Directions	13.73%
	Criticizing or Justifying Authority	0%

STUDENT TALK	Student-Talk in Response to the Teacher	17.65%
	Talk Initiated by the Student	17.65%
Silence or Confusion	Periods of silence or pauses	1.96%
	Simultaneous unclear interaction	0%

Table 6. Illustrates the interactions occurring within Speaking Class 2. The percentage of teacher talk is at 61.78%, with (1) Indirect Influence (Response): Accepting feelings 0.98%, Praising and Encouraging 13.73%, and Accepting or Using Students' Ideas 0%. (2) Direct Influence (Initiation): Asking Questions 5.69%, Lecturing 17.65%, Giving Directions 13.73%, and Criticizing or Justifying Authority 0%.

The percentage of student talk stands at 35.29% with (1) Indirect Influence (Response): Student-Talk in Response to the Teacher 17.65%, and (2) Direct Influence (Initiation): Talk initiated by student 17.65%. Furthermore, the percentage of silence or confusion is at 1.96% with Periods of silence or pauses 1.96%, and Simultaneous unclear interaction 0%.

Classroom Interaction Dynamics

The learning process of a foreign language, in this case, Chinese as a Foreign Language, requires strategies to achieve learning targets. Language learning oriented towards active communication between teachers and students is more effective than mastering language material in written form (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This thing proves that classroom interaction is one of the essential components in the process of learning a foreign language.

Based on the analysis of 4 online CFL classes using the Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC) framework (Flander, 1970), it is shown that teacher talk is more dominant than student talk and silence or confusion. In teacher talk, direct influence (initiation) has a higher percentage compared to indirect influence (response). This situation could happen because teachers in each class more often engage in lecturing, which is also the most prominent element compared to other elements in classroom interaction. Lecturing becomes critical when delivering learning material to students (Nurhidayatullah et al., 2023). Lecturing is also used when teachers explain parts students do not understand during the learning process.

The flows in the four classes show that the dominant role of teacher talk is undeniable, but the exciting thing that emerges is how the management of teacher talk occurs. A series of rotations is happening, where practical teacher talk in the form of *Teacher Initiation*, such as *asking questions and giving directions*, will then influence student talk in the form of *student response to the teacher*. This kind of teacher initiation can elicit direct responses in classroom interaction.

However, the most important thing is how the teacher talk as the teacher responds next. The interaction becomes passive when the teacher merely accepts answers or responses from students without further engagement. However, when the teacher responds in the form of *accepting feelings*, meaning accepting and understanding if the student is wrong or making small mistakes in answering questions, as well as *praising and encouraging*, it makes students who respond, whether right or wrong, feel a sense of achievement and appreciation for their effort in responding. An important note in this observation is that when the teacher responds by *accepting or using students' ideas*, using a student's answer as an example relevant to the class theme, other students will be motivated to answer as well. This condition then increases students' active participation and student initiation, where the teacher no longer needs to point or ask students to answer. However, student talk is initiated by the student actively. Consequently, this condition may sustain students' motivation and foster a sense of ownership over their learning journey. As mentioned in Fatmawati (2023), there is a strong correlation between student motivation and their learning strategy in CFL learning. Encouraging an atmosphere through effective classroom interaction may help students be included more actively in their learning.

This cycle of classroom interaction can continue if the teacher manages the class well and students actively participate in class. Teachers should be able to encourage student talk and contribute more to classroom interaction. Teachers can analyze classroom interaction activities so that teacher talk can support and stimulate student talk as much as possible (Pujiastuti, 2013). Additionally, teachers must pay attention to various strategies to encourage active student participation, such as discussion-based learning techniques, role-playing, or collaborative projects. Consequently, teachers can create a stimulating and supportive learning environment where students feel comfortable speaking and interacting in the online learning environment, thus optimizing learning a foreign language.

CONCLUSION

Data analysis distinctly emphasizes the crucial significance of classroom interaction in online Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) classes. This significance is rooted in the interplay between teacher and student dynamics interaction. The study illuminates the fundamental role of teacher and student talk in shaping the online learning journey. Even though giving lectures is essential, students getting involved and participating a lot comes from the helpful instructions given by the teacher. The effective participation of students often hinges on the guidance and prompts that the teacher initiates, thereby fostering a collaborative and enriching learning environment in the online classroom.

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