



JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM DISCOURSE: FLANDERS' INTERACTION ANALYSIS CATEGORY SYSTEM IN FOCUS

Edelyn Navarro¹,
Kristel Mae G. Tacder²,
Cristy Grace A. Ngo³ⁱ

¹⁻³College of Teacher Education,
University of Mindanao,
Davao City, Philippines

³Professional Schools,
University of Mindanao,
Davao City, Philippines

Abstract:

This study aimed to analyze the identified verbal interactions and most frequent and least observed interactions in the Junior High School classrooms of a private non-sectarian academic institution in Davao City. Flanders' Interaction Analysis Category System (FIACS) was used to analyze the data gathered from four classes that used English as the medium of instruction. The results revealed that the different verbal interactions observed include direct teacher talk, indirect teacher talk, pupil talk, and silence. Meanwhile, the most frequently observed verbal interaction was lecturing, and the least observed was criticizing or justifying authority. The findings indicate that lecturing remains the core method of instruction in the observed classrooms and confirmed that despite the calls for more learner-centered approaches, direct instruction continues to shape how classroom time is used and how students engage with lesson content. This study provides authentic classroom-based evidence of how teacher-student verbal interactions are shaped by dominant lecturing, implying that teachers need to balance lecturing with more opportunities for student talk to support more interactive and learner-centered teaching. Providing classroom-based evidence of actual teacher-student verbal interaction patterns guides future improvements in teaching strategies and professional development, thereby contributing to the academic field.

Keywords: education, classroom discourse, Flanders' Interaction Analysis Category System, junior high school

ⁱ Correspondence: email cngo@umindanao.edu.ph, cristygracengo@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Classroom interaction is one critical factor in achieving quality teaching and learning. However, various factors often limit the ideal classroom interaction. For example, teachers' dominance in the discourse limits the students' opportunities to express their thoughts and engage actively in the discussion, leading to reduced students' autonomy (Wang *et al.*, 2021; Pratiwi, 2019). In addition, Ahmad (2021) emphasized the various reasons for students' reluctance to speak in class, including lack of interest in the subject matter, fear of discrimination, and fear of making mistakes while sharing their opinions about a particular topic, leading the students to experience anxiety when talking in front of the class.

Moreover, Kahveci (2022) stressed that disengagement diminishes the quality of classroom interactions and hinders students' academic growth. UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2023) asserted that there is a growing concern about the lack of student participation and overall engagement across various educational systems worldwide. Further, ^[6] examined classroom interaction in Indonesian lower secondary schools and found that teachers tend to dominate classroom discussion, limiting students' opportunities to initiate conversation and engage more deeply in meaningful discourse. Although students have been given chances to interact, they tend to be passive in interaction and choose to remain silent when the teacher discusses (Fachrunnisa & Nuraeni, 2022; Ate *et al.*, 2021).

In the Philippines, similar challenges in classroom interaction are observed, particularly with the traditional teaching methods that still prevail in many educational institutions. Enerio (2021) found that excessive control over discussions often limits students' participation, and they are likely to become passive learners, preventing them from having active learning. Studies show that teachers' dominance in discussions leaves students with limited opportunities to express themselves. Along with this issue is compounded by cultural norms such as *hiya* (shyness), which discourages students from speaking out, especially when facing the class, leading to low self-efficacy and passive behavior in classroom discussions (Yuarata, 2015). In addition, Trinidad (2022) found that students tend to refrain from participating and showing emotions in class to avoid being reprimanded by the teachers.

In classroom interaction, teacher-talk and student-talk are evident during discussions. Several studies observed conversations that happened in the classroom. This was supported by Domogen (2021), highlighting that there is an imbalance of teacher-student classroom interaction during discussion, revealing predominantly directive language used by teachers, which led to limited student interaction. Teachers frequently dominate classroom discourse, relying on direct instruction and minimizing opportunities for students to initiate interaction, which highlights the need to have a more interactive classroom environment. Moreover, there is a strong reliance on lectures and directives during classroom interaction. Teachers' dominance in the classroom leads the students to show lower cognitive engagement. They exert a great deal of control on

the students and have a strong influence on how the students behave (Aruta *et al.*, 2019). Thus, the quantity and consistency of teacher-student interaction are a vital element of effective teaching and improved learning in the classroom.

The importance of this study lies in its contribution to understanding how verbal interactions between teachers and students shape the dynamics of classroom communication that are essential for fostering an engaging and effective learning environment. By systematically analyzing these interactions, this study can reveal patterns in teacher talk—such as the balance between direct and indirect communication—and their corresponding effects on student participation and learning. Such insights are crucial for informing teaching practices that, along with the goals of Quality Education, emphasize inclusive and participative pedagogies. The findings may help educators to improve their communication strategies to enhance student engagement, critical thinking, and classroom collaboration. Ultimately, this research will provide empirical evidence that can guide curriculum developers, policymakers, and teacher training programs in promoting interaction-rich classrooms.

There are several studies worldwide on classroom discourse with different types of frameworks used. However, in the Philippines, particularly in the secondary education of a private non-sectarian academic institution in Davao City, Philippines, limited studies have been found to account for Flanders' (1970) Framework in teacher-student verbal interactions during classroom discussions (Barbadillo *et al.*, 2024; Pentinio, 2023; Mercado, 2022). Hence, it is essential to delve into the manifested teacher-student verbal interactions as well as the most frequent and least observed verbal interactions during the teaching-learning process (Halim, 2018). Considering that classroom interaction fosters active learning, further research needs to be conducted to prove the effectiveness of teacher-student interactions in various subject matters to create appropriate teaching strategies for teachers' guidance in enhancing students' learning development.

This study aimed to analyze and understand how verbal interactions between the teacher and students in the classroom influence students' responses and participation to improve classroom interactions and student engagement. This study sought to answer the following research objectives: (1) analyze the verbal interactions present in the classroom between teacher and students, and (2) determine the most frequent and least observed verbal interactions in the classroom between teacher and students in Junior High School in a private non-sectarian academic institution in Davao City, Philippines. Additionally, this study aligns with the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4, which addresses quality education, more specifically focusing on SDG 4.1, ensuring inclusive, equitable, and quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all.

3. Material and Methods

3.1 Research Data

The data of this study consisted of recorded discourses between the teacher and their students in two Grade 9 classes and two Grade 10 classes in a private non-sectarian academic institution in Davao City. A consent form was given to the principal which proved that they had given their permission to proceed with the observation. Only lessons taught by licensed professional teachers with at least two years of teaching experience in their current grade level were considered to ensure consistency of typical classroom interaction. Also, regular academic subjects taught during regular class hours following the standard curriculum were included.

However, lessons conducted during written assessments, examinations, special events, or non-academic programs were excluded to avoid atypical interaction patterns. Any class where consent for observation was not given by the teacher was not included in the data gathering process. Moreover, the observation focused on verbal behavior and served as the core data for the analysis, which contained details necessary to discover the most frequent and least observed verbal interactions in these classes. The interaction that occurred during regular class sessions specifically captured dialogues, instructions, questions, and responses between the teacher and the students.

In addition, the data was collected through observation sheets and audio recordings to record the intricacies of classroom interactions and to fully determine and analyze which of the categories were being manifested in the teacher-student verbal interaction that took place during the sessions.

3.2 Research Design

This research utilized an interaction analysis approach, using Flanders' Interaction Analysis Category System (FIACS) as a theoretical and methodological framework. Interaction analysis is used to systematically observe, categorize, and interpret the verbal behaviors of teachers and students, thus revealing the underlying interaction patterns that shape the classroom environment and instructional quality. Through structured observation using frameworks such as FIACS, it becomes possible to assess the balance between student-centered and teacher-centered communication, providing empirical data to enhance teaching strategies (Amatari, 2015).

The recorded discourse was categorized and analyzed according to the Flanders' Interaction Analysis Category System (1970) Framework, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the dynamics between teacher and student interactions in the classroom. Considering that this study was focused on analyzing the most frequent and least observed verbal classroom interactions made it a particularly suitable approach.

3.3 Data Analysis

In analyzing the data for this study, the researchers used the data analysis framework of Miles and Huberman (1994), which involves three interactive and concurrent processes:

data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification followed by the FIACS which classified verbal behavior into 10 categories: seven for teacher talk, two for student talk, and one for silence or confusion. Teacher talk is divided into indirect and direct categories. The indirect talk includes *accepting feelings, praising or encouraging, accepting or using students' ideas, and asking questions*. Direct talk includes *lecturing, giving directions, and criticizing or justifying authority*. Further, student talk is categorized as either *student response* or *student initiation*. The final category is *silence or confusion* that appears when communication is not understood.

Data reduction was conducted by transcribing the recorded classroom interactions and systematically coding them according to the 10 categories of FIACS. The step involved filtering the verbal exchanges to focus on relevant teacher and student talk, summarizing the frequencies and patterns observed across different sessions. Once the data were categorized, the next process involved data display, where the coded interactions were presented through tables to visually represent the proportion of direct teacher talk, indirect teacher talk, and student talk. These displays facilitated a clearer understanding of the interaction patterns within the classroom.

Finally, in the conclusion drawing and verification phase, the researchers interpreted the displayed data to derive insights about the nature of teacher-student interactions, particularly identifying whether the communication patterns were teacher-centered or student-centered. To ensure the validity of the findings, the researchers cross-checked data from multiple observations and verified coding consistency. Through this systematic process, the study was able to uncover meaningful patterns in classroom interactions and provide evidence-based conclusions regarding the dynamics of teacher and student exchanges.

4. Results and Discussion

This section addresses the research objectives that guided this study: (1) analyze the verbal interactions present in the classroom between teacher and students, and (2) determine the most frequent and least observed verbal interactions in the classroom between teacher and students in Junior High School in a private non-sectarian academic institution in Davao City, Philippines. The discussion of the findings then follows a connection with existing literature.

4.1. Verbal Interactions of Teachers and Students as Observed in Junior High School Classes

Table 1 shows several interactions observed namely praising or encouraging, accepting or using students' ideas, asking questions, lecturing, giving direction, criticizing or justifying authority, pupil-talk response, pupil-talk initiation, and silence or confusion. Authentic verbal interactions observed are categorized accordingly through codes—O₁ for observations in Grade 9 section one, O₂ for observations in Grade 9 section two, O₃ for observations in Grade 10 section one, and O₄ for observations in Grade 10 section two.

Table 1: Verbal Interactions of Teachers and Students as Observed in Junior High School Classes

Main Category	Sub-Category	Sub-class
Teacher Talk	Indirect Talk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Praise or encouragement • Accepting or using ideas of students • Asking questions
	Direct Talk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecturing • Giving direction • Criticizing or justifying authority
Pupil Talk	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupil-talk response • Pupil-talk initiation
Silence/Confusion	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silence or confusion

4.1.1 Indirect Teacher Talk

Indirect teacher talk is associated with teachers motivating learners to share ideas freely, develop critical thinking skills, and actively construct knowledge rather than passively receiving it (Purba *et al.*, 2018; Sagita, 2018). As specified in FIACS, this category comes in different forms, such as accepting feelings, praising or encouraging, accepting or using pupils' ideas, and asking questions. These categories reflect a teacher's role as a facilitator who acknowledges students' emotional expressions, motivates them through positive reinforcement, supports their ideas, and stimulates thought through questioning (Putri, 2015).

4.1.2 Praise or Encouragement

Praise or encouragement is often used as a motivating and affirming tool that teachers use to provide positive reinforcement for students' learning and behavior (Erickson & Goldberg, 2021). This sub-category highlights teachers' positive feedback towards the students, allowing them to participate more in the discussion (Campean & Roman, 2024). Teachers may tell students that they have done well in class, which results in exhibiting positive attitude, behavior, and action. These are manifested in the observed verbal interactions below:

That's correct. Very good. -O₁

All right, good. -O₄

Who wants to try? Okay lang magka-mali. -O₂

Translation: It is okay if you answer incorrectly.

In O₁ and O₄, the teachers praise the students for their answers. The teachers give affirmative words that help the students be motivated and be more participative. While in O₂, the teacher includes support by not only praising correct answers but also encouraging them to answer despite being uncertain or wrong. These boost students' confidence and create a positive classroom climate where learners feel motivated and safe to speak up. Teachers even incorporate light humor to ease the tension and make students feel more comfortable when the lesson becomes difficult. Consequently, instead of only

flattering correct answers, teachers help students see learning as meaningful by recognizing their effort, curiosity, and progress. Hogg *et al.* (2024) found that when teachers provide genuine and specific praise to students, they develop greater confidence in their abilities, which can lead to increased engagement and persistence in learning tasks. Praise and encouragement communicate to students that their efforts are being recognized and valued, fostering trust and positive social bonds that contribute to a supportive classroom environment (Kauffman, 2024; Peng, 2021). This shows that effective praise is timely, sincere, and behavior-specific, focusing on students' efforts and strategies rather than solely on outcomes.

4.1.3 Accepting or Using Ideas of Students

In this sub-class, only the students' ideas are accepted and not their feelings, which denotes how the teacher acknowledges and incorporates ideas, suggestions, or intellectual contributions made by students during the teaching-learning process (Ng *et al.*, 2025). When students share their ideas or suggestions, the teacher may paraphrase or summarize them using their own words to maintain the flow of the lesson while validating student input (Zhao, 2024). This is manifested in the observed verbal interactions below:

Teacher (T): *Who are these bystanders?*

Students (Ss): *Mga nakakita.*

Translation: Those who witness

T: *Very good. So, a bystander is a person who witnesses...-O₃*

Student (S): *If the three sides are proportional to the other three sides of another...*

T: *Okay, when we use the side-side-side theorem or triangle similarity...-O₂*

In O₃ and O₂, the teachers actively listen to the students' input and elaborate through iteration into the ongoing discussion. This shows that the teachers' actions signify that they are not only passively receiving their students' ideas but also valuing them as meaningful contributions to the learning process, allowing the students to feel more validated and respected. Wong *et al.* (2023) emphasized that integrating students' ideas promotes the development of new knowledge and cognitive development among learners. When students share and discuss perspectives with their teachers and peers, they deepen their understanding and internalize new concepts more effectively. Moreover, Quiblat and Ubayubay (2024) found in Philippine junior high school classrooms that teachers who regularly incorporated student ideas fostered higher participation and reduced classroom anxiety. This suggests that accepting students' ideas is not just about classroom motivation or management, but also a pedagogical strategy with significant emotional and cognitive rewards.

4.1.4 Asking Questions

This sub-class is associated with the teacher's act of testing the student's level of understanding by posing a question about the discussion, intending to the pupil to respond. Teachers' questioning is a central component of classroom discourse that mediates student learning by eliciting responses, guiding thinking, and fostering engagement (Uştuk & Hu, 2025). Questions without answers are not included in this category. These are manifested in the observed verbal interactions below:

T: *How many hydrogens?*

S1: *Two.*

T: *There's two because it's H₂. Okay, how about oxygen?*

S2: *Still two.*

T: *Still two. Next, how many H?*

S3: *Two.*

T: *Two. How about the O?*

S4: *Two.*

T: *Only one. Is it balanced?*

S5: *No, sir. –O₁*

In O₁, the teacher performs a series of actions—questioning, confirming, probing, correcting, checking for understanding—which are common strategies in maintaining an interactive and responsive classroom discourse. A skillful use of questioning can improve student motivation, develop higher-order thinking skills, and create a collaborative classroom culture that supports lifelong learning. Uştuk and Ye (2025) affirmed that effective classroom questioning requires a balance between cognitive demand and interaction strategy, where teachers purposefully use a mix of lower-order and higher-order questions to stimulate both thinking and dialogue. Similarly, Boyd (2015) highlighted the importance of contingent questioning—where teachers respond to students' answers with follow-up questions—which scaffolds students' thought processes and extends classroom discourse. Structured questioning sequences such as guiding, probing, and refining student responses have been shown to support conceptual understanding and critical reasoning (Prain *et al.*, 2023). Thus, the act of asking questions is a key instructional strategy used to stimulate thinking, check understanding, and encourage student participation.

4.1.5 Direct Teacher Talk

This involves behaviors where the teacher assumes a more controlling or authoritative role in classroom discourse, typically through giving information, giving direct instructions, offering critical feedback aimed at managing behavior or clarifying content (Nafisah & Setianingsih, 2024), lecturing, or criticizing or justifying authority intended to manage or instruct in a predominantly one-way communicative pattern (Winanta *et al.*, 2020).

4.1.6 Lecturing

This is a traditional and teacher-centered instructional approach where an oral delivery of information by the teacher intends to transmit facts, principles, concepts, ideas, or theories to a large group of students (Blackburn & Stair, 2022). In the observations we conducted, the teachers used to lecture the most as their primary approach to teaching. While they transmit information, the students listen and jot down notes simultaneously, resulting in a dominantly one-way form of communication. Despite this, the teachers structured their lecturing with appropriate pacing and smooth transitions that help students follow the flow of ideas. Students might have struggled to remain attentive; however, teachers delivered with clarity, structure, and enthusiasm, with active learning strategies such as questioning, which help reinforce learning and promote student participation.

Roberto and Madrigal (2019) asserted that in many Philippine classrooms, lecturing enables teachers to manage instructional time while ensuring curriculum coverage, particularly those with large student populations. From a student's perspective, lecturing can be beneficial when it is well-organized, purposeful, and focused. It helps students benefit from the teacher's interpretation, expertise, and synthesis of content (Andal & Hermosa, 2025). Moreover, Klein *et al.* (2023) compared traditional and active lecture formats and reported that students in active-lecture sessions—who experienced interactive elements, like discussions and quizzes—demonstrated greater attention, engagement, and preference compared to those in straight lectures.

4.1.7 Giving Directions

In this sub-class, the teacher provides directions, commands, or initiation that students are expected to follow. Giving directions contributes significantly to learning efficiency guiding the students' behavior, learning tasks, and transitions as it provides clear and structured instructions (Berger *et al.*, 2023). This is manifested below:

Get your notebook and take down notes. –O₁

Keep all your gadgets. –O₂

Students at the back, you also have to answer. –O₃

Solve this using your scientific calculator. –O₄

Typically, the teachers provide directives at various stages of the class which manage the flow of activities, clarify instructions and ensure that students are on track with the lesson objectives and procedures. This is fundamental in organizing the learning environment and sharpening students' focus, allowing them to engage confidently in the learning process. Evidently, according to Mapacpac (2023), when teachers deliver directions with clarity and maintain organized classrooms, students not only perform better academically but also feel more motivated, confident, and emotionally invested in learning. Likewise, Mallillin *et al.* (2023) emphasized that concise, step-by-step

instructions help students stay focused and reduce the likelihood of task-related errors. Through precise and concise teacher directions using calm and respectful tones, students are likely to comply with the teacher's requests when directions are delivered, improving student responsiveness (Gagnon *et al.*, 2024). Thus, effective teacher directions help establish expectations, reduce confusion, and guide student behavior in a structured manner.

4.1.8 Criticizing or Justifying Authority

This sub-class pertains to the statements teachers use to interrupt the students' behavior that is considered unacceptable or unpleasant. Teachers also exercise their authority by calling out students' names or drawing their attention to their behavior during discussion (Ibrahimova, 2025) or using authoritative phrases to restore the flow of communication during instructional periods (Nolan & Mac Ruairc, 2022). These are manifested below:

Ssh! Listen! –O₄

I hear some noise. –O₃

In O₄ and O₃, the teachers use their authority to assert control, suppress students' noise, and maintain order. The verbal cues used by the teachers made students become more aware of their behavior without creating fear or embarrassment and instead of scolding or shouting at the students, the teachers redirected their attention back to learning. This allows self-regulation in students as they realize that being disruptive affects the learning environment. The teachers justify their authority calmly, professionally, respectfully, and pedagogically to attract attention or halt interruptions made by the students during the class. Hence, the students adjust their behavior accordingly.

Edwards-Groves and Davidson (2016) emphasized that a classroom management plan, which includes rules and regulations, aids in encouraging good student behavior, preventing student misbehavior, and fostering a feeling of organization and consistency in the classroom. When teachers justify their authority, they make classroom expectations transparent. This supports students in understanding not only what is expected of them but also why, leading to improved classroom climate and trust. As noted by Hanessy *et al.* (2011), providing justification for authority helps build relational equity and fosters mutual respect between teachers and students.

4.1.9 Pupil Talk

This sub-category pertains to the verbal responses and contributions made by students during classroom interaction. This includes asking questions and expressing original ideas made by the students without direct prompts from the teacher. This is where students engage in the classroom with frequent pupil-initiated talk, which supports higher-order thinking and long-term retention of information, fostering an active classroom interaction (Oloruntegbe & Ikpe, 2011).

4.1.10 Pupil-talk Response

This sub-class pertains to students' responses to the teacher, characterized by students following directions or answering questions provided by the teacher. These responses not only serve as indicators of comprehension but also active engagement in the learning process; they can be relevant or irrelevant, short or elaborated. The nature of these responses reflects both the students' ability and willingness to participate in dialogue and the teacher's questioning strategies (Hasanah *et al.*, 2020). In our observations, the students were more likely to respond freely and express opinions during the teacher's talk, even if they might make mistakes. Students' responses evolved throughout the lesson. At the beginning, their responses were more recall-based; however, as the lesson progressed and they became more engaged or confident, their answers shifted towards analysis, interpretation, and application. Throughout the observation, students' responses only happened when teachers asked questions or initiated discussions with the students, which the students later answered in chorus, such in O₇ where the students' response to the teacher was delivered individually and collectively—each student answered in unison. Further, teachers assess students' understanding during or after a presentation by asking questions, which encourage participation and determine if they grasp the topic, which enhances the overall class interaction. Moreover, it was evident that the students' responses guided the teacher in adjusting the pace, content, and strategy of instruction to better suit the students' needs.

Our findings support Mundelsee and Jurkowski (2023), who claimed that the frequency and quality of pupil-talk responses are linked to improved academic performance, as these responses provide teachers with insight into learners' understanding and allow for immediate instructional adjustments. While often brief, pupil responses lay the groundwork for deeper learning when teachers follow up with extension questions that encourage students to justify, analyze, or expand on their initial replies. This shift can transform classroom exchanges from basic question-and-answer to rich, exploratory dialogue that promotes critical thinking and self-expression (Murphy, 2015). Wirza and Sholihah (2020) stated that learners participate in class for several reasons: they have opportunities to learn, use new knowledge and strategies, clarify their reasoning, explore their thinking processes, and identify the need to revise their thinking. Thus, responsive interactions rooted in pupil talk enable teachers to tailor feedback effectively and create a more interactive, learner-centered classroom environment.

4.1.11 Pupil-talk Initiation

This sub-class pertains to voluntary verbal contributions commenced by the students. Students express their own ideas, initiating a topic, developing and presenting their opinions, and asking thoughtful questions without prompting from the teacher (Decristan *et al.*, 2023). Moreover, when students take the initiative to contribute to discussions, it not only aids in constructing meaning but also supports critical thinking and comprehension (Al-Adeimi, 2025). We observed that students were given multiple opportunities to initiate questions and share their ideas freely. The teacher would then

nod, smile, or affirm students' opinions or when the students would ask questions during discussions and the teacher responds, they have grown a sense of confidence and feel more driven to initiate a contribution. For instance, few students voluntarily raised their hands and asked, *Ma'am, what is parasuicide?* –O₁₇ and *Does adjacent have any value, Sir?* –O₂₀ where the teachers immediately provided accurate information or appropriate clarification to the students' queries, aiming to feed their curiosities and maintain engagement. These observations indicate that students are more eager to express themselves, whether through questions or suggestions, which helps build a collaborative and motivating atmosphere.

Lumber *et al.* (2023) found that encouraging students to generate their own questions can enhance cognitive processes and critical thinking skills. Students trained to formulate and pose their own questions exhibited significant improvements in reasoning abilities and questioning skills. Moreover, van Balen (2024) underscored that when students are given the space to initiate discourse, it fosters a sense of agency and ownership over their learning. Such environments encourage students to engage more deeply with the content, leading to enhanced understanding and retention.

4.1.12 Silence or Confusion

Silence or confusion occurs when students process information momentarily, hesitate to respond to the teacher's initiation, or are uncertain about a question (Wang & Kang, 2023). It also includes non-verbal pauses, such as when the teacher is preparing materials or transitioning between activities (Liu & Gillies, 2021). While these moments are often brief and may seem passive, they can serve an important instructional function, allowing the students to have cognitive processing, transitioning, or planning. On another note, prolonged silence without a clear instructional purpose may also indicate confusion, lack of engagement, or ineffective questioning strategies (Yilmaz & Soysal, 2023).

During our observation, silence or confusion was manifested when the students did not understand the scientific concept or mathematical problem. Although every teaching and learning process might experience this sub-class, teachers immediately discerned the areas where students struggle and need further support. Consequently, the teachers scaffolded through iterating the lesson or asking probing questions to find the accurate information. In addition, the students' silence was due to processing information, introspection, reluctance, and prolonging verbal pauses. At the same time, teachers preparing materials or transitioning between tasks without a clear instructional purpose were counted as silence during the observations.

In other words, silence can be an indication of disengagement, lack of understanding, focus, thought processing, hesitation, dubiety, or anxiety. Similarly, expressions of confusion—verbal or nonverbal—serve as important feedback for teachers in signaling the parts where students grapple and need follow-up. Thus, effective classroom practice involves teachers discerning between silence that signals reflection versus silence indicating withdrawal, and using strategies such as open-ended questions,

clarifying prompts, or peer discussion to encourage articulation and conceptual clarity (Akhat *et al.*, 2022).

4.2 The Most Frequent and Least Observed Verbal Interactions of Teachers and Students in Junior High School Classes

Table 2 shows the most frequent and least observed verbal interactions of teachers and students in junior high school classes. These include praise or encouragement, accepting or using ideas of students, asking questions, lecturing, giving direction, criticizing or justifying authority, pupil-talk response, pupil-talk initiation, and silence or confusion. Authentic verbal interactions observed are categorized accordingly through codes—O₁ for observations in Grade 9 section one, O₂ for observations in Grade 9 section two, O₃ for observations in Grade 10 section one, and O₄ for observations in Grade 10 section two.

Table 2: The Most Frequent and Least Observed Verbal Interactions of Teachers and Students in Junior High School Classes

Sub-Category	Sub-class	O ₁	O ₂	O ₃	O ₄	Total
Indirect Teacher Talk	Praise or Encouragement	39	25	10	5	79
	Accepting or Using Ideas of Students	32	105	45	21	203
	Accepts Feelings of Students	0	0	0	0	0
	Asking Questions	83	213	93	63	452
Direct Teacher Talk	Lecturing	646	457	960	871	2,934
	Giving Direction	41	45	11	5	102
	Criticizing or Justifying Authority	12	13	6	2	33
Pupil Talk	Pupil-Talk Response	70	164	121	79	434
	Pupil-Talk Initiation	43	56	99	78	276
Silence or Confusion	Silence or Confusion	6	24	9	18	57

Out of 10 sub-classes, *lecturing* is the most frequently observed, while *criticizing or justifying authority* is the least. The dominance of lecturing confirms that classroom talk remains heavily teacher-centred. This teaching approach, while efficient for maintaining control of lesson flow and covering material, often limits opportunities for interaction, dialogue, and autonomy among students. Such teacher-centred instruction can create a passive learning environment where students are expected to absorb information rather than construct knowledge (Renos & Pontillas, 2024). Moreover, the instructional reliance on lecturing also aligns with cultural and systemic expectations, where teachers are viewed as the primary authority in the classroom (Bernardo, 2004). However, research increasingly supports the shift toward dialogic teaching practices, which allow students to engage more actively in knowledge construction through collaboration, questions, and shared reasoning (Alonzo *et al.*, 2023). Thus, while lecturing dominates classroom discourse, it may need to be balanced with more interactive strategies to support critical thinking and learning engagement.

Meanwhile, *criticizing or justifying authority* indicates that teachers rarely used verbal discipline, behavior correction, or explicit verbal assertion or regulation. This suggests that when some classes are well-managed already or students follow behavioral

expectations with minimal intervention. Also, it reflects a classroom environment where discipline is enforced non-verbally or where misbehavior is under-addressed to avoid class disruption. Although minimal use of authority-assertive talk may seem positive, completely avoiding verbal correction, when necessary, can lead to reduced behavioral accountability and unclear boundaries (Marzano & Marzano, 2003). When criticizing or justifying authority is used constructively, brief and respectful discipline-related talk can enforce classroom norms that support a safe and structured learning environment. Therefore, while low use of this sub-class indicates a calm classroom climate, it also calls for a closer look at how teachers manage students' behavior, whether through implicit strategies or missed opportunities for reinforcing expectations.

Overall, the results echo a discourse pattern where the teachers' role is primarily instructional, with minimal emphasis on behavioral or relational management through verbal interaction. Thus, a potential need for more balanced verbal practices that include not only content delivery, but also positive reinforcement, behavioral guidance, and student engagement is buttressed.

5. Implications for Practice

The finding that lecturing was the most frequently observed verbal interaction in junior high school classrooms has significant implications for student engagement, classroom practice, and instructional quality. Undoubtedly, the prevailing mode of instruction remains strongly teacher-centered, heavily relying on teacher talk for content delivery with limited opportunities for students to take an active role in constructing and negotiating meaning. While lecturing can be an efficient strategy for explaining complex information, its overuse may unintentionally reinforce passive learning and may discourage student inquiries. When students are positioned mainly as recipients of information, their motivation to challenge ideas, ask questions, and participate critically can be diminished. This limits the development of collaborative competencies and higher-order thinking skills that are vital for 21st century learners.

Moreover, the dominance of lecturing also has implications for teachers' professional practice, highlighting the need to balance traditional content delivery with more dialogic approaches and student-centered practices, such as guided discussions, interactive questioning, peer collaboration, and project-based learning. Integrating these strategies can help shift the verbal climate from monologic to dialogic, creating more space for students' voices, perspectives, and experiences. The finding calls attention to the importance of ongoing teacher training in classroom discourse strategies, including how to effectively encourage participation, scaffold student responses, and manage classroom time so that lectures do not limit opportunities for student interaction.

To address these, it is recommended that schools initiate targeted professional development programs, such as training and workshops that emphasize practical techniques for balancing lecturing with meaningful student participation. This suggests that schools and education policymakers must continue supporting curriculum

innovations and professional development that promote critical thinking, active learning, and student agency. Such initiatives aim to enhance lecturing by embedding opportunities for dialogue that support collaborative learning.

Given the findings that classroom verbal interaction remains profoundly lecture-driven and teacher-centered, future researchers are encouraged to broaden this study by exploring how different subjects, teaching contexts, or grade levels might influence verbal interaction patterns. It would be valuable to examine how teacher experience, student demographics, or training in learner-centered strategies affect the balance between student talk and teacher talk. Future studies may also combine FIACS with an interview with teachers and students, focus group discussions, or video analysis to gain deeper insights into how students perceive and experience classroom discourse.

It is also recommended that longitudinal research be conducted to determine whether professional development in promoting active student participation leads to measurable changes in how teachers and students talk are distributed during lessons. By addressing these gaps, future research can strengthen the evidence base for more participatory and inclusive classroom communication.

6. Conclusion

The findings underscore the pressing need to reimagine classroom communication patterns in junior high school. While lecturing has long served as a dependable instructional tool, relying on it as the primary mode of interaction narrows opportunities for students to take ownership of their learning. A more balanced approach that integrates interactive strategies can foster deeper engagement, strengthen critical thinking, and cultivate collaborative skills that are essential for contemporary learners. For teachers, this highlights the value of continuous professional development focused on discourse techniques that promote participation, dialogue, and student voice. At the institutional level, sustained support for instructional innovation and training is necessary to move toward more inclusive and dynamic learning environments. Finally, broadening and deepening future research will not only validate these insights across diverse contexts but also provide a stronger foundation for reshaping classroom practice into one that meaningfully blends content delivery with active student involvement.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

About the Author(s)

Edelyn Navarro and Kristel Mae G. Tacder are fourth-year students under the Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English program at the University of Mindanao, Philippines.

Cristy Grace A. Ngo, PhD, is a full-time Faculty Member of the College of Teacher Education and a part-time instructor in the Professional Schools at the University of Mindanao, Philippines. She teaches courses that focus on language, linguistics, literature, pedagogy, and assessment. Her research interests involve pragmatics and corpus-based explorations.

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