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An Analysis of IRF Patterns in Teacher-Student Interaction in an EFL Classroom at SMKN 3 Mataram

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Abstract

This study analyzed Initiation–Response–Feedback (IRF) patterns in teacher–student interaction in an EFL classroom at SMKN 3 Mataram. It aimed to identify the IRF patterns that occurred, investigate the factors shaping the teacher's use of these patterns, and examine how the patterns created or limited students' opportunities to participate and produce English. Using a qualitative classroom discourse analysis design, data were collected through four classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with one English teacher and five eleventh-grade Electrical Power Installation Engineering (TITL) students. Data were analyzed following Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña and coded using the IRF framework of Sinclair and Coulthard and Walsh. Of 109 codable teacher–student sequences, 79 were complete three-part IRF exchanges and 30 were incomplete I–R sequences because the Feedback move could not be reliably identified. Initiation was dominated by display questions (103 of 109), and student responses were overwhelmingly minimal (99 of 109). Among the 79 complete sequences, Feedback was divided between evaluative (42) and elaborative (37) types. The teacher's use of these patterns was shaped by student characteristics and classroom conditions, the degree of question preparation, time and class-size constraints, students' English proficiency, and curriculum demands. Most interviewed students preferred questions with a single correct answer and felt more anxious answering in front of the whole class, while the teacher's elaborative feedback was the point at which extended student responses were most likely to develop. These findings suggest that students' opportunities for extended language production depend not only on the type of question asked but also on how feedback is delivered and on students' confidence in the classroom. The study addresses a gap in IRF research, which has mainly examined general secondary schools, elementary classrooms, universities, or online settings and has rarely explained why teachers use particular IRF patterns or how those patterns shape English production in Indonesian vocational high schools.

Keywords: Classroom Discourse Analysis, IRF Pattern, Teacher-Student Interaction, EFL Classroom, Vocational High School.

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INTRODUCTION

Interaction plays a central role in language learning, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, where the quality of communication between teachers and students directly shapes how well students can learn and use the target language. Vygotsky (1978) argued that learning is fundamentally a social process that takes place through communication, and Long (1996) emphasized through his Interaction Hypothesis that learners who interact and negotiate meaning are more

likely to develop their language skills. Where students have limited exposure to English outside school, the classroom becomes the primary and often the only place in which they can practice and develop their English (Harmer, 2007). The quality of classroom interaction in EFL settings is therefore not simply a matter of teaching preference but a basic requirement for effective language learning.

However, research has consistently shown that EFL classroom interaction tends to be dominated by the teacher. Walsh (2011) argues that teachers' language choices are never neutral: every decision a teacher makes in managing classroom talk determines how much space students have to participate, negotiate meaning, and develop communicative competence. When teacher talk dominates, students are placed in the role of passive recipients rather than active language users. This pattern has been widely reported in Indonesian EFL classrooms, where teacher talk often takes up most of the classroom communication and reduces the space for meaningful student participation (Abdusyukur, 2022; Nursehag et al., 2024).

The problem becomes even more significant in Indonesian vocational high schools (SMK), where English is not only a school subject but also a practical tool connected to students' future working lives. At SMKN 3 Mataram, for example, students in technical programs need English to read technical manuals, follow instructions, and communicate in workplace settings. Despite this need, EFL interaction in SMK classrooms is still largely controlled by the teacher, and students are rarely given the chance to participate actively in classroom discourse (Putri et al., 2024). Research in the local Mataram context also indicates that managing classroom interaction and encouraging active student participation are among the main challenges faced by English teachers (Insani et al., 2024).

In this study, IRF pattern is defined as the three-move structural pattern of classroom discourse consisting of teacher Initiation, student Response, and teacher Feedback (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975; Walsh, 2011). Classroom Interactional Competence is defined as the teacher's ability to use classroom interaction strategically so that students' participation and language production can be expanded or constrained in line with lesson goals (Walsh, 2011). Vocational high school is defined as a secondary school that combines general subjects with vocational competence and requires English learning connected to workplace needs (Sujana et al., 2024).

A particularly useful framework for examining this problem is the Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) model developed by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). The model describes the most common structural pattern of classroom discourse: the teacher opens an exchange, usually with a question; a student responds; and the teacher then gives feedback or an evaluation. Although the IRF pattern has been recognized as a basic organizational feature of classroom talk in many educational contexts (Mehan, 1979; Wells, 1993), its value as a teaching tool is debated. Walsh (2011) argues that IRF can either limit or expand students' language use depending on how the teacher applies it. Applied rigidly, it tends to produce display questions and minimal student output; applied flexibly, with open-ended questions, extended feedback, and scaffolding, it can create real opportunities for language development (Walsh, 2011; Wells, 1993).

Several recent studies have examined IRF and related patterns in Indonesian settings. Kartini et al. (2022) found that elicitation was the dominant initiation move

in a university EFL classroom and that the structure of teacher moves often limited the depth of student responses. Nursehag et al. (2024) reported that teacher talk accounted for 74.4% of classroom communication in a secondary EFL classroom, with heavy reliance on display questions contributing to minimal and formulaic student responses. Hasanah et al. (2024), who applied the Sinclair and Coulthard model to a sixth-grade English class, found that IRF structured communication effectively but that student responses were frequently repetition rather than evidence of comprehension. Wati et al. (2025) showed that offline university classes produced more varied and extended IRF sequences than online ones, and Zulfah et al. (2025) showed that IRF can reinforce power asymmetry between tutors and students while variation in feedback can open the exchange to more balanced interaction.

Although these studies provide important insights, most were conducted in general secondary schools, elementary classrooms, universities, or online settings. None of the reviewed studies investigated how IRF patterns operate in an Indonesian vocational high school, and they tended to describe the occurrence of IRF patterns without examining why the teacher used them or how they created or limited students' opportunities to produce English. The gap addressed in this study is therefore the limited IRF research in Indonesian vocational schools that not only describes structural patterns but also explains why the teacher uses those patterns and how they affect students' opportunities to produce English. The novelty of the study lies in combining a structural analysis of all three IRF moves with the teacher's and students' accounts in a vocational context that has received little attention in the IRF literature. Specifically, this study aims (1) to identify the IRF patterns that occur in an EFL classroom, (2) to investigate the factors that shape the teacher's use of these patterns, and (3) to examine how the observed patterns create or limit students' opportunities to participate and produce English.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a classroom discourse analysis design. Qualitative research seeks to understand and interpret social phenomena in their natural settings, focusing on meaning, context, and process rather than numerical measurement (Creswell, 2014). Classroom discourse analysis goes beyond recording what is said in the classroom to analyzing the communicative functions and pedagogical implications of language use (Walsh, 2011). This design suited the study because its primary data were the verbal exchanges between teacher and students, and because it allowed the IRF moves to be identified, described, and interpreted systematically.

Research Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at SMKN 3 Mataram, a state vocational high school in Mataram, West Nusa Tenggara, which offers programs such as Motorcycle Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Computer and Network Engineering, and Geomatics Engineering, with English taught as a compulsory subject in all programs. The study was conducted during the first semester of the 2025/2026 academic year over approximately three weeks. The participants were one English teacher and one intact class of eleventh-grade students (class XI Teknik Instalasi Tenaga Listrik, TITL) in the academic year 2025/2026, selected through purposive

sampling (Creswell, 2014). The class consisted of approximately 34–35 students of varying English proficiency. The teacher was selected because she was actively teaching English at the school, had at least three years of EFL teaching experience, regularly engaged in verbal interaction with students, and was willing to be observed and interviewed. Five students were selected purposively to include both more active and less active participants, based on the teacher's nomination and classroom observation; the criteria were frequency of voluntary participation and willingness to be interviewed. All five students and the teacher provided informed consent.

Data Collection

Data were collected through classroom observation and semi-structured interviews, which complement each other and support triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher acted as a non-participant observer in four lessons, each covering one full English lesson over approximately three weeks. An observation checklist guided attention to the types of questions in the Initiation move, the nature of student responses, and the form and function of teacher feedback, and field notes captured contextual information. Each lesson was audio-visually recorded and transcribed.

After the observations, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teacher and the five students. This format allows pre-determined questions while giving participants freedom to elaborate (Merriam, 2009). The teacher interview covered her awareness of IRF patterns, the factors influencing her interactional choices, and her views on how IRF affects students' language development. The student interviews explored how students felt about being questioned, their comfort in answering in English, the kinds of questions they preferred, and their perceptions of the teacher's feedback. Interviews were audio-recorded with consent and conducted in English or Indonesian according to participants' preference.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Recordings and interviews were transcribed in full and condensed by removing repetitions, fillers, and unintelligible segments. Teacher-student exchanges reflecting the three-move IRF structure were segmented and coded using the scheme in Table 1, which draws on Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) and Walsh (2011). Administrative announcements and transitions between activities were excluded. The coded data were displayed as annotated excerpts and frequency tables, and interview data were organized thematically around the factors influencing the teacher's IRF use and the perceived effects of those patterns on students. Findings from the two data sources were cross-referenced, and credibility was supported by observing multiple sessions, member checking, and peer debriefing. Member checking was conducted by sending interview transcripts and summaries of findings to the interviewed teacher and students so that they could confirm whether the researcher's interpretations matched their intended meanings and could correct or clarify any inaccurate points. Peer debriefing was conducted through discussions with supervisors and colleagues familiar with classroom discourse analysis to review the coding process, IRF categories, and data interpretations, so that analytic decisions did not depend on a single researcher.

Table 1. IRF Coding Scheme for Analyzing Teacher-Student Interaction

IRF Move	Category	Indicator
Initiation	Display question	Teacher asks a question with a known answer to check students' knowledge or comprehension.
Initiation	Referential question	Teacher asks for students' opinion, explanation, or personal response to which there is no single correct answer.
Response	Minimal response	Student gives a one-word or short-phrase answer with little or no elaboration.
Response	Extended response	Student gives a longer answer with explanation, reasoning, or elaboration.
Feedback	Evaluative feedback	Teacher responds with a simple judgment such as *correct*, *good*, *wrong*, *yes*, or *no* without extending the interaction.
Feedback	Elaborative feedback	Teacher asks a follow-up question, expands on the student's answer, or prompts further clarification to extend the interaction.

Ethical principles were followed throughout. Informed consent was obtained from the teacher, the students, and, where necessary, their parents or guardians, and formal permission was obtained from the school. Recordings were stored on a password-protected device accessible only to the researcher, and the names of all participants were anonymized using codes or pseudonyms.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

IRF Patterns in the EFL Classroom

The four observations yielded 109 codable teacher–student sequences (24, 29, 29, and 27 on Days 1–4, respectively). Of these, 79 were complete three-part exchanges in which the Initiation, Response, and Feedback moves were all identifiable, and 30 were Initiation–Response pairs only because the Feedback move could not be reliably identified. A sequence was coded as complete when the teacher's verbal reaction to the student's response could be clearly identified in the recording and occurred before the next Initiation began. A sequence was coded as incomplete when the Feedback move could not be reliably identified, for example because the teacher moved directly to the next question, several students answered at once, or the teacher's reaction was non-verbal or unintelligible. Incomplete sequences were retained because their Initiation and Response moves remain analytically meaningful, but they are reported separately.

A sequence was coded as complete when the teacher's verbal reaction to the student's response could be clearly identified in the recording and occurred before the next Initiation began. In the observed lessons this mostly happened when students answered individually or on behalf of their group during exercises and games in which answers were scored, so the teacher confirmed, corrected, or expanded each answer before moving on, either with a brief judgment (evaluative) or with a follow-up question or explanation (elaborative). A sequence was coded as incomplete when the Feedback move could not be reliably identified, which occurred in three situations. First, in rapid question-and-answer series, such as when the teacher showed pictures or asked for vocabulary translations one after another, the teacher moved directly to

the next question without an audible reaction. Second, when several students answered at once, any teacher reaction was not distinguishable from the surrounding classroom talk. Third, some teacher utterances were unintelligible in the recording or were delivered non-verbally, for example through a nod or a gesture, and so could not be transcribed. Incomplete sequences were retained, since their Initiation and Response moves remain analytically meaningful, but they are reported separately (Table 2).

Table 2. Distribution of Codable IRF Sequences Across Observations

Observation	Complete (I-R-F)	Incomplete (I-R only)	Total
Day 1	12	12	24
Day 2	23	6	29
Day 3	24	5	29
Day 4	20	7	27
Total	**79**	**30**	**109**

Table 3 presents one complete and one incomplete sequence from each of the four observations.

Table 3. Examples of Complete and Incomplete IRF Sequences from Each Observation

Day	Type	Initiation (Teacher)	Response (Student)	Feedback (Teacher)
1	Complete	"Insulation artinya apa?"	"Insulator."	"Oke."
1	Incomplete	"Konduktor apa artinya? Konduktor artinya apa?"	"Pengantar."	[not captured]
2	Complete	"Safety, dengarkan baik-baik. Listen carefully. I am a tool. I can measure resistance. I am used by electrician. Who am I?"	"Ovommeter."	"Avometer atau multimeter? ... Betul, sama ya, multimeter."
2	Incomplete	"Okey group lamp? Apa artinya lamp?"	"Lampu."	[not captured]
3	Complete	"Black flexible long cable electrical. Urutan yang benar?"	"A long flexible electrical cable."	"Benar. Jadi yang benar itu a long flexible electrical cable. ... itu paling depan lagi ya."
3	Incomplete	"... berarti sudah paham urutannya ya?"	"Iya." (several students)	[not captured]
4	Complete	"Yang terakhir, bahasa Inggris dari kupu-kupu terbang tinggi ke awan?"	"Tidak tahuuu."	"Yang bener adalah butterfly flying high up to the clauds."
4	Incomplete	"Selanjutnya, why is it called batu bolong?"	"Karna batunya bolong buu."	[not captured]

Initiation, Response, and Feedback moves

Table 4 summarizes the coded moves. Initiation was dominated by display questions (103 of 109 sequences), while referential questions were rare (6 sequences), and this distribution was consistent across all four observations. Student responses were overwhelmingly minimal (99 of 109 sequences), typically a single word or short phrase, and only 10 responses were extended. Among the 79 complete sequences,

Feedback was divided almost evenly between evaluative (42) and elaborative (37) types.

Table 4. Frequency of Initiation, Response, and Feedback Types Across Observations

Day	Display	Referential	Minimal	Extended	Evaluative	Elaborative	Not captured
1	22	2	21	3	5	7	12
2	27	2	24	5	11	12	6
3	28	1	28	1	11	13	5
4	26	1	26	1	15	5	7
Total	**103**	**6**	**99**	**10**	**42**	**37**	**30**

Display questions were most frequent in activities requiring students to recall a specific word, term, or sequence, such as identifying a tool from a riddle (Table 3, Day 2) or ordering adjectives. Referential questions appeared mainly when the teacher asked students to reflect on or summarize what they had learned (Excerpt 1). Extended responses occurred mainly after referential or explanation-seeking Initiations, where students had to give a reason rather than name an object (Excerpt 2), and were most frequent on Day 2 (5 of 29 sequences) and Day 1 (3 of 24), but nearly absent on Day 3 and Day 4 (1 each).

Excerpt 1 (Day 2)

Teacher: "Okay, listen to my question. What did we learn today?"

Student: "Hari ini kita kerjain ... kayak teamwork, terus adjective."

Excerpt 2 (Day 1)

Teacher: "Please. What is an electrical cable use for?"

Student: "Mentransmisikan daya listrik dari satu tempat ke tempat lain buu."

Feedback also varied. Evaluative feedback consisted of a brief judgment confirming or rejecting an answer, for example "Very good." Elaborative feedback extended the exchange with explanation, correction, or clarification, as in Excerpt 3, where the teacher did not simply confirm the answer but explained the grammatical reasoning behind it. Day 4 showed the strongest tendency toward evaluative feedback (15 of its 20 complete sequences), whereas Days 2 and 3 showed a nearly equal division between the two types.

Excerpt 3 (Day 2)

Teacher: "Why use 'is'?"

Student: "Because there's only one."

Teacher: "Since there is only one item, in English it's called 'singular.'"

The classroom discourse was organized around a narrow version of the IRF structure: display Initiation, minimal Response, and Feedback that either closed or extended the exchange. This corresponds closely to what Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) describe as the basic exchange structure of classroom discourse. Seen through Walsh's (2011) framework, however, the pairing of display questions with minimal responses indicates an interactional pattern oriented toward accuracy and content coverage rather than extended meaning negotiation, and the present data directly support his claim that heavy reliance on display questions and evaluation yields minimal student participation.

The structure was nonetheless not entirely rigid. Referential questions were rare but did occur, and elaborative Feedback accounted for a substantial share of the complete sequences (37 of 79). This resembles what Mehan (1979) describes as uptake,

where the teacher incorporates the student's contribution into the ongoing discourse instead of simply judging it, and it reflects both the constraining and the enabling sides of IRF noted by Walsh (2011).

These findings are broadly consistent with earlier Indonesian studies. The predominance of display questions and minimal responses parallels the formulaic student responses reported by Nursehag et al. (2024), the repetition-based responses reported by Hasanah et al. (2024), and the limited response depth reported by Kartini et al. (2022). The near-even split between evaluative and elaborative Feedback echoes the duality described by Zulfah et al. (2025), in which feedback variation can open the exchange. The finding also qualifies Wati et al. (2025): although the present classroom was entirely face-to-face, IRF sequences remained predominantly short, suggesting that the offline setting alone does not explain the degree of elaboration, and that other factors specific to the vocational classroom need to be considered. This comparison is indicative rather than conclusive, as the studies differ in level, setting, and method.

Factors Shaping the Teacher's Use of IRF Patterns

The semi-structured interview with the English teacher revealed five interrelated factors that helped explain why her Initiation and Feedback moves took the form described above: student characteristics and classroom conditions, the degree of question preparation, time and class-size constraints, students' English proficiency, and curriculum demand. Viewed through Walsh's (2011) concept of Classroom Interactional Competence, her choices can be understood not as arbitrary habits but as pedagogical decisions made under specific institutional and contextual pressures. Each factor is discussed below in relation to the observational data.

Student characteristics and classroom conditions

The teacher explained that her way of interacting with students was not fixed but adjusted to the character of the class being taught:

"Kalau cara berinteraksi dengan siswa itu tergantung kelasnya. Karena karakteristik siswa setiap kelas berbeda-beda. ... kita harus melihat kondisi dan karakteristik siswanya terlebih dahulu." (Teacher, interview)

She reported that when material was delivered directly through lecturing or a PowerPoint presentation, students tended to lose interest, which led her to use games, challenges, or digital media to keep them engaged:

"Kalau kita langsung memberikan materi atau menggunakan PowerPoint saja, terkadang siswa kurang tertarik. ... Misalnya, kalau siswa lebih tertarik dengan permainan, kita bisa menggunakan game atau challenge supaya mereka lebih semangat mengikuti pembelajaran. Bisa juga menggunakan media digital seperti Kahoot ..." (Teacher, interview)

As an example, she mentioned a recent activity in which adjectives were built around the topic of butterflies and then developed into a descriptive text ("kayak kemarin kita bahas adjective objectnya dari kupu-kupu kemudian di jadiin teks deskripsi"), which corresponds to the adjective-ordering and descriptive-text activities observed on Days 2 to 4. This helps explain why many of the coded sequences are short, scored question-and-answer exchanges, such as the ordering of "black flexible long cable electrical" in Table 3: in an activity designed to hold the attention of a class, a quick question with a clear answer is a natural unit of interaction. The teacher's statement that her approach depends on the class ("tergantung

kelasnya") reflects precisely the kind of situated, goal-driven adjustment that Walsh (2011) associates with teachers who adapt their interactional behavior to the immediate goals and conditions of the lesson, rather than a fixed teaching style.

Degree of question preparation

The teacher indicated that her Initiation moves combined pre-planned and spontaneous questions rather than following a single approach:

"untuk pertanyaan biasanya disiapin sebelumnya ... kadang juga spontan tergantung dari interaksi didalm kelas." (Teacher, interview)

She added that, regardless of preparation, every question had to be connected to the lesson: "Pokoknya harus berkaitan dengan materi." Two points follow from this account. First, preparation by itself does not explain the predominance of display questions; rather, the questions seem to have been shaped by the content of each activity, such as recalling the meaning of a technical term, identifying a tool, or arranging words in the correct order, all of which have a known answer. Second, the spontaneous questions she described are the ones most directly tied to what students actually said, and they are the type of question that can arise in the Feedback position as a follow-up. The requirement that questions stay tied to the material may also help account for why referential questions, which invite students' own opinions, were rare and appeared mainly when the teacher asked students to reflect on or summarize the lesson.

Time constraint and class size

The teacher explained that large classes made classroom management difficult, particularly in male-dominated technical classes such as TSM and TITL:

"Ada malah kelas yang 38 itu susah banget untuk mengendalikannya, apalagi laki-laki semua." (Teacher, interview)

She also noted that the limited duration of each lesson restricted how long an interactive activity could be sustained before students became bored, and that lessons in the last period of the school day were especially difficult:

"Kalau jam terakhir lebih parah, kalau jam terakhir itu ya siswanya agak susah diatur, ribut juga, dan mereka nggak bisa konsentrasi." (Teacher, interview)

To manage content coverage under these constraints, she reported supplementing lessons through a class WhatsApp group and additional material from YouTube. With classes of up to 38 students and limited lesson time, sustaining extended, open-ended exchanges with individual students becomes considerably harder to manage. This is consistent with Cazden's (2001) observation that teacher-student interaction is the mechanism through which classroom participation is organized and managed: under large-class conditions, a teacher's organizational burden favors interactional structures, such as short, closed questions, that can be processed quickly and distributed across many students. The 109 sequences collected in only four lessons, many of them one-line exchanges, fit this reading. The teacher's use of games, challenges, and digital media to maintain engagement can likewise be read as a strategy for managing participation within these constraints rather than as a departure from sound interactional practice.

Students' English proficiency

This factor was the one most directly connected to the Feedback move. The teacher reported that students' proficiency shaped both the language and the type of question she used:

"Kalau siswa yang bahasa inggrisnya cukup, nggak apa-apa kita pake bahasa Inggris. ... Tapi kalau siswa yang kurang bahasa inggrisnya, itu sebenernya akan buat mereka minder dan kurang percaya diri, jadi kita combine jadi pertanyaan itu pake bahasa Indonesia terus mereka jawab pake bahasa Indonesia juga ngak apa apa." (Teacher, interview)

This account is visible in the transcripts: in Table 3, several Initiation and Feedback moves are delivered in Indonesian or in a mixture of Indonesian and English (for example, "Insulation artinya apa?"), and students often answer in Indonesian ("Lampu."). She stated that her main priority was for students to attempt a response in any form rather than remain silent ("Yang penting ngomong, mau nulis, mau berlatih"). When a student gave a minimal or hesitant response, she reported following up with a probing question:

"Oh, biasanya dipancing-pancing ... kasih pertanyaan pemantik, supaya dia mau ... tanyain why, jadi dilebar-lebarkan." (Teacher, interview)

and, when a student appeared reluctant, encouraging the student to respond regardless of accuracy and correcting afterward: "yang penting mau ngomong aja atau nulis aja atau coba aja gitu nanti kalau salah kita benerkan." This reported strategy corresponds to what Mehan (1979) describes as uptake, in which the teacher uses the Feedback move to draw out further contribution instead of simply closing the exchange with an evaluation. It offers a plausible explanation for why elaborative Feedback still accounted for a substantial share of the complete sequences (37 of 79) despite the overall dominance of display Initiation: the teacher appears to have used the Feedback stage, rather than the Initiation stage, as her main tool for extending interaction when students' limited proficiency made open-ended questioning less practical. This adds a context-specific dimension to Walsh's (2011) claim that elaborative feedback and uptake keep the interaction open, by showing that in a vocational EFL classroom with uneven proficiency, elaboration was built into her response to the student rather than into the question she first asked.

Curriculum demands

The teacher reported that frequent curriculum changes, and the changes in the accompanying teaching documents, made lesson planning more difficult for teachers in the field:

"Ini kalau kurikulumnya sekarang ini terlalu cepat berubahnya gitu ... RPP, modul ajar, skenario pembelajaran, dia berubah-ubah. Kadang-kadang kita yang di lapangan itu agak susah menyesuaikannya." (Teacher, interview)

She further explained that her questions needed to align with the learning objectives and material of each lesson rather than being asked as an unrelated warm-up ("Pertanyaannya harus sesuai dengan tujuan pembelajaran dan disesuaikan dengan materinya"). She considered the most effective interaction to be questions connected to students' daily lives but still tied to the lesson material, citing the Day 4 activity in which students described their favorite place in Lombok. Together, these remarks show a teacher who must keep every question accountable to a changing set of objectives, which favors questions that check whether the intended content has been

learned, that is, display questions. This reflects the particular character of the vocational school environment and is consistent with Sujana et al. (2024) and Nuraini et al. (2025), who found that English teaching and classroom interaction in Mataram vocational schools are shaped by institutional and resource conditions specific to SMK settings. It also supports the research gap identified at the outset: findings from general EFL classrooms cannot be assumed to transfer directly to vocational classrooms such as the one examined here.

Taken together, the five factors indicate that the predominantly display-and-evaluative pattern of interaction was shaped less by a single cause than by the combined pressure of large classes, limited instructional time, a demanding and shifting curriculum, and students' uneven English proficiency, within which closed, game-based questioning functioned as a practical strategy to sustain engagement. None of the five previous studies reviewed documented why the teacher used the pattern they described; the present findings extend this line of research by situating the teacher's choices within the practical realities of teaching English in a vocational classroom, and, in doing so, answer the second research question.

Students' Perspectives and Opportunities to Produce English

The IRF patterns identified above appeared to influence students' language production in several interrelated ways, as shown by both the observational data and the semi-structured interviews with five students (Student 1 to Student 5) of class XI TITL.

Evidence from classroom observation

Of the 109 coded sequences, 99 student responses were minimal and only 10 were extended, and the extended responses occurred mainly after referential or explanation-seeking Initiation moves. Since 103 of the 109 Initiation moves were display questions, most exchanges offered students limited structural opportunity to produce language beyond a single word or short phrase. Wells (1993) stresses the value of extended learner turns for practicing the target language, and Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) observed that the scope of a student's response is largely determined by how the initiating question is framed; the present data fit both points. The pattern also corresponds to the teacher's own account of probing for elaboration whenever a response was too short, which suggests that extended student language depended more on the teacher's follow-up within the Feedback stage than on the IRF structure itself.

Student preference for question type

Four of the five students (Students 2, 3, 4, and 5) preferred questions with a single correct answer, mainly because they found it difficult to construct original English sentences to express their own ideas:

"Saya lebih suka pertanyaan dengan satu jawaban yang benar karena saya kesulitan menggunakan kosakata bahasa Inggris untuk jelasin ide saya sendiri." (Student 2, interview)

"Saya biasanya lebih suka jenis pertanyaan singkat maksudnya jawaban yang tidak perlu saya jelaskan panjang-panjang." (Student 3, interview)

"Saya lebih suka pertanyaan dengan satu jawaban benar karena saya tidak harus mikir dan buat jawaban baru sendiri." (Student 5, interview)

Student 4 gave a similar reason, namely that he could answer such questions more directly. Only Student 1 preferred referential, open-ended questions, explaining

that they allowed him to share his own thinking ("saya bisa memberikan pendapat saya sendiri buu"). From the students' own perspective, this distribution offers a plausible explanation for the dominance of display Initiation and minimal Response: for most of the students interviewed, a display question was not only easier to answer but also more comfortable, given their self-reported limited English proficiency. It also qualifies a purely structural reading, in which the pattern is imposed by the teacher's questions alone. Read alongside Walsh's (2011) claim that referential questions and elaborative feedback are more likely to produce extended learner turns, it suggests that simply increasing the number of referential Initiation moves may not produce more extended Responses if students lack the linguistic resources, or the confidence, to answer at length.

Confidence and anxiety in responding

All five students reported feeling less comfortable or more anxious when answering in front of the whole class than when answering in a small group, most often citing low confidence in their spoken English:

"Ketika saya menjawab di depan seluruh teman kelas, saya merasa malu karena saya kurang bisa bahasa Inggris saya belum lancar." (Student 1, interview)

"Kalau Menjawab di depan kelas terasa berbeda karena semua teman lihat ke saya, sedangkan saat dalam kelompok ada temen yang lain juga yang bantu saya ngomong." (Student 2, interview)

"Saat berada di depan kelas dan mencoba menjawab pertanyaan, saya gugup dan merasa takut salah berbicara karena kemampuan bahasa Inggris saya belum cukup jadi takut." (Student 5, interview)

Student 3 similarly described answering at the front as "agak canggung" (somewhat awkward) and answering in a group as more comfortable because friends could help. These accounts suggest that the whole-class IRF format itself, independent of question type, may have constrained how much language some students were willing to produce.

Perceptions of teacher feedback

Students' perceptions of the Feedback move were largely positive. Students 1, 2, 3, and 5 reported that feedback helped them correct their answers, understand the material better, and continue speaking:

"Respon dari guru sangat membantu karena dengan itu saya bisa memperbaiki jawaban dan mempelajarinya lagi mana yang bener." (Student 1, interview)

"Sangat membantu, karena saya dapat mengetahui dimana letak jawaban yang salah sehingga saya bisa memperbaikinya nanti." (Student 5, interview)

Student 4's experience was more mixed. He reported that feedback helped him understand his mistakes ("Umpan balik guru menurut saya membantu kami kalau salah itu buat kami paham lagi"), but also that:

"Terkadang umpan balik bu guru membuat saya berhenti bicara karena malu jika jawaban saya salah." (Student 4, interview)

Feedback that was generally experienced as helpful for correction could therefore still discourage further talk for a student who was particularly sensitive to being seen as wrong. This qualifies the claim that elaborative feedback and uptake are automatically more valuable than evaluative feedback (Walsh, 2011): even well-intentioned feedback can discourage further talk if it is experienced as exposing in front of classmates.

Overall perception of interaction and confidence

All five students agreed that interacting with the teacher in English helped develop their language skills to some extent, most commonly their vocabulary and listening or speaking ability:

"Interkasi dalam bahasa Inggris juga dapat meningkatkan kemampuan menyimak dan bicara saya sedikit-sedikit." (Student 1, interview)

"Ketika guru pakai bahasa Inggris, ini dapat menambah vocabulary bahasa inggris saya." (Student 5, interview)

When asked what made them more confident to speak, three students (Students 2, 3, and 4) pointed to supportive, non-judgmental peers and teachers rather than to their own proficiency:

"Saya lebih percaya diri kalau teman-teman mendukung saya dan tidak menertawakan ketika saya kalo salah bicara." (Student 2, interview)

"Saya lebih percaya diri ketika guru kasih semangat dan tidak langsung menyalahkan saya karena jawaban saya salah." (Student 4, interview)

Students 1 and 5, by contrast, linked their confidence directly to their own English, saying they would feel more confident once they could speak more fluently and correctly. Zulfah et al. (2025) found that variation in feedback created openings for more balanced interaction, a claim broadly supported by the teacher's probing strategy. The interview data, however, suggest an additional affective dimension: whether elaborative feedback actually leads to extended language use may depend as much on a student's confidence and fear of embarrassment as on the structural openness of the Feedback move, and the classroom's social climate, not only its IRF structure, shaped students' willingness to engage in extended interaction.

Taken together, the dominant pattern of display Initiation, minimal Response, and largely evaluative or probing Feedback aligned with what most students described as their preferred and most comfortable way of participating, given their limited confidence in spoken English. It offered only limited opportunity for students to produce extended language on their own initiative, students' willingness to keep talking after Feedback depended partly on whether that Feedback felt corrective or embarrassing, and elaborated student talk emerged mainly when the teacher deliberately extended the Feedback move through follow-up questioning. This answers the third research question: the IRF pattern influenced students' language production primarily through the Feedback move rather than the Initiation move, and efforts to develop students' spoken English in a setting such as SMKN 3 Mataram would need to address not only the type of question asked but also the way Feedback is delivered and the climate in which students are asked to respond. Because these interview data come from one teacher and five students, these interpretations should be read as context-bound.

CONCLUSION

Students who participated in Madani Super Camp generally gave positive ratings to statements about their perceived speaking development and to the speaking activities included in the questionnaire. In relation to the first research question, students perceived their English speaking skills as developing positively through MSC, as indicated by indicator averages above 4.00. In relation to the second research question, the aspects of speaking perceived as developing most positively were

vocabulary (4.67), followed by speaking activities (4.56), comprehension (4.48), grammar (4.41), pronunciation (4.39), and fluency (4.20). In relation to the third research question, vocabulary practice received the highest activity rating (4.68), followed by speaking games (4.63), role-play (4.56), group discussions (4.54), and storytelling (4.41). Taken together, these findings suggest that learners valued opportunities to build and use vocabulary and to participate in engaging communicative activities, while fluency—especially speaking with fewer pauses—may warrant further instructional attention. They do not demonstrate objectively measured improvement or establish a causal effect of MSC. A stronger evaluation should combine perception data with validated instruments, direct speaking assessments, and preferably pre-test/post-test or comparison-group designs.

RECOMENDATIONS

For students, continued participation in speaking activities and regular practice outside the camp may help them develop confidence and use English more frequently. The questionnaire findings indicate that students viewed role-play, group discussions, storytelling, vocabulary practice, and speaking games positively, so students may continue to take part actively in these activities.

For English teachers and Madani Super Camp instructors, the findings suggest that students value a variety of speaking opportunities. Instructors may continue using role-play, group discussions, storytelling, vocabulary practice, and speaking games while providing additional support for fluency, including practice in speaking at length and expressing ideas with fewer pauses.

For the school, maintaining opportunities for meaningful English communication may support students' continued practice. If the school wishes to evaluate students' speaking performance rather than perceptions alone, future program evaluation may combine student-perception questionnaires with direct speaking assessments.

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