



From Discipline to Dialogue: A Phenomenological Study of Classroom Interaction in English Language Classroom

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Abstract

This phenomenological study explores interaction in English language classrooms in District Hyderabad, Sindh, focusing on the lived experiences of English language teachers and secondary school students. The study examines how classroom interaction is shaped by discipline oriented teaching practices and how it gradually shifts toward dialogue based and student centered learning environments. The main purpose of the study is to understand how teachers and students experience interaction, participation and communication in English language learning contexts. A qualitative research design was adopted and data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that they had relevant experience with English language teaching and learning. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis allowing for an in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives and lived experiences. The findings of the study reveal that traditional classroom practices characterized by strict discipline and silence among students, limiting their participation in English communication. Students reported hesitation due to fear of making mistakes, while teachers observed low interaction levels in teacher centered classrooms. However, the findings also indicate that supportive teacher behavior, emotional safety, and dialogue based teaching strategies significantly enhance student confidence and willingness to participate. The study recommends that teachers should adopt dialogic teaching practices, maintain balanced discipline and create supportive classroom environments to improve student participation and language development.

Keywords: Classroom Interaction, English Language Teaching, Dialogue Based Learning; Student-Centered Learning, Classroom Discipline

Introduction

Classroom interaction plays a central role in the teaching and learning of English language skills. In English language classrooms, communication between teachers and students shapes not only academic achievement but also learners' confidence, participation as well motivation. Traditionally, many classrooms, particularly in developing educational contexts, have been dominated by discipline oriented teaching practices where teachers exercise authority and students remain passive recipients of knowledge. Such environments often limit opportunities for

meaningful dialogue, collaborative learning and active student engagement (Baker, W. 2023). Dialogue based classrooms encourage students to express ideas, ask questions, negotiate meaning and develop communicative competence (Darling-Hammond, L. 2023). In English language teaching, interaction is especially important because language is learned effectively through communication and social participation. Therefore, shifting from rigid disciplinary approaches toward dialogic classroom practices has become an important concern in contemporary education (Ellis, R. 2023). Despite this growing emphasis on interaction, many English language classrooms continue to experience challenges related to teacher centered instruction, fear of mistakes, unequal participation, and limited student voice. Students may hesitate to speak due to strict classroom management practices. Similarly, teachers may struggle to balance classroom discipline with the need to create open and participatory learning environments. Understanding how teachers and students experience these interactions is essential for improving classroom practices and promoting effective language learning (Kumaravadivelu, B. 2023). This study adopts a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of teachers and students regarding classroom interaction in English language classrooms. Phenomenology focuses on understanding how individuals perceive and make meaning of their experiences. By examining participants' experiences, perceptions, and feelings, this study seeks to uncover how classroom interaction moves from discipline centered practices toward dialogue centered learning experiences (Benson, P. 2024). The study is significant because it contributes to a deeper understanding of classroom communication in English language education. The findings may help teachers, teacher educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers design strategies that encourage supportive, inclusive and interactive classroom environments. Furthermore, the study may provide insights into how dialogic practices can improve students' language proficiency, confidence and engagement in English learning contexts (Li, S., & Smith, B. 2024).

Literature Review

Classroom Interaction in English Language Teaching

Classroom interaction is considered one of the most important components of effective English language teaching and learning. Interaction refers to the communication that occurs between teachers and students as well as among students themselves during classroom activities. Students acquire language more effectively when they actively participate in meaningful communication. English language classrooms therefore require opportunities for discussion, questioning, collaboration, and feedback to enhance learners' communicative competence (Mercer et al., 2023). Lev Vygotsky emphasized that learning occurs through social interaction and collaboration. His sociocultural theory highlights the importance of dialogue in cognitive and language development. Similarly, Jerome Bruner argued that classroom communication supports learners in constructing knowledge through guided interaction. These theories suggest that interaction is not merely a classroom activity but a central process in language learning (Miles et al., 2024).

Discipline Oriented Classroom Practices

Traditional classrooms in many educational settings have often been characterized by teacher centered and discipline focused approaches. In such classrooms, teachers control communication, maintain authority and expect students to follow instructions passively. Classroom discipline is usually associated with silence, obedience and strict behavioral management. While discipline may help maintain order, excessive control can reduce students' willingness to participate and express themselves (Nassaji, H. 2023). Studies in English language education indicate that

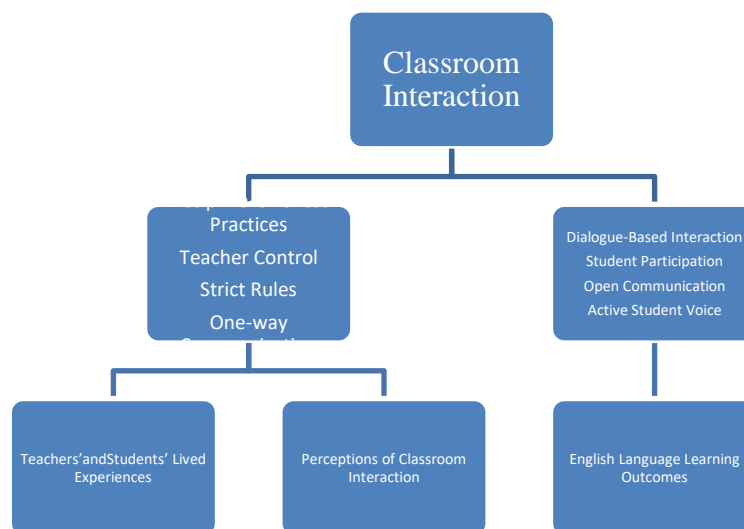
discipline oriented classrooms may create fear and anxiety among learners, especially when students are criticized for making mistakes while speaking English. This environment limits opportunities for authentic communication and discourages active participation. Students may avoid asking questions or engaging in discussions due to fear of embarrassment or punishment. As a result, language learning becomes focused on memorization rather than meaningful communication (Richards, J. C. 2023).

Dialogic Teaching and Student Engagement

The concept of dialogic teaching has gained increasing attention in contemporary educational research. Dialogic teaching promotes open discussion, collaborative learning and mutual respect between teachers and students. Paulo Freire criticized traditional “banking education,” where teachers deposit knowledge into passive learners. He advocated for dialogue based education that empowers students to become active participants in the learning process (Swain, M., & Watanabe, Y. 2023). Similarly, Robin Alexander described dialogic teaching as an approach that encourages questioning, reflection, and collective meaning-making. In English language classrooms, dialogue allows students to practice speaking, improve confidence, and develop critical thinking skills. Interactive teaching strategies such as group discussion, pair work, role-play and collaborative tasks have been found to increase learner motivation and participation (Walsh, S. 2023). Effective classroom interaction improves students’ language proficiency and social development. When students feel respected and supported they are more likely to participate actively in classroom communication. Teachers who encourage dialogue create learning environments where mistakes are treated as part of the learning process rather than as failures (Wells, G. 2024).

Research Questions

1. How do teachers and students perceive classroom interaction in English language classrooms?
2. What are the lived experiences of teachers and students regarding discipline oriented practices in English language classrooms?
3. How do teachers and students experience dialogue-based interaction in English language classrooms?



Conceptual Framework

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of teachers and students regarding classroom interaction in English language classrooms. Phenomenology is appropriate for this study because it focuses on understanding participants' perceptions, feelings and experiences related to a particular phenomenon. The qualitative approach allows the researcher to gain in depth insights into how teachers and students experience classroom communication, participation, discipline, and dialogue (Creswell, 2024). The participants of this study comprised of five English language teachers and ten secondary school students selected from public secondary schools in Hyderabad District. Purposive sampling technique used to select participants who have direct experience with classroom interaction practices in English language classrooms. Data was collected through Semi-structured interviews. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data obtained from semi structured interviews with English language teachers and secondary school students were analyzed using thematic analysis. Major themes were identified that reflect participants' lived experiences of classroom interaction in English language classrooms in District Hyderabad, Sindh, Pakistan.

Theme 1: Classroom Discipline

Participant's responses indicate that reduced participation among students was due to teacher controlled classroom environments. Participants consistently reported that emphasis on discipline and correctness discourages learners from speaking English freely.

In our schools, discipline is the foundation of everything. Without strict rules, students do not follow instructions. If students start arguing or ignoring rules, teaching time is lost and learning suffers. When students misbehave, we immediately use punishments such as sending them out of the class or writing warnings. This is the only way to maintain control, especially in large classes. Discipline is not just about correcting students; it is about sending a clear message to everyone that rules must be respected to keep the school functioning smoothly. Teachers noted that students tend to respond only when directly questioned, while students reported avoiding participation due to fear of making mistakes or receiving negative feedback.

Students described classroom environments where fear of mistakes and negative evaluation limited their willingness to speak English. Students explained that they often felt anxious when asked to respond in English, especially when they were uncertain about correctness. This anxiety led them to avoid speaking and remain silent during classroom activities. Students reported that fear of peer judgment also contributed to their silence. They shared that classmates sometimes laughed at incorrect answers, which increased embarrassment and reduced confidence in speaking English. As a result, students preferred listening quietly rather than participating actively. Students emphasized that repeated exposure to such environments created a long term habit of silence. They explained that instead of practicing spoken English, they relied more on memorization. This reduced their communicative ability and made English learning stressful rather than engaging.

Theme 2: Emotional Safety and Supportive Teacher Student Relationships

This theme unravels the critical role of emotional safety in promoting effective classroom interaction. Participants emphasized that respectful communication; encouragement and

positive reinforcement from teachers enhance students' willingness to participate. Teachers reported improved engagement when adopting friendly and supportive approaches, while students indicated that appreciation and non-judgmental feedback increased their confidence. The findings suggest that emotionally safe classroom environments are essential for meaningful dialogue and active participation in English language learning.

Students expressed that they feel more confident when teachers respond to mistakes in a supportive and encouraging manner. They explained that positive reinforcement helps them overcome fear and gradually increases their willingness to speak in class. Students believed that a respectful classroom atmosphere significantly improves their participation. They reported that when teachers listen patiently and avoid harsh criticism, they feel valued and more willing to contribute to discussions.

Theme 3: Dialogue as a Mechanism for Enhancing Student Confidence

Participants responses revealed that dialogue based instructional practices significantly contribute to the development of student confidence and oral participation. Activities such as pair work, group discussions and open ended questioning were reported as effective strategies for encouraging communication.

Teachers observed increased student participation following the introduction of interactive methods, while students reported reduced anxiety and improved confidence in speaking English. This indicates that dialogue serves as a transformative pedagogical tool that supports learner engagement and self-expression.

Students shared that pair work and small group discussions helped them feel more comfortable speaking English. They explained that speaking in smaller groups reduced pressure and made communication easier. Students reported that dialogue-based activities improved their confidence and learning experience. They stated that interacting with peers helped them learn new expressions and correct mistakes in a natural way. Students emphasized that continuous participation in classroom dialogue gradually reduced their fear of speaking. They explained that regular interaction made them more confident and active learners in English classrooms.

Theme 4: Interactive Learning as a Mediator of Language Development

Teachers identified interactive learning strategies as more effective than traditional lecture based instruction for English language acquisition. Engagement in collaborative tasks was found to enhance vocabulary development, speaking fluency and comprehension skills.

Students expressed a preference for participatory learning over passive listening, while teachers reported improved learning outcomes through group based activities. These findings underscore the importance of interaction in fostering communicative competence in English language classrooms. Students stated that interactive classroom activities were more effective than lectures in helping them understand English lessons. They explained that participation made learning more engaging and easier to comprehend. Students expressed that group work improved their vocabulary and speaking ability. They reported that learning through interaction helped them remember concepts more effectively than passive listening. Students further explained that interactive learning improved both their speaking and listening skills. They stated that classroom participation allowed them to use English in real situations, which strengthened their overall language ability.

Theme 5: Transition from Teacher Centered Instruction to Student Centered Collaboration

This theme reflects a pedagogical shift from teacher centered, discipline oriented instruction toward student centered and collaborative learning environments. Teachers described moving from authoritative roles focused on syllabus completion to facilitative roles that encourage student voice and participation.

Students confirmed that increased opportunities for expression and involvement in classroom decisions enhanced their engagement and motivation. This transition indicates a broader movement toward constructivist and dialogic approaches in English language teaching. Students described a gradual shift from silence toward participation when teachers began encouraging interaction. They explained that even small opportunities to speak increased their interest in learning English. Students reported that their participation increased when classroom activities became more interactive. They stated that group tasks and discussions made them feel more involved and motivated. Students emphasized that this shift transformed their learning experience. They explained that they feel more confident, engaged and responsible for their learning process.

Findings based on Teachers’ Data Analysis

Table 1

Theme	SubThemes	Teachers’ Responses	Findings
Theme 1: Classroom Discipline	Teacher controlled classrooms	Teachers emphasized strict rules and classroom control to maintain order and complete lessons effectively.	English classrooms were largely authority driven, limiting spontaneous interaction and student participation.
	Discipline through punishment	Teachers reported using warnings and punishment to control student behavior, especially in large classes.	Fear based discipline created restricted classroom interaction and passive learning environments.
	Limited student participation	Teachers observed that students mostly responded only when directly questioned.	Excessive emphasis on correctness discouraged free communication in English.
	Syllabus and control orientation	Teachers prioritized maintaining discipline over interactive learning opportunities.	Classroom management practices reduced communicative and collaborative learning experiences.

Table 2

Theme	SubThemes	Teachers’ Responses	Findings
Theme 2: Emotional Safety and Supportive Teacher Student Relationships	Positive reinforcement	Teachers noticed increased participation when they encouraged students positively.	Supportive teacher behavior improved students’ confidence and willingness to interact.
	Friendly teacher	Teachers adopted	Emotional safety

approach	respectful and non-threatening communication styles.	promoted active classroom engagement and dialogue.
Encouragement and appreciation	Teachers observed that appreciation reduced students' fear of speaking English.	Positive classroom relationships strengthened learner participation and self-expression.
Non-judgmental interaction	Teachers avoided harsh criticism to create supportive environments.	Emotionally safe classrooms enhanced communicative confidence among learners.

Table 3

Theme	SubThemes	Teachers' Responses	Findings
Theme 3: Dialogue as a Mechanism for Enhancing Student Confidence	Pair work and group discussion	Teachers used collaborative tasks to encourage classroom communication.	Dialogue based learning reduced student anxiety and increased participation.
	Open ended questioning	Teachers asked students reflective and discussion-based questions.	Dialogic teaching promoted critical thinking and oral expression.
	Increased participation	Teachers observed greater student interaction after introducing dialogue-based methods.	Continuous interaction improved students' speaking confidence.
	Student self expression	Teachers believed interactive dialogue supported learner voice and engagement.	Dialogue functioned as a transformative pedagogical strategy in English learning.

Table 4

Theme	SubThemes	Teachers' Responses	Findings
Theme 4: Interactive Learning as a Mediator of Language Development	Collaborative learning strategies	Teachers identified group work and participatory activities as effective instructional approaches.	Interactive learning enhanced communicative competence and language acquisition.
	Vocabulary development	Teachers reported improvement in students' vocabulary through interaction.	Language skills developed more effectively through communication-based activities.
	Speaking fluency and comprehension	Teachers observed improvement in speaking and	Participation based learning supported practical language use.

Learning beyond lectures	understanding during collaborative tasks. Teachers considered interactive learning more effective than lecture based instruction.	Active learning strategies improved student engagement and retention.
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Table 5

Theme	SubThemes	Teachers' Responses	Findings
Theme 5: Transition from Teacher Centered to Student Centered Collaboration	Shift in teacher role	Teachers described moving from authoritative instructors to facilitators of learning.	A pedagogical transition toward collaborative and constructivist learning was evident.
	Encouraging student voice	Teachers provided more opportunities for student participation and discussion.	Increased learner involvement enhanced classroom engagement and confidence.
	Student-centered interaction	Teachers promoted collaborative tasks rather than passive listening.	Student centered approaches strengthened motivation and active learning.
	Constructivist teaching practices	Teachers encouraged dialogue, collaboration, and shared learning experiences.	The findings reflected movement toward dialogic and learner centered pedagogy.

Findings based on Students Data Analysis

Table 1

Theme	SubThemes	Students' Responses	Findings
Theme 1: Classroom Discipline	Fear of mistakes	Students reported anxiety when speaking English due to fear of incorrect answers.	Fear and criticism reduced willingness to participate in classroom interaction.
	Negative evaluation	Students avoided speaking because teachers and classmates sometimes criticized mistakes.	Negative classroom environments promoted silence and passive learning.
	Peer judgment	Students stated that classmates laughed at incorrect answers.	Peer reactions reduced confidence and increased embarrassment.
	Memorization over communication	Students relied more on memorization than spoken practice.	Fear based classrooms weakened communicative competence in English learning.

Table 2

Theme	SubThemes	Students' Responses	Findings
Theme 2: Emotional Safety and Supportive Teacher Student Relationships	Supportive teacher responses	Students felt confident when teachers responded kindly to mistakes.	Positive reinforcement reduced fear and encouraged participation.
	Respectful classroom atmosphere	Students valued patient listening and respectful communication from teachers.	Emotional safety enhanced classroom interaction and learner confidence.
	Increased willingness to speak	Students became more active when criticism was avoided.	Non judgmental environments supported meaningful participation.
	Feeling valued and respected	Students felt appreciated when teachers encouraged their ideas.	Teacher support improved students' motivation and engagement.

Table 3

Theme	SubThemes	Students' Responses	Findings
Theme 3: Dialogue as a Mechanism for Enhancing Student Confidence	Comfort in small groups	Students preferred pair work and group discussions because they reduced pressure.	Small group interaction improved speaking confidence.
	Peer learning	Students learned new expressions and corrected mistakes through interaction with classmates.	Collaborative dialogue supported natural language learning.
	Reduced anxiety	Students stated that regular dialogue reduced fear of speaking English.	Continuous participation strengthened communicative confidence.
	Active classroom participation	Students became more active through discussion-based activities.	Dialogue enhanced learner engagement and self expression.

Table 4

Theme	SubThemes	Students' Responses	Findings
Theme 4: Interactive Learning as a Mediator of Language Development	Preference for participatory learning	Students preferred interaction over passive listening and lectures.	Interactive learning improved understanding and engagement.
	Vocabulary and speaking improvement	Students reported better vocabulary and speaking ability through group work.	Participation based learning improved communicative competence.

Improved listening and comprehension	Students stated that interaction strengthened listening and understanding skills.	Active classroom involvement enhanced language acquisition.
Real life use of English	Students practiced English during classroom interaction.	Practical communication opportunities strengthened overall language ability.

Table 5

Theme	SubThemes	Students' Responses	Findings
Theme 5: Transition from Teacher Centered to Student Centered Collaboration	Increased opportunities to participate	Students became more engaged when teachers encouraged interaction.	Student centered learning increased motivation and confidence.
	Group tasks and collaboration	Students enjoyed discussions and collaborative classroom activities.	Collaborative learning promoted active involvement in learning.
	Transformation from silence to participation	Students gradually became more confident in expressing themselves.	Interactive teaching reduced passivity and improved learner autonomy.
	Responsibility for learning	Students felt more engaged and responsible for their learning process.	Student centered approaches encouraged independent and active learning.

Discussion

The phenomenological study provides a rich understanding of how classroom interaction is experienced by secondary school students and English language teachers in District Hyderabad, Sindh. The lived experiences of participants reveal that classroom interaction is not simply a pedagogical technique but a deeply social and emotional process shaped by confidence and communication opportunities. A significant insight from the study is the strong influence of classroom discipline on student participation. Both teachers and students described traditional classrooms as environments where silence is often equated with discipline and control. While such practices help maintain order, they simultaneously restrict opportunities for meaningful interaction. Students reported that fear of making mistakes, being corrected harshly by peers leads them to remain silent during English lessons. From a phenomenological perspective, this silence is not passive disinterest but an active response to perceived emotional risk in the classroom environment. Consequently, language learning becomes more focused on memorization and correctness rather than communication and fluency.

The study explored crucial role of emotional safety in facilitating classroom interaction. Participants consistently emphasized that when teachers adopt a supportive, respectful and encouraging attitude, students feel more comfortable engaging in classroom discussions.

Emotional safety emerges as a foundation for participation, as it allows students to take risks in using a second language without fear of humiliation. Teachers who provide positive reinforcement and avoid punitive responses create an environment where students gradually develop confidence. This suggests that effective English language teaching requires not only methodological expertise but also emotional sensitivity and interpersonal support.

The study also demonstrates that interactive learning strategies significantly contribute to English language development. Participants noted that traditional lecture based instruction is often insufficient for developing communicative competence. In contrast, interactive activities provide learners with opportunities to use language in meaningful contexts, which enhances vocabulary acquisition, fluency and comprehension. Through peer interaction, students are able to negotiate meaning, correct errors and learn collaboratively. This reinforces the idea that language learning is inherently social and requires active engagement rather than passive reception of information.

The findings reveal a shift in classroom pedagogy from teacher centered control to student centered collaboration. Teachers described their evolving roles from authoritative knowledge providers to facilitators of learning. This transition reflects a broader pedagogical change aligned with constructivist and communicative language teaching approaches. Students feeling more motivated when their voices are valued and their participation are encouraged.

Conclusion

The study aimed to understand how classroom interaction is shaped by discipline oriented practices and how it transitions toward dialogue based learning environments. Traditional classroom practices characterized by strict discipline often create fear, anxiety and silence among students. In such environments, students tend to avoid participation due to fear of making mistakes, receiving criticism and experiencing peer embarrassment. This limits their opportunities for meaningful communication in English and restricts their overall language development. The study also demonstrates that when teachers adopt supportive, encouraging and dialogic approaches, classroom interaction improves significantly. Emotional safety, respectful communication and positive reinforcement were found to increase students' confidence and willingness to participate. Dialogue based teaching strategies such as pair work, group discussions and interactive activities play a central role in transforming classroom dynamics from passive to active learning environments.

The study concludes that interactive learning approaches are more effective in developing English language skills compared to traditional lecture based instruction. Students learn better when they are actively engaged in using the language in meaningful contexts. Interaction not only enhances linguistic competence but also builds confidence, motivation and learner autonomy.

Recommendations

1. Recommendations for Teachers

English language teachers need to adopt student centered and dialogue based teaching approaches in their classrooms. Pair work, group discussions, role plays and guided questioning will provide learners with more opportunities to practice English in meaningful contexts and reduce fear of speaking.

2. Recommendations for Students

Students should be encouraged to take active responsibility for their own language learning. They need to participate more confidently in classroom discussions, group activities and peer interaction, speaking English in and outside the classroom will help reduce anxiety and improve fluency over time.

3. Recommendations for School Administration

School administrators should support the creation of interactive and learner friendly classroom environments by encouraging the use of communicative teaching methods. Classrooms should be equipped and structured in a way that supports group work and student interaction rather than only traditional seating arrangements.

4. Recommendations for Policy and Teacher Training

Educational policymakers and teacher education institutions should provide regular professional development programs focused on communicative language teaching and interactive pedagogy. Training workshops should emphasize how to manage classroom discipline while promoting dialogue and student engagement.

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