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## Students' Linguistic Moves In English Language Classroom Interactions In Relation To Teachers' Control Strategies

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study examined students' linguistic moves in relation to teachers' control in English as a second language (ESL) classroom. The focus was on the impact of teachers' control strategies on students' linguistic contributions in ESL classrooms in Nigeria. A qualitative approach involving classroom observations and teacher interviews was used for data collection and analysis. The results reveal that teachers had continual control over classroom interaction. The students' linguistic moves were determined by teachers' discourse choices and control strategies, which mainly involved the use of display questions and instructions. The impact of teacher control on students' verbal participation included students' limited discourse initiation moves, increased responding moves, and silence to turn-taking. The study concluded that teachers exercise significant control over the classroom discourse, and this behaviour pattern dramatically impacts students' linguistic contributions. It is recommended that teachers reflect on their discourse behaviour and interactional strategies to encourage students' classroom linguistic contributions and the development of students' communicative skills.*

**KEYWORDS:** linguistic moves, classroom interaction, discourse, teacher control, classroom practice.

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### INTRODUCTION

In the last few decades, the focus of research and second language pedagogy has gradually but noticeably shifted from teacher teaching. More emphasis has been placed on students' learning. This shift has been demonstrated in increasing studies undertaken from the learners' perspectives, particularly in research on formal language learning situations. More and more second language educators have now recognised that effective learning strategies, such as classroom interaction, can enhance students' achievement in second language learning (Anana, 2019; Jiang, 2020).

In the context of teaching English as a second language, classroom interaction has been identified as one of the tools by which communication skills can be developed (Deji-Afuye & Obadare, 2019; Hardman, Abd-Kadir & Smith, 2008; Some-Guiebre, 2020). Verbal communication is essential to the interaction between the teacher and the students. The idea that classroom talk impacts the kind, extent, and standard of learning and knowledge acquisition has prompted more scholarly research in this area (Oloninisi, 2019). Studies in situations like Nigeria demonstrate that classroom practice and pedagogy do not practically emphasise student learning above teacher teaching (Oyewumi & Jabaar, 2017). Given the dominant status of English as a language of instruction and a compulsory subject in the country's educational system, it is imperative to bring classroom practice in line with reality in the learning environment. According to Anjorin-Ojewole (2023), there has been consistent English as a Second Language (ESL) curriculum change to incorporate effective teaching practices in Nigeria.

Much of the challenges of making classroom interactions more student-oriented and communicative as stipulated in the curriculums could be traced to the lack of adequate resources and seemingly teachers' preference for traditional teaching, which they have been used to (Anjorin-Ojewole, 2023). Amuseghan (2007) states that there are two perspectives to be considered for the curriculum to be effectively implemented: prescription (intended curriculum) and practice (implemented curriculum). In his study, Amuseghan (2007) observes that although the design and purpose of the ESL curriculum are to promote students' academic and communication achievements, communication skills are not given much attention in the classroom contexts. In this study, students' more verbal participation is considered significant to help develop their communicative competence. Therefore, with regard to the identified problem, this study sought to examine the impact of teachers' control strategies on students' linguistic contributions in English classes in Nigeria to motivate the required adjustment.

The study is guided by the following research questions.

1. How does the teachers' control impact students' linguistic moves?
2. What linguistic moves are made by students in classroom interaction?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Classroom Interaction in the Nigerian Context

Since academic resources and knowledge are organised and communicated through language, teaching and learning in the classroom involve speaking, listening, reading, and writing, all of which are expressed through interaction (Pinxteren, 2022). Therefore, linguistic knowledge and competence in the language of instruction are of great significance to effective classroom interaction. The Nigerian classroom language context is noted for the use of English, a second language, as the principal language of instruction. In such a situation, the quality of classroom interaction, as well as teaching and learning, will be significantly influenced by teachers' and students' interaction skills and proficiency in the language (Ahaotu & Ohiaeri, 2023). Sabe and

Luka (2020), identifying the medium of instruction as one of the challenges to classroom interaction, state that students who do not understand their teacher may neither learn anything taught in the language nor be able to respond to the teacher's talk using the language.

Classroom interaction is known to be mainly directed by the teacher to accomplish particular educational goals (Anderson, 2020; Sari, 2020). Oloninisi (2019) claims that for learners to develop good communication skills, the basic communicative language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) should be explored with emphasis on teachers' spoken English and verbal interaction with the students in and out of the classroom. Deji-Afuye and Obadare (2019) observe that there have been hindrances to classroom interaction because of teachers' inefficient use of spoken language. Some ESL teachers are not proficient enough to speak English fluently because they also learned the language in a second-language environment. Furthermore, a lack of proficiency in contrastive linguistics, coupled with the direct instruction method of teaching, has a great impact on comprehending and developing effective pedagogical techniques for successful classroom practices and learning (Ahaotu & Ohiaeri, 2023).

Studies have observed that students' talk takes a less significant percentage of total classroom interaction (Anana, 2019; Deji-Afuye & Olowoyeye, 2019; Sharma & Tiwari, 2021). Several factors could explain this observation. Many of the classrooms used in these studies are traditional or teacher-centred, and the types of questions teachers ask limit students' verbal responses to yes-no or one-two words answers. The objectives of those questions, the degree of motivation teachers give their students to respond to the questions, and the types of classroom activities in which students participate create constraints to student talks. Most often, students talk less because they have low proficiency in the language of instruction. All these studies indicate that, for the ESL classroom, getting students to talk becomes thoughtful and essential as they need to practice speaking and listening skills to develop their speaking skills and competence in English.

### **Teacher Talk and Control Strategies.**

According to Putri (2015), teacher talk is used as a unique communicative activity to develop students' language proficiency and as a medium by which teachers conduct instruction and control classroom activities. From the preceding, teacher talk can be said to be a communication-based or interactive-based talk. Teachers can affect their students' behaviour and mood by changing their communication styles, i.e., the tone of voice used, the type of content their speeches have, and the variety of linguistic devices they use.

Anana (2019) observed that a teacher's classroom talks often reveal the power and control he exhibits due to his position as a teacher in the classroom. The author argues that students' awareness of such irregularity and the discourse function attributed to the teacher's position affect their full participation and limit their linguistic contributions. A conventional teacher-centred teaching method makes it challenging for teachers to involve students in class discussions that can improve their communication abilities (Mardani & Gorjizadeh, 2020; Rashidi & Rafieerad, 2010). According to Oyewumi and Jabaar (2017), the authoritative nature of Africans generally makes

some Nigerian teachers believe that students must be put under their control. The idea that a good teacher is someone who shows off their extensive knowledge in front of their students is still very much in vogue today. Such an idea becomes a pointer to the constraints of student-centred learning in the Nigerian context. Therefore, the current study attempts to examine teachers' control techniques and point their attention to appropriate language use and turn-taking in conversation which are essential to help students develop their independent thinking, initiative, self-determination, and interaction skills.

## **METHODOLOGY**

A qualitative approach was adopted in the study for data collection and analysis, involving interaction analysis of classroom verbal exchanges and teacher interviews. The method was employed to look into how teachers' control techniques in English language classes related to the linguistic moves made by students during classroom interaction. This study adopted a case study and descriptive survey design. The study sample was obtained using a purposive sampling technique. The sample consisted of four ESL teachers selected from two senior secondary schools in Ikere local government area of Ekiti state in Nigeria. The teachers' teaching experience ranged from 5 years to 10 years and above, and their educational backgrounds comprised Nigerian Certificates in Education (NCE), first degree and master's degree. The teacher participants were two men and two women. Student participants were all the students in the classes taught by the teachers observed. The students' ages ranged between 16 and 20.

The teachers were observed and personally video-recorded by the researcher during their English lessons, lasting from twenty to forty minutes each. One-on-one interviews with the teachers followed the lesson observations. The observation schedule contained two parts designed to directly observe the extent of teachers' control and what characterised students' linguistic moves during English lessons. The observations were relevant because they allowed the researcher to collect descriptive narrative data on the classroom interaction between teachers and their students.

The data collected through video recordings were transcribed and analysed using slightly modified Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) rank scale model's core elements of teaching exchange, initiation, responding, and follow-up moves to classify participants' utterances indicating teachers' control moves and students' linguistic moves. The analysis focused on teaching exchange structure and discourse moves made by the participants. Extracts are used to show the teaching exchanges. In each of the extracts, 'T' stands for teacher, 'SS' for students answering in chorus and 'S' stands for a student responding to the teacher's questions or instructions. The interview involved open-ended questions to have teachers' explanations regarding the classroom practices they followed to engage the students in verbal participation. The data gathered through individual interviews were also classified and analysed in the following section.

## RESULTS

This section features the presentation and analysis of the data indicating the impact of teachers' control on students' linguistic moves during classroom exchanges. The focus was on the categories of teaching exchange moves that either promoted or prevented students' verbal participation. In light of the abovementioned expectations, the following extracts were used to reflect the exchanges between the teachers and their students in the classrooms.

### Interaction Analysis

#### Extract 1- Teacher 1 (School 1)

Turn	Speaker	Exchange	Move	Category
1	T	Bring out your textbook. What was our last topic?	Directive	Instruction
2	SS	Adverbs	Elicitation	Question
3	T	I don't want chorus answer. Adverb, adverb. What is an adverb?	Responding	Positive
4	SS	Silence	Directive	Instruction
5	T	Ojo, what is an adverb?	Elicitation	Question
6	S1	An adverb is a word that modifies a verb	Directive	Nomination
7	T	Alomoh. (Nominates another student)	Elicitation	Question
8	S2	An adverb is a word that is used to modify a verb, adverb or adjective.	Responding	Positive
9	T	An adverb is used to modify a verb, an adjective or another adverb. Any other person? What's an adverb? You. (Nominates another student pointing in his direction).	Supportive	Feedback Clue
10	S3	An adverb is a word that modifies a verb and adverb.	Elicitation	Question
11	S4	(Raises hand)	Directive	Nomination
12	T	Yes.	Responding	Positive
13	S4	How can an adverb modify another adverb?	Turn Passing	Nomination
14	T	An example of that is 'very quickly'. He ran out very quickly. Very modifies quickly to show the speed at which he ran.	Elicitation	Question
			Responding	Positive

### Extract 2- Teacher 2 (School 1)

Turn	Speaker	Exchange	Move	Category
1	T	What are the things you can do to come up with a debate writing that is devoid of errors and mistakes?	Elicitation	Question
2	SS	Silence.		
3	T	Yes. Who can answer that question?	Elicitation	Question
4	SS	Silence		
5	T	Yes, who can try? Yes, Fatia.	Elicitation Directive	Question Nomination
6	S1	Using figurative expressions, proverbs and... and idioms.	Responding	Positive
7	T	Yes. Is that all?	Supportive Elicitation	Feedback Question
8	S1	No	Responding	Positive
9	T	Yes.	Turn passing	Instruction
10	S1	Then, giving detailed explanation of the points which, you have to put in the essay	Responding	Positive
11	T	Yes. Thank you. God bless you.	Supportive	Praise

### Extract 3- Teacher 3 (School 2)

Turn	Speaker	Exchange	Move	Category
1	T	The context of the use of the verb will indicate whether they are nouns or verbs. The last one we mentioned? You.	Informative Directive Elicitation	Explaining Nomination Question
2	S1	By using gerund	Responding	Positive
3	T	Yes. By using gerund. Do you have questions on what we have done before I give you the assignment? Questions?	Supportive Turn passing	Feedback Question
4	SS	Silence.		
5	T	I want someone to come and clean the board. You. Any question?	Directive Turn passing	Instructing
6	SS	Silence.		
7	T	Do you understand? On any of the things we have done today, ask questions. If you have a question, raise your hand.	Checking Directive	Checking Requesting
8	SS	Silence.		
9	T	Nobody has questions. Okay. Now write any verb and change it to a noun using any of the methods.	Informative Directive	Reporting Instructing

**Extract 4- Teacher 4 (School 2)**

Turn	Speaker	Exchange	Move	Category
1	T	Like I said earlier on, a rhyme occurs when two words sound alike. Rhyme is used to describe sameness of sound in words or syllables. So when you look at the word commit and the word permit you'll see that they share the same ending. Have you been able to get anything meaningful?	Informative	Explaining
			Checking	Question
2	SS	Yes ma	Feedback	Acknowledging
3	T	Your questions now.	Turn passing	Instruction
4	SS	Silence		
5	T	So, if there are no questions, should I ask my own question?	Elicitation	Question
6	SS	Yes ma.	Feedback	Acknowledging
7	T	Can you tell me how we came about the rhyme scheme? Now (referring to the example written on the board) this is an example. And this is our rhyme scheme a b a b. How did we come about them?	Elicitation Supportive	Question Clue
8	SS	Silence.		
9	T	(Nominates a student) Dave, how did we come about the rhyme scheme?	Directive Elicitation	Nomination Question
10	S1	We can get the rhyme scheme automatically the first... last sound in the first line. If it is different from the last word in the second line automatically they will be a b but if the last word is the same with that of the second line, we will get aa.	Responding	Positive
11	T	Very good. So that means it is not in all excerpts that we come across that we'll have a b a b. We may likely get something like aa bb cc.	Supportive	Feedback Metalinguistic explanation
12	S2	Is it possible to have the rhyme scheme of a b c?	Initiation (Elicitation)	Question

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13	T	Yes, it's possible if you are given such an excerpt and you're asked to work on it and at the end of the day there are no words that share the same ending, then, you are going to have a b c. You cannot have a b a b when there are no words that share the ending. Do you understand?	Responding	Positive
14	SS	Yes ma.	Feedback	Acknowledging

All the teaching exchanges in Extracts 1 to 4 reflect teachers' lesson control strategies such as elicitation, directive, supportive, checking, turn passing and responding. All the teachers mostly used elicitation as a control strategy through questioning, as shown in Extract 1, Turns 1, 3, 5, 9, Extract 2, turns 1, 3, 5, 7, Extract 3, turn 1 and Extract 4, turns 5, 7, and 9. Directive control strategy was used by the teachers in the form of instruction and nomination, as shown in Extract 1, turns 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, Extract 2, turn 5, Extract 3, turns 5, 7, 9, and Extract 4, turns 9. Nominations were realised by calling the names of students as shown in Extract 1, turns 5 and 7 or with the use of words like "yes", and "you" while pointing or looking in the direction of a particular student (Extract 1, turn 9; Extract 2, turns 5, 7, and 9 and Extract 3, turn 1). Nomination was used to call on students to answer questions or respond to instructions. Supportive strategy was employed by all the teachers in the form of giving feedback (Extract 1, turn 9, Extract 2, turn 7 and 9, Extract 3, turn 3, and Extract 4, turn 11), clues (Extract 1, turn 9, Extract 4, turn 7), praise (Extract 2, turn 11) and metalinguistic explanations (Extract 4, turn 11) after students' attempt to answer questions. Checking questions were used by the teachers in Extracts 3 and 4 mainly to check if students were following or to draw their attention. The responding moves made by the teachers in Extract 1, turn 14 and Extract 4, turn 13, were to the initiation moves by Student 4 and Student 2 in Turns 13 and 12, respectively.

The data reveal that linguistic moves mostly made by students were to respond to teachers' elicitation (mostly closed-ended questions) and directive moves, as shown in Extract 1, turns 2, 6, 8, 10; Extract 2, turns 4, 6, 8, 10; Extract 3, turn 2 and Extract 4, turns 2 and 4. Students' initiation moves (questions) are shown in Extract 1, turn 13 and Extract 4, turn 12. The extracts also reveal students' silence to teachers' questions (Extract 1, turn 4, Extract 2, turn 2, 4, and Extract 4, turn 8) and turn passing (Extract 3, turns 4, 6, 8, and Extract 4, turn 4). The observation, as exemplified in Extract 1, turn 6, 8, 10, Extract 2, turn 6, and Extract 4, turn 10, show that individual students did not often respond to questions or talk in class unless they were nominated or beckoned to by the teacher. In Extract 4, turns 2, 6 and 14, it was observed that the students gave feedback to the teacher's checking questions to acknowledge the teacher's thought and they generally did so in chorus. Additionally, the data demonstrate that students' responses were either choral or individual.



## Classroom Practices to Engage Students in Verbal Participation

### Interview Questions:

- How do you organise your talk to engage your students to participate in the classroom?
- In your last class, which parts of your instructional delivery most effectively encouraged students' participation and talk?
- Why were some of the students silent when given turns to talk?

When the teachers were asked: "How do you organise your talk as a teacher and plan to engage your students to participate in the classroom?" their responses showed that they used questions, instructions, and explanations and also allowed students to ask questions as they teach.

Teacher 3 said:

*I start my lessons by asking the students to remind the class of the last topic. I thereafter explain further the major part of the previous lesson. I introduce the topic for the day. I explain the topic, ask them questions to monitor their understanding, give classwork, check the students' last assignment, and give them assignments on the new topic. I plan to engage my students to participate in my class through the use of questions and instructions relevant to the topic.*

The responses of other teachers agreed with the above.

Teacher 4 said:

*I start by introducing the lesson to the students and asking them questions from the previous lesson. This would lead us to the new topic. I ensure that I explain the new topic and thereafter asked them questions to check their understanding. I planned to ask them questions based on what they had been taught or what I intended to teach. I also allow them to ask their own questions or view their opinions where necessary.*

The second question aimed to get teachers' instructional strategies that most effectively encouraged students' participation and talk in the observed classes. All the responses indicated that they used nomination or allowed students to volunteer to respond to questions.

Teacher 1 said:

*I believe it is by giving the students questions to make them talk and ensuring that the questions are directed to each one of them at a time and not a few ones that have been identified as outspoken among them.*

Teacher 2 said,

*I tried to allow the students to volunteer to answer my questions, but if there was no volunteer, I chose any of them. Sometimes I deliberately nominate to ensure some silent ones among them also participate.*

The other two teachers mentioned that they usually use classroom activities such as class works, oral engagement, and textbooks to promote students' active involvement in most lessons.

When asked about the reason for some students' silence when they were to talk in the classes all teachers mentioned issues such as the introverted nature of some students, lack of confidence, and lack of concentration and understanding. Other issues mentioned include fear of being ridiculed by other students or the teacher, lack of self-expression in English, fear of giving wrong answers, timidity, and low self-esteem as some of the students' challenges. Some of the teachers acknowledged that many of the students do not have textbooks.

## DISCUSSION

### Teachers' Control Impact

The results of the study reveals teachers' lesson control strategies such as 'elicitation', 'directive', 'supportive', 'checking', 'turn passing' and 'responding' linguistic moves. However, teachers' utterances were mostly characterised by elicitation and directives. Elicitation was of great significance to all the lessons as it was mostly used by teachers in the form of display questions to pass turns and elicit students' linguistic responses. According to the typical classroom discourse pattern proposed by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), teachers' questions are significant as an initiation act used to get students' responses. The findings support Jiang (2020), who concludes that teachers' questioning techniques determine the extent of students' verbal engagement. In the current study, teachers' questions were mostly display questions, which focused on content knowledge and were at a lower cognitive level. In corroboration with Some-Guiebre (2020) and Ahaotu and Ohiaeri (2023), the present study found that teachers' control over classroom interaction is exhibited through teacher-centred pedagogy and questioning techniques.

Apart from elicitations, teachers' directives acted as instructions that required either verbal or non-verbal responses from the students. Many of the teachers' instructions to get students' verbal responses attracted mostly choral responses, except in cases where teachers had to nominate individuals to talk. Hardman et al. (2008) are of the opinion that although choral responses may, in certain cases, increase student participation, it is questionable if doing so at the expense of students' expressiveness and cognitive and language development is worth it.

Predominant among the teachers' directives were nominations. The findings indicate that teacher control is evident because he or she decides which student answers the questions. It was observed that students did not often answer questions or talk in class unless they were called or beckoned to by the teacher. The students appeared to have been used to such a teacher strategy whereby the teacher decides which student answers the questions, and as such, they would wait for nomination. The findings suggest that there is much teacher control in classroom interaction, showing one of the characteristics of teacher-centred classrooms. The findings align with Sari (2020) that teachers' power is higher than the students' in that they control students' turn-taking. This kind of control may not encourage equitable student participation. The findings agree with Anderson (2020), who explains that using teachers' nominations reduces students' freedom and makes them feel

impassive or overly stressed, or it might favour more intelligent students over those who need assistance the most. However, nomination encouraged many students to participate through choral or individual responses across the classes observed for this study. This is in line with the submission of Fesway-Malao (2016), who sees nomination as a practical approach to give inactive members of the class a chance to communicate their thoughts and help them use the language as they express themselves in the interaction.

Furthermore, teachers' responses to interviews show that they had control over the classroom interaction to give instructions, ask questions, nominate students to respond, evaluate students' responses and ensure that the lesson objectives were attained. The findings indicate that teachers' pedagogical beliefs influenced their choices about the discourse patterns and pedagogical approaches they employed in their classes. As demonstrated in some earlier studies, the assertions that pedagogical factors like teachers' linguistic skills, beliefs, experiences and attitudes towards English teaching and the learners, the curriculum and the learning environment are very fundamental to what goes on in ESL classrooms have been made on several international platforms (Amuseghan, 2007; Oloninisi, 2019, in Nigeria; Some-Guiebre, 2020 in Burkina Faso; Jiang, 2020 in China; Sari, 2020; in the US; Sharma & Tiwari, 2021 in India). Considering those assertions, it is important to note that more studies in the Nigerian contexts have shown that students' attitudes, either consciously or unconsciously, are shaped by some of such factors in Nigerian public schools (Anana, 2019; Oyewumi & Jabaar, 2017). Therefore, students are predisposed to depend on the choices teachers have to make in the learning process.

### **Students' Linguistic Moves**

#### **Students' Initiating Moves**

Students' initiating moves are usually generated from student-teacher or student-student talk. In this study, the classroom discourse in relation to students' initiation across the classes observed only involved student-teacher talk. Student-student talk was missing because there were no collaborative classes or group discussions throughout the observations. The findings indicated that students' contributions were limited, even though they initiated conversations at some points in the interaction. The findings of the study align with those of Deji-Afuye and Obadare (2019), Sharma and Tiwari (2021), and Ahaotu and Ohiaeri (2023), indicating that there have been fewer student-initiated dialogues than teacher-initiated ones in most classrooms because students are given limited opportunity to participate fully in the discourse. These researchers argued that this observation has been attributed to students' difficulty gaining turns to the talk due to teachers' influences and choices. The practice has been that before speaking, students should get the teacher's attention and approval, according to Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). This attitude was prevalent in this study. Hence, students had limited initiation moves.

The results indicate that students' 'elicitations' were used for clarifications or to request further explanation of the teachers' instruction, as exemplified in Extract 1, turn 13 and Extract 4, turn 12. However, the classroom observations revealed that students did not use directive acts in the

initiation. As in Rashidi and Rafieerad's (2010) study of the pattern of classroom interaction in EFL classrooms in Iran, the absence of directive acts in students' initiation might also be connected to contextual influence or the power dynamics between teachers and students. For instance, in the Nigerian context, students do not have the authority or are not supposed to direct teachers in classroom settings (Anana, 2019).

One of the characteristics of students' attitude to talk in the observation was the frequency of their silence whenever they were given chances to answer or ask questions in the class. In extract 3, the teacher was ready to give turns to the students to ask questions, but they were silent (turns 3 – 8). Silence mainly happened when students were unsure of the correct answers to questions and perhaps when they were thinking of the best way to answer them. The increased rate of students' silence was not only a result of not gaining turns to the talk; it seemed to be students' face-saving strategy to avoid speaking poor English, providing wrong answers, and avoiding ridicule. The level of students' attitudes to classroom participation appeared to compel teachers to answer their own questions and give more explanations on the topics, thereby increasing teacher talks above student talks. The results suggest that students' attitudes and teacher factors, coupled with some contextual influences, contribute to the low level of student initiation in classroom interaction in corroboration with recent studies on classroom practices in Nigeria (Anjorin-Ojewole, 2023; Deji-Afuye & Obadare, 2019; Oloninisi, 2019; Oyewumi & Jabaar, 2017).

### **Students' Responding Moves**

The results indicated that student linguistic moves were mostly devoted to responding. The instances of such responses suffice in the extracts. Recent studies have shown that students often find it easier to respond to questions than to initiate a conversation in a whole-class interaction (Ahaotu & Ohiaeri, 2023; Hardman et al., 2008; Mardani & Gorjizadeh, 2020;). Mardani and Gorjizadeh (2020) explain that students are more comfortable responding considering that most of the questions are based on the lesson's content, and basic knowledge, which teachers elicit using closed-ended questions that require short responses. According to the results of the current study, teachers' questioning techniques often influenced the students' responses and shaped the discourse. Across the classes examined for this study, it was observed that nomination encouraged students to participate through individual responses. In support of this finding, Fesway-Malao (2016) explains that nomination is a practical strategy to allow active and inactive students in the class to express their ideas and participate in the discourse.

### **Students' Feedback Moves**

Feedback from students is structured much differently than feedback from teachers. All the feedback acts used by the students only included 'acknowledging'. There was no endorsement or thanking. The acknowledgement given by the students was characterised by the word 'Yes', mainly to answer the teachers' checking for their understanding of the lesson. Student feedback was mainly determined by teachers' check questions, which appeared to be superficial rather than genuine because the teacher did not bother to check if the students' responses were true. The

teachers' checking that produced students' feedback should have served as a way for teachers to assess how well they had attained the lesson's objectives. Rather, it was merely used to give the students a feeling of participating in the conversation. These observations are consistent with the findings of Hardman et al. (2008), who reported that using a participatory method such as choral acknowledgement of understanding will always prevent students from engaging in more creative and improved levels of thought and experiences with various language functions.

This study considered students' linguistic choices characterised by responses to teacher questions and instructions as prompted by unequal distribution of authority, influence, and power between them and their teachers (Anderson, 2020). Their discourse privileges and abilities express this disparity. As discussed earlier, the study indicated fewer student-initiated talks than teacher-initiated ones. Findings based on teacher interviews demonstrated that teachers used questioning and nominating to engage students verbally in the interaction. The observations showed that teachers made conscious efforts to engage individual students to talk by asking questions, and the students only responded when nominated. Another reason for students' linguistic choices that was established from the findings of this study was students' level of cognition and proficiency in the language of instruction. This might have also accounted for students' silence when they did not know the correct answers to teachers' questions or when they were given chances to ask questions in the course of the interactions.

### **Implication to Research and Practice**

Discourse behaviour in the classroom is of great significance to students' academic achievements in any subject, especially in language learning, given that the second language in the Nigerian context is consciously learned in the classroom. Constant language use facilitates language acquisition when learning a language. Hence, the current study clamours for a student-oriented classroom environment where students have a level of control and are more accessible to interact with their peers and teachers without much constraint. A study of this nature would make teachers understand how significantly uneven distribution of authority, influence, and power between classroom participants inhibits classroom interactions. The awareness that would be created would transform teacher talk, assist them in managing classroom communication, and give understanding to teachers who find it challenging to shift from traditional methods to more rewarding language teaching practices. This study will add to the existing work done in classroom interactions for the interest of language users.

### **CONCLUSION**

Students were seen hardly initiating conversations but most of the time responding to teachers' questions and instructions as individuals and in chorus. As in the study of Anana (2019) of classroom discourse in English in Nigeria, the present study found in all the classes observed that it was a common practice for students to talk only when the teachers permitted them to do so. The classroom observations in this study show that all students' linguistic contributions to the classroom discourse were usually directed and controlled by teachers. The results show that

students made different linguistic choices in the triadic exchange structure found in all the classes involved in this study: Initiation, response, and feedback. However, the linguistic choices of students tended more towards responding than initiating or giving feedback in the classes as a result of teachers' control. A number of preceding research findings have reported this trend across the globe (Hardman et al., 2008; Sharma & Tiwari, 2021; Some-Guiebre, 2020). For example, Sharma and Tiwari (2021) are of the view that teachers exercise a significant level of control over the students, and this behaviour pattern has a great impact on the students' linguistic contributions in the classroom. Hardman et al. (2008) explain this as part of the significant effects of didactic and rote learning methods on learners' verbal participation and linguistic choices in the classroom.

Based on the above findings, the current study suggests that pedagogical improvement may be accomplished through more efficient teacher training programs within the teachers' experiences and the environment in which they work. In order to achieve a positive change that will enhance the quality and practical methods of teaching and learning, all school administrators, heads, and teachers should take responsibility for creating a sustainable classroom culture in the interest of students' achievement. Furthermore, it would be beneficial for teachers to reflect on their discourse behaviour and interactional strategies to encourage students' classroom linguistic contributions and the development of communicative skills.

### **Future Research**

This study only focused on teacher-student talks in ESL classrooms in senior secondary schools. Further research should focus on student-teacher and student-student talks to shift one-sided power dynamics in classroom interaction. Furthermore, given the current trends precipitated by COVID-19, it would be prudent for research to be carried out on the influence of teacher talk as well as strategies that can improve the impact of teacher talk on online platforms.

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