

## **CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS ON TEACHER TALKS IN CLASSROOM COMMUNICATION**

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### **Abstract**

Classroom communication plays a vital role in the teaching and learning process, particularly through teacher talk, which dominates classroom interaction. Teacher talk functions not only to deliver instructional content but also to manage classroom activities and regulate student participation. This study aims to analyze teacher talk in classroom communication using a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach. The research employed a qualitative descriptive design and was conducted in an eighth-grade English classroom at junior high school in Pematangsiantar, Indonesia. Data were collected through classroom observation and audio recording, focusing on naturally occurring teacher discourse. Fairclough's three-dimensional framework was used to analyze the data at the levels of text, discursive practice, and social practice. The findings indicate that teacher talk is characterized by the frequent use of imperatives, display questions, and evaluative feedback, reflecting institutional authority and control. Classroom interaction was predominantly structured through the Initiation Response Feedback pattern, positioning students as passive participants. However, teacher talk also showed potential to support learning when used in a more inclusive and dialogic manner.

**Keywords :** Teacher Talk, Classroom Communication, Critical Discourse Analysis, Power Relations, Classroom Discourse

### **INTRODUCTION**

Classroom communication plays a central role in the teaching and learning process, as it serves as the primary medium through which knowledge is constructed, negotiated, and transmitted. Within this context, language is not merely a neutral tool for conveying information, but a powerful instrument that shapes social interaction, classroom dynamics, and students' learning experiences. One of the most dominant forms of classroom language is teacher talk, which refers to the language used by teachers to manage the class, explain subject matter, ask questions, and respond to students' contributions. The way teachers use language in the

classroom has significant implications for students' participation, understanding, and overall academic development.

Teacher talk often occupies a substantial portion of classroom discourse, especially in teacher centered instructional settings. Teachers typically control the flow of interaction by selecting topics, determining who may speak, and evaluating students' responses. While such control is often necessary for effective classroom management and instructional clarity, it may also reinforce unequal power relations between teachers and students. As a result, students may have limited opportunities to express their ideas, ask critical questions, or engage in meaningful dialogue. This condition highlights the importance of examining teacher talk not only from a pedagogical perspective but also from a critical discourse perspective.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers a theoretical and analytical framework for examining the relationship between language, power, and ideology in social contexts. CDA views discourse as a form of social practice that both reflects and constructs social structures. According to Fairclough (1995), language use is closely linked to power relations and ideological processes that often operate implicitly in everyday communication. In educational settings, classroom discourse becomes a site where institutional authority, social norms, and ideological values are reproduced and negotiated. Therefore, analyzing teacher talk through the lens of CDA allows researchers to uncover the hidden meanings and power structures embedded in classroom communication.

In classroom interactions, teacher talk often reflects the teacher's institutional authority as the primary knowledge holder and decision-maker. This authority is manifested through linguistic features such as imperative sentences, evaluative feedback, questioning patterns, and turn-taking control. For instance, teachers frequently use directives to instruct students on what to do, how to respond, and when to participate. While these directives help maintain order and guide learning activities, they may also position students as passive recipients of knowledge. From a CDA perspective, such discourse practices may contribute to the reproduction of hierarchical relationships in the classroom.

However, teacher talk does not solely function as a tool of control and dominance. It can also serve as a means of scaffolding learning, motivating students, and fostering a supportive learning environment. Teachers may use inclusive language, encouragement, and open ended questions to invite students' participation and promote critical thinking. Thus, teacher talk contains both controlling and empowering elements, depending on how language

is used in classroom interaction. A critical analysis of teacher talk is therefore necessary to understand how these different functions operate simultaneously within classroom discourse.

Previous studies on classroom discourse have emphasized the importance of interaction in facilitating language learning and student engagement. Research on teacher talk has shown that the quantity and quality of teacher language significantly influence students' opportunities to learn. However, many of these studies focus on pedagogical effectiveness rather than the ideological and power-related aspects of teacher talk. Consequently, there is a need for research that critically examines teacher talk as a form of discourse that reflects broader social and institutional practices.

This study seeks to address this gap by analyzing teacher talk in classroom communication using Critical Discourse Analysis. By applying Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, this research examines teacher talk at the levels of text, discursive practice, and social practice. Through this approach, the study aims to reveal how linguistic choices in teacher talk construct power relations, shape classroom interaction patterns, and influence students' roles in the learning process.

Understanding teacher talk from a CDA perspective is essential for promoting more reflective and equitable teaching practices. When teachers become aware of how their language use may reinforce or challenge power imbalances, they can make more informed decisions about how to communicate with students. Ultimately, this awareness can contribute to the creation of a more interactive, inclusive, and student-centered classroom environment. Therefore, this study highlights the importance of critically analyzing teacher talk as a key component of classroom communication and educational discourse.

## **Literature Review**

### **Classroom Communication and Discourse in Education**

Classroom communication is a complex and dynamic process in which meaning is constructed through interaction between teachers and students. It involves not only the transmission of knowledge but also the negotiation of social roles, identities, and relationships within the classroom setting. According to Richards and Lockhart (1996), classroom discourse reflects the pedagogical goals, beliefs, and values of teachers, as well as the institutional norms of educational settings. Language used in classroom communication shapes how teaching and learning are enacted and how participants position themselves in relation to one another.

Discourse in the classroom is often characterized by an unequal distribution of speaking opportunities. Teachers usually dominate classroom talk by initiating interactions, asking questions, and evaluating students' responses. This interactional pattern, commonly known as the Initiation–Response–Feedback (IRF) sequence, has been widely documented in classroom discourse studies. While the IRF pattern helps maintain lesson structure and instructional control, it may also restrict students' opportunities to engage in extended discourse and critical thinking. From a discourse perspective, classroom communication is therefore not neutral but structured by institutional roles and power relations.

### **Teacher Talk in Classroom Interaction**

Teacher talk refers to the language used by teachers during classroom instruction to facilitate learning, manage behavior, and interact with students. Walsh (2011) emphasizes that teacher talk plays a central role in shaping the quality of classroom interaction, particularly in language classrooms. The ways teachers give instructions, ask questions, and provide feedback directly affect students' participation and engagement.

Several studies have categorized teacher talk into different functions, such as explaining, questioning, giving feedback, and managing classroom activities. Questioning strategies, for example, are crucial in encouraging student participation. However, teachers often rely on display questions that require short, predetermined answers rather than referential questions that promote critical thinking and extended responses. As a result, students' contributions may remain limited and controlled.

In addition, teacher talk often reflects teachers' authority in the classroom. Teachers decide when students may speak, how long they may speak, and whether their responses are acceptable. This control over turn taking and evaluation positions teachers as dominant participants in classroom discourse. While such dominance may support classroom order and instructional efficiency, it can also marginalize students' voices and limit opportunities for dialogic interaction.

### **Power and Ideology in Teacher Talk**

From a critical perspective, teacher talk is closely linked to issues of power and ideology. Power in the classroom is not only exercised through explicit rules and authority but also through language use. Teachers' linguistic choices, such as the use of imperatives, modal verbs,

and evaluative expressions, can subtly reinforce hierarchical relationships between teachers and students.

Ideology in classroom discourse refers to the beliefs and values that are implicitly conveyed through language. For instance, the assumption that teachers are the sole knowledge holders may be reflected in teacher-centered discourse practices. These practices can reproduce traditional views of education in which students are positioned as passive recipients of knowledge rather than active participants. CDA seeks to uncover these hidden ideological assumptions by analyzing how language constructs social reality.

Studies adopting a CDA perspective have shown that teacher talk often reflects institutional norms and educational ideologies, such as standardization, obedience, and authority. However, teacher talk can also challenge dominant ideologies when teachers use language to empower students, encourage critical dialogue, and promote collaborative learning. This dual role of teacher talk highlights the importance of critically examining classroom discourse.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as an Analytical Framework**

Critical Discourse Analysis is an approach that examines the relationship between language, power, and society. Fairclough (1995) argues that discourse both shapes and is shaped by social structures. CDA goes beyond surface-level linguistic analysis by focusing on how discourse practices reproduce or challenge power relations and ideologies.

Fairclough's three-dimensional model is one of the most widely used frameworks in CDA. It consists of three levels of analysis: text, discursive practice, and social practice. Text analysis focuses on linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure. Discursive practice examines how texts are produced, distributed, and interpreted within specific contexts. Social practice considers the broader social and institutional factors that influence discourse.

In educational research, CDA has been used to analyze textbooks, policy documents, and classroom interactions. By applying CDA to teacher talk, researchers can explore how classroom communication reflects institutional authority and pedagogical ideologies. CDA is particularly relevant for examining teacher talk because it reveals how seemingly ordinary classroom language carries deeper social meanings.

## **Previous Studies on Teacher Talk and CDA**

Previous research on teacher talk has primarily focused on its pedagogical effectiveness and impact on learning outcomes. Studies in applied linguistics and education have examined how teacher talk influences students' comprehension, motivation, and language acquisition. However, fewer studies have adopted a critical perspective to analyze the ideological and power-related dimensions of teacher talk.

Some CDA-based studies have highlighted how teacher-centered discourse limits students' participation and reinforces hierarchical classroom structures. Other studies have shown that teachers who adopt more dialogic and inclusive discourse practices create opportunities for student empowerment and critical engagement. These findings suggest that teacher talk is a crucial site for examining the intersection of language, power, and education.

Despite these contributions, there remains a need for more context-specific studies that analyze teacher talk in classroom communication, particularly in English language teaching contexts. This study builds on previous research by applying CDA to teacher talk in classroom interaction, with a focus on uncovering power relations and ideological meanings embedded in everyday instructional discourse.

## **Research Gap**

Although teacher talk has been widely studied in educational research, most studies emphasize instructional strategies rather than critical discourse dimensions. There is limited research that systematically applies Critical Discourse Analysis to examine how teacher talk constructs power relations in classroom communication. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by providing a critical analysis of teacher talk using Fairclough's CDA framework, contributing to a deeper understanding of classroom discourse and its implications for teaching and learning.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design using a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach. A qualitative approach was chosen because the study aimed to explore meanings, patterns, and social practices embedded in teacher talk rather than to measure variables quantitatively. Critical Discourse Analysis was applied to examine how language used

by teachers in classroom communication reflects power relations, ideology, and institutional authority.

This design allowed the researcher to analyze naturally occurring classroom discourse without manipulating the teaching process. By focusing on authentic classroom interaction, the study sought to provide an in-depth understanding of teacher talk as a social practice within an educational institution.

### **Research Setting and Participants**

This study was conducted at a public junior high school located in Pematangsiantar, North Sumatra, Indonesia. The school was selected because it represents a typical Indonesian junior high school where English is taught as a compulsory subject and classroom interaction is largely teacher-centered. English lessons at this level involve intensive verbal interaction, making the setting appropriate for analyzing teacher talk in classroom communication.

The research took place during regular English teaching and learning activities in the academic year. The classroom environment reflected common instructional practices in Indonesian junior high schools, where teachers frequently use spoken language to explain materials, manage classroom behavior, and guide students' participation.

The participants of this study consisted of one English teacher and eighth-grade students at the school. The teacher was selected as the primary participant because the focus of the study was on teacher talk. The teacher had several years of teaching experience and regularly used oral interaction as the main instructional medium.

The students participated as interlocutors in classroom communication. However, they were not the main focus of the analysis. Student responses were analyzed only to support the interpretation of teacher talk, particularly in relation to interaction patterns, turn-taking, and feedback. The students had varied levels of English proficiency, which is typical of junior high school learners in Indonesia.

To maintain ethical standards, the identities of the school, teacher, and students were kept confidential. Pseudonyms were used in transcription and analysis, and permission was obtained prior to data collection.

## **Data Sources**

The primary data of this study were spoken classroom discourse, specifically teacher talk produced during English lessons. The data consisted of utterances spoken by the teacher during instructional activities, including explanations, instructions, questions, and feedback. Supporting data were obtained from classroom observation notes, which provided contextual information about classroom activities, interaction patterns, and teaching situations. These notes helped the researcher interpret teacher talk within its situational and institutional context.

## **Data Collection Techniques**

Data were collected through classroom observation and audio recording. The researcher observed English lessons and recorded teacher-student interactions using a digital audio recorder. The observation was conducted in a non-participatory manner to minimize disruption to the teaching and learning process.

The recorded classroom interactions were transcribed verbatim to produce written texts for analysis. The transcription focused on teacher utterances, while relevant student responses were included when necessary. Important features such as repetition, emphasis, and pauses were noted to preserve the characteristics of spoken discourse.

## **Data Analysis Procedures**

The data were analyzed using Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis, which consists of text analysis, discursive practice analysis, and social practice analysis.

### **1. Text Analysis**

This stage focused on linguistic features of teacher talk, including vocabulary choice, sentence structure, modality, and types of speech acts. Special attention was given to imperatives, questioning forms, and evaluative expressions that indicate authority and control in classroom discourse.

### **2. Discursive Practice Analysis**

At this stage, the analysis examined how teacher talk was produced and interpreted during classroom interaction. Interactional patterns such as turn-taking, questioning strategies, and feedback mechanisms were analyzed, particularly the Initiation Response Feedback (IRF) pattern commonly found in classroom discourse.

### 3. Social Practice Analysis

This stage interpreted teacher talk in relation to broader social and institutional contexts. The analysis focused on how teacher discourse reflects educational ideologies, institutional power, and the teacher's role as an authority figure in the classroom.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study and discusses them in relation to the research objectives, theoretical framework, and previous studies. The analysis focuses on teacher talk in classroom communication at a junior high school in Pematangsiantar, examined through Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis: text, discursive practice, and social practice.

### Linguistic Features of Teacher Talk (Text Analysis)

The analysis of teacher talk at the textual level reveals that the teacher frequently used imperative sentences, directive expressions, and evaluative language during classroom interaction. Imperatives such as "*Open your book,*" "*Listen carefully,*" and "*Answer the question*" were commonly found in instructional discourse. These forms indicate the teacher's authority in managing classroom activities and controlling students' behavior.

In addition to imperatives, the teacher often used closed questions or display questions, which required short and predetermined answers from students. For example, questions such as "*What is the meaning of this word?*" or "*Is this sentence correct?*" limited students' opportunities to elaborate their responses. This finding supports Walsh's (2011) view that teacher talk often constrains student output when questioning strategies are not varied.

Evaluative expressions such as "*Good,*" "*Correct,*" and "*No, that's wrong*" were also frequently used by the teacher to assess students' responses. While such feedback is pedagogically necessary, it positions the teacher as the sole evaluator of knowledge. From a CDA perspective, these linguistic choices reflect unequal power relations in classroom discourse, where the teacher holds dominant authority.

### **Interaction Patterns and Control of Discourse (Discursive Practice Analysis)**

At the level of discursive practice, the findings indicate that classroom interaction was largely structured around the Initiation Response Feedback (IRF) pattern. The teacher initiated the interaction by asking questions or giving instructions, students responded briefly, and the teacher provided feedback or evaluation. This pattern dominated most classroom exchanges.

The teacher also controlled turn-taking by selecting which students were allowed to speak and determining when interaction began and ended. Students rarely initiated interaction independently, and spontaneous student talk was limited. This pattern reflects teacher centered classroom discourse, which aligns with the findings of previous studies on classroom communication in institutional settings.

However, the analysis also shows moments where the teacher attempted to encourage participation by asking follow-up questions or repeating students' answers for clarification. These practices indicate that teacher talk does not solely function as a mechanism of control but also serves as a pedagogical tool to guide learning and maintain engagement.

From a CDA perspective, discursive practices in the classroom reflect how discourse is produced and interpreted within an institutional context. The dominance of teacher talk in interaction patterns reinforces the teacher's role as the central authority, while students are positioned as respondents rather than co-constructors of knowledge.

### **Teacher Talk and Power Relations (Social Practice Analysis)**

At the level of social practice, teacher talk reflects broader educational and institutional norms in Indonesian junior high schools. The teacher's dominant role in classroom communication aligns with traditional educational ideologies that emphasize teacher authority, discipline, and control. Language functions as a means through which institutional power is exercised and maintained.

The use of directive language, limited questioning strategies, and evaluative feedback positions students as passive participants in the learning process. This supports Fairclough's (1995) argument that discourse both reflects and reproduces social structures. In this case, teacher talk reproduces hierarchical relationships between teachers and students within the classroom.

Nevertheless, the findings also suggest that teacher talk has the potential to challenge these power relations. When the teacher used encouraging expressions or allowed students more

time to respond, classroom interaction became slightly more dialogic. These moments demonstrate that teacher talk can function as a tool for empowerment when teachers consciously adopt more inclusive discourse practices.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirm that teacher talk plays a crucial role in shaping classroom communication. Consistent with the literature reviewed earlier, teacher talk dominates classroom discourse and reflects asymmetrical power relations. The frequent use of imperatives, display questions, and evaluative feedback supports previous research indicating that teacher-centered discourse limits students' opportunities for extended participation.

From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, teacher talk is not neutral but embedded with ideological meanings related to authority and institutional control. The classroom becomes a site where power relations are enacted through everyday language practices. This finding aligns with Fairclough's view that discourse functions as a form of social practice.

However, the study also reveals that teacher talk can serve positive pedagogical functions. While teacher dominance is evident, teacher talk also provides structure, guidance, and support for learning. The challenge, therefore, lies not in eliminating teacher talk but in using it more reflectively to promote interaction and student engagement.

These findings suggest that teachers need greater awareness of how their language choices influence classroom dynamics. By adopting more open-ended questions, encouraging student-initiated talk, and reducing excessive control over interaction, teachers can create a more balanced and student-centered classroom discourse.

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