

# Teachers' Verbal Communication Strategies in Fostering Elementary EFL Students' Willingness to Communicate

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## Abstract

Teachers' verbal communication plays a central role in facilitating students' oral participation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, particularly at the elementary level, where learners' linguistic resources are still developing. This qualitative descriptive study examines the verbal communication strategies an English teacher uses to stimulate and support English-speaking participation among third-grade students in an EFL classroom. The study focuses exclusively on teachers' verbal discourse as a form of instructional and affective support for students' oral production. The participants consisted of one English teacher and 18 third-grade students at a private elementary school in Bandar Lampung, Indonesia. Data were collected through non-participant classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with the teacher. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal four main categories of verbal communication strategies: questioning, prompting, encouragement, and feedback. Questioning and prompting emerged as the most frequently used strategies, activating prior knowledge, sustaining English use, and extending students' oral responses. Encouragement and feedback provided affective and instructional support by reducing students' anxiety, building confidence, and clarifying linguistic expectations. Collectively, these strategies created a supportive English-speaking classroom environment that fostered students' willingness to communicate in English. The findings highlight the pedagogical importance of purposeful verbal communication strategies in supporting young learners' oral participation in EFL classrooms.

**Keywords:** verbal communication, teachers' strategies, speaking skills, verbal discourse, EFL.

## INTRODUCTION

Mastery of speaking skills is widely recognized as a central indicator of English language proficiency, as it reflects learners' ability to actively use language for communication rather than merely possessing grammatical or lexical knowledge (Lestari, 2016; Peltonen, 2023; Derakhshan et al., 2016). In EFL contexts, speaking represents one of the most demanding forms of language use because it requires learners to process meaning,

select appropriate linguistic forms, and respond in real time under communicative pressure (Mega & Sugiarto, 2020; Kahng, 2020; Mora et al., 2023; Olkkonen et al., 2024). However, successful speaking development is not determined solely by linguistic competence; learners must also demonstrate a willingness to communicate, defined as their readiness to initiate and sustain oral interaction in the target language (Khajavy et al., 2016; Yashima et al., 2018). In many EFL classrooms, particularly where exposure to English outside school is limited, students may possess basic language knowledge but refrain from speaking due to anxiety, fear of making mistakes, or low confidence (Lee & Hsieh, 2019; Teimouri et al., 2019). For young learners at the elementary level, willingness to communicate is essential because their confidence, attitudes toward English, and communicative habits are still forming (Oga-Baldwin et al., 2017; Oga-Baldwin & Fryer, 2018; Myhre et al., 2023). If students repeatedly avoid speaking at this early stage, silence can gradually become a habitual response that negatively affects their long-term language development (Maher & King, 2023). Therefore, fostering willingness to communicate is essential for promoting meaningful speaking practice and supporting sustainable oral language growth in elementary EFL classrooms (Leeming, 2024; Solhi et al., 2024).

Despite the recognized importance of speaking and willingness to communicate, many elementary EFL students remain reluctant to speak English in the classroom. This reluctance is commonly associated with anxiety, perceived limitations in linguistic resources such as vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, and concern about negative evaluation from teachers or peers (Mustamir, 2024; Abrar, 2024; Taqwa et al., 2022; Susidamaiyanti, 2018). For young learners, these challenges are often intensified by minimal exposure to English outside the classroom, which makes English an unfamiliar and cognitively demanding medium of interaction (De Wilde et al., 2020; Zoubi, 2018; Nikmah & Anwar, 2021). When students repeatedly experience difficulty or discomfort in speaking English, they may adopt silence as a coping strategy to protect themselves from embarrassment or perceived failure (Perkasa, 2022; Günes & Sarigöz, 2021). In many EFL contexts, the classroom becomes the primary structured environment where students have opportunities to practice English orally, particularly when opportunities beyond school are limited (Mutalliyeva, 2024; Van Ha et al., 2021; Amiruddin, 2022; Fitria, 2013). Consequently, limited participation in classroom interaction restricts students' opportunities for target-language practice and may negatively influence achievement and communicative development over time (Sundari, 2018; Bui & Dao, 2023). Without appropriate instructional and emotional support, early reluctance to speak may gradually develop into a stable pattern of participation that constrains students' long-term communicative growth.

In addressing students' reluctance to speak English, the role of the teacher becomes particularly significant, as teachers function as key mediators of classroom interaction and play a central role in shaping learners' affective experiences during speaking activities (Tajeddin & Kamali, 2023; Jiang & Dewaele, 2019). In elementary EFL classrooms, teachers largely determine how interaction unfolds through instructional decisions and daily communicative practices, which directly influence participation opportunities and learner engagement. Teacher behavior also shapes the classroom emotional climate, affecting whether students feel safe, supported, and confident enough to participate orally (Li et al., 2021). Furthermore, teachers' verbal choices influence participation patterns, including who speaks, how frequently students speak, and how learners respond to interactional demands

in the target language (Howe et al., 2019; Böheim et al., 2021; Tong et al., 2024). Significantly, the ways teachers deliver instructions, questions, corrections, and responses can either reduce or intensify students' anxiety, thereby shaping learners' readiness to communicate in English (Luquin & Roothoof, 2019; Dobson & Sojisirikul, 2023). Thus, teachers do not merely transmit linguistic content; they actively construct the interactional conditions that enable or constrain students' willingness to communicate.

In classroom interaction, teachers employ a range of verbal communication strategies that serve not only as instructional tools but also as scaffolding that support students' oral participation and engagement (Mahan, 2022; Avila, 2019). Common verbal strategies include questioning, prompting, encouragement, and feedback, which collectively serve to open interactional turns, sustain classroom discourse, and guide learners' spoken production (Sert, 2017; Haile, 2024; Aliabadi & Weisi, 2023). These strategies directly influence how frequently students speak, how extensively they elaborate their responses, and whether they feel emotionally safe to communicate in English, particularly in contexts where anxiety and fear of negative evaluation are prominent (Nababan & Lestariningsih, 2024; Guo et al., 2022). In elementary EFL classrooms, where learners' linguistic resources and confidence are still developing, such verbal scaffolding is especially crucial, as students often rely on teacher talk to navigate participation demands and interactional expectations (Koyuncu & Kumpulainen, 2024; Dao et al., 2024; Nilsson, 2024). For this reason, the present study focuses exclusively on teachers' verbal communication in order to examine more precisely how teacher discourse shapes classroom interaction and supports students' willingness to communicate in English.

Existing research indicates that learners' willingness to communicate in EFL contexts is shaped by affective and contextual factors that are strongly influenced by teachers' classroom behavior. Guo et al. (2022) showed that teacher immediacy, including verbal and nonverbal behaviors, enhances learners' enjoyment and emotional engagement, thereby supporting greater readiness to communicate. From a situated perspective, Yashima et al. (2018) demonstrated that willingness to communicate is not a stable trait but rather fluctuates with classroom interaction patterns and contextual influences. Similarly, Lee and Hsieh (2019) found that learners with higher self-confidence and lower anxiety were more willing to initiate communication in classroom settings, highlighting the role of emotional support in face-to-face interaction. At the classroom level, Khajavy et al. (2016) identified classroom environment as the strongest predictor of willingness to communicate, influencing learners' motivation and communication confidence. More recently, Solhi et al. (2024) revealed a reciprocal relationship between teacher enjoyment and learners' enjoyment and willingness to communicate, emphasizing the dynamic emotional interplay between teachers and students in EFL classrooms.

Previous research has established the importance of affective factors, classroom environment, and teacher behavior in shaping learners' willingness to communicate in EFL contexts. However, much of this work has tended to emphasize broad emotional constructs, trait-like dispositions, or general classroom conditions, with primary attention given to adolescent or adult learners. Limited attention has been paid to the interactional processes through which teachers' moment-to-moment verbal communication operates during classroom discourse, particularly in elementary EFL settings. For young learners whose linguistic resources and communicative confidence are still developing, teachers' verbal

strategies may play a decisive role in initiating, sustaining, and regulating English-speaking participation. Examining teachers' verbal communication in authentic classroom interaction can therefore provide a more detailed understanding of how oral participation is supported among elementary EFL learners. Accordingly, the present study aims to investigate the verbal communication strategies an English teacher uses to stimulate and support English-speaking participation among third-grade students in an EFL classroom.

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive (generic qualitative) design to document an elementary EFL teacher's verbal communication strategies and to produce a close, context-sensitive account of classroom talk as a core instructional resource (Filipović, 2019; Morse, 2020). A qualitative, naturalistic stance was adopted to examine teacher-student talk-in-interaction as it occurred in the classroom, supported by video-recorded observations, to prioritize interpretive understanding of interactional processes rather than make causal claims (Deppermann, 2021). Accordingly, the analysis focused on teacher discourse moves—namely, questioning, prompting, encouragement, and feedback—as forms of interactional scaffolding. Methodological rigor was strengthened through explicit procedures for credibility, including data triangulation and transparent analytic decision-making throughout the research process (Stahl & King, 2020).

Data were collected through a combination of non-participant classroom observation and a semi-structured interview with the teacher to develop a comprehensive, contextualized account of verbal communication practices as they naturally unfolded in the EFL classroom (Smit & Onwuegbuzie, 2018). Classroom observations were conducted in a third-grade class at a private elementary school in Lampung, Indonesia. Participant and setting details were specified to support purposeful sampling decisions and to enable readers to assess the adequacy of the dataset for qualitative description (Gentles et al., 2015; Fusch & Ness, 2015). Observations were conducted across three instructional sessions totaling approximately 3 hours, and all sessions were video-recorded to enable accurate transcription and fine-grained analysis of teacher talk and interactional moves. The observation guide, adapted from established classroom verbal communication frameworks, focused on four categories of teacher verbal communication—questioning, prompting, encouragement, and feedback—which were operationalized into observable indicators to enhance systematic data capture and analytic consistency. Following the observation phase, a semi-structured interview was conducted to elicit the teacher's intentions underlying specific verbal strategies and to clarify interactional patterns identified during classroom observation. Open-ended interview prompts provided flexibility for probing and depth while maintaining alignment with the study's analytic focus (Khan & MacEachen, 2022).

Data analysis was conducted using reflexive thematic analysis, progressing through familiarization, initial coding, theme development, theme review and refinement, theme definition and naming, and report production (Nowell et al., 2017; Braun & Clarke, 2019). To enhance the rigor and trustworthiness of the findings, the study followed established qualitative quality principles that emphasize credibility, dependability, and transparency as ongoing, decision-based practices throughout analysis and reporting (Timonen et al., 2024). Data triangulation was achieved by systematically cross-checking patterns across observation data, interview transcripts, and instructional documents, such as lesson plans,

to corroborate interpretations and reduce single-source bias (Lemon & Hayes, 2020; Archibald, 2016). Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary interpretations with the teacher to confirm resonance, correct misunderstandings, and refine contextual meaning from the participant's perspective (McKim, 2023). In addition, an audit trail and detailed methodological documentation were maintained, including iterative coding records, theme revision logs, and analytic rationales, to support transparency and allow readers to trace how interpretations were produced (Carcary, 2020). Finally, systematic coding procedures and explicit decision rules, including clear code definitions, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and consistency checks, were applied to strengthen dependability and make the analytic logic explicit and reviewable (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020; Halpin, 2024).

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study describe how the English teachers who were the focus of this study used specific categories of verbal communication, namely, questions, prompts, encouragement, and feedback, during the learning process in third-grade English as a foreign language (EFL) class. The following sections describe how each category appeared in three sessions, including the situational patterns and relative frequency of these utterances as far as possible.

**Table 1.** Questioning observation data

| No. | Teacher's Utterances                        | Meaning   |
|-----|---|---|
| 1   | Do you still remember what we learned?      | Activate students' memory and encourage them to speak aloud.                |
| 2   | Do you know barely?                         | Encouraging students to express their understanding of concepts in English. |
| 3   | Who can answer in English?                  | Motivating student participation through challenges and points.             |
| 4   | Do you still remember what we learned?      | Activating students' memory while maintaining focus on the material.        |
| 5   | Do you know arrogant?                       | Encouraging students to understand the meaning of new words and use them.   |
| 6   | Who knows what present continuous is?       | Testing and building language material discussions.                         |
| 7   | Why don't you say it in complete sentences? | Guide students to speak in complete sentences.                              |

Table 1 illustrates how teacher questioning served multiple interactional purposes during classroom instruction. The questions activated students' prior knowledge, introduced and reinforced vocabulary, checked understanding of language concepts, and guided students toward more complete spoken responses. Recall questions were employed to reorient students to previously learned material and maintain lesson focus, while vocabulary-related questions encouraged students to articulate their understanding of new words in English. Participation-oriented questions invited responses in the target language, reinforcing English use during interaction. In addition, questions directing students to speak in complete sentences provided structural guidance that supported the development of more extended oral responses. Collectively, the questioning practices shown in the table demonstrate how teacher questions operated as interactional tools to sustain classroom talk



and support students' spoken production. Moreover, the following interview data strongly support this finding:

*Usually, in my class, to encourage students to think and speak in English, we assess their level. If it is in the lower levels 1-3, we use a little translation. However, if the students are in the upper level of grades 4-6, we have to push them to speak English. (line 3-6)*

*"They are not allowed to use Indonesian, or when they speak Indonesian, they will get a minus score. So they inevitably have to speak English with the vocabulary they can. (line 7-9)*

*I choose it based on the topic being taught or the goal or objective we want. I will ask simple questions when I am sure the student understands or has prior knowledge, or when they can relate the question to their daily life. For example, "have you ever", "do you know?" or something like that. For open-ended questions, it is done when we want students to give opinions, statements, feelings, and so on, depending on what we want to get. (line 16-24)*

*For my class, they are more excited to ask questions in English, because maybe they think it is cooler. Moreover, their responses are also good when I ask them to ask questions in English. This also makes the class more conducive because there is less unnecessary talking. (line 26-29)*

Teachers explained that the questions were carefully designed to align with students' proficiency levels and learning objectives. Simple questions were used to ensure basic understanding, while open-ended questions encouraged discussion and higher-level thinking. In addition, teachers strictly enforced a policy of using English, with penalties for using Indonesian, which encouraged students' willingness and need to speak English consistently.

**Table 2.** Prompt observation data

| No. | Teacher's Utterances                                    | Meaning  |
|-----|---|--|
| 1   | English please!   | Reminding students to use English.                     |
| 2   | No, no, in English                                      | Encourage students to give answers in English.         |
| 3   | Please answer in a complete sentence                    | Direct students to give complete answers in English.   |
| 4   | Come on, you can do it, choose one subject first        | Encouraging students to start speaking.                |
| 5   | You have to answer it in a complete sentence in English | Direct students to give complete answers in English.   |
| 6   | Why don't you say it in a complete sentence in English  | Directing and encouraging the use of correct language. |

Table 2 illustrates how prompts were used as immediate verbal cues to regulate language use and support students' oral production during classroom interaction. The prompts primarily served to remind students to use English consistently and to guide them toward producing complete, well-formed responses. Short directives such as *"English please!"* and *"No, no, in English"* redirected students back to the target language when they shifted away from English. Other prompts explicitly focused on sentence completeness,

providing structural guidance that encouraged students to extend their responses beyond single words. Encouraging prompts, such as *“Come on, you can do it, choose one subject first,”* were used to help hesitant students initiate speech by offering simple starting points. Overall, the prompts shown in the table served as real-time scaffolding, maintaining English use and supporting students in producing more sustained spoken responses. As the interview data confirms these findings:

*They are not allowed to use Indonesian... when they speak Indonesian, they will get a minus score... So they inevitably have to speak English with the vocabulary they can... they have to speak English even if they do not know something... When we open the opportunity for them to speak Indonesian, they will come up with many excuses. (line 7-13)*

*“To trigger them, it definitely has to start with us; we need to get ourselves used to it first. In my case, I usually begin with phrases like, “Okay, the class begins, and no Bahasa Indonesia please,” or “Remember, always English speaking.” I set a rule so they know the lesson has started, and that means no speaking in Indonesian. (line 86-90)*

*I also use rewards, or I say things like, “Please answer the question with a simple sentence.” So we motivate them by giving rewards. First, we issue a warning or reminder, then follow up with points or scores as rewards. (line 90-94)*

*When they asked me in Bahasa, and I said No, no, I do not understand that,” or I made it clear that I would not answer their questions. This makes them feel frustrated; they want to know the answer, they are curious, but I will not give it to them because they are breaking the rules. So, they have to stick to the rule of speaking English. That becomes a strong push for them. (line 109-113)*

Teachers' use of prompting strategies, such as establishing clear classroom language rules, providing reminders, and implementing a reward-punishment system, serves as a verbal stimulus that encourages students to initiate or expand their language output, thereby enhancing interaction and supporting the language learning process. In addition, the teacher explained that she deliberately used prompting to remind students to continue using the target language.

**Table 3.** Encouragement observation data

| No. | Teacher's Utterances  | Meaning   |
|-----|---|---|
| 1   | Vio, you can do it. Choose one subject first, come on, Vio                                      | Direct emotional encouragement that boosts students' confidence. Teachers provide verbal support and gentle guidance so that students dare to start speaking.         |
| 2   | I know most of you do not speak English at home, so we try to help you learn English at school. | Teachers show empathy for students' limitations and motivate them to feel safe to try speaking in English. This reduces anxiety and boosts students' self-confidence. |
| 3   | “Who can answer in English will get a point.”   | Teachers provide rewards to encourage students to try speaking in English. This increases students' drive and interest in participating.                              |

Table 3 shows how encouragement was used as an affective verbal strategy to support students' willingness to speak English. The encouraging utterances reduced hesitation and built students' confidence by offering emotional support and reassurance during moments of uncertainty. Personalized encouragement, such as directly addressing students by name and providing simple guidance on how to begin speaking, helped create a sense of safety and readiness to participate. Statements that acknowledged students' limited exposure to English outside the classroom demonstrated empathy and positioned the classroom as a supportive space for practice. In addition, reward-based encouragement was used to increase students' motivation and interest in speaking English by associating oral participation with positive reinforcement.

The interview data also support classifying several teacher utterances as encouraging, especially those aimed at reducing student anxiety, building confidence, and creating an environment conducive to oral production. Quotes from the interviews show how teachers deliberately use verbal encouragement to motivate students to participate in English language learning.

*For me, it is by giving them the understanding that English is important... giving them an understanding that this is the only chance to speak English. (line 31–32)*

*So, how do you go to school in an English environment using English? Yes, in this class, this is the perfect opportunity for you... the most suitable place. (line 37–39)*

*Giving instructions in English... helps students become more confident. We constantly remind them that English is an international language, so they have to master it. (line 62–64)*

*As for praise, I usually use simple words like 'Good'... or I give points... This makes them happy. (line 115–118)*

*I usually correct them privately... so the other students do not know... This way, they do not feel embarrassed. (line 146–150)*

The teachers' approach reflects a deliberate effort to help students feel safe, capable, and valued when they attempt to speak in English. This emphasis on emotional support and confidence-building complements the observation's findings, which confirm that encouraging talk plays a crucial role in maintaining students' willingness to participate and persevere in speaking activities.

**Table 4.** Feedback observation data

| No. | Teacher's Utterances  | Meaning   |
|-----|---|---|
| 1   | "No, no, that is not the format."                             | Provide corrective feedback indicating that the student's answer does not meet the expected structure.    |
| 2   | "Barely is rare."   | Provide corrective and informative feedback by providing accurate meanings and linguistic clarifications. |
| 3   | "I ask you to answer in English with a complete sentence."    | Provide corrective feedback focused on form to guide students toward correct sentences.                   |
| 4   | Enough for the word 'teaching' ya, you can use another word." | Provide feedback on reformulation by suggesting alternative lexical choices.                              |



|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| 5 | "Whenever I hear Bahasa Indonesia, one word minus five."      | Provide evaluative feedback related to consequences to reinforce English usage.    |
| 6 | "Change it, please." ( <i>after the student uses Bahasa</i> ) | Provide explicit corrective feedback, instructing students to change their speech. |

Table 4 illustrates how feedback was used to guide students' language use and reinforce classroom expectations during English instruction. The feedback utterances functioned to signal accuracy, clarify meaning, and direct students toward more appropriate linguistic forms. Corrective feedback was provided when students' responses did not meet expected structural or language-use criteria, helping them adjust their spoken output. Informative feedback, such as clarifying word meanings, supported students' vocabulary understanding and reduced potential misunderstandings. Reformulative feedback encouraged students to consider alternative lexical choices without replacing their ideas, thereby supporting language development while maintaining learner agency. In addition, evaluative feedback on classroom language rules reinforced expectations for English use and prompted students to self-correct when they used their first language. Interview data further supports the interpretation of these utterances as feedback-related moves. The teacher noted that reminders and corrective cues are intentionally delivered to help students remain aware of the target-language expectations. For example:

"I usually begin with phrases like '*No Bahasa Indonesia please*'... so they know the lesson has started" (line 86–90).

"When they ask something in Indonesian, I say '*No, I do not understand that*'... because they are breaking the rules" (line 109–113).

"I correct them privately... not in front of their classmates... so they do not feel embarrassed" (line 146–150).

These excerpts show that feedback is not limited to linguistic accuracy, but also includes responses aimed at regulating language behavior in the classroom and protecting students' self-confidence. Personal corrections, as described by the teacher, constitute a protective form of feedback intended to prevent embarrassment and maintain students' willingness to speak.

## DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that teachers' verbal communication strategies play a decisive role in shaping elementary EFL students' willingness to communicate by organizing participation opportunities and regulating classroom interaction. From an interactional perspective, teacher talk serves as the primary mechanism for constructing turn-taking, response expectations, and participation rights in classroom discourse, directly influencing students' engagement and oral production (Howe et al., 2019; Böheim et al., 2020; Tong et al., 2024). In elementary EFL classrooms, where learners' linguistic competence and communicative confidence are still developing, such interactional structuring is particularly consequential, as students rely heavily on teacher cues to determine when and how to speak (Koyuncu et al., 2023; Li & Zou, 2021; Nilsson, 2024).

Questioning and prompting served as core interactional scaffolds, lowering barriers to participation by providing predictable entry points into classroom talk. Rather than serving solely evaluative purposes, teacher questions structured interactional space and invited students to engage orally in ways that were cognitively and linguistically manageable (Howe et al., 2019; Haile et al., 2024; Sert, 2017). Similarly, prompts operated as immediate regulatory cues that guided students toward target-language use and complete responses without disrupting interactional flow, a function that has been identified as critical in supporting young learners' sustained participation in EFL classrooms (Koyuncu et al., 2023; Mahan, 2020; Avila, 2019). Together, questioning and prompting reduced interactional uncertainty and supported students' readiness to speak, even when linguistic resources were limited.

Beyond interactional structuring, the findings highlight the centrality of affective support in fostering willingness to communicate. Encouragement strategies contributed to an emotionally supportive classroom climate by reducing anxiety, normalizing difficulty, and reinforcing students' confidence to speak English. This aligns with extensive evidence showing that young EFL learners' oral participation is highly sensitive to anxiety and fear of negative evaluation, particularly in classroom contexts that emphasize public performance (Abrar et al., 2024; Günes & Sarigöz, 2021; Maher & King, 2023). Positive emotional experiences and perceived teacher support have been consistently linked to increased enjoyment and willingness to communicate, suggesting that affective scaffolding is a prerequisite for sustained oral engagement (Guo et al., 2022; Jiang & Dewaele, 2019; Myhre et al., 2023).

Feedback further complemented questioning, prompting, and encouragement by guiding students' language use while maintaining their willingness to participate. The teacher's use of corrective and reformative feedback supported linguistic development without silencing students, reflecting research showing that feedback can either exacerbate or alleviate speaking anxiety depending on its interactional delivery (Dobson & Sojisirikul, 2023; Luquin & Roothoof, 2019; Van Ha et al., 2021). In elementary EFL classrooms, feedback that emphasizes guidance and self-correction rather than public evaluation appears particularly effective in sustaining students' communicative engagement and confidence (Nababan & Lestariningsih, 2024; Susidamayanti, 2018).

The consistent enforcement of English as the mandatory classroom language provided an overarching interactional framework that amplified the effectiveness of these verbal strategies. By positioning the classroom as the primary space for English use, the teacher increased students' exposure to the target language and encouraged the development of habitual speaking practices. This finding is consistent with research demonstrating that sustained exposure and stable language-use environments are essential for young learners' oral development (De Wilde et al., 2021; Zoubi, 2018; Mutalliyeva, 2024). Moreover, clearly defined classroom norms have been shown to shape participation patterns and promote more focused, orderly interaction, which in turn, supports communicative development (Sundari, 2018; Bui & Dao, 2023; Fitria, 2013).

## CONCLUSION

This study investigated the verbal communication strategies an English teacher used to stimulate and support English-speaking participation among third-grade students in an

EFL classroom. The findings demonstrate that teacher verbal communication plays a central role in fostering students' willingness to communicate by shaping both the interactional structure of classroom talk and the emotional climate in which speaking occurs. Rather than functioning as isolated techniques, questioning, prompting, encouragement, and feedback worked synergistically to create sustained opportunities for oral participation and consistent use of English during classroom interaction.

Questioning and prompting emerged as key interactional resources that structured participation and guided students toward producing more complete and appropriate spoken responses. These strategies provided clear entry points into classroom talk, reduced uncertainty about participation expectations, and supported students in initiating and sustaining oral interaction despite limited linguistic resources. Encouragement complemented these strategies by addressing the affective dimensions of speaking, helping to reduce anxiety, build confidence, and normalize linguistic difficulty among young learners. Feedback further supported students' oral development by guiding language use, reinforcing classroom norms, and maintaining a supportive environment that encouraged continued participation. The consistent implementation of English as the mandatory classroom language provided an overarching framework that strengthened the effectiveness of these verbal strategies. By positioning the classroom as a safe and structured space for English use, the teacher promoted habitual target-language practice and more focused interaction.

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