



Teacher's Instructional Patterns in English Classroom Interaction of VII Grade Students at SMPN 3 Medan

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzed the types of teacher's instructional patterns used in English classroom interaction of seventhgrade students at SMPN 3 Medan and explored the underlying reasons behind the teacher's instructional decisions. Using a qualitative descriptive design, data were collected through classroom observation with video recordings and a semi-structured teacher interview, analyzed through Brown and Lee's (2015) instructional orientations framework and Borg's (2019) teacher cognition framework. Findings show that all three instructional orientations emerged, with teacher-centered instruction dominant (50.6%), followed by studentcentered (25.3%) and interactive instruction (24.1%). The teacher's instructional decisions were shaped by the interplay of beliefs, prior learning experiences, professional training, and contextual factors. These findings highlight the teacher's selective use of studentcentered and interactive approaches within a predominantly teacher-centered classroom context.

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INTRODUCTION

English Language Teaching (ELT) has become a central concern in educational systems worldwide, driven by the growing role of English as an international language. Galloway and Rose (2018) confirm that English now functions as a global resource used across education, business, and intercultural communication. Brown and Lee (2015) emphasize that language teaching involves not only the transmission of linguistic knowledge but also the development of learners' communicative abilities through meaningful instructional processes. As a result, the quality of teacher's instructional patterns and interaction has become a critical factor in determining whether English education effectively equips learners with communicative competence.

In the Indonesian educational context, English occupies a strategic position as a compulsory subject at the secondary school level. However, despite the curriculum's communicative orientation, the implementation of English teaching in Indonesia often faces significant challenges. Lie (2017) argues that English teaching in Indonesia continues to reflect issues related to limited student participation and teacher-centered instructional practices. This view is supported by Ariatna (2016), who contends that despite its communicative potential, CLT in Indonesia faces persistent challenges including inadequate teacher training and systemic classroom constraints.

In practice, classroom interaction in Indonesian EFL settings is often characterized by extended teacher talk, direct grammar explanation, and tightly controlled exercises (Sundari et al., 2017; Walsh, 2015). The dominant pattern tends to follow the Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) sequence (Rustandi & Mubarak, 2017), in which the teacher initiates questions, students provide brief responses, and the teacher evaluates those responses. Preliminary observations conducted at SMPN 3 Medan confirmed this tendency: English lessons were largely teacher-directed, with students' participation generally limited to answering display questions and completing structured written exercises.

This situation points to a gap between the theoretical emphasis on interactive, student-centered learning and the classroom practices observed

at SMPN 3 Medan. Importantly, the gap goes beyond simply noting that teachercentered instruction is dominant; a deeper issue lies in understanding why the teacher employs particular instructional strategies. According to Borg (2019), teacher cognition — encompassing teachers' beliefs, prior learning experiences, professional training, and contextual factors — plays a fundamental role in determining how instruction is delivered.

Therefore, this study focuses on analyzing teacher's instructional patterns in English classroom interaction of seventh-grade students at SMPN 3 Medan. Specifically, it aims to: (1) identify and categorize the types of teacher's instructional patterns used in English classroom interaction, drawing on Brown and Lee's (2015) framework of instructional orientations, and (2) explore and describe the underlying reasons behind the teacher's selection of particular instructional strategies through the lens of teacher cognition (Borg, 2019). By bridging the gap between theoretical expectations and classroom realities, this research aims to provide a deeper understanding of how teacher's instructional patterns shape interaction in junior high school English classrooms.

LITERATURE REVIEW Classroom Interaction

According to Brown and Lee (2015), interaction is the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings, or ideas between two or more people, resulting in a reciprocal effect on each other. Walsh (2015) further defines classroom interaction as the communicative events that take place between teachers and learners during lessons, through which teaching and learning are accomplished; it is the very medium through which learning occurs, not merely incidental to it.

Teacher's Instructional Patterns and Instructional Orientations

Based on Brown and Lee's (2015) perspective on teacher talk and classroom discourse, instructional orientation reflects the degree of teacher control and the level of student participation in classroom interaction. These orientations are categorized into three types:

- **Teacher-Centered Instruction:** An orientation in which the teacher assumes primary control over classroom discourse and learning activities, characterized by the teacher dominating classroom talk, delivering explanations through direct instruction, controlling turntaking, structuring interaction through the IRF pattern, and

directing highly guided, sequential learning activities (Brown & Lee, 2015).

- **Student-Centered Instruction:** An orientation in which learners take a more active role while the teacher functions as a facilitator, characterized by students initiating responses, the teacher acting as a facilitator rather than a dominant speaker, collaborative activities, and opportunities for students to construct understanding independently (Brown & Lee, 2015).
- **Interactive Instruction:** An orientation in which teacher and students share control of the conversation flow, characterized by follow-up questions that extend student responses, extended student turns, and negotiation of meaning through clarification (Brown & Lee, 2015; Mackey, 2020).

Teacher Cognition and Instructional Decision

According to Borg (2019), teacher cognition refers to the beliefs, knowledge, and thinking processes that teachers hold about teaching, learning, students, and subject matter. This study understands teacher cognition through four components: (1) **beliefs**, which fundamentally shape instructional preferences and predict classroom behavior more reliably than formal training alone; (2) **prior learning experiences**, the “apprenticeship of observation” (Grossman, 2018) through which teachers unconsciously reproduce instructional models they experienced as students; (3) **professional training**, whose effectiveness in changing classroom behavior varies depending on specificity and sustained mentoring; and (4) **contextual factors**, such as curriculum requirements, student proficiency variation, class size, and lesson duration, which force teachers into real-time pragmatic adjustments.

Relevant Previous Studies

Several studies support this framework. Abdusyukur et al. (2022) found that teacher talk dominated Indonesian EFL online classroom discourse due to students’ passivity. Sari (2022) and Mubarak et al. (2023) similarly found teacher-initiated interaction dominating classroom discourse following the IRF model. Al-Munawwarah (2021) confirmed that teacher-dominated interaction persisted across educational levels in Indonesia. In contrast, Vistari et al. (2024) found that inquiry-based strategies produced more balanced teacher-student interaction, while Riwayatiningsih (2024) found that structured instructional language enhanced student engagement. On teacher cognition, Chen and Abdullah (2022) found a mismatch between

EFL teachers' stated beliefs and actual classroom behavior, while Koca (2021) confirmed that teachers' beliefs, prior experiences, and institutional context collectively shape instructional decisions.

METHOD Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) to investigate teacher's instructional patterns in English classroom interaction of seventh-grade students at SMPN 3 Medan. This approach allowed the researcher to observe, describe, and analyze the instructional strategies used by the teacher in a real classroom setting, while also examining the relationship between teacher cognition, instructional orientation, and instructional patterns.

Data and Sources of Data

The main sources of data consisted of one English teacher and 32 seventh-grade students. The teacher provided information about instructional strategies and the reasons behind particular instructional choices through observation and interviews, while students' participation was observed to analyze how instruction affected classroom communication. Documentation such as lesson plans and teaching materials supported and verified the observational and interview data.

Instruments and Techniques of Collecting Data

Three instruments were used: (1) an observation sheet with a field notes sheet, developed based on Brown and Lee's (2015) three instructional orientations, including a frequency column for each indicator; (2) an interview guideline, developed based on Borg's (2019) four components of teacher cognition, using open-ended questions; and (3) a documentation checklist. Data were collected through classroom observation (two lesson sessions, video-recorded) and a semi-structured teacher interview, ensuring triangulation across sources (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Miles et al., 2020).

Technique of Analyzing Data

Data were analyzed following Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's (2020) three-component model: data reduction (summarizing and filtering observation and interview data to identify relevant patterns), data display (organizing reduced data into descriptive narratives, tables, and thematic categories), and conclusion drawing and verification (drawing conclusions by cross-verifying findings from observation, interview, and documentation).

RESULTS

Types of Teacher's Instructional Patterns

The teacher's instructional patterns during the two observed lesson sessions at SMPN 3 Medan reflected all three instructional orientations proposed by Brown and Lee (2015).

Table 1 Frequency Summary of Teacher's Instructional Patterns

Instructional Patterns		Total Frequency	Percentage	Notes
1.	Teacher-Centered	38	31	69
2.	Student-Centered	2	1	3
3.	Interactive Instruction	2	2	4

Teacher-Centered Instruction was the dominant orientation (40/79, 50.6%), reflected through the teacher dominating classroom talk (e.g., simultaneously reviewing material, giving directions, and managing behavior within a single turn), delivering explanations through direct instruction (e.g., explicitly clarifying the meaning of prepositions such as on, beside, and next to), controlling turn-taking (e.g., repositioning students and expressing dissatisfaction with low response rates), structuring interaction through the IRF pattern, and directing highly guided, sequential learning activities.

Student-Centered Instruction was the second most frequent orientation (20/79, 25.3%), most evident during the collaborative group work activity, in which the teacher shifted into a facilitative role — circulating around the classroom, monitoring progress, and providing individual guidance — while students applied target language structures (e.g., there is/there are) to real objects in their environment.

Interactive Instruction was the least frequent orientation (19/79, 24.1%), but meaningful episodes emerged particularly during the preposition review activity, characterized by follow-up questions that extended student responses, students producing extended answers (e.g.,

full sentences rather than single words), and negotiation of meaning through collaborative guessing and clarification.

Reasons Behind the Teacher's Instructional Choices

Analysis of the interview data, guided by Borg's (2019) four components of teacher cognition, revealed the following:

Beliefs. The teacher believed grammar instruction should precede communicative practice for seventh-grade learners, favoring a sequenced approach of explanation, example, and student production — a transmission-oriented belief that directly informed her preference for teacher-centered strategies.

Prior Learning Experiences. The teacher's own schooling in the 1980s involved a teacher-led, explanation-first model, which she explicitly acknowledged as continuing to shape her current teaching approach (Borg's "apprenticeship of observation").

Professional Training. While the teacher had attended training programs prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, she described this training as general and not specifically applicable to classroom instruction, limiting its direct influence on her instructional patterns.

Contextual Factors. The 40-minute lesson duration, mixed-ability students, shifting curriculum demands (KTSP to Kurikulum 2013 to Deep Learning), and reliance on Bahasa Indonesia (approximately 60% of classroom talk) collectively reinforced the teacher's preference for direct, structured, teacher-directed instruction.

DISCUSSIONS

Teacher-Centered Instruction as the Dominant Orientation. This finding is consistent with Abdusyukur et al. (2022), Sari (2022), Mubarok et al. (2023), Al-Munawwarah (2021), Muñoz-Basols et al. (2023), and Koca (2021), all of whom reported teacher-dominated interaction in EFL classrooms. It contrasts, however, with Vistari et al. (2024), who found inquiry-based strategies produced more balanced interaction, and with Chen and Abdullah (2022), who reported a mismatch between teachers' stated beliefs and actual practice; a mismatch not found in the present study, where the teacher's beliefs and practices were consistently aligned.

Student-Centered Instruction as the Second Most Frequent Orientation. This aligns with Vistari et al. (2024) and Riwayatiningsih (2024), who found that collaborative and structured instructional language can promote meaningful student engagement. However, unlike Vistari et al. (2024), where student-centered strategies were applied systematically throughout lessons, in this study they appeared only selectively at particular stages.

Interactive Instruction as the Least Frequent Orientation. This mirrors Mubarok et al. (2023) and Al-Munawwarah (2021), who similarly found interactive episodes less frequent than teacher-initiated interaction. It differs from Chen and Abdullah (2022), whose teachers expressed interactive orientations but defaulted to teacher-centered practice; the opposite pattern from the present study, where the teacher did not strongly express an interactive orientation yet still demonstrated meaningful interactive episodes.

Teacher Cognition Components. The teacher's beliefs aligned with Chen and Abdullah (2022) and Koca (2021) in confirming beliefs as strong predictors of classroom behavior, though; unlike Chen and Abdullah's (2022) participants; this teacher showed coherence between stated beliefs and observed practice. Her prior learning experiences reinforced Koca's (2021) and Chen and Abdullah's (2022) findings on the persistence of internalized teaching models, although Vistari et al. (2024) showed this influence is not always deterministic. Professional training's limited impact supported Koca's (2021) and Chen and Abdullah's (2022) findings that generalized training rarely produces lasting instructional change. Finally, contextual constraints echoed Koca (2021) and Abdusyukur et al. (2022), though they appeared to play a more decisive, limiting role at SMPN 3 Medan than in the more flexible context studied by Vistari et al. (2024).

CONCLUSIONS

This study found that the English teacher at SMPN 3 Medan employed all three instructional orientations proposed by Brown and Lee (2015), with teacher-centered instruction dominant (50.6%), followed by student-centered (25.3%) and interactive instruction (24.1%). This mixed pattern suggests that while teacher-centered instruction constitutes the primary orientation, the teacher also demonstrates awareness of, and selectively applies, alternative instructional approaches.

The teacher's instructional decisions were shaped by the interplay of all four components of teacher cognition (Borg, 2019): her belief in grammar-

first instruction, her own teacher-led schooling experience, professional training that was too general to influence classroom practice, and contextual constraints including limited lesson time, mixed-ability students, shifting curricula, and reliance on Bahasa Indonesia.

It is recommended that English teachers incorporate more studentcentered and interactive episodes through open-ended questions and extended collaborative tasks; that students take a more active role by volunteering responses and engaging in group work; and that future researchers explore alternative frameworks such as FIACS (Flanders, 2000), the Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) Discourse Analysis Framework, Walsh's (2006) SETT Framework, or van Lier's (1996) Classroom Interaction Framework to broaden the theoretical diversity of research on EFL classroom interaction in Indonesia.

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