



## Applying Conversation Analysis to Improve Classroom Interaction: Teacher Talk, Turn-Taking, and Learner Engagement in EFL Lessons in Iraq

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### Abstract in English

This research concerns the use of Conversation Analysis (CA) procedures to improve classroom communication in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to the local Iraqi educational system. The study uncovers how the use of teacher talk patterns, the utilization of turn-taking mechanisms, and learner engagement strategies can all be bettered through working out CA principles. By employing a mixed-methods approach, data were gathered from 35 EFL classes spread over Baghdad, Basra, and Erbil, where 15 experienced teachers and 420 learners were involved. As a result, it was found that teachers in Iraqi EFL classes showed a very low level of wait-time ( $M = 2.3$  seconds vs. recommended 5-10 seconds) and an average percentage of teacher talk dominance of 78% with only 22% of learner participation. The introduction of CA-managed pedagogical interventions has brought about great changes such as a reduction in the teacher talk to 58% ( $p < 0.001$ ), an extension of the wait-time to 6.8 seconds and a rise in learner engagement to 42% with the establishment of meaningful turn-taking sequences. The study unveils various difficulties experienced in the Iraqi school sector, such as the problem of a large number of students (average 45 students), scarcity of resources and limitations set by institutions for inventive teaching methods. Among the suggestions are the teacher professional development programs that are suitable for the Iraqi educational system and the implementation strategies that will last. This project is a step towards realising CA concepts in communicative language teaching in Iraqi EFL contexts by providing empirical evidence.

### Paper Info

#### Keywords

*EFL classrooms, teacher talk, turn-taking, learner engagement, Iraqi education.*

## 1 .Introduction and Context

### 1.1 Background and Significance

Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Iraq has seen quite a change over the last couple of years. However, problems related to classroom interaction, which directly affect language acquisition, are still very much there (Al-Rashid & Al-Hamdani, 2022). Since the country focuses more and more on English proficiency as a condition for economic growth and international cooperation, the quality of EFL instruction is becoming a crucial factor. Unfortunately, the traditional teacher-centered methods still prevail in the classrooms of Iraq, thus denying students access to the language through interaction and authentic use of the target language (Al-Hamdani & Ghani, 2023) .

The Ministry of Education in Iraq has put forward some tough criteria like internationally recognized English certificates at specific, high-level standards as a prerequisite for English language proficiency, realizing that communicative competence is the key to Iraqi graduates' success in the global market (Iraq Ministry of Education, 2021). Nevertheless, research on the ground shows that the teachers' practices have scarcely changed and are still far from the communicative, learner-centered approach. The discrepancy between the desired outcomes and what is actually happening in the classroom reflects the systemic problems e.g. poor teacher training, big classes, shortage of instructional materials, and the pressure from the institution to concentrate on exam performance rather than on communicative development (Al-Rashid, 2022) .

As a tightly defined methodology for investigating talk-in-interaction, Conversation Analysis (CA) reveals real-life grounded changes that can be made in order to create meaningful discourse in classrooms. Principally, by looking at the different parts of classroom talking, CA can access the details of language teaching discourse and how to get learners involved more (Seedhouse, 2004). Using CA in the Iraqi EFL contexts comes as a great help in the situation where there is a need to come up with a lasting, grounded-in-evidence approach that considers the local educational limitations but at the same time is open to pedagogical innovation .

### 1.2 Research Problem

The current EFL teaching practices in Iraqi schools face a series of interconnected and severe problems that collectively undermine effective language learning outcomes. A primary issue is the over-dominance of the teacher, who typically occupies the majority of classroom talk time, drastically limiting opportunities for student language production. This teacher-centered dynamic is further complicated by insufficient wait-time, with teachers often allowing only a very brief period for student responses instead of the recommended longer pause that fosters thinking and participation. Classroom discourse patterns also restrict sufficient turn-taking, confining learners to brief, formulaic answers without the chance to extend their contributions. Consequently, engagement levels remain poor, with participation often limited to only a small number of high-achieving students, leaving the majority of the class passive. Moreover, genuine interaction is largely absent, as classroom communication prioritizes teacher-initiated questions and form-focused correction over authentic, meaning-driven exchange. These

pedagogical challenges are exacerbated by significant contextual constraints, including overcrowded classrooms, a shortage of instructional materials, limited professional development for teachers, and educational policies that emphasize exam performance over the development of communicative competence

### 1.3 Research Questions

The current research attempts to answer the following primary and subsidiary research questions :

Primary Research Question: In What way can Conversation Analysis principles be utilized to improve classroom interaction working patterns with a focus on teacher talk, turn-taking mechanisms and learner engagement in Iraqi EFL lessons ?

Sub-Questions :

- 1.What are the current teacher talk distribution and turn-taking sequence patterns in Iraqi EFL classrooms ?
- 2.How do the duration of wait-time and the teacher's questioning strategy influence the learner participation rate ?
- 3.What CA-informed interventions can be the most effective in engaging students in the Iraqi educational context ?
- 4.What are the contextual factors in Iraqi schools that either facilitate or hinder the implementation of CA-informed pedagogy ?
- 5.After the systematic implementation of CA principles, how long do the improvements in classroom interaction last ?

### 1.4 Aims and Objectives

The overall Aim of the study is to accomplish classroom interaction patterns through a systematic application of Conversation Analysis principles to Iraqi EFL lessons resulting in improved teacher-learner discourse quality and increased learner engagement .

Specific objective :the study aims to:

1. accomplish an in-depth CA study of the existing discourse patterns in the classroom of Iraqi EFL schools
2. measure the current distribution of teacher talk, wait-time, and learner participation in different school settings in Iraq
3. create and carry out CA-informed pedagogical interventions that are suitable for the Iraqi education system
4. gauge the impact of CA-informed interventions on classroom interaction and quality metrics
5. discover the contextual factors that help or impede the use of CA in Iraqi schools
6. design teacher professional development programs that are sustainable and tailored to the Iraqi educational infrastructure

## 2 :Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Conversation Analysis: Theoretical Foundations

Conversation Analysis is a methodical empirical method of studying the social interaction system modeled by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974). CA investigates the ways by which the participants in a conversation psychologically prepare the next sequence of the turn, how they achieve the social actions via talk, how they solve the overlappings and the repairs, and how they agree upon the shared understanding

through the language use. While traditional discourse analysis may emphasize the semantic content, CA focuses on the sequential organization and the turn-taking which is at the core of any interaction and which makes the latter still logical (Sidnell, 2010).

## 2.2 CA in Language Teaching Contexts

By applying CA to language teaching, a lot of critical-discourse related insights have been gleaned. For example, Seedhouse (2004) illustrates how language teaching discourse could be regarded at the same time as a unique kind of talk which differs essentially from normal conversation. Teachers in language classes usually control turn-allocation, open exchanges with known-answer questions, and give learners' contributions an explicit evaluation by their own. (If some teacher control is necessary for pedagogical purposes), however, over dominance of the teacher limits the possibilities for authentic language use and learner agency .

Table 1: Key CA Concepts Applied to Classroom Discourse

CA Concept	Definition	Classroom Application
<b>Turn-Taking</b>	Systematic allocation of who speaks next	Teacher-regulated vs. learner-initiated turns
<b>Adjacency Pairs</b>	Two-part sequences (e.g., question-answer)	Teacher questions requiring learner responses
<b>Repair</b>	Correction of misunderstandings or errors	Recasts, explicit corrections, clarifications
<b>Overlap</b>	Simultaneous speech	Competitive vs. collaborative floor management
<b>Wait-Time</b>	Silence duration after teacher question	Affects response quality and participation rates

(Adapted from Seedhouse, 2004; Walsh, 2011)

## 2.3 Teacher Talk and Classroom Dominance

The excessive teacher talk will, in fact, provide the input for a number of roles: demonstrating language forms, class management, and checking learner response. However, Teacher talk instead of this exceeds 60-70%, the time that is available for the learners to produce the language is very limited, thus the amount of practice which is the main frequency of second language acquisition is drastically decreased. Apart from Krashen's (1985) findings, several subsequent acquisition studies are also in line with the fact that learners need to be provided with a high amount of comprehensible input accompanied by the opportunity for output production.

## 2.4 Wait-Time as a Critical Pedagogical Variable

Wait-time, which is the time of silence stretching after a teacher's question or a learner's input, is a cornerstone that shapes the quality of interaction in the class (Rowe, 1986). Changing wait-time from the normally brief 1-2 seconds to 3-5 seconds or even more opens the door for a good number of positive effects, in fact implementing effective teaching strategies leads to a cascade of positive outcomes in the language classroom. Learners demonstrate an improved quality of responses,

producing longer, more complex, and accurate contributions. Iraqi study clearly indicates that teachers provide wait-times that average 2.3 seconds while Al-Rashid & Al-Hamdani (2022) have it recorded which is significantly shorter than the recommended time. This scenario demonstrates that teachers need to maintain the pace of the lesson and cover the exam content, silent pauses are not supported by institutional structures, and teachers have only limited knowledge of the wait time effects .

### 2.5 Turn-Taking Organization in Classroom Discourse

Turn-taking organization is a social mechanism that governs the rights to speak next, the moment, and the duration. In normal classroom conversation, teachers through direct nomination control turn-allocation ("Ahmed, please answer"). Apart from that, teachers also implicitly facilitate turns through directed gaze or closeness and sequential interaction (Walsh, 2011). Sedhouse, 2004, suggests that language teaching may involve different turn-taking patterns .

- 1.The teacher decides who is speaking, when they are speaking, and for how long
- 2.Learners try to self-select but the teacher allows them only partially
- 3.Learners really have the right to speak without teacher permission

### .3Iraqi Educational Context and Current Practices

#### 3.1 The Iraqi Education System

The educational system of Iraq had to bear the brunt of its problems caused by the long periods of wars conflict, economic troubles, and flaws in its local institutions (UNESCO Iraq, 2021). The Ministry of Education is in charge of an educational network consisting of about 7 million students studying in 26000 schools. English language teaching starts from grade 4 (age 10).

The 2021 Education Development Strategy, as one of its main thrusts, looks at English proficiency as a prerequisite for workforce development, international engagement, and technological advancement (Iraq Ministry of Education, 2021). Consequently, there appeared to be a demand for teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) to make students acquire the required learning outcomes for English, as a result of this, they feel the need to be supported by institutions, to receive continuous training and resources. However, this support is still far from being up to the mark .

#### 3.2 Current EFL Teaching Practices in Iraqi Classrooms

Several types of research done also support the idea that the teaching methods used are traditional and teacher-centered, which are the most commonly found in EFL classes in Iraq (Al-Rashid & Al-Hamdani, 2022). Table 2 illustrates the outcomes of recent research in classrooms observed :

Table 2: Current EFL Classroom Interaction Patterns in Iraq

Interaction Feature	Current Mean	Standard Deviation	Recommended Range
Teacher Talk (%)	78.2%	8.5%	40-60%
Learner Talk (%)	21.8%	8.5%	40-60%
Wait-Time (seconds)	2.3	1.1	5-10
Active Participation Rate (%)	22.4%	12.3%	70-90%
Teacher-Initiated vs. Learner-Initiated Turns	94:6	-	50:50

<b>Form-Focused vs. Meaning-Focused Discourse</b>	73:27	-	40:60
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(Al-Rashid & Al-Hamdani, 2022; Al-Hamdani, 2023)

### 3.3 Contextual Factors Affecting Iraqi EFL Classrooms

Implementing effective teaching strategies leads to a cascade of positive outcomes in the language classroom. Learners demonstrate an improved quality of responses, producing longer, more complex, and accurate contributions. This fosters an environment where participation increases significantly, engaging a broader spectrum of students rather than being dominated by a few high-achievers. As a result, students make more frequent and sustained contributions beyond their initial answers. Ultimately, this cycle of successful engagement builds their self-assurance, leading to a marked increase in confidence as they gain trust in the correctness of their responses.

## 4. Research Methodology

The EFL learning environment in Iraq is limited in the context of the systemic challenges that affect it. The first of these is the overcrowding of the classrooms, which is typical in the Iraqi context, with between 45-50 students in a class, which is much larger than the recommended number. This, in turn, affects the teacher-centered nature of the class, which is inevitable in such contexts for management purposes. The second is the linguistic context, which is dominated by the use of the Arabic language and the differences between the grammar of Arabic and English, which pose a major barrier to the process of EFL learning.

### 4.1 Research Design

A mixed-method research design in which quantitative data from classroom observations were combined with qualitative data from interviews and focus groups. Through structured observation, this approach made it possible to discover the ongoing interaction patterns while simultaneously obtaining the views of teachers and students on the factors influencing the use of communicative practices in the local context.

### 4.2 Participants and Settings

The study was conducted across 35 schools, comprising both intermediate and secondary levels. The intermediate schools catered to Grade 8-9 students, while the secondary schools served Grade 10-12 students. These schools were located in three governorates: Baghdad, Basra, and their surrounding rural areas.

Table 3: Research Participant Demographics

Variable	n	Percentage	Location
<b>Total Classrooms</b>	35	100%	-
Urban Schools	22	62.9%	Baghdad (12), Basra (10)
Rural Schools	13	37.1%	Surrounding Areas
<b>Teachers Observed</b>	15	100%	-
Male Teachers	10	66.7%	-
Female Teachers	5	33.3%	-
Teaching Experience (Mean)	-	8.4 years	Range: 2-18 years
<b>Total Learners</b>	420	100%	-

Grade 8-9	280	66.7%	-
Grade 10-12	140	33.3%	-
Proficiency (Self-Rated)**	-	-	-
Low	189	45.0%	-
Intermediate	168	40.0%	-
Upper-Intermediate	63	15.0%	-

Teachers' experience varied from delete to 2 years to 18 years and the majority of them (n=10) had 5-12 years of teaching experience. Eight teachers were B.A. holders of English language, five were diploma holders in English education, and two were M.A. degree holders. No one has reported doing a specialized training in Conversation Analysis.

#### 4.3 Data Collection Methods

**Classroom Observations:** In each classroom, three lessons were taped (making a total of 105 lessons), each approximately 45 minutes long. The video captured all interactions in the classroom, thus allowing detailed turn-by-turn CA analysis to be done.

**First:** Semi-structured interviews with each of the 15 teachers (45-60 minutes duration) focused on teachers' pedagogical beliefs, recognition of interaction patterns, difficulties in applying communicative approaches, and views of possible improvements. The interviews were held in English (with Arabic used for clarification if needed) and audio-recorded after getting participants' permission.

**Second:** Four focus groups (8-10 students per group) held separately from formal lessons discussed learners' experiences with classroom interaction, their favorite participation patterns, what they thought were barriers to speaking, and their suggestions for improvement. The focus groups were held in Arabic so that learners could be represented in their authentic voices.

#### 4.4 Data Analysis Procedures

**Quantitative Analysis:** The video recordings were systematically analyzed with the help of the Classroom Interaction Analysis (CIAD) coding system that was modified for EFL contexts:

**Speaker Identity:** Teacher vs. Learner

**Turn Duration:** seconds of uninterrupted speech

**Turn Type:** question, response, comment, clarification request

**Wait-Time:** seconds of silence after the teacher's question

**Learner Participation:** Individual learners being identified for accumulation of participation frequency

In each variable, frequency counts and means were obtained. Descriptive statistics and inferential tests (paired t-tests comparing pre-intervention and post-intervention phases) were performed using SPSS version 26.

**Qualitative Analysis:** Transcripts of the interviews and data from focus groups were subjected to thematic analysis based on Braun and Clarke (2006) guidelines. The very first coding considered the themes related to barriers to communicative teaching, teacher beliefs about appropriate classroom interaction, and contextual factors affecting pedagogy. Comparing these themes in teachers and learners, the researchers identified convergent and divergent perspectives.

**CA-Specific Analysis:** According to Seedhouse (2004) and Walsh (2011) this in-depth CA examines the organization of turn-taking, repair sequences, being overlapped, and

participation structures. One of the main points was to find out which methods the teacher used to not only support but also to control the learner's active participation and what moments of interaction could benefit from CA-informed intervention to facilitate turn-taking strategies

#### 4.5 CA-Informed Intervention Protocol

After the baseline data collection and CA analysis, the 15 teachers took part in an intense 8-week intervention phase that was guided by three core {CA} principles: Wait-Time Management, Balanced Turn-Allocation, and Systematic Repair Organization. The intervention also included three 3-hour professional development workshops, bi-weekly peer observations, and individual coaching sessions using video feedback.

The protocol demanded from teachers particular changes in their behavior:

##### 4.5.1 Wait-Time Extension

Teachers had to increase the silence on purpose after the question, which is their question (Wait-Time 1), and learner responses (Wait-Time 2).

- **Target Goal:** Keep {Wait-Time} between 5 and 10 seconds before continuing, nominating another student, or giving the answer.
- **Techniques:** Teachers made use of non-verbal signs (continued look, open hand gesture) to convey to learners that they were waiting for a reply, and utilized "soft silence" methods, so as not to be pressured by the break of time.

##### 4.5.2 Balanced Turn-Allocation

The aim was to limit the {Teacher-Controlled} turns (Initiation-Response-Feedback/Evaluation or IRF/IRE) and facilitate Learner Self-Selection and learners' equitable participation.

- **Target Goal:** Reduce the teacher talk time from the baseline 78% to the {40-60%} range.
- **Techniques:** Teachers performed the open-ended, display questions (questions to which the teacher does not know the answer) instead of test questions and used pair/group work before whole-class feedback to prepare learners for self-selection. Also, they were advised to utilize a "participation sheet" so that quiet learners could be targeted and given the opportunity for low-stakes turns.

##### 4.5.3 Systematic Repair Organization

The focus was on transferring the responsibility of error resolution from the teacher to the learner, changing the practice of explicit correction that usually closes the turn sequence.

- **Target Goal:** Increase the use of {implicit repair} mechanisms.
- **Techniques:** Teachers were encouraged to implement Recasts (changing the learner's incorrect utterance without interrupting the flow) and Clarification Requests (e.g., "Pardon?", "Can you say that again?") to guide the learner towards self-repair or to start meaning negotiation.

## 5. Findings and Results

### 5.1 Current Classroom Interaction Patterns

#### 5.1.1 Teacher Talk Dominance

Analysis of baseline data confirmed substantial teacher talk dominance across all observed classrooms. Teachers were leading the classroom communication, making up 78.2% of the talk time (SD = 8.5%). This figure is very significant, as the teachers' talk time is thrice the maximum limit of the recommended 40-60% range, therefore, it indicates a serious limitation of students' language production opportunities. More than one-half of the teachers' talking time was consumed by:

**Grammar Explanation:** 34.2% of teacher talk

**Vocabulary Presentation:** 18.7% of teacher talk

**Classroom Management:** 22.1% of teacher talk

**Question Asking:** 15.3% of teacher talk

**Feedback/Correction:** 9.7% of teacher talk (Al-Hamdani, 2023)

**Table 4: Teacher Talk Functions - Frequency Analysis**

Teacher Talk Function	Frequency (n)	Percentage	Mean Duration (seconds)
Grammar Explanation	687	34.2%	18.5 (SD=12.3)
Vocabulary Presentation	376	18.7%	12.2 (SD=8.1)
Classroom Management	445	22.1%	8.3 (SD=4.7)
Question-Asking	308	15.3%	3.2 (SD=2.1)
Feedback/Correction	196	9.7%	5.1 (SD=3.4)
<b>TOTAL TURNS</b>	2,012	100.0%	-

The distribution revealed a radically transmission-level teaching method that very much focused on providing more input to students rather than output.

### 5.1.2 Wait-Time Analysis

The data analysis has shown that wait-times were very short and this was the case in all the classrooms:

The average wait-time was 2.3 seconds (SD = 1.1), and 57.3% of the wait-times were 2 seconds or less. The 5-10 seconds range that was recommended was followed only in 2.8% of teacher questions. Such a small time for thinking drastically reduces the learners' ability to come up with an answer, especially those of lower proficiency, who need more time for their mental processing.

### 5.1.3 Learner Participation Patterns

Only 22.4% of classroom talk time was the learners speaking (SD = 12.3%). In addition, learner participation was highly concentrated: the 10 highest-participating learners (approximately 5% of the class) accounted for 60% of all learner talk. The remaining 95% of learners shared only 40% of the total learner talk time.

**Table 5: Learner Participation Patterns**

Participation Level	Number of Learners	Percentage	Mean Turns per Lesson	Participation Rate
Non-Participants	105	25.0%	0 turns	Silent throughout
Minimal (1-3 turns)	168	40.0%	2.1	Occasional responses
Moderate (4-8 turns)	105	25.0%	6.2	Regular participation
Active (9+ turns)	42	10.0%	14.3	High engagement
<b>TOTAL</b>	420	100.0%	-	-

The fact that a quarter of the learners were completely silent throughout the three recorded lessons (405 minutes of classroom time per learner), and thus, they did not produce any English utterances, is very significant. Besides that, 40% of the learners were low-contributors (1-3 turns across three lessons), i.e., approximately one response per 135 minutes of classroom time.

### 5.1.4 Turn-Taking Organization

The detailed CA examination of the data has revealed mainly teacher-controlled turn-taking with very little learner initiative:

**Table 6: Turn-Taking Organization Patterns**

Turn-Taking Pattern	Frequency (n)	Percentage	Description
Teacher-Controlled Turns	1,687	83.8%	Teacher explicitly allocates next speaker
Learner Self-Selection	215	10.7%	Learner initiates without nomination
Competitive Floor	87	4.3%	Multiple learners attempt to speak simultaneously
No Next Speaker Allocated	23	1.2%	Turn-allocation fails; silence ensues
<b>TOTAL TURNS</b>	2,012	100.0%	-

## 5.2 Intervention Implementation

The targeted interventions were implemented during the 8 weeks following the collection of baseline data and CA analysis.

### The interventions were aimed at:

The instructional intervention introduced several targeted strategies to transform classroom dynamics. Firstly, teachers were trained to deliberately increase their wait-time, pausing for 5–10 seconds after posing a question before accepting an answer or selecting another student. Secondly, they worked to systematically reduce teacher talk by setting specific lesson objectives aimed at boosting learner talk, with a goal of achieving 50% student speech by the fourth week.

## 5.3 Post-Intervention Results

### 5.3.1 Increased Learner Talk

After the intervention, the proportion of teacher talk was significantly reduced to 57.8% (SD = 9.2%,  $p < 0.001$ , paired t-test). Learner talk, however, went up to 42.2%. The reduction of teacher dominance by 20.4 percentage points was still quite significant, thus the ratio has been changed from severely imbalanced (78:22) to more equitable (58:42) distribution. While teacher talk was still somewhat above the ideal 50%, the change reflected a major milestone in the move towards a more balanced discourse.

The most ostensible change was the rising of student talk as a percentage of the total classroom discourse from 21.8% to 42.2% ( $p < 0.001$ ). Even more importantly, the distribution of participation had become much more equitable:

The proportion of the students who kept silence throughout had been significantly reduced from 25.0% to 6.7%. The modal category has been changed from "minimal participation" (40%) to "moderate participation" (45%), which means that most of the students had from 4 to 8 turns across three lessons, i.e. roughly one turn per 50-55 minutes instead of per 135 minutes.

### 5.3.2 Wait-Time Extension

The setting of wait-time goals only resulted in changes:

After the intervention, average wait-time was significantly extended, it went up from 2.3 to 6.8 seconds ( $p < 0.001$ ). The percentage of wait-times within the recommended 5-10 seconds interval was increased from 2.8% to 67.3%, thus, a large conformity with the evidence-based practice was attained. The follow-up data 12 weeks after the

intervention shows a partial drop to 5.1 seconds, thus indicating that a continuous effort is needed to keep the wait-time extension going.

**Table 7: Wait-Time Distribution Shifts**

Wait-Time Range	Baseline (%)	Post-Intervention (%)	Follow-up (%)
≤2 seconds	57.3%	8.2%	14.1%
2-3 seconds	29.6%	15.8%	24.3%
3-5 seconds	10.1%	28.4%	38.2%
5-10 seconds	2.8%	39.1%	20.3%
>10 seconds	0.2%	8.5%	3.1%
Mean (seconds)	2.3	6.8**	5.1*

\*Significant increase from baseline ( $p < 0.001$ ); \*\*Follow-up decline reflects regression without continued intervention support

### 5.3.3 Enhanced Learner Participation

Post-intervention analysis revealed substantial improvements in learner participation: Learner talk increased from 21.8% to 42.2% of classroom discourse ( $p < 0.001$ ). Critically, the distribution of participation became substantially more equitable:

**Table 8: Learner Participation Distribution - Post-Intervention Changes**

Participation Level	Baseline (n)	Baseline (%)	Post-Intervention (n)	Post-Intervention (%)	Change
Non-Participants	105	25.0%	28	6.7%	-18.3%
Minimal (1-3 turns)	168	40.0%	112	26.7%	-13.3%
Moderate (4-8 turns)	105	25.0%	189	45.0%	+20.0%
Active (9+ turns)	42	10.0%	91	21.6%	+11.6%
TOTAL	420	100.0%	420	100.0%	-

The proportion of learners who did not utter a single word dropped significantly from 25.0% to 6.7%. The modal category changed from "minimal participation" (40%) to "moderate participation" (45%), showing that the majority of learners had now made 4-8 turns in three lessons—roughly one turn per 50-55 minutes instead of per 135 minutes.

### 5.3.4 Improved Turn-Taking Opportunities

The structure of turn-taking changed significantly to a higher level of learner agency:

**Table 9: Turn-Taking Organization - Post-Intervention Changes**

Turn-Taking Pattern	Baseline (%)	Post-Intervention (%)	Change (pp)
Teacher-Controlled Turns	83.8%	62.1%	-21.7%
Learner Self-Selection	10.7%	28.4%	+17.7%
Competitive Floor	4.3%	8.1%	+3.8%
No Allocation/Silence	1.2%	1.4%	+0.2%

Instances of learner self-selection more than doubled, from 10.7% to 28.4%, which means that teachers creating situations in which learners felt they were able to start their turns without a teacher's explicit indication were successful. Competitive floor behavior

(more than one person speaking at the same time) increased slightly, which teachers said was better than silent classrooms although still needing to be controlled.

#### 5.4 Teacher Perspectives on CA Implementation

Semi-structured interviews revealed the differences in teachers' reactions to CA-informed interventions, their views being quite diverse:

##### Benefits Themes:

##### 1. Visible Learner Engagement

All 15 teachers admitted that they had noticed increased learner participation and enthusiasm. One teacher (Male, 12 years experience) expressed: "Students were surprised but also excited to have chances to speak when I finally stopped talking so much. I saw participation from students who never spoke before."

Teachers informally reported that they had noticed better English fluency and complexity in learner responses. One teacher recollected: "Students' responses became longer and more complete when they were given time to think. They used the wait-time to construct better English sentences."

##### Challenges Themes:

##### 1. Discomfort with Silence

Some of the teachers were not comfortable with silence due to long wait-times. Most of them referred to the intervention period as "uncomfortable" and "awkward". Teachers mentioned that they thought the 5-10 second pauses were much longer than they really were because they were used to rapid questioning.

##### 2. Curriculum Coverage Concerns

Eight teachers that chose to reduce their talking and extend their wait-times were quite reluctant to do that as they thought it would cause the teacher to lose control of the class and there would be less time for the curriculum. As such, they were worried about examination performance and saying, "The curriculum is too extensive. If I give all this wait-time, I won't be able to finish the material before the exams."

##### 3. Class Size Constraints

The most of the teachers pointed out that large classes (45-50 students) made it hard for them to effectively implement turn-taking in an equitable manner. Teachers mentioned, "With 50 students, if everyone gets a turn, we'll be talking about one lesson for weeks. I have to control turns to manage time efficiently."

##### 4. Resistance to Change

The three teachers (all with 15+ years experience) who doubted the effectiveness of CA-informed practices in the Iraqi context, suggested that such practices might not be the solution.

#### 5.4 CA Transcript Analysis: Qualitative Shift in Interaction

In order to provide evidence for the significant changes made by quantitative measures in {Teacher Talk} reduction and {Wait-Time} extension, a detailed CA analysis of the sequential organization changes qualitatively shift towards more negotiation and learner agency. The following transcripts exemplify the changes in {Wait-Time} and {Repair} mechanisms.

##### 5.4.1 Impact on Wait-Time and Response Quality

The sequences of the following excerpts show a typical {Wait-Time} just before the intervention and a sequence after training, thus demonstrating the effect of extended silence on the response quality.

##### Transcript 1A: Baseline (Short Wait-Time)

Notation	Meaning
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(.)	Short pause (less than 0.2 seconds)
(3.2)	Timed pause in seconds
[text]	Overlap in speech
T:	Teacher
L1:, L2:, L3:	Learner 1, Learner 2, Learner 3

#### Transcript 2A: Baseline (Explicit Correction)

Turn	Speaker	Utterance	Wait-Time / Duration	Observation
1	T:	What is the main idea of the first paragraph?	(.)	Display question
2	L1:	Um... travel?	0.9s	Hesitant, short response
3	T:	Travel, yes, but what about it? [L2 is raising hand]	1.5s	Teacher re-initiates quickly, limits L1's chance to elaborate.
4	T:	Ahmed, what do you think?	2.1s	Teacher allocates turn.

#### Transcript 1B: Post-Intervention (Extended Wait-Time)

Turn	Speaker	Utterance	Wait-Time / Duration	Observation
1	T:	Why is learning English important for Iraq's future?	(.)	Open-ended question
2		((T maintains eye contact, open posture))	6.8s	Teacher implements extended Wait-Time 1.
3	L1:	It is important because for jobs, and to speak with foreign people when they come to our country for business.	9.1s	Longer, more complex and reasoned response.
4	T:	Jobs and business. Good. (.) Can anyone add more detail to L1's idea?	3.5s	Teacher accepts answer and prompts further elaboration (Wait-Time 2).

#### Transcript 2B: Post-Intervention (Implicit Recast/Clarification Request)

Turn	Speaker	Utterance	Observation
1	T:	What did you do last week?	-
2	L2:	I go to the market with my father.	Error in verb tense (go → went)
3	T:	No, you must say, "I went to the market." Go is present.	Teacher explicitly corrects and explains, closing the repair sequence.
4	L2:	I went to the market.	Repetition for confirmation.

#### 5.4.2 Shift in Repair Organization

The comparison below demonstrates the shift from explicit teacher correction (which stops the communicative flow) to the use of {recasts} or {clarification requests} that facilitate {learner self-repair}.

**Transcript 2B: Post-Intervention Interaction (Implicit Recast/Clarification Request)**

The move from Explicit Correction (Transcript 2A, T3) to the Implicit Recast (Transcript 2B, T3) successfully maintained the communicative flow while still addressing the linguistic error, aligning with {CA-informed} pedagogical principles. The change from Explicit Correction (Transcript 2A, T3) to the Implicit Recast (Transcript 2B, T3) was very effective in maintaining the conversational nature of the interaction, which is a desirable goal in {CA-informed} pedagogical principles, and at the same time, the linguistic error was addressed.

**5.5 Learner Perspectives on Classroom Interaction**

Focus group discussions with learners gave insights into their experiences:

**Positive Responses to Changes:**

Almost all the learners (n=28 of 32 focus group participants) reported that they liked interaction patterns in the classroom after the intervention was implemented.

They expressed that the longer think-time was very much to their liking and they also explained the advantages of it: "Now I have time to think about my answer, not just immediately panicking" .

**Persistent Concerns:**

Some learners were still anxious about making mistakes: "Even with more wait-time, I still fear making mistakes in front of everyone".

A few of the students pointed out that the peer pressure factor was the main reason for their non-participation: "Even if the teacher waits, I don't want to speak if the class might laugh" A few of the students preferred teacher-controlled traditional interaction: "I like when the teacher just explains everything. That's how we learn English"

**5.6 Contextual Factors Affecting Implementation**

Qualitative analysis helped to identify the specific local factors that either facilitated or impeded the implementation of the Communicative Approach in Iraqi schools:

**Table 10: Contextual Factors - Implementation Facilitators and Barriers**

Factor	Facilitator	Barrier	Frequency
<b>School Leadership</b>	Principal support for innovation	Administrative indifference or resistance	12 schools (facilitated) vs. 23 (barriers)
<b>Peer Collaboration</b>	Teachers supporting each other	Isolated implementation without peer support	8 teachers collaborated; 7 worked alone
<b>Professional Development</b>	Regular workshops and coaching	One-shot training without follow-up	All 15 received workshops; 8 received follow-up coaching
<b>Classroom Resources</b>	Materials enabling communicative activities	Textbook-only, no supplementary materials	12 well-resourced vs. 23 resource-limited
<b>Class Size</b>	Under 35 students	40-50 students per class	8 smaller classes vs. 27 larger classes
<b>Examination Pressure</b>	Flexibility in pacing	Strict curriculum with high-stakes exams	Moderate in 10 schools; high in 25 schools

<b>Teacher Motivation</b>	Enthusiasm for innovation	for Burnout or resistance to change	10 motivated; 5 ambivalent
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## 6. Discussion and Implications

The initial results confirmed the previous research that documented the excessive teacher talk and minimal wait times and that participation was limited to only a few learners. Importantly, through the intervention phase, it was shown that targeted changes made with the help of CA-led the improvement in the noted dimensions of interaction and these changes could be measured.

Although the reduction of teacher talk by 20.4 percentage points i.e. from 78.2% to 57.8% is a considerable one, the latter percentage is still above the recommended 40-60% range.

This indicates that the first interventions lead to the initial progress of the work, but the latter needs a sustained, systematic implementation to reach the optimal balance. The partial regression phenomenon in the follow-up (teacher talk increasing from 57.8% to 61.2% by week 12) shows that teachers' interaction styles in the classroom still have quite a significant follow-up momentum.

Teachers alone, therefore, may not be able to keep to the changed interaction modes in their habitual pedagogical routines without having to be provided with continuous support and reinforcement.

Changing the waiting time is probably the most significant example of intervention effect.

### Negotiating Contextual Constraints:

#### Strategies for Large Classes

The reduction in {Teacher Talk} and the large increase in {Wait-Time} obtained through this study (as evidenced in Chapter 5) are very impressive achievements, especially when they are considered in the light of the extremely challenging contextual factors in the Iraqi education system that were documented, notably large classes (with an average size of 45 students). The major finding of this study is the practical strategies that teachers used to overcome these systemic challenges through the use of {CA}-informed principles.

#### Practical Strategies for Large Class Implementation:

**Organized Group Work and Peer-Monitoring:** Teachers, on their part, systematically moved away from the reliance on whole-class {IRF} sequences only, and they extensively engaged students in well-structured pair-work and small group discussions thus preparing them for the stage of whole-class reporting. In that way, every learner got enough {output opportunity} and the teacher did not have to handle 45 individual turns one after another.

#### Targeted Turn-Allocation

Without the limitation of the whole-class time, {High-Participators} might have had the chance to dominate it and thus the teachers resorted to a technique of "turn banking" in order to avoid such a situation. By doing so they were able to keep the record of students who did not take part in the previous discussion and thus they used randomly selected nomination (for instance, by picking a card with a name) together with prolonging the {Wait-Time} so that the students who usually remain silent would now feel the necessity to take part in the conversation.

#### Non-Verbal Cues for Extended Wait-Time:

Teachers admitted that at first holding 5-10 seconds of silence was a hard task for them, and as a matter of fact, the big-class environment was a factor that put pressure on them to continue at a fast pace so that the students would not lose their attention.

**Shifting Classroom Management Focus:** Apart from using the {CA-informed}{Recasts} and {Clarification Requests} as a means of linguistic repair, teachers directed them also as an instrument of classroom management. The method of error negotiation involving students thus engaging them more actively, the focus of discourse shifting to understanding rather than the usual passivity, which in essence leads to less student-on-task behavior typical of large classes where the teacher is in control and dominates the class.

### 6.2 CA Specific insights relevant to the Iraqi context

Iraqi teachers use a teacher-controlled and teacher-activated turn-allocation mode that is part of their daily routine to show how extraordinarily the management of 45-50 students in a very small space of the classroom is the challenge. Explicit turn-allocation (rather than open floor management) gives control to the teachers to maintain order and at the same time to ensure participation. However, CA analysis shows that this management strategy unintentionally limits learner agency. So, the intervention was about establishing well-defined small-group interactions in big classes

### 6.3 Limitations and Considerations

The study presented many limitations that influenced the possibilities of generalizing the outcomes and making conclusions based on the data:

**Sample Characteristics:** This research was conducted only in 35 classrooms and with 15 teachers from three governorates. The urban schools in Baghdad and Basra were more represented than those in the rural areas and smaller governorates, thus the geographic generalizability is limited.

**Intervention Intensity:** The implementation was very intense in terms of the professional development that was involved (three 3-hour workshops plus individual coaching), and such a level of support is not normally available in Iraqi schools. So, the results may be overestimating the improvements that can be made with minimal teacher training.

**Hawthorne Effect:** The teachers who were aware of being observed and the intervention research in which they were participating, might have consequently elevated their engagement and the quality of their implementation, and this may have happened beyond typical classroom contexts.

**Sustainability Questions:** The measurements after 12 weeks showed that some of the changes such as longer wait-time and teacher talk reduction had reverted. There are no data for an extended follow-up period and thus the question about sustainability in the long run remains unanswered.

**Quantitative Precision:** Although the coding scheme was reliable, it still necessarily simplified complicated classroom discourse. Different types of questions, repair mechanisms, and interactional functions may be merged in the quantitative summaries resulting in slight inaccuracies.

## 7. Recommendations and Conclusions

Based on the findings, a multi-tiered set of recommendations is proposed to enhance communicative practices in Iraqi EFL classrooms. For teachers, practical steps include gradually extending wait-time to 5-10 seconds, implementing structured small-group interactions to increase student talk, using explicit turn-allocation systems for equity, and self-monitoring via video recordings to reflect on interaction patterns. On an institutional level, educational administrators are urged to establish sustained

professional development programs focused on classroom discourse, reform examinations to assess communicative competence, pursue initiatives to reduce class sizes, and emphasize interaction quality in teacher evaluations. Furthermore, researchers are called to conduct longitudinal studies on the sustainability of interventions, investigate context-specific implementation strategies, examine teacher learning processes, and explore the long-term impact of improved interaction on learner proficiency development.

#### 7.4 Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the application of the principles of CA in improving classroom interaction in Iraqi EFL contexts, specifically whether such an approach can facilitate a shift from teacher-dominated discourse to more participatory dialogue. It was first established that a severe imbalance existed, with teacher talk making up 78% of total discourse and wait times of just 2.3 seconds. The study confirmed that a deliberate attempt to lengthen wait times to 6.8 seconds would improve the quality and depth of student participation. It was also established that effective approaches included small group work, equitable turn-taking, and conversational approaches to error correction such as recasts. The systemic challenges of large class sizes and an exam-focused culture were also confirmed, although it was found that these were navigable with institutional support. However, subsequent data revealed a regression in such approaches and, in conclusion, it was established that although CA is a valuable toolkit, it is a constant process.

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### Abstract in Arabic

تطبيق تحليل المحادثة لتحسين التفاعل الصفّي: حديث المعلم، تبادل الأدوار، ومشاركة المتعلمين في دروس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في العراق  
الملخص:

يختص هذا البحث باستخدام إجراءات تحليل المحادثة (CA) لتحسين التواصل الصفّي في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (EFL) ضمن النظام التعليمي المحلي في العراق. تكشف الدراسة عن كيفية تحسين أنماط حديث المعلم، وتوظيف آليات تبادل الأدوار، واستراتيجيات مشاركة المتعلمين من خلال تطبيق مبادئ تحليل المحادثة. باتباع منهج مختلط (كمي ونوعي)، جُمعت البيانات من 35 فصلاً دراسياً لتعليم اللغة الإنجليزية موزعة على بغداد والبصرة وأربيل، بمشاركة 15 معلماً من ذوي الخبرة و420 متعلماً.

أظهرت النتائج أن المعلمين في فصول اللغة الإنجليزية في العراق أظهروا مستوى منخفضاً جداً في "وقت الانتظار" أو المهلة المعطاة للطالب (بمتوسط قدره 2.3 ثانية مقابل 5-10 ثوانٍ موصى بها)، مع هيمنة حديث المعلم بنسبة بلغت 78% مقابل 22% فقط لمشاركة المتعلمين. أدى إدخال التدخلات التربوية القائمة على تحليل المحادثة إلى إحداث تغييرات كبيرة، مثل خفض نسبة حديث المعلم إلى 58% ( $p > 0.001$ )، وتمديد وقت الانتظار إلى 6.8 ثانية، وارتفاع معدل مشاركة المتعلمين إلى 42%، مع ترسيخ تسلسلات هادفة لتبادل الأدوار. وتكشف الدراسة عن صعوبات متنوعة يواجهها قطاع المدارس في العراق، مثل مشكلة الأعداد الكبيرة للطلاب (بمتوسط 45 طالباً)، وندرة الموارد، والقيود المؤسسية المفروضة على أساليب التدريس المبتكرة. تضمنت المقترحات برامج للتطوير المهني للمعلمين تتناسب مع النظام التعليمي العراقي، واستراتيجيات تنفيذ تضمن الاستدامة. ويعد هذا المشروع خطوة نحو تفعيل مفاهيم تحليل المحادثة في تعليم اللغة التواصلية في سياقات اللغة الإنجليزية في العراق من خلال تقديم أدلة تجريبية.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

فصول اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (EFL)، حديث المعلم، تبادل الأدوار، مشاركة المتعلم، التعليم في العراق.