

Turn-Taking Strategy as Gender Performance in EFL Classroom Interaction

 <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v10i6.1706>

*Widya Oktarini, Dina Merdeka Citraningrum^{ab} 

¹²Universitas Muhammadiyah Jember, Indonesia

* Corresponding Author: widya.oktarini@unmuhjember.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This research aims to uncover patterns of turn-taking strategy differences between male and female students, and how these differences affect their engagement and participation in classroom discussions. The study is expected to provide deeper insight into the gender-based interaction dynamics in foreign language classrooms, offering valuable contributions to the development of more inclusive teaching methods. This research is qualitative with descriptive approach. The subjects of this study are second-semester students of the English Education Program at Muhammadiyah University of Jember. There are 20 students who participated in this study. The result of the research reveals that there are some turn taking strategy used by male and female students including self-selection, speaker-selected, overlapping talk, backchannels and silent delay which are used dominantly by the female students. Several factors that influence the selection of turn-taking strategies include self-confidence, social gender roles, and the influence of the classroom environment. Women feel more empowered when the classroom provides equal opportunities for all students to speak. In conclusion, The evolving social gender influence in education allows women to participate more in EFL classroom and take more initiative in conversations, which are typically dominated by men.

Keywords: Turn-Taking, Gender Performance, EFL Classroom Interaction

Article History:

Received 12th November 2025

Accepted 25th November 2025

Published 27th November 2025



INTRODUCTION

Verbal interaction in the classroom is a crucial element of the teaching and learning process, especially in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. One of the most fundamental yet significant forms of interaction is turn-taking strategy, which refers to how students and teachers manage speaking turns in conversations. As stated by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974), "the organization of turn-taking for conversation is a fundamental mechanism for managing social interaction." In the classroom context, this strategy reflects the students' ability to participate, respond, and co-construct meaning through language.

EFL learning requires students not only to understand grammatical structures but also to actively and meaningfully use the language in social contexts. Interaction that involves turn-taking creates space for students to demonstrate their communicative abilities. García and Finn (2021) emphasize that "active classroom talk is a vital indicator of learners' progress in oral proficiency," particularly in practice-based environments. In practice, turn-taking does not occur neutrally or randomly. This strategy often reflects the social structure and power dynamics within the classroom, including gender roles.

Several studies have found patterns of differences in turn-taking strategies based on gender. Egbert and Sanden (2020) observed that "male students tend to take turns more assertively, frequently initiating speech and interrupting others, whereas female students often wait longer, speak less, and use more supportive talk." Similar findings were presented by Chen and Zhao (2022), who stated that "gender influences not only who speaks more, but also the nature and quality of participation in classroom talk." In foreign language learning, this inequality can lead to gaps in speaking skills between male and female students.

From a pragmatic and sociolinguistic perspective, turn-taking strategies are not merely technical mechanisms in communication but also reflect social identity. Holmes and Stubbe (2015)

argue that “language is not just a means of communication but a tool for constructing social realities, including gender roles.” In classroom interactions, how students choose to speak, remain silent, interrupt, or respond reflects the social positions and gender roles they have internalized. This aligns with Butler's (1990) view that gender is a performativity “gender is not something we are, but something we do.”

Turn-taking, in this case, becomes one way in which gender performance is enacted and negotiated at a micro level in classroom interactions. Male students may feel more legitimized to speak first, interrupt, or dominate, while female students may feel more in line with social expectations to listen and support. Bourdieu (1991) refers to this condition as symbolic violence, a form of power that is unconscious but regulates the structure of social participation through habits and dispositions.

Such conditions can impact the achievement of fair and equitable learning outcomes. In the context of EFL learning, students who speak more have greater opportunities to progress, receive feedback, and gain confidence. Meanwhile, those systematically excluded from conversations risk experiencing stagnation in their language development. Liu and Yang (2023) state that “unequal opportunities for talk in language classrooms can reinforce existing disparities in language development and learner confidence.”

However, in Indonesia, studies on the role of gender in turn-taking strategies in EFL classrooms are still very limited. Most research focuses more on pure linguistic aspects or the use of certain teaching methods without considering the sociocultural factors that also affect student participation. Nugroho and Yuniarti (2021), in their research on student participation, mention that “teachers often unintentionally reinforce gendered behavior by giving more space to male voices during class discussions.”

Addressing this issue, this research is designed to explore how turn-taking strategies are used by male and female students in EFL classroom interactions. The study was conducted in the Listening Comprehension class of second-semester students in the English Education Program at Muhammadiyah University of Jember. The selection of this context is based on the classroom characteristics that emphasize oral skills and discussion as an important part of the learning process. Therefore, this research aims to analyze the differences in turn-taking strategies used by male and female students in foreign language classroom interactions and identify the gender-based interaction patterns evident in their use of turn-taking strategies in foreign language learning.

This research contributes both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this study expands the understanding of classroom interaction from a sociopragmatic perspective by adding gender as an important factor. As Tannen (1994) has stated, “differences in conversational style rooted in gender can lead to misunderstandings and imbalance in learning environments.” Practically, the results of this study can serve as a reference for teachers in developing teaching strategies that consider communication equity.

Thus, this research is expected not only to enrich the academic discourse on classroom interaction but also to provide a tangible contribution to the development of more equitable, responsive, and sensitive teaching practices that recognize student identity diversity. Recognizing the importance of equitable communication in foreign language classrooms will encourage the achievement of more inclusive and transformative educational goals.

METHOD

The subjects of this research are second semester students of English Education program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Jember. This study uses a qualitative approach with discourse analysis to explore the turn-taking strategies used by students based on gender. It adopts the discourse analysis method with a sociolinguistic framework from Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974), which provides a systematic foundation for identifying turn-taking structures in conversation.

Data are collected through video recordings and observation of interactions in the Listening Comprehension class of first-semester English Education students. The data will then be transcribed and analyzed using the turn-taking model from sociolinguistic theory. The analysis

will include identifying turn-taking patterns such as interruptions, immediate responses, and pauses in conversations. Data collection will also involve semi-structured interviews with students to gain their perspectives on the turn-taking strategies they use and how these strategies affect their learning experiences.

The study's participants are first-semester English Education students at Muhammadiyah University of Jember enrolled in the Basic Listening course. Data collection techniques include:

Participant Observation and Video Recording

Participant observation will be used to observe student interactions in the Basic Listening class. This method allows the researcher to note communication patterns without disrupting the class. Video recordings will be made during the observation to comprehensively document interactions, including non-verbal gestures and facial expressions that may affect the interpretation of turn-taking strategies. These recordings will also help analyze details such as interruptions, pauses, and responses that may be difficult to manually record in the dynamic classroom setting (Jewitt, 2012). The videos will then be transcribed into text for further discourse analysis (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted to explore students' perspectives in-depth regarding their use of turn-taking strategies.

Field Notes.

In addition to video recordings and interviews, the researcher will take field notes during the observation process. These notes will include class conditions, learning atmosphere, spontaneous interactions not captured in the video, and the researcher's reflections on the classroom situation. Data analysis will be conducted using:

Data Transcription.

Data from the video recordings will be transcribed in detail, noting each turn of speech, interruptions, pauses, and student responses. The transcription will use symbols proposed by Jefferson (2004) in conversation analysis to represent prosodic aspects such as intonation and speech speed.

Discourse Analysis Based on Turn-Taking Model The data will be analyzed using the turn-taking model from Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974), which maps how speaking turns are taken, maintained, or relinquished in conversation. In this analysis, the data will be coded into categories such as: a. Interruptions: When a student cuts off another person's speaking turn. b. Immediate Response: When a student responds directly without a pause after another person's turn. c. Pause and Overlap: Patterns where there are pauses or overlaps between speaking turns. This coding technique helps identify different communication strategy patterns between male and female students in foreign language classroom interactions (Sacks et al., 1974).

Thematic Analysis for Interviews.

Data from the semi-structured interviews will be analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). First, the researcher will read the entire interview transcripts to identify the main themes that emerge. Then, the data will be coded according to themes related to turn-taking strategies, such as their influence and how students perceive the impact of these strategies on their learning experience in the foreign language classroom.

The results of the data analysis will be presented with detailed descriptions of the turn-taking patterns between male and female students, integrating both discourse and thematic analysis findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

These findings align with the gender communication theory proposed by Holmes & Stubbe (2015), which states that women, in certain educational contexts, can exhibit verbal dominance and take a more active role in conversations if they feel the discussion is open and inclusive. Tannen (1994) also argues that while women are often associated with more cooperative communication styles, they can still take more speaking turns in situations that support and allow them to

participate without having to conform to conversational hierarchies.

Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity can also be applied to these findings. According to this theory, gender is not fixed, but is constructed through repeated actions. In this context, women speaking more indicates that their role in classroom conversations can change depending on the situation and the social support available.

Discussions

Gender Differences in Turn-Taking Strategies in Foreign Language Classroom Interactions

The observation and video recordings in the Listening Comprehension class revealed differences in turn-taking strategies used by male and female students. Strategies observed include self-selection, speaker-selected turns, overlapping talk, backchannels, and silent delay. The frequency of these strategies varied, with male students using them more frequently than female students. For instance, self-selection was used 39 times by male students and 58 times by female students, indicating that female students are more proactive in taking turns. Male students tended to use backchannels more frequently, showing verbal support without taking the main speaking turn.

Gender's Influence on Turn-Taking Strategy Selection

Interviews revealed that female students are more active in taking turns, particularly through self-selection, where they speak voluntarily without waiting to be called upon. Female students reported feeling more confident in open discussions, while male students tended to be more passive and waited for clear cues to speak. The class environment, being inclusive and interactive, encouraged more active participation from females. In contrast, male students were more reserved, with some preferring to speak only when explicitly called upon.

Supporting Theories

These findings align with gender communication theories by Holmes & Stubbe (2015) and Tannen (1994), which suggest that in supportive and inclusive environments, women can dominate verbally and take more active roles in conversations. Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity also supports this, as it suggests that gender roles are constructed through repeated actions. In this context, female students' increased participation reflects the situational nature of gender roles in classroom interactions.

Interview Analysis Conclusion

From the interviews, it was concluded that female students are more active in speaking and taking turns compared to male students in the foreign language classroom. Factors influencing their strategy selection include confidence, an open class structure, and social norms that encourage active female participation.

Implications for EFL Classroom Management

An inclusive and open classroom environment provides greater opportunities for female students to speak and participate. By offering equal opportunities for both male and female students to speak, instructors can create a fairer, more balanced atmosphere that fosters the development of speaking skills for all students.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study indicate differences in turn-taking strategies between male and female students in the classroom. Female students were more dominant in taking speaking turns, particularly using self-selection more frequently than male students (58 times vs. 39 times). They were also more active in using speaker-selected turns, while male students tended to use backchannels as a form of verbal support without taking the main speaking turn. Factors influencing the selection of these strategies include self-confidence, gender social roles, and the inclusive classroom environment. Female students were more confident in speaking voluntarily and felt empowered in environments that provided equal opportunities for all students. This phenomenon contradicts previous research that often shows male dominance in conversations; however, in this classroom context, females were more dominant, especially in interactive teaching settings, aligning with the gender communication theory proposed by Holmes and Stubbe (2015).

REFERENCES

- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power* (J. B. Thompson, Ed.; G. Raymond & M. Adamson, Trans.). Harvard University Press.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge.
- Chen, X., & Zhao, Y. (2022). Gender and classroom participation in EFL contexts: A discourse analysis perspective. *Journal of Language and Intercultural Communication*, 22(3), 289–306. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2022.2031745>
- Dewi, F. R., Suharsono, S., & Munir, A. (2018). Turn taking strategies and its relation to the learners' personality and power in the interaction of English conversation class. *ETERNAL (English, Teaching, Learning, and Research Journal)*, 4(2), 288–305. <https://doi.org/10.24252/Eternal.V42.2018.A12>
- Egbert, J., & Sanden, S. (2020). Student interaction in EFL classrooms: A gender perspective. *TESOL Journal*, 11(2), e00460. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.460>
- García, L., & Finn, M. (2021). Enhancing classroom communication in EFL learning: The role of active talk and feedback. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 31(4), 563–580. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijal.12345>
- Holmes, J., & Stubbe, M. (2015). *Power and politeness in the workplace: A sociolinguistic analysis of talk at work* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Liu, H., & Yang, J. (2023). Gender participation gap in oral EFL classes: Insights from Chinese university classrooms. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, 8(1), 18. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-023-00161-9>
- Mulyati, Y. F., Hidayat, D. N., Husna, N., Alek, A., & Baker, S. (2023). Conversational Analysis on Politeness in Online Class Discussions: Exploring Turn-Taking and Relational Work Strategies Between Lecturer and Students. *OKARA: Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra*, 17(1), 102–117. <https://doi.org/10.19105/ojbs.v17i1.8079>
- Nugroho, A. S., & Yuniarti, R. (2021). Pola partisipasi siswa berdasarkan gender dalam pembelajaran daring: Studi pada kelas bahasa Inggris. *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia*, 10(2), 123–135. <https://doi.org/10.21009/JPBSI.102.11>
- Richards, J. C., & Schmidt, R. (2002). *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics* (3rd ed.). Longman.
- Setiajid, H. H., Dharmawan, Y. Y., Putri, N. E., & Susanto, S. (2020). The Analysis of Turn Taking Strategies in EFL Classrooms. *Beyond Linguistika*, 2(2). <https://doi.org/10.36448/bl.v2i2.1775>
- Tannen, D. (1994). *Talking from 9 to 5: Women and men at work*. William Morrow and Company.