

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**LANGUAGE TEACHER
COGNITION AND ITS INFLUENCE
ON CLASSROOM INTERACTION IN
DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS
AT SEKOLAH AGAMA RAKYAT
(SAR)**

NURULHAYATI BINTI ILIAS

PhD

June 2026

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Applied Language Studies)

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CONFIRMATION BY PANEL OF EXAMINERS

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I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Teknologi MARA. It is original and is the results of my own work, unless otherwise indicated or acknowledged as referenced work. This thesis has not been submitted to any other academic institution or non-academic institution for any degree or qualification.

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ABSTRACT

This doctoral study examines Language Teacher Cognition (LTC) in classroom interactions and its influence on the facilitation of students' speaking skills in Sekolah Agama Rakyat (SAR) secondary schools in Perak, Malaysia, with a focus on the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices, particularly in the use of the Initiation–Response–Feedback (IRF) method to support speaking development. Despite increasing emphasis on communicative competence, students in SAR schools continue to experience limited opportunities to engage in meaningful spoken interaction, and existing studies have paid insufficient attention to how teachers' cognition shapes moment-to-moment classroom interaction in this specific context. A mixed-method approach was employed, where quantitative data were collected through questionnaires completed by English language teachers, and qualitative data involved twelve classroom observations followed by semi-structured interviews with selected teachers and students to gain deeper insights into classroom practices and learning experiences. The findings indicate that although classrooms demonstrated active participation and clear teacher guidance, instructional practices reflected a combination of teacher- and student-centred approaches. However, noticeable incongruences remained between teachers' stated beliefs and their actual classroom practices. While teachers showed theoretical understanding of IRF as a tool to promote participation and improve speaking competence, its implementation was constrained by factors such as students' language proficiency, school management, and teachers' own language ability. The study highlights the need for targeted professional development and stronger institutional support to bridge the gap between planned and enacted practices, ultimately contributing to a better understanding of LTC and IRF in the SAR context and offering practical insights for improving English language teaching through more effective classroom interaction practices.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations

ABIM	Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CO	Classroom Observation
F-MOVE	Feedback Move
FO	Focus
FR	Framing
I-MOVE	Initiation Move
IRF	Initiation Response Feedback
JAIPK	Jabatan Agama Islam Perak
JIM	Jemaah Islamiah Malaysia
LTC	Language Teacher Cognition
MMRD	Mixed Method Research Design
MOE	Ministry of Education
PCK	Pedagogical-Content Knowledge
POST-OI	Post-Observation Interview
PRE-OI	Pre-Observation Interview
R-MOVE	Response Move
RQ	Research Question
SABK	Sekolah Agama Bantuan Kerajaan
SAN	Sekolah Agama Negeri
SAR	Sekolah Agama Rakyat
SI	Student Initiation
SMKA	Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama
SR	Student Response
SRI	Stimulated Recall Interview
TF	Teacher Feedback
TI	Teacher Initiation

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with the background of English language education in Malaysia, highlighting the importance of speaking skills in the CEFR-aligned curriculum and the central role of classroom interaction in building communicative competence. It further reveals that while teachers often support interactive teaching, classroom talk remains teacher-dominated, exposing a gap between beliefs and practices. To explain this gap, the Language Teacher Cognition framework (LTC) is introduced as the conceptual lens, as it explores how teachers' prior schooling, professional training, classroom practices, and contextual constraints continuously shape teachers' instructional decisions. Within this framework, the Initiation Response Feedback (IRF) model is employed as an analytical tool to evaluate classroom discourse and measure the extent to which speaking lessons promote or restrict interaction. *Sekolah Agama Rakyat* (SAR) has been chosen as the research context since English achievement in these schools has remained moderate over the years. In addition, several constraints faced by these schools such as limited resources and restricted training opportunities make SAR schools the ideal settings for this study. These discussions culminate in the problem statement, which justifies LTC as a lens to analyse how teachers and students manipulate IRF (initiation-response-feedback) moves with the ultimate purpose to enhance students' speaking skills.

1.2 Background of the Study

Education in the Malay Archipelago began with Islamic instruction in the 14th century, long before Western colonisation. Islamic education was introduced by traders from the Middle East who came to the Malay Peninsula to trade while spreading Islam (Kadir et al., 2022; Saragih & Siregar, 2023). Early instruction centred on worship, daily rituals, Qur'anic recitation, and moral formation within families and local communities. Over time, Islamic education developed through four phases: (i) informal teaching in homes, (ii) the institutionalisation of *Pondok* schools, (iii) the reform into *Madrasah*

institutions, and (iv) the integration of Islamic studies into the national school system (Mokhtar et al., 2023; Rohana et al., 2024).

Traditional Islamic education in the Malay Peninsula began in the homes of religious preachers, many of whom came from the Arabian continent, Persia and India. Instruction centred on memorising Qur'anic verses and practising daily rituals, and it was conducted in domestic settings rather than in formal schools (Mughal, 2021). As enrolment increased, communities built small huts around the preachers' houses to accommodate students. This led to the establishment of *Pondok* institutions, the earliest private, community-funded schools in the region (Sivalingam, 2021). These schools adopted Middle Eastern curricula that focused on theology, jurisprudence and ethics, and many of their graduates later continued their studies in Middle Eastern countries to deepen their religious expertise.

Between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Islamic scholars returning from the Middle East sought to reform the *Pondok* system by introducing academic subjects such as mathematics and geography, which were seen as essential for strengthening Muslim intellectual capacity. This movement marked the beginning of the establishment of *Madrasah* schools as a more structured alternative to the informal *Pondok* system. The school infrastructure and administrative systems were upgraded, signalling a shift towards formal schooling. Notable early madrasahs founded during this period include *Madrasah Al-Misriah*, *Madrasah Iqbal* and *Madrasah Al-Hadi* (Kadir et al., 2022).

1.3 Islamic Schooling During Colonial and Post-Colonial Reform

During the colonial period, the British administration introduced a secular school system while gradually taking control of the private Islamic schools. They offered financial aids to these schools on the condition that these schools agreed to incorporate academic subjects during school hours and shifted Qur'anic instruction to after-school sessions. Islamic studies were thus pushed out of official school hours, while literacy, arithmetic and geography became the core subjects in the main academic timetable (Hamid, 2017).

After independence, the government established the Ministry of Education and endorsed a national curriculum for public schools. Aware of the public concerns on their children's Islamic education, Islamic subjects were reinstated into the official public-

school hours and the weekly time allocation for Islamic studies was increased (Lubis, 2022). Meanwhile, private traditional Islamic schools continued to operate but experienced declining institutional support due to weak governance structures, financial constraints, and limited infrastructure development (Lubis, 2022). In response, the Ministry of Education implemented several formalisation and support measures aimed at strengthening administrative coordination and improving educational provision by: (i) directly taking over eleven private traditional Islamic schools in 1977 to centralise administration and standardise educational management, leading to the establishment of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama (SMKA or National Islamic Secondary Schools), (ii) enabling the respective state religious departments to take over several privately managed Islamic schools which were subsequently reclassified as Sekolah Agama Negeri (SAN or State Religious Schools); and (iii) launching a national assistance scheme in 2006 to expand structured financial and administrative support for private Islamic schools (Ministry of Education, 2012). Schools that accepted participation in this scheme were reclassified as Sekolah Agama Bantuan Kerajaan (SABK Government-Assisted Religious Schools), while those that declined retained their original status as independent Sekolah Agama Rakyat (SAR; Community or People's Religious Schools).

This reconfiguration produced four broad categories of religious schools in Malaysia: (i) Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama (SMKA), (ii) Sekolah Agama Negeri (SAN), (iii) Sekolah Agama Bantuan Kerajaan (SABK), and (iv) private Sekolah Agama Rakyat (SAR) that operate independently under Islamic NGOs while aligning with state registration and national examination standards. The last type of school is the focus of this empirical study; they are typically private, community-funded institutions that integrate Islamic subjects with the national school curriculum, enabling students to sit for national examinations (Umar et al., 2012).

Parallel to this, another stream of private religious schooling emerged which is called *Tahfiz* institutions that employed curriculum centred on Qur'an memorisation. Increasingly, these schools now integrate national academic subjects to broaden students' educational pathways. Collectively, the evolution of SAR and *Tahfiz* schools illustrates how Islamic education has been retained, diversified and hybridised within Malaysia's broader national education framework (Surtahman et al., 2023).

1.4 Context of Study - Sekolah Agama Rakyat

This study focuses on the private Sekolah Agama Rakyat that are operated and managed by non-governmental Islamic organizations such as Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM) or the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia, Jemaah Islam Malaysia (JIM) and even private individuals (Tayeb, 2018). Although they are privately funded and responsible for their management, finances, student affairs, and logistical matters, they are mandated to register with the Ministry of Education and adopt the academic curriculum as espoused by the National Education System to allow their students to sit for the country's national school examinations.

SAR schools were selected for this study because they constitute a distinctive yet underexamined context in English language education. Their biggest aim is to cultivate a balanced generation who are professionally successful yet spiritually strong to withstand the challenges of globalisation. These schools pursue a dual mandate: to produce graduates who are academically competent in fields such as science, technology and literacy, while being simultaneously grounded in Islamic knowledge. These graduates are expected to compete in diverse professional domains and to function as Muslim preachers capable of disseminating Islamic teachings locally and internationally (Kadir et al., 2020). In this regard, mastery of English is critical, as it enables future preachers to participate in global dialogue and to communicate with heterogeneous audiences across borders.

1.5 English and SAR School Aspirations

SAR schools are registered under the Ministry of Education; hence, their English instruction is mandated to adhere to the national language policy (Ministry of Education, 2013). Performance in English at SPM (Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia or Malaysian Certificate of Education) level is pivotal because it allows wider path to higher education, professional employment and socio-economic mobility, while enabling students to participate globally without abandoning their religious identity. At the same time, SAR students are expected to meet the institutional aim of producing graduates who can deliver Islamic teachings confidently at national and international levels (Lina, 2022), which heightens the instructional responsibility on teachers to develop students' speaking skills.

Beyond policy compliance, the emphasis on English speaking is epistemically grounded. English functions not as a neutral linguistic skill but as a tool for conveying, justifying and spreading Islam beyond the Malay-Muslim sphere. From the lens of Islamization of Knowledge (IOK), attaining speaking ability is considered a religious responsibility because English serves as a medium for *dakwah* (spreading of Islam) rather than free self-expression (Gusmuliana et al., 2023). Thus, speaking instruction in SAR schools is value-regulated: classroom talk is steered to ensure that English speech remains purposeful, beneficial and aligned with Islamic principles. Unlike secular settings where speaking is nurtured for personal expression, mobility or competitiveness, SAR schools cultivate English speaking to produce graduates who can articulate Islam in English with both linguistic credibility and ideological discipline.

1.6 Problem Statement

1.6.1 Moderate Performance of English at SAR Schools

English has become the world's lingua franca, enabling people to communicate across domains such as trade, education, and technology and to participate in global modernisation. It is believed that English strengthens a country's economic and international positioning. And so, many nations, including Malaysia, place English language education at the core of their national strategies for global competitiveness and development (Ministry of Education, 2015). In Malaysia, English holds the status of a second language and is made compulsory from primary school through tertiary education. Among the four major language skills, speaking is considered the most crucial (as a productive skill) because it signals learners' ability to use English in real-time and in authentic situations. Students with higher speaking fluency tend to participate more confidently in forums, classroom discussions and competitions (Budiman et al., 2023). At the international level, strong oral proficiency allows students to join exchange programmes, collaborate across cultures, and adapt to academic or professional settings where English is the main medium of communication. Such proficiency increases access to wider career opportunities, especially in sectors that value intercultural interaction (Ne'matullah et al., 2023). For these reasons, the strengthening of English-speaking skills remains a national priority in Malaysia, not

only to meet internal educational goals but to prepare students for participation and mobility in a globalised world.

However, with regards to the English language, SAR schools appear to face persistent challenges. Despite numerous language reform programs endorsed by the Ministry of Education to improve students' level of proficiency, many students in SAR schools continue to show moderate performance in the SPM English paper as reflected in the subject's *Gred Purata Mata Pelajaran* (GPMP or Grade Point Average for Subjects) values over the years (Tiwari, 2021; Zaswita, 2022). The GPMP is a system introduced by the Ministry of Education to provide a numerical measure of students' mastery in all SPM subjects. In analysing students' performance, a grading scale has been prepared by the *Lembaga Peperiksaan Negara* (LPM or Malaysian Examination Syndicate) (MOE, 2010) which serves as the standard reference for interpreting student achievement in national examinations. Table 1.1 shows the GPMP scale and their categories.

Table 1.1
GPMP Ranges and Their Corresponding Categories

	GPMP	KATEGORI / CATEGORY
1	$\leq 4-5$	Cemerlang (Excellent)
2	$\pm 5-6$	Sederhana (Moderate)
3	≥ 7	Lemah (Weak)

Source: Lembaga Peperiksaan Malaysia.

A GPMP value within the range of about 7 to 8 is categorised as weak for the subject. A GPMP value between 5 to 6 is as moderate, while a range below 4 is considered as excellent.

This research involved all 17 private SAR secondary schools in Perak. With regards to the performance of English language at SAR schools, the researcher believes it is necessary to obtain the GPMP data for English subject as solid evidence to support this study. Table 1.2 presents the GPMP results for the English language subject at the SPM level for all SAR secondary schools across Perak from the year 2020 to 2024. The results analysis was provided by the Examination Unit of the Perak State Islamic Religious Department. To adhere to research ethics and confidentiality, the names, addresses and telephone numbers of the schools will not be revealed.

Table 1.2

Gred Purata Matapejaraan (GPMP) Results for SAR from 2020 to 2024 (Source: JAIPk, 2025)

Year	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	S14	S15	S16	S17
2020	8.67	5.33	8.06	8.60	7.60	7.64	5.86	7.63	8.21	6.30	6.80	7.90	7.39	5.80		7.42	
2021	8.33	5.30	7.35	8.45	6.77	7.00	6.00	6.31	7.37	6.50	5.90	7.84	7.47	5.29		5.96	
2022	8.53	3.26	7.57	7.72	7.50	6.56	5.24	6.94	7.48	7.27	6.27	8.31	6.39	4.77	8.07	6.11	
2023	8.15	4.14	6.86	8.24	6.53	6.67	4.73	6.24	7.83	7.30	5.56	7.64	6.06	5.38	7.33	5.40	7.07
2024	7.67	4.05	6.48	8.11	5.43	6.63	5.08	5.44	7.81	6.60	5.82	5.92	6.42	closed	7.82	4.78	6.92
Mean	8.27	4.416	7.264	8.224	6.766	6.9	5.382	6.512	7.74	6.794	6.07	7.522	6.746	5.31	7.74	5.934	6.995

S = School

Based on the data presented in Table 1.2, the GPMP results of SPM English language for SAR schools from 2020 to 2024 indicate that the majority of the schools fall under the weak category, with GPMP values exceeding 7. Only one school demonstrated strong performance, which was S2 with a GPMP of 4.416.

Such performance is further reinforced by the findings from further research, which identify various factors contributing to students' limited proficiency, such as reliance on rote learning, teacher-centred classroom practices, and students' low motivation to master the language (Ilias, et al., 2022; Ismail, 2018; Musa et al., 2021). Although many classroom observations have been conducted in these schools, most were focused on Islamic studies, with only a handful addressing English language teaching (Ismail, 2018; Musa et al., 2021). In addition, local scholars argue that without stronger English skills, private SAR school students may struggle to compete globally, and risk losing relevance unless their command of the language improves (Malik, 2018; Othman, 2018). This imbalance highlights a significant gap in practice, especially when considering that English proficiency is essential for SAR graduates who aspire to contribute to spreading Islamic teaching at the global stage.

1.6.2 Other Persistent Challenges in SAR Schools

Presently, SAR schools have shown moderate performance in SPM English language as reflected in the GPMP results. Indeed, many studies have also shown persistent shortcomings in the school infrastructure, financial resources, and teacher preparedness that negatively impact learning. A study in Perak revealed that many SAR schools still operate in outdated facilities that are neither safe nor conducive to learning (Osman et al., 2015). The biggest contributor to this situation is limited funding, fragmented governance, and heavy reliance on public donations to sustain operations (Ilias et al., 2022).

Poor infrastructure leads to poor access to reliable internet connectivity and digital technologies, which then prevents teachers from integrating online resources, multimedia content, or digital platforms that could enhance authentic communication and support speaking practice (Ag-Ahmad et al., 2025). More worryingly, the majority of English language teachers in SAR schools are merely SPM school leavers without formal language teaching qualifications and were rarely sent to attend professional development or in-service courses to improve their pedagogical skills and

professionalism (Baba et al., 2021). Teachers who lack adequate training may face challenges in becoming effective classroom practitioners, as professional fulfilment is often linked to sufficient pedagogical knowledge and classroom expertise (Chee et al., 2018).

The weaknesses outlined on the previous two subheadings stand in contrast to the current national education policy direction. While SAR schools continue to record weak to moderate English outcomes under structural constraints, the national system has shifted towards international benchmarking for language teaching. A discussion of the CEFR-aligned curriculum is therefore necessary, as SAR schools are equally expected to align their instructional practices and speaking outcomes with this framework. The next section outlines the Malaysian CEFR-aligned curriculum, which requires all schools, including SAR schools, to develop students' communicative competence with an emphasis on speaking.

1.7 Malaysia CEFR-Aligned Language Curriculum and Speaking Skills

In Malaysia, the Ministry of Education has introduced a number of language reforms specifically aimed at strengthening students' English proficiency, with particular emphasis on speaking skills. The most recent initiative is the implementation of the Malaysian CEFR-aligned English Language Curriculum, which is in tandem with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Ministry of Education, 2015). This framework serves as an internationally recognised guideline for developing language curriculum, teacher training and assessment (Chong, 2024). The central focus of this framework is a set of 'can do' descriptors that explain what students should be able to achieve at each proficiency level, from A1 (beginner) to C2 (advanced), across the four major language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Teachers are expected to use these descriptors to set clearer teaching objectives, plan lessons that lead to observable performance, and supervise progress with evidence from student work. The emphasis is on what learners can do, not just on what content has been covered. As a consequence, curriculum delivery is expected to be aligned with measurable outcomes and not merely textbook completion.

With regards to speaking skills, this framework emphasizes the development of communicative competence, placing speaking and interaction at the heart of language learning (Ministry of Education, 2020). Classroom speaking tasks are therefore

expected to encourage interaction through activities such as asking for clarification, giving opinions, summarising information, negotiating meaning, and responding spontaneously. The design of these tasks assumes that students should speak to their peers, not only to the teacher, so that classroom talk becomes two-way and context-based rather than a one-directional recitation. Such interactional exposure is important because communicative competence develops through actual use, not through silent knowledge. When students are required to speak, listen, and adjust their responses in real time, they practise the same skills that they will need in academic, professional, and intercultural settings. Over time, this approach is expected to produce school students who can participate confidently in classroom discussions, community activities, and intercultural exchanges, thereby supporting Malaysia's goal of developing globally competent young talents (Bakar et al., 2021).

1.8 The Importance of Interaction

While the Malaysian CEFR-aligned curriculum standards set clear expectations for speaking proficiency, the actual success of this framework depends largely on classroom realities, particularly in how classroom interaction is structured. In a communicative classroom, interaction is the heart of communication (Tiwari, 2021) as it provides the medium through which language learning takes place. It is through interaction, not isolated drills that students receive input, provide output, and adjust their language use in response to feedback. Meaningful verbal exchanges between teachers and students, especially during speaking lessons, allow students to experiment with language, negotiate meaning, and express opinions in authentic communication activities. Such exchanges are not incidental, they form the mechanism to analyse whether the CEFR descriptors are successfully translated.

Interaction also plays a central role in developing higher-order thinking skills. Research shows that dialogic exchanges stimulate critical thinking and problem-solving, while at the same time strengthening both accuracy and fluency in speaking (Eisering & Margana, 2019). Although translanguaging theory suggests that flexible use of multiple languages can support comprehension, this study maintains that reduced engagement in the target language may limit opportunities for developing spontaneous speaking competence. Thus, interaction performs a dual function, it advances linguistic competence and at the same time cultivates reasoning, stance-taking and

communicative judgement. This emphasis on interaction ensures that the goals of the CEFR-aligned curriculum are successfully transformed into practical classroom experiences that genuinely boosts students' communicative competence. Without sustained and meaningful interaction, students' speaking skills will not develop, and they may not able to use English effectively in real-life contexts. In other words, CEFR compliance at the policy level does not guarantee oral competence unless the interactional engine of the classroom is activated and maintained.

1.9 Mismatch Between Beliefs and Practice

The main concern is, how interactive are the language classrooms and are the classrooms conducive enough to allow sufficient meaningful verbal interaction, or are they still dominated by teacher talk? It is also important to ensure that lessons go smoothly without being affected by challenges from inside and outside the class that may hamper acquisition. While many teachers widely recognize the importance of interaction in enhancing students' speaking skills, a handful of research conducted in the Malaysian setting revealed that classroom talk is still largely teacher-dominated, exposing a gap between beliefs and practices. Evidence have shown that while teachers support interactive classrooms, they often dominate talk time (Hidayatullah, 2024). In online settings, the dominance may become even stronger (Zulfah et al., 2025). There is always a correlation between teacher beliefs about teaching speaking and their actual practices (Jamil et al, 2025). A study which involved a group of secondary school ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers reveals how teachers value communicative assessments but consistently rely on accuracy-focused methods due to lack of training and contextual constraints (Jamil et al., 2025). Similarly, university lecturers support learner autonomy but seldom practice this in classrooms (Saad et al., 2024). Even when teachers viewed classrooms as dynamic learning spaces, institutional pressures limited the enactment of such beliefs (Teh, 2025). These confirm a persistent belief versus practice gap in the Malaysian context.

Similar inconsistencies have also been documented across different settings. Several studies show that teachers' beliefs in communicative approaches often does not align with their actual classroom practice. While some prioritize grammar drills, lectures, or exam-focused accuracy (Adem & Berkessa, 2022; Alam et al., 2024; Tleuov, 2025), other teachers face cultural or institutional pressures that restrict

spontaneity and interaction (Nemati et al., 2022; Wang & Lam, 2023). Even in online or technologically mediated classrooms, teachers' beliefs in interactive feedback frequently give way to form-focused corrections (Uludağ, 2024).

Clearly, not all teacher beliefs are successfully translated into classroom practices, and such restrictions may result from a variety of internal and external factors, including students' low language proficiency, limited classroom time, large class sizes, inadequate resources, and even school management that shape how interaction is practised. Against this background, it is clear that there a consistent gap exists between what teachers *believe* about teaching and what actually *happens* in their classrooms. To unravel and better understand this gap, Borg (2003) introduced the theory of Language Teacher Cognition (LTC), which offers a comprehensive framework for examining the relationship between teachers' mental constructs and their real classroom practices.

1.10 Language Teacher Cognition (LTC)

Language Teacher Cognition (Borg, 2003) provides a framework to understand the phenomenon discussed in previous subsections. Borg defines LTC as what teachers “think, know, believe and the relationships of these mental constructs to what teachers do in the language teaching classroom” (p. 1). He further likens this structure to an iceberg. Teachers' visible classroom behaviour is only on the surface, like the tip of the ice. Beneath it lies a larger mass of ice, representing an individual teacher's system of beliefs, experiences and contextual pressures that shape the observable behaviour. This analogy reinforces the claim that any attempts to improve classroom practice must address not only technique but also the underlying cognition that generates those techniques.

Borg further explains that there are four elements that constantly influence language teacher cognition, namely (i) schooling experience, (ii) professional teacher education, (iii) classroom teaching practices and (iv) school contextual factors. According to him, these four constructs play a major part in influencing teachers' cognitive processes and shape teachers' perception about their roles, their interactions with students, and the teaching methods they employ in the classroom.

Teachers do not enter the classroom as neutral actors. Their decisions and behaviours are filtered through prior learning histories, formal training, teaching experience and the realities of the schools in which they teach. As a result, instructional

practices are the behavioural expression of an internal cognitive system that has been formed over time rather than a simple response to curriculum demands. Figure 1.1 illustrates the interconnectedness of four key constructs that shape language teacher cognition.

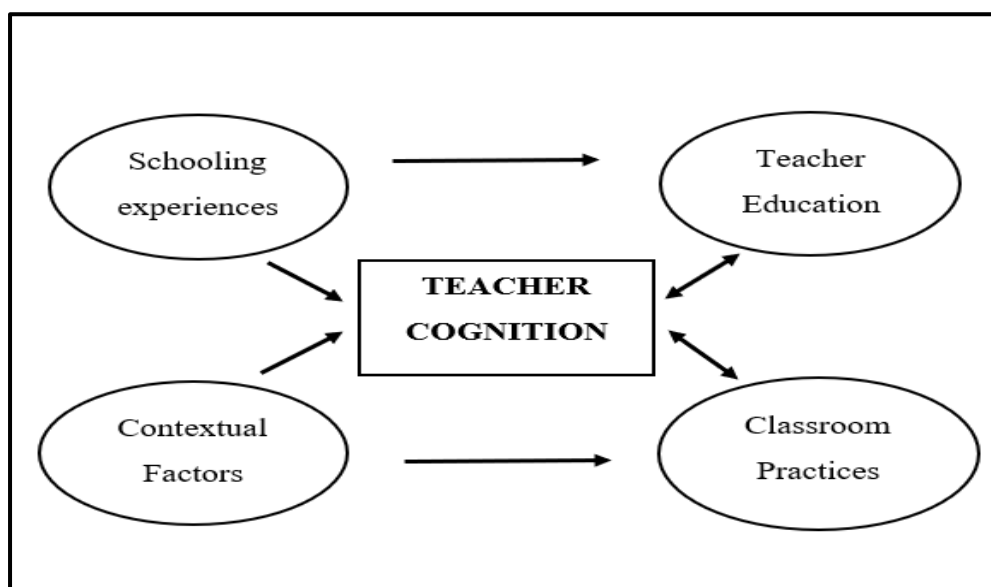


Figure 1.1. Language Teacher Cognition framework (Borg, 2003)

Schooling experiences signifies teachers' prior learning as language students, which form their initial beliefs about language teaching. Teacher education refers to formal teacher training or continuous in-service professional development courses that may refine the teachers' existing beliefs. Classroom practices refer to the teachers' encounter with their daily classroom instructions which may continuously influence their cognition by strengthening, challenging or transforming their current beliefs. Finally, contextual factors relate to external factors such as the curriculum, syllabus, examinations, school management, parents, community or political constraints that may impact teachers' cognition by either supporting or constraining their preferred pedagogical choices (Borg, 2003). The one-way arrows show fixed influences, such as teachers' past schooling and contextual factors like exams, policies, and resources, which then shape beliefs but are not easily changed by current practices. The two-way arrows, however, represent reciprocal relationships, where teacher education and classroom experiences both shape and are continuously shaped by teachers' existing beliefs (Borg, 2003). Together, these constructs do not operate in isolation; instead, they

intersect and materialise in classroom practice, where beliefs may or may not translate into action.

1.11 Congruence and Incongruence Between Belief and Practice

These interrelated constructs continuously exert a strong influence on teacher cognition. At times, teachers may demonstrate congruence, where their classroom practices are coherent with what they believe to be good teaching. However, incongruence is more frequent, whereby teachers' instructional practices contradict their stated beliefs due to contextual pressures, exam-driven constraints, student readiness, or institutional expectations (Borg, 2003). This 'mismatch' does not happen by accident. It happens because teachers' beliefs are shaped and limited by inside and outside classroom factors, such as exams, past learning, school rules, and daily classroom realities. These factors often hinder teachers from doing what they believe is best. For instance, a teacher may believe that students need more interaction and longer turns in speaking, but in class the teacher may still use short IRF cycles because of time pressure, exam focus or student silence.

For this reason, it is important to examine LTC to identify the real causes of the gap between belief and practice. When these causes are made clear, teachers can see why the gap exists and what needs to change. This understanding can help teachers reduce the gap and make classroom instruction more supportive of students' speaking development. However, beliefs and practices cannot be analysed in isolation. The gap between what teachers think and what they do must be verified in actual classroom interaction. To do so, a systematic discourse analysis tool is needed to measure the extent to which teachers facilitate classroom talk by capturing how teachers and students speak, respond, and close sequences in real time. Without such a tool, the belief-practice gap remains a claim rather than an observable fact.

1.12 Initial-Response-Feedback (IRF) as a Tool

Within this body of work, Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) Initial-Response-Feedback (IRF) was chosen as the classroom interaction analysis tool (IRF) as it provides a clear model of a three-move tier that illustrates teacher-student talk in communicative classrooms. Based on this framework, interaction is commonly

structured in three moves: Initiation (I-Move), often a teacher's question; Response (R-Move), where a student answers; and Feedback (F-Move), in which the teacher evaluates the response. A complete IRF cycle is illustrated in the following example:

Teacher	:	What is the capital of Equador?	(Initiation)
Student	:	Quito, sir.	(Response)
Teacher	:	Well done!	(Feedback)

However, this traditional short and simple IRF triadic cycle, has been criticized for its failure in generating extended interactions to foster students speaking skill. Its restricted structure, if heavily relied on, may lead to teacher-dominated classrooms, where students' language output is limited. To address this weakness, some researchers have suggested modifying the third turn of the IRF sequence by replacing the evaluative feedback with follow-up questions that can encourage longer strands of discussions. To achieve this, the use of referential questions, which encourage critical thinking, are preferred over display questions that elicit simple answers from the students. By extending the basic IRF pattern, teachers force students to engage with longer strands of discussion that promote language development and improve their speaking skills. An example of the extended IRF exchange is shown below.

Teacher	:	What is the capital of Malaysia?	I
Student	:	Kuala Lumpur.	R
Teacher	:	Do you have any relatives staying in Kuala Lumpur?	Ib
Student:	:	Yes, I have. My uncle is staying in KL with his family.	R
Teacher:	:	Owh? And where do they stay?	Ib
Student:	:	They stay in Cheras.	R
Teacher:	:	Good!	F

The hanging alphabet 'b' represents 'bound,' indicating that the teacher delays giving evaluation at the third IRF stage and instead prompted further questions to encourage deeper thinking and verbal expression. This technique extends the discussion and strengthens students' speaking skills. It is therefore the teacher's responsibility to manipulate this simple cycle of communication to elicit new ideas and responses, encouraging students to engage in longer, more authentic interactions that enhance their speaking skills (Jaeger, 2019; Zaswita, 2022).

1.13 LTC as a Lens

All the points in the previous subsections lead to one important conclusion: examining the relationship between teacher cognition and their actual classroom practices is essential. As Borg (2021) points out, there are times when teachers experience congruence between what they believe about teaching (their cognition) and what they actually practice in their speaking classroom. However, more often than not, teachers experience incongruence or tension between their beliefs and their practice due to multiple challenges and restrictions.

This perspective underscores the importance of examining teaching methods like IRF through the lens of LTC. Evaluating the effectiveness of the IRF method cannot be done solely by looking only at its intended outcomes; it requires an understanding of the underlying factors that contribute to both success and failure of the practice (Borg, 2012). In other words, studying IRF through LTC helps narrow the gap between pedagogical theory and classroom practice. Through such an approach, teachers can identify which effective practices should be maintained, which weaker practices need improvement, and why certain theoretical approaches fail to be implemented successfully in classrooms. This will eventually offer valuable insights for strengthening classroom interaction and enhancing students' speaking skills in meaningful and sustainable ways.

1.14 The Role of Discourse Analysis

Since teachers' beliefs and practices are strongly influenced by personal and contextual factors, it is vital to explore how these beliefs are manifested in their actual classrooms. An effective way to examine this congruence and incongruence is through the field of classroom discourse, which reveals how teachers manage classroom interaction, and provide speaking opportunities for students. Classroom discourse analysis therefore offers a systematic means to measure the extent to which lessons are interactive or restrictive, and whether the classroom environment is conducive in promoting communicative use of the language.

When interaction is long and constructive, students are likely to have more chances to negotiate meaning, clarify ideas, and verbalize their thoughts. This is

achievable when teachers utilise open-ended questions that encourage extended discussions and give students more opportunities to express their ideas. Conversely, interaction becomes restrictive when teacher talk dominates and students are confined to minimal responses, especially when display questions are overly used. Thus, while classroom discourse can support meaningful engagement, it can also constrain students' oral proficiency if interactional patterns are overly rigid, or teacher dominated.

To address this, there are numerous discourse analysis tools that have been employed to systematically examine classroom interaction and how it assists in developing students' speaking skills (Puteri, 2025). Among these tools are the Flanders' Interaction Analysis Category System (FIACS) (Flanders, 1970, in Barbadillo et al., 2024), the Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) (Allen et al., 1984) and Sinclair and Coulthard's Discourse Analysis Model (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). By examining teacher questioning strategies, student turn-takings, and interactional exchanges, researchers can effectively evaluate whether the classroom talk promotes extended, meaningful discussions or confines students to limited responses (Awadelkarim, 2021; Paltridge, 2021).

1.15 Focus of Study

All of these constraints, if left unattended, may contribute to the continued decline in English language achievement in SAR schools. This situation is worrying, as some students will eventually move on to higher education where English is an important medium of instruction. If they fail to demonstrate sufficient ability in English at the secondary level, concerns may arise about their readiness to pursue tertiary education. Yet, while teacher cognition and IRF have been widely studied in mainstream schools, it remains underexplored in SAR contexts. The IRF method may provide an effective structured approach that can scaffold students' speaking skills. However, various constraints arising from inside and outside the classroom that may restrict teachers' ability to apply IRF effectively in their speaking lessons and, in turn, affect the development of SAR students' oral proficiency.

Addressing this is crucial, as insights into teachers' beliefs and practices in resource-limited contexts can lead to policy interventions, and support systems aimed at improving English proficiency in SAR schools. Therefore, examining the effectiveness of the Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) method through the lens of

Language Teacher Cognition is particularly relevant. Furthermore, this study also extends the LTC framework by taking into consideration students' learning experiences in the IRF-driven speaking classrooms, rather than focusing exclusively on teachers alone.

This is extremely important to study because prior research has shown that teachers' perceptions of their classroom practices do not always reflect students' lived experiences or learning outcomes (Feryok, 2010; Konings et al., 2024). A well-prepared lesson plan may give the impression of effectiveness, but it does not necessarily guarantee that students will develop the intended speaking sub-skill. This is particularly pertinent in SAR schools, where limited resources, varying student proficiency levels, and contextual constraints can make the successful transfer of speaking skills even more challenging. By highlighting both teacher and student perspectives, this study might provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the IRF method in enhancing speaking skills.

1.16 Research Objectives

This study investigates Language Teacher Cognition in relation to the effectiveness of the IRF method in enhancing students' speaking skills at SAR schools in the state of Perak, Malaysia. LTC encompasses what teachers know, think, belief and how these elements shape their classroom practices. Examining LTC in context with the use of IRF is critical, as it offers valuable insights into how teacher cognition specifically about the IRF method impacts their instructional strategies in teaching speaking.

RO1 To investigate the existing knowledge and beliefs of the teachers related to the role IRF method in facilitating students' speaking skill.

RO2 To observe how teachers facilitate their IRF pattern to enhance their students' speaking skills.

RO3 To observe how students benefit from the IRF method to enhance their speaking skills.

RO4 To investigate the reasons behind their IRF patterns in their classrooms.

1.17 Research Questions

Based on the aforementioned issues, 4 research questions have been operationalized to guide this study from beginning to end.

RQ1 What are the teachers' cognition about the role of IRF-Moves in the teacher-student classroom interactions in facilitating students' speaking skills?

RQ2 How do the teachers facilitate the IRF-Moves in the teacher-student classroom interactions to help improve their students' speaking skills?

RQ3 How do the students benefit from the IRF-Moves in the teacher-student classroom interactions to help improve their speaking skills?

RQ4 For teachers, what are the reasons for the congruences and incongruences between the theory and practice that occur throughout the teacher-student classroom interaction patterns?

Based on the LTC framework (Borg, 2003), together with the IRF framework (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975), this study investigates teachers' beliefs about the effectiveness of the IRF method in strengthening students' speaking skills in speaking classrooms at SAR schools in Perak. It explores the challenges teachers encounter in implementing the IRF method and how their instructional practices match or mismatch with their cognition. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for identifying gaps between theory and practice, offering valuable insights into professional development needs and instructional strategies.

1.18 Significance of the Study

This study carries significance in three main areas: theory, practice, and methodology.

1.18.1 Theoretical Contribution

This study contributes theoretically by providing insights how the IRF acts as a tool to understand classroom interaction and the development of speaking skills. IRF provides a clear framework to analyse how teachers initiate talk, how students respond, and how teachers provide feedback to promote more meaningful communication. On the other hand, looking at IRF from the lens of LTC sheds light on how teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and experiences impact their teaching strategies when faced with various challenges from both inside and outside the classroom.

At the same time, this research broadens the scope of the traditional focus of LTC studies by taking into consideration students' perspectives. While LTC typically concentrates on teacher cognition and classroom practice, this study further explores how students might benefit from the interaction and whether teachers' teaching strategies truly translate into learning opportunities. In doing so, the research strengthens the theoretical understanding of LTC by bridging the gap between teacher cognition and student learning, showing how both 'actors' within the classroom contribute to the effectiveness of IRF in enhancing speaking skills.

1.18.2 Practical Contribution

From a practical perspective, this study has direct implications for teachers, school leaders, and policymakers. Its findings will act as mirror for the teachers in SAR schools to reflect critically on their classroom interaction patterns, identifying both strengths to retain and weaknesses to improve in their speaking instructions. The research also emphasizes how the IRF cycle can be adapted to create more authentic opportunities for student talk, moving beyond short responses to extended meaningful communication. At the policy level, the outcomes of this study may also act as the foundation to design suitable teacher training and professional development programs. Finally, the research aims to contribute toward improving students' English proficiency and communicative competence in SAR schools.

1.18.3 Methodological Contribution

Methodologically, while LTC research often depends heavily on teachers' thought processes and classroom practice, this study also triangulates data from students to provide a more holistic picture of teaching and learning. Including students' voices is a particularly valuable innovation, as it ensures that the effectiveness of classroom interaction is not judged solely from the teachers' perspective but also from those directly experiencing the lessons. This methodological approach demonstrates how combining quantitative and qualitative data can enrich understanding of teacher cognition and classroom practices in second language education.

In sum, the significance of this study lies in its attempt to connect theory, practice, and methodology. It enriches the theoretical framework of LTC by incorporating student perspectives, provides practical guidance for teachers and policymakers to improve English language teaching in SAR schools, and offers methodological innovation through its triangulated, mixed-method design. Together, these contributions ensure that the study not only addresses existing gaps in literature but also delivers meaningful impact for both scholarship and practice.

1.19 Scope and Limitations

In terms of selection of respondents, this study examines the cognition processes and experiences of English language teachers from private SAR schools in the state of Perak. The overarching objective is to look at how these teachers use IRF-Moves to facilitate students' speaking skills and how their beliefs and knowledge influenced the way they structured interaction during lessons. The findings are used to interpret the patterns of cognition by the teachers involved in the study and how they make sense of their teaching experience to inform their professional practice.

The scope of this research, however, was limited in several ways. For one, it focused only on private SAR schools in Perak, therefore, the findings only reflect the realities of a specific context. Hence, although the number of classroom observations and interviews provide rich insights related to the classroom interaction pattern, they do not represent the whole SAR school system across Malaysia. SAR schools in other states may differ in terms of the school policy and management as well as the students' backgrounds, which may influence the way English is taught and how IRF is practiced.

For this reason, the findings should not be taken as generalizable to all SAR schools nationwide but rather as a case-based understanding that highlights key issues and insights within one state in Malaysia. Additionally, the collected experiences cannot be used to make a generalization that all teachers in SAR schools all over Malaysia go through the same processes in their English language classrooms.

1.20 Definition and Restatement of Key Terms

In this section, the researcher will define and explain the key terms used in this research, succinctly.

(i) LTC

LTC is abbreviated from Language Teacher Cognition, an area of academic inquiry regarding what English language teachers think, believe, and do, as proposed by Borg (2003) in his LTC framework.

(ii) IRF

IRF is abbreviated from Initiation-Response-Feedback, which explains three basic interaction stages that normally occur in the teacher-student interaction (Alawiyah et al., 2024). It describes a complete cycle of interaction that normally happens in a language classroom between a teacher and students. Usually, a teacher would start this cycle by asking questions to students. The students would answer the questions followed by the teacher responding with feedback to end the discussion.

(iii) I-Move

The Initiation Move or I-Move is the first part of a complete IRF classroom interaction cycle. It usually begins with a teacher asking questions, providing information, or giving instructions to the students. However, students can also act as the initiators at any stage of this interaction (Alawiyah et al., 2024).

(iv) R-Move

R-Move or Response Move refers to the students responding to questions at the I-Move stage. At this stage, students are encouraged to participate simultaneously before the teacher finalizes the discussions at the F-Move.

(v) F-Move

F-Move refers to the Feedback Move which marks the last part of the IRF cycle. At this stage, the teacher would provide feedback to the students' responses and end the discussion before initiating another question.

(vi) SAR

SAR refers to *Sekolah Agama Rakyat*, private religious schools that are operated and managed by non-governmental Islamic organizations such as *Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia* (ABIM) or the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia, and also *Jemaah Islam Malaysia* (JIM).

1.21 Summary

Although Malaysia's CEFR-aligned curriculum highlights the importance of speaking skills, SAR classrooms remain largely teacher-dominated, indicating a gap between teacher beliefs and their actual classroom speaking instructions. Borg's (2003) LTC framework is used to illustrate how prior schooling, teacher education, classroom practices, and contextual constraints shape teacher cognition. This results in teachers frequently experiencing inconsistencies between their beliefs and classroom practice. To examine this, classroom discourse analysis, particularly through the IRF model (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975) has been chosen as a systematic tool for measuring the effectiveness of classroom interaction. The problem statement underscores SAR students' moderate performance in English and systemic challenges such as limited resources and insufficiently trained teachers. The chapter concludes by stressing the importance of bridging the belief and practice gap to strengthen instruction and enhance students' speaking skills.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides reviews the literature that frames the study. It begins by discussing the political-historical development of Islamic education across the Muslim world by examining how colonialism, educational dualism, and curriculum reforms shaped a parallel system to secular and religious schooling. This is followed by a review of the emergence of integrated Islamic Schools across South-east Asia including the rise of Malaysian Sekolah Agama Rakyat (SAR) and their subsequent integration into the national education system. The chapter further explains the role of English as a global lingua franca and the significance of mastering speaking skills in education, employability and participation in the world's globalization. It then narrows to outlines the trajectory of English language education in Malaysia, from colonial times to the current CEFR-aligned curriculum, while adopting Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as a key pedagogical approach. This leads to the introduction of the study framework, Language Teacher Cognition (LTC), alongside the use of the Initiation–Response–Feedback (IRF) discourse analysis tool. The final sections focus on how LTC serves as a lens to analyse the ways SAR teachers and students modify their IRF-driven classroom talk, identifying whether teacher beliefs are ‘congruent’ or ‘incongruent’ with their practices in speaking classes at SAR schools, and how these dynamics enhance the development of students’ speaking skills.

Wherever relevant, this chapter presents critical evaluation by linking prior studies to the research objectives, juxtaposing coherence and incoherence between teacher beliefs and classroom practice, and synthesising arguments across empirical and theoretical sources. This is crucial to ensure that the chapter is not merely descriptive but positions the present study within the existing literature to increase the credibility of the analysis.

2.2 A Political-Historical Review of Islamic Education in the Muslim World

Since this study examines LTC and its influence on classroom interaction in developing students' speaking skills at SAR schools in Perak, this section begins with a brief political-historical overview of Islamic education in Muslim countries. The discussion first outlines the origins of Islamic education prior to any forms of colonization, followed by its decline after colonization and the subsequent emergence of integrated Islamic schools worldwide. The review then narrows to the establishment of SAR schools in Malaysia as the institutional settings of this study. Presenting this historical trajectory is necessary to establish the rationale for addressing the English language issues in Malaysian SAR schools.

To begin, in many Muslim countries all over the world, the basics of Islamic education began with teaching young children the worship of God and instilling moral, ethical, and cultural values within the Muslim community. The higher education system on the other hand, focused on Syariah law and theology. At the beginning of the 12th century, Islamic higher institutions all over the world began to integrate secular subjects such as mathematics, logic, medicine, and astronomy. These subjects were offered due to their significant importance in developing Islamic nations (Saepudin, 2022).

However, interest in these areas of knowledge began to decline in the early 18th century, leading to a weakening of Islamic influence around the world. Among the main leading factors were first, the traditional belief that a good Muslim should focus only on religious knowledge. Second was the rise of Sufism, which opposed intellectualism and led to the exclusion of secular subjects from school curricula (Hashim, 1996). The third factor was the Ottoman Empire's rule, spanning over four centuries, which numerous Arab Muslim scholars have characterized as an era of intellectual and cultural stagnation. It was said that the empire's decline was shaped by political corruption, economic crises, resistance to reform, military defeats, and the rise of nationalism, all of which undermined its ability to modernize and compete with European powers (Quataert, 2021). This long period of instability caused many Muslim countries to fall into decline, resulting in a deterioration in the quality of Islamic education. And so, this educational discipline became stagnant when it failed to adapt to changes in society.

2.2.1 Islamic Education in the Muslim World During and After Colonization

Muslim communities rediscovered the importance of education in the 19th century when they faced colonization and modernity (Siregar et al., 2024; Ullah, 2025). During this period, European powers gradually expanded their dominance over many Muslim-controlled regions in South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, establishing their control through military, politics, and the economy. The British, French, and Dutch for instance, established many modern schools that emphasized secular subjects and used European languages, particularly English and French, as the medium of instruction. The role of traditional Islamic schools became increasingly restricted to the teaching of Arabic and the religious sciences. As a result, a dual education system was established across Muslim societies worldwide, dividing the new secular system from traditional religious education (Siregar et al., 2024; Ullah, 2025).

This structural separation in schooling was not only an administrative decision but it also changed how knowledge was valued. It placed higher status on European literacy and lowered the status of Arabic literacy in matters of social mobility. As a result, families that wanted economic advancement chose Western-style schools, while those who prioritised religious education stayed in the traditional stream. This pattern gradually widened the sociocultural divide between the two groups. This marked the emergence of the ‘dual’ system that still shapes today’s educational systems in many Muslim-majority countries and continues to spark debates on curriculum, language policy, and the role of religion in education today. Policy-related issues from deciding on how to make schools become more Islamic-oriented, to practical school matters such as teacher training and the language used to teach, are not new issues but a continuation of the same dualist system that started long ago. In other words, the tensions encountered in today’s reforms are better understood as the consequences of the split that happened in the 19th century, rather than problems that suddenly appeared today.

2.2.2 Education Dualism in the Muslim World

As explained in the previous sub-section, the colonialization of Muslim countries not only introduced new schooling systems but also established a lasting dualism that remains as a critical challenge in the Muslim world. It refers to the existence of two parallel systems of education: the modern secular system and the

traditional religious system. Both systems have been criticized for failing to produce Muslims with a balanced personality (Syeikh, 2020). The secular education system has been seen said to be effective in producing professionals, but often at the expense of Islamic and ethical values. Conversely, the traditional religious system focuses heavily on theology jurisprudence and moral ethics, sometimes producing graduates with limited ability to engage critically, creatively, and productively with contemporary social, political, and economic challenges.

Muslim scholars across different regions have argued that this educational divide has created deep polarity within societies. On one side are secular intellectuals oriented toward modern professions, while on the other are religious specialists who focus almost exclusively on the Hereafter but acquiring limited real-world practical skills (Al-Razi et al., 2024; Hidayati et al., 2023). This global pattern of educational division has long-term implications, as it affects not only the identity formation of Muslim learners but also the capacity of Muslim societies to participate fully in modern nation-building while remaining grounded in their religious heritage.

2.2.3 The Emergence of Integrated Islamic Schools

Unlike secular schools which began to gain wider acceptance, traditional Islamic schools were struggling with limited resources and slow adaptation to modernization largely caused by insufficient capital resources. Such constraints prevented the latter from hiring well-qualified teachers, developing sufficient educational resources, improving school infrastructure, and adapting to modernization and technological advancements. Over time, more Muslims parents began voicing out their concerns and desire to see their children educated in both Islamic and secular subjects so that they could grow into balanced individuals who are spiritually strong and academically competent (Rohman et al., 2023).

According to Shamma (2018), a possible solution to this challenge is a fusion between the traditional and modern educational system. This approach could pioneer the development of modern Islamic schools, specially designed to integrate both secular and Islamic education in a balanced and harmonious way. Demands for reforms in traditional Islamic education integrating both Islamic and secular subjects within a unified curriculum escalated and was supported by both Muslim scholars and more secular academics (Azzami et al., 2024; Rashed & Tamuri, 2022). It was believed that

this integration can produce well-balanced graduates, who were both intellectually competent and spiritually grounded (Rohman et al., 2023). Schools that successfully implement this integration will produce students demonstrating deeper understanding of Islamic principles together with enhanced academic performance (Moslimany et al., 2024).

This eventually led to the establishment of Integrated Islamic Schools (IIS) worldwide, which are often supported by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or through community initiatives. Across the Muslim world, IIS have multiplied rapidly, and their numbers continue to grow each year. There are an estimated 60,000 Islamic-integrated educational institutions in Southeast Asia, particularly in Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei Thailand, and Singapore, with Indonesia alone accounting for about 49,241 (Kosim et al., 2023) and Thailand with 3,760 schools overall as of May 2022 (Assalihee & Boonsuk, 2023).

2.2.4 The Concept of Islamization of Knowledge (IOK)

The need for the establishment of IIS was not an action that is merely administrative or reactive to state policy. Instead, it was also supported by a broader intellectual movement known as the ‘Islamization of Knowledge’ (IOK) (Samsuri et al., 2024). This movement emerged as a response to the epistemic lethargy discussed in Section 2.1, where modern knowledge had been adopted without a central Islamic framework. Rather than simply adding religious components onto pre-existing curricula, IOK calls for the redefinition and restructuring of all branches of knowledge so that their contents are measured by Islamic principles rather than secular ones. It became a new, reformed educational foundation where modern disciplines are to be re-anchored under Islamic epistemology so that the production of knowledge does not occur in a neutral or secular vacuum but remains aligned with Islamic morality and spiritual commitments (Novayani, 2017).

Supporters of this movement argue that the intellectual decline of the Muslim world is not merely material but is largely attributable to the failure to critically evaluate the adoption of Western epistemologies which do not uphold Islamic values, leading to a separation between *Shariah* (Islamic laws) and other fields of knowledge (Anwar & Al-Baqi, 2020). This disintegration produced an intellectual lethargy within the *ummah*. Religious knowledge became narrowly confined to afterlife concerns, while modern

disciplines were seen through secular lens without reference to Islamic evaluative standards, resulting in a split between worldly and spiritual understanding of knowledge (Anwar & Al-Baqi, 2020).

That being said, IOK is not a theological movement, instead, it acts as an epistemic corrective movement aiming at re-integrating secular and spiritual knowledge. Instead of leaving *Shariah* values and modern sciences on parallel tracks, IIS were developed as a response to IOK, with an attempt to house both under one roof with religious knowledge as the primary governing framework and re-aligning the other ‘secular’ sciences beneath it. English language education is no exception to remain accountable to an Islamic epistemic vision. This model aims to produce graduates who are intellectually competent and spiritually grounded, seen as essential for reinforcing the ummah’s intellectual ethical integrity (Samsuri et al., 2024).

2.3 Malaysian Traditional Religious Schools Before (Western) Colonization

In the context of Malaysia, the origin of Islamic schools is closely linked to the earliest types of education that arose in the Malay Archipelago upon the arrival of Islam in the geographical area. The history of Islamic education in Southeast Asia began when children were taught to worship God, study the Al-Quran and perform daily prayers. Its emergence in the Malay Peninsula was closely associated with the spread of Islam by Arab merchants in the 14th century (Kadir et al., 2022; Saragih & Siregar, 2023). At this formative age, teaching was mainly to transmit religious beliefs and guide proper moral behaviour, rather than to provide formal schooling. Learning mainly focused on performing daily prayers and moral routines, family life, and participation in religious activities within the local community.

The development of Islamic education in Malaysia progressed through four stages, beginning in the teachers’ homes, followed by the rise of *Pondok* institutions, the expansion of *Madrasah* schools and later, the central inclusion of Islamic studies within the national school system (Mokhtar et al., 2023; Rohana et al., 2024). This trajectory indicated a slow and deliberate shift in how learning was organised, which moved from informal instruction in homes and villages towards more formal, structured schooling with fixed syllabus, curriculum, additional subjects and finally into more streamlined systems that were absorbed into state-run education. However, throughout

these changes, religious teaching maintained to serve as the central foundation and guiding system.

2.3.1 The ‘Home’ Institution

Traditionally, Islamic education was held at the ‘*Imam*’ or religious instructor’s house (Mughal, 2021). Those knowledgeable in Islam became the central agents in the Islamic socialisation of children and adults. In those days, many of these teachers and preachers came from the Arabian Peninsula, Persia and India. Formal education for children began around the age of six, studying the Al-Quran and performing daily prayers. It was the first type of formal education received by children at that time. Learning was typically conducted in small groups and lessons focused mainly on the memorization of Quranic verses as well as *surahs* for daily prayers. Schooling was community-based rather than qualification-driven. Children were trained not to focus on credentials but to cultivate piety, learn correct recitations, and internalise the basic habits of a good Muslim’s life. Since lessons took place inside private homes, there was no clear separation between learning, religious practice, and daily family routines. The home functioned at the same time as a place of worship, a space for social life, and a setting for instruction (Mughal, 2021).

2.3.2 ‘Pondok’ Institution

As the number of students increased, teachers’ houses became crowded, and lessons were moved to mosques. However, when the mosques could no longer accommodate the growing student population, especially those who came from distant places, the community helped to build small huts around the teachers’ houses, leading to the formation of the so-called *Pondok* schools. *Pondok* schools acted as the first institutional-type schools, first in Kelantan and then in other states in Peninsula Malaysia (Sivalingam, 2021). The schools adopted the Islamic education model from Egypt, Mecca, Medina and other Arab countries (Kadir et al., 2022) which focused on Islamic studies such as *Tauhid* (Belief in the oneness of God), *Feqah* (Islamic rules governing daily rituals and practices), *Usuluddin* (Islamic theology) and *Tasawwuf* (Islamic spirituality and purification of the heart). The teaching and learning processes were conducted entirely in *Jawi* script, which is adopted and adapted from classic

Arabic. Unsurprisingly, many graduates from these schools later pursued their studies in Middle Eastern countries.

Pondok schools were residential institutions where teaching, moral supervision and religious discipline are part of students' daily routines. The students lived under the direct supervision of their *Imam* or *Ustaz* (A Muslim religious teacher or scholar) who used rewards and punishments to instil discipline and moral values within the students (Sugianto et al., 2023). Learning is arranged as an apprenticeship model whereby the students studied *Al-Quran, kitab* (Islamic religious texts) and also modelled their conducts after their teachers because moral behaviour was treated as equally important as knowledge (Syafnan, 2024). Knowledge was then transmitted through *ijazah-sanad* (Certified chain of knowledge transmission from teacher to student), *talaqqi* (Face-to-face instruction) and guided discussion rather than through formalised accreditation. Recent research on *Pondok* institutions in Malaysia, including in Kelantan, revealed that the boarding setting, the use of *talaqqi*, and the emphasis on moral behaviour are still maintained even today (Musa et al., 2023).

2.3.3 'Madrasah' Institution

Towards the end of the 19th century, a massive reform movement arose in some countries in the Middle East which brought changes to the Islamic educational system in the Malay Archipelago (Kadir et al., 2022). Upon returning home, local students who furthered their studies in the Middle East sought to reform and modernize the traditional *Pondok* system by introducing some secular / academic subjects such as Mathematics and Geography, which were perceived as crucial in the spreading of Islam. The school facilities were improved by building well-structured buildings, hostels, recreational areas and administrative offices. This marked the establishment of a more organized institution known as the *Madrasah* school.

The first *Madrasah* school in Malaya was 'Madrasah Al Misriah' in Seberang Prai, founded in 1906. This was followed by 'Madrasah Iqbal', built in Singapore in 1907 and 'Madrasah Al Hadi', built in Melaka in 1917. Among the well renowned ones are 'Madrasah Al Iqbal', 'Madrasah Al Masyhoor', 'Madrasah Idrisiah' and 'Madrasah Zainal Abidin' (Kadir et al., 2022). The upgrading of *Pondok* schools to *Madrasahs* changed both the curriculum and the epistemic status of knowledge. Academic subjects were no longer treated as 'secular' influences but as tools to strengthen the Muslim

community both intellectually and strategically. The introduction of proper classrooms, fixed schedules, administrative structures and graded levels brought Islamic education into a modern institutional form while retaining its religious core (Kadir et al., 2022).

2.4 Malaysian Islamic Schools: Before and After Independence

During British colonization, the government introduced the British education system, which remains as the foundation of our national education policy to date. A diverse school system emerged, consisting of Malay, Chinese, and Tamil vernacular schools alongside English-medium institutions, which were rapidly established (Shanmugavelu et al., 2020). At the same time, the colonial powers progressively took control of the traditional Islamic schools by offering financial assistance with the condition that these schools agreed to integrate academic subjects alongside their Islamic studies. The result was a restructuring of the formal morning school sessions specifically for secular instruction, relegating Quranic studies to the afternoon, after school hours. During school hours, students learned academic subjects such as reading, writing, geography and mathematics. All Islamic studies subjects were excluded from the official school hours and taught in the afternoon, after the school session in the same building (Shanmugavelu et al., 2020).

Right after Independence, the Malayan government established a special committee to form the National Education Policy. Aware of parents' concerns about religious education, Islamic subjects, which had previously been taught in the afternoon after school hours, were infused back into the system and taught during official school hours (Kadir et al., 2022). The time allocated for the subject was initially 120 minutes per week, which was later increased to 240 minutes per week in 1988 (Lubis, 2022).

Meanwhile, private Islamic schools continued to operate and began to integrate both Islamic and academic subjects. However, although these schools combined Islamic and academic components, greater emphasis was placed on Islamic studies while less attention was given to academic subjects. Over time they began to lose support due to weak administration and poor infrastructure (Lubis, 2022).

Aware of the challenges faced by private Islamic schools, the Ministry of Education began to take measures to support and refurbish them in order to improve their performance. The serious effort began by establishing the *Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama* (SMKA) along with the acquisition of eleven private Islamic

schools in 1977 (Ministry of Education, 2012). This was followed by the launching of a new scheme offering the private Islamic schools with trained teachers, textbooks, scholarships, and infrastructure support in 2006. The private Islamic schools that accepted this offer were registered as *Sekolah Agama Bantuan Kerajaan* (SABK), while the remaining private Islamic schools which declined were allowed to continue operating independently as private *Sekolah Agama Rakyat* (SAR) (Ministry of Education, 2012). The establishment of both SMKA and SABK proves that the government took serious effort to improve the Malaysian religious school system and to align their curricula with the national education policy.

The above events marked the foundation of different types of religious schools in our country. According to a study by the Advisory Board for the Coordination of Islamic Education or *Lembaga Penyelaras dan Pendidikan Agama Islam* (LEPAI) as cited in Umar et al. (2012), Malaysia generally has four types of religious schools at present: (i) *Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama* (SMKA) which are solely managed by the Ministry of Education; (ii) *Sekolah Agama Negeri* (SAN), managed by the State Department of Religious Affairs; (iii) *Sekolah Menengah Agama Bantuan Kerajaan* (SABK), private Islamic schools that continue to operate independently but accept government assistance in the form of teachers, textbooks, scholarships, and infrastructure support; and (iv) Private Agama Rakyat Schools (SAR) and which are operated and managed by non-governmental Islamic organizations which are responsible for the management, finances, curriculum development and other areas.

2.5 Sekolah Agama Rakyat (SAR)

The private schools mentioned in item (iv) above are the ones involved in this study. These schools, commonly referred to as *Sekolah Agama Rakyat* (SAR), are named differently based on the governing bodies that manage them, for example Islamic NGOs such as *Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia* (ABIM), *Parti Islam Se-Malaysia* (PAS) or *Jemaah Islam Malaysia* (JIM). Although they are independently funded, these schools are mandated to register under the respective State Religious Departments for the purpose of channeling assistance. They are also required to integrate with the academic curriculum provided by the National Education System to qualify the students to sit for national standardized examinations such as the SPM and STPM (Rahman et al., 2023).

Their principal sources of income come through a combination of student fees, per-capita grants from State Religious Departments, and community contributions such as *waqf* (property or wealth donated for religious or charitable purposes) and donations. Student fees cover daily operational costs and per-capita allocations provide limited but essential support for teachers and administration, while community funding is often directed to infrastructure upkeep, scholarships, and academic programme development. Together, these funding streams demonstrate a shared responsibility between families, the state, and society in ensuring the continuity of SAR schools (Rahman et al., 2023).

However, it is worth noting that there is another type of private religious school in Malaysia known as *Tahfiz* schools. *Tahfiz* education have started to gain popularity for its focus on intensive Quranic learning, where students are trained to memorize and recite the entire book of the Al-Quran (Surtahman et. al, 2023). Students from a very young age engage in intensive Quranic memorization with the goal of becoming '*Hafiz*' and '*Hafizah*', a title bestowed to those who memorize the entire Quran. Alongside Quranic studies, students also learn other Islamic subjects such as *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *Tauhid* (Islamic theology), *Hadith* (sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad) and Arabic language, which is crucial for understanding the Quran.

Recently, to ensure a more balanced education, many private *Tahfiz* schools began to incorporate national academic subjects into their curriculum. This integration includes mathematics, science, Malay, and English, adhering to the standards set by the Malaysian Ministry of Education to equip students with the necessary knowledge and skills to pursue higher education and professional careers. Extracurricular activities, such as sports and community service, are also encouraged to foster a well-rounded development. Overall, the curriculum of private *Tahfiz* schools in Malaysia aim to produce individuals who are not only well-versed in Islamic teachings but also capable of contributing positively to society (Surtahman et. al, 2023).

Given that this study examines the development of English-speaking skills within SAR classrooms, it is necessary to locate English language use in the broader Malaysian context. Understanding the role and development of English as a world lingua franca help to clarify the reasons why English-speaking competence is a warranted focus in SAR school-based research. Accordingly, further sub-sections provide a brief overview of the four language skills with particular emphasis on

speaking. This emphasis is necessary because similar to other educational institutions, SAR schools have their distinctive aspirations for students' speaking competence as part of their mission and vision as *dakwah*-oriented institutions which focused on spreading Islamic teachings. In this sense, speaking is not treated merely as a linguistic skill but as an instrument for enacting the communicative goals embedded in the schools' religious and educational mandate.

2.5.1 SAR Aspirations

With regards to SAR schools, the implementation of English instruction is closely tied to the national education policy. As officially registered institutions, SAR schools are required to comply with national policies and their students are mandated to sit for national examinations such as *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (SPM) and *Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia* (STPM) (Ministry of Education, 2013). Success in English in SPM examination is crucial, as it is a compulsory subject and often a prerequisite for admission into higher education. SAR students with stronger English proficiency will not only be eligible for tertiary study but they also have better access to university enrolment, quality jobs and might eventually become professionals who can contribute effectively to both local and global contexts while preserving their religious identity.

In addition, SAR school students are also expected to fulfil the schools' broader aspiration of producing graduates who can deliver Islamic preaching at both national and international levels confidently (Lina, 2022). To achieve this, the students must not only be knowledgeable in Islam but also develop strong speaking skills to convey Islamic teachings to global audiences. This makes the teachers' responsibility to support speaking skills especially critical in SAR schools, as they directly shape their students' ability to meet this aspiration of producing learners who not only excel in Islamic studies but are also able to express themselves confidently in English.

This aspiration is not driven by institutional policy or practical considerations alone, but it is epistemically grounded. Within SAR schools, English is not treated as an ordinary linguistic subject, but as a means to accomplish the religious obligation of conveying, justifying and spreading Islam beyond the Malay-Muslim context. The aim is not to produce fluent English speakers in general, but English-speaking bearers of Islamic discourse who can operate credibly in global arenas.

From the perspective of Islamization of Knowledge, the pursuit of speaking proficiency is a religious responsibility rather than merely language fluency. English becomes a vehicle for *dakwah* (spreading of Islam), not a platform for unrestricted expression. Speaking lessons in SAR schools are not designed as platforms for students to express themselves without purpose. Rather, teachers consciously regulate classroom talk so that what is spoken in English is beneficial and does not deviate from Islamic values. This makes speaking instruction in SAR schools epistemically different from speaking instruction in secular settings. In purely secular contexts, English is typically cultivated for purposes such as personal expression, economic mobility or global competitiveness. In SAR contexts, however, there is an added value where speaking is cultivated to produce graduates who can perform *dakwah* with linguistic credibility and ideological discipline. The objective is not only that students can speak English, but that they can speak about Islam in English accurately and confidently. Teachers therefore do not approach speaking lessons as open spaces for unrestricted communicative exploration, but they treat them as rehearsals for morally framed, value-aligned public speech.

2.5.2 SAR Schools in the Muslim World

The challenges faced by SAR schools as described in the earlier sub-sections are not only confined to the Malaysian context. Similar struggles are also evident in private Islamic schools across other Muslim countries, where issues of poor management, limited resources, pedagogy, and classroom practice continue to impede effective language education. Schools struggle to balance their dual curricula due to limited financial resources, inadequate facilities, and heavy reliance on student fees (Moslimany et al., 2024). In many cases, teachers also lack teaching qualifications and access to professional development, and teaching remains heavily dependent on rote memorization instead of effective, contemporary pedagogy, leading to mismatches between curriculum content and student abilities.

In Uganda for example, critical issues in language education persist which includes the absence of a standardized curriculum, examinations and certification, a shortage of qualified teachers, poor facilities, poor school management, limited integration of secular knowledge, and high dropout rates, especially among girls (Nalubega & Kalanzi, 2023).

In Indonesia, *Madaris* (Islamic schools) face restricted growth, enrolling only about 15% of students (Elfindri et al., 2022). Their curricula are often determined by religious clerics who often neglect science and technology, and overloading students with additional religious subjects. A shortage of qualified teachers further hampers the quality of education, with some teachers possessing only minimal literacy in scientific subjects, thereby contributing to weak academic outcomes.

In Thailand, Islamic integrated schools encounter poor leadership and weak pedagogical skills among teachers (Assalihee & Boonsuk, 2024). Managing both religious and academic subjects increase school hours and teacher workloads, causing fatigue and limiting effectiveness. Students often fail to meet expected learning outcomes, and many graduates struggle to gain university admission. A further gap exists as religious teachers lack scientific knowledge, while science teachers lack Islamic knowledge, preventing balanced instruction.

Evidence from these countries show that the challenges faced by SAR schools in Malaysia are similar to those in other Muslim countries. Recurrent issues such as poor school management, heavy dual curriculum, insufficient teachers, and reliance on rote learning explain why language goals are not achieved in practice in these schools. The evidence supports the present study because it shows that the mismatch between curriculum goals and classroom realities is a persistent problem happening in Islamic schools, especially in the developing world.

These issues, if left unaddressed, might lead to poor language proficiency among students in Malaysian SAR schools, particularly in speaking skills, due to lack of meaningful practice. This might narrow their chances for university admission, lower competitiveness in the job market, and lessen their participation in broader socio-economic settings. By situating the Malaysian case within this broader pattern, the study treats SAR schools as part of a larger systemic issue and justifies the need to examine how these constraints appear in real classroom talk.

2.5.3 English Language Performance and Malaysian SAR Schools

As aforementioned, English language performance remains a persistent challenge in SAR schools, frequently highlighted by the media and local communities because of their moderate to poor results in national standardized examinations (Surtahman et al., 2023). Despite language policy reforms and practical programs

endorsed by the Ministry of Education to improve students' level of proficiency, many students in SAR schools continue to show moderate performance in the SPM English paper as reflected in the subject's *Gred Purata Mata Pelajaran* (GPMP) values over the years (Tiwari, 2021; Zaswita, 2022).

The GPMP is an evaluation system introduced by the Ministry of Education to assign numerical values to students' achievement across all SPM subjects. The *Lembaga Peperiksaan Negara* or National Examinations Board provides the official grading scale, which serves as the reference for interpreting examination results. Within this scale, a GPMP score of 7 to 8 reflects weak performance, a score of 5 to 6 indicates moderate achievement, and a score below 4 is regarded as excellent. According to the Examination Unit of the Perak State Religious Department, GPMP records for the English subject at the SPM level in all SAR secondary schools in Perak between 2020 and 2022 consistently fell between the 7-8 range.

Othman (Buletin Mutiara, 2018) confirmed that most students in private Islamic schools, including SABK and SAR, lacked sufficient English proficiency to compete globally, which is a concern also echoed by Malik (2019), who emphasized the need for improvement. On the other hand, Yaacob (2022) noted that many students majoring in Islamic and Arabic studies showed little interest in mastering English that is not entirely surprising considering their academic inclinations.

A growing body of research in the Malaysian setting has investigated the underlying factors of the decline in English language performance in SAR schools. Findings generally revealed that financial constraints remain as the primary barrier which prevents the schools from hiring well-qualified English language teachers to teach. Not only that, but teachers are also rarely sent to professional development courses, which limits their capacity to improve classroom practices. In addition to that, many such schools lack adequate infrastructure, particularly ICT facilities, which are essential for supporting effective language instruction in the here and now (Baba, 2022; Ilias et al., 2022; Ismail, 2018). This situation is further exacerbated by the frequent use of the students' mother tongue in instruction (Ilias, 2023), which further reduces their exposure to authentic English input which is quite crucial for sustained target-language use. Empirical studies support this position. Yang and Maarof (2024) found that learners who received greater exposure to English input demonstrated stronger pragmatic competence compared to those with limited exposure. Similarly, Muñoz and Cadierno (2021) reported that learners with more sustained in-school and out-of-school exposure

to English achieved higher levels of overall proficiency. These findings reinforce the CEFR emphasis on active use of the target language, as extended exposure and meaningful interaction contribute directly to language development. Although translanguaging theory suggests that flexible use of multiple languages can support comprehension, this study maintains that reduced engagement in the target language may limit opportunities for developing spontaneous speaking competence.

Moreover, the reliance on rote learning discourages meaningful interaction in English and hinders the development of students' speaking competence (Embong et al., 2018). Classrooms are also dominated with teacher-talk, with English teachers speaking up to 74% of the time, leaving students with very limited opportunities to participate (Musa et al., 2021; Ilias & Mahmud, 2016).

Collectively, these empirical findings highlight systemic challenges that limit the effectiveness of English instruction in SAR schools and help explain the persistent moderate language performance among their students, especially in the skills related to speaking. If left unaddressed, these constraints will likely limit students' readiness for tertiary education where English serves as the principal medium of instruction. Such shortcomings may also limit their competitiveness in the job market later, where acquiring speaking skills is quite essential for day-to-day workplace communication and professional advancement. Hence, immediate and targeted interventions are necessary not only to improve teaching practices but also to sustain students' interest and motivation, to build their confidence and to strengthen their overall English proficiency with particular emphasis on speaking.

Now that the difficulties faced by SAR schools in fostering students' speaking skills has been established based on the historical trajectory of English language education in Malaysia, the following sub-sections will discuss the roles of English in education, employability and globalization, before reviewing national language reforms, particularly the implementation of the Malaysian CEFR-aligned curriculum. This is followed by an introduction to this study's framework, Language Teacher Cognition (LTC), together with its analytical tool, the Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) model, and how both theories can provide solutions to the persistent challenges in SAR speaking classrooms and directly address the research questions of this study.

2.6 English as a Lingua Franca

English has emerged as the lingua franca that connects people from different countries and cultures. It enables communication among communities with different native languages. English plays a central role in virtual communication, academic mobility, international forums, worldwide travel, and cross-regional cooperation (Bhandari & Ghimire, 2025). English mastery has also emerged as a widely recognised criterion across numerous professional fields worldwide. Its significance is not confined to the facilitation of communication; rather, it provides access to opportunities within a global environment where participation, mobility, and recognition are frequently conditioned by the ability to converse in English. In the field of language education, English proficiency is commonly associated with four main skills which are reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Reading and listening are receptive skills that involve processing and understanding input, while writing and speaking are productive skills that involve generating language output to express meaning. These skills are interdependent whereby weakness in any one of them will affect performance in the others (Demirel, 2021).

Among the four language skills, mastering speaking is crucial because it enables people to share ideas, feelings, and opinions. Spoken competence carries additional weight because it demands immediate cognitive control, rapid formulation, and sustained linguistic spontaneity in a real-time oral interaction. Individuals who master English speaking skills have communicative advantages in many occasions where written proficiency alone is insufficient (Demirel, 2021). In other words, mastering English speaking not only improves communication but also open doors to global participation and professionalism, helping people fit into the international community and perform with confidence (Wang & Zhang, 2024).

2.6.1 Speaking Skills - Cognitive Aspect as Real-Time Skill

Since this study centres around the teaching and development of speaking skills within SAR classrooms, it is essential to first establish the theoretical elements of speaking before examining how it is translated into practice. Speaking is not merely production of knowledge about language, it is a spontaneous act that demands intensive cognitive processing. Therefore, it is wise to discuss speaking skills from cognitive and

psycholinguistic perspectives before looking at how it is translated in SAR schools; otherwise, the interpretation risks being shallow or misleading.

Speaking is a cognitively demanding activity because it requires multiple processes to take place simultaneously under the pressure of time. When a speaker speaks, the brain first retrieves relevant lexical items from memory, formulate grammatical structures, monitor accuracy, and finally articulate speech without rehearsal (Conti, 2025). Unlike writing, which allows time for planning and revision, speaking requires immediate execution while maintaining coherence and comprehensibility. This real-time processing load explains why learners may know words or rules but are still unable to speak fluently when placed in communicative situations (Y. Liu, 2022).

These cognitive challenges of speaking are supported by the well-known framework of ‘complexity, accuracy and fluency’ or CAF (Housen, 2021). When students attempt to speak using more advanced vocabulary or grammar, their fluency typically declines as they search for suitable words or structures. In contrast, when fluency is prioritised, grammatical accuracy and lexical precision are often compromised. Speaking competence therefore does not emerge automatically from knowing grammar or vocabulary, it depends on the extent to which the brain can coordinate these cognitive demands in the expected time.

Psycholinguistic filters further intensify the cognitive burden. Language anxiety, fear of evaluation, and excessive self-monitoring increase cognitive load and disrupt fluency (Chau et al., 2025). Even students with adequate linguistic knowledge may silent themselves when experiencing affective pressure during word formulation. This pressure can trigger cognitive overload which may result in silence, hesitations or providing short responses. These behaviours do not necessarily signify linguistic deficit, rather they reflect students’ cognitive overload.

These cognitive burdens are directly relevant for interpreting speaking behaviour in SAR classrooms. Although there has been a number of studies revealing the moderate speaking performance in SAR settings, it cannot be judged solely on how much or how quickly students speak. What we see in their speech is the end result of heavy mental processing which includes retrieving, organising, monitoring, and verbalising language under pressure. This interpretation aligns with one of this study’s aim, which is to investigate the sources of speaking challenges in order to propose solutions to improve their speaking skills development.

2.6.2 Speaking Skills – Affective Aspect and Socio-Religious Constraints

In addition to the cognitive load, the act of speaking is also constrained by the affective factors that may hamper students' willingness to speak. Speaking tasks commonly trigger anxiety because they often expose the speaker to immediate evaluation (Özdemir & Seckin, 2025). This generates language anxiety which is widely recognised as the strongest barrier to speaking, even in learners with sufficient linguistic knowledge. Students anticipate errors or negative judgment, draining the mental energy required to plan and speak. Another affective inhibitor arises from excessive self-monitoring. When speakers over monitor grammar or pronunciation, their attention shifts inward which inhibits spontaneity (H. Li, 2025). In accuracy-driven classrooms, students often choose silence over the risk of making mistakes, leading to very low oral participation.

Speaking is also shaped by social and cultural rules about what is acceptable to say (Kakita & Palukuri, 2025). In SAR schools, speech is not neutral, instead, it carries moral and social weight. Students may choose to speak less to avoid sounding rude, disrespectful or controversial. This moral pressure works like an invisible filter; it does not only reduce how much they speak, but also controls which ideas they dare to express, even if they have the language to say them. Affective and social filters suggest that limited participation in speaking tasks cannot be automatically interpreted as low proficiency or weakness in teaching strategies. Students with adequate linguistic knowledge may choose to stay silent because the psychological impact of speaking under evaluation is really high. For the purpose of the present study, this leads to the tentative conclusion that speaking behaviour in SAR classrooms must be carefully analysed from the perspective of cognitive and affective constraints to understand the underlying reasons for the students' moderate language performance.

2.6.3 Interactional, Pragmatic and Strategic Dimensions of Speaking

Speaking competence is not developed solely based on cognitive processing and linguistic knowledge. A substantial body of literature have shown that effective spoken interaction also depends largely on the ability to negotiate turns, to position individuals socially in relation to others, and to execute correction strategies spontaneously whenever necessary (Dingemanse & Enfield, 2024). Pragmatic

competence on the other hand, enables speakers to choose expressions that are appropriate, avoiding expressions that are socially or morally inappropriate (Nordquist, 2025). Additionally, interactional competence is concerned with the ability to manage turn-taking and sustain coherence across exchanges (Ekin, 2025). Speakers also rely on strategic competence to keep interactions going when they experience lexical gaps through paraphrasing and substituting words without collapsing the interaction.

In SAR schools, pragmatic failure may be viewed not only as a linguistic error but also as a breach of politeness shaped by religious values. Although English lessons mainly focus on developing language proficiency rather than teaching religious knowledge, classroom communication often takes place within a religiously guided environment. As a result, students may hesitate to use strategic paraphrasing because they worry that rephrasing certain ideas may unintentionally change meanings related to religious or sensitive expressions. Consequently, classroom interaction may be influenced not only by students' language proficiency but also by their awareness of appropriate conduct. In this study, these pragmatic and moral considerations suggest that speaking performance in SAR classrooms should not be evaluated solely based on secular expectations that encourage risk-taking in communication. Instead, speaking needs to be understood within a context where interaction is guided by shared values as well as communicative purposes (Bardis et al., 2021)

2.6.4 What Counts as Successful Speaking

Successful speaking is commonly defined through fluency, intelligibility, and the ability to take communicative risks (Jebahi, 2024). A successful speaker is not only able to produce language accurately and with ease, but is also willing to initiate turns, respond spontaneously, negotiate meaning, and sustain interaction without relying on rehearsed or scripted language. This comprises the ability to manage breakdowns in communication using different strategies such as paraphrasing, simplifying and clarification requests. In other words, successful speaking is demonstrated not by knowledge of language alone, but by the ability to mobilise that knowledge in real time under interactional pressure (Jebahi, 2024).

Recent studies also emphasise that a successful speaker is one who can adjust her or his language to the social expectations of the interactional context, including status differences, communicative goals, and shared background assumptions (Ghafar

& Raheem, 2023). This aligns with the view that speaking competence is not merely individual performance but a form of co-constructed action, where success is measured by the speaker's ability to maintain coherence and relevance within a particular social encounter. This concept of speaking competence lays the groundwork for the next section, which examines how speaking is not developed in isolation but emerges through guided interaction, social mediation and collaborative negotiation of meaning.

The preceding discussion outlines the criteria that constitutes successful speaking from an interactional and pragmatic point of views. However, defining the construct alone is insufficient without explaining why such competence matters beyond the classroom. The next section therefore shifts from the theoretical and pragmatical features of speaking to considering its practical functions in academic and professional contexts. It then explains how the ability to speak acts as a pathway to educational advancement, employability, and broader social participation.

2.6.5 Speaking Skills in Education and Employment

Acquiring strong speaking skills is vital for both education and employability. In schools, speaking English helps students build their confidence, think critically, and share ideas. Activities such as group discussions, role plays and presentations provide chances to express themselves clearly and logically in the target language. These experiences support academic success, teamwork abilities and leadership skills development (Abdullah et al., 2022). In higher education, speaking becomes even more crucial particularly in courses that use English as the medium of instruction. Students are expected to present research, join debates, and collaborate with peers from diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, effective speaking, especially in multilingual settings, is essential for academic discourse and for preparing to enter global job markets, if students so choose. Graduates who communicate well in English are more likely to secure employment in Malaysia, as employers value oral communication alongside technical knowledge (Yallew & Dipitso, 2023 – CHECK!).

In the workplace, speaking skills are crucial for leadership, teamwork, and career advancement. Some tasks, including meetings, presentations, and negotiations, require strong communication skills (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017; Rana & Shaikh, 2024). Thus, some local employers consistently highlight communication as a top soft skill for hiring and job promotion (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017; Rana & Shaikh, 2024). English also

supports collaboration, knowledge sharing and networking across borders, giving employees an advantage in multinational projects and global teamwork (Hussein, 2024). Therefore, schools and universities have greater responsibility to prepare students with strong speaking skills to ensure career readiness. Mastery of speaking not only supports employability but also serves as a lifelong asset for personal and professional growth (Hussein, 2024).

In the context of SAR schools, acquiring strong speaking skills is not only worthwhile for education and employability but it is also relevant to the mission of SAR schools. Since SAR schools are required to register under State Religious Departments and adopt the national curriculum, their students are mandated to sit for the SPM school-leaving standardised examination. This requirement provides students with enrolment opportunities in various technical and science-based fields at universities, alongside their religious studies. Therefore, acquiring strong speaking competence becomes a gateway for SAR students to access wider academic and professional opportunities beyond the religious sector. Without English mastery, their options after SPM might be limited and reducing their competitiveness in the broader job market. This stands in contrast with the aspirations of SAR schools to produce globally competent Muslim preachers who are capable of engaging with international audiences. Thus, speaking skills are not only tied to academic success and employability, but they are central to the holistic vision of SAR education, where religious knowledge is strengthened by the ability to participate effectively in professional and global contexts.

2.7 English Language Reforms in Malaysian Schools

Similar to other Muslim countries, English education in Malaysia has long been shaped by the history of colonisation, politics, and language policies. During British rule, English served as the language of administration and missionary schooling, giving urban communities greater access while rural Malays and Indians had limited exposure to the language. This uneven distribution of access led to linguistic stratification (Bakar et al., 2021; Shanmugavelu et al., 2020). Over time, those who resided in urban areas further enjoyed socio-economic privileges and possessed higher levels of education, whereas those in remote regions remained disadvantaged due to limited opportunities presented to them (Rahman & Singh, 2021).

After independence, the government introduced National Schools and made Malay the national language to build unity, while still keeping English important for education and globalization. This dual-track stance, Malay for nation-building and English for mobility became the basis of Malaysian language planning (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2012).

In the 1990s, as Malaysia experienced rapid economic growth, English proficiency became even more important for participation in global affairs. Since independence in 1957, the Ministry of Education has worked hard to improve the overall standard of the English language among Malaysian students, particularly in speaking skills. This concern was clearly reflected in ‘Vision 2020’ (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013), which emphasised the importance of a cultivating workforce with higher English competency to enable them to function at international level. In line with this aspiration, the government at that time revisited its language education policies and introduced ‘The Teaching of Science and Mathematics in English’ (PPSMI) in 2003. Its major aim was to strengthen students’ command of English through multiple exposure, including in non-language classrooms such as Science and Mathematics. The underlying assumption was straightforward: increasing the number of English language hours would improve linguistic competence, although the pedagogical side was not fully taken into account.

Due to the above factor, the programme encountered major challenges, particularly in rural schools, because limited exposure to English prevented both teachers and students from engaging with educational contents meaningfully. As a result, classroom practice often reverted into translation rather than instruction. After it became evident that the intended linguistic gains were not being realised in practice, PPSMI was officially terminated in 2012 (Ganaprakasam & Karunaharan, 2020). The discontinuation demonstrated that exposure alone, without adequate teacher preparedness, infrastructural advancement and sociolinguistic acceptance, is insufficient to raise oral proficiency to a higher level. This highlighted the need for a more sustainable approach to improving English education. Consequently, the national agenda shifted from short-lived structural mandates toward more durable reforms that target teacher practice, classroom discourse, and the quality of interactional opportunities available to learners.

2.7.1 Malaysian CEFR-Aligned Curriculum

The turning point came in 2013 with the launch of the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025, which adopted the internationally recognised Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) as the benchmark for English proficiency. It represents a major step in aligning Malaysia's English language education with global standards (Rashid et al., 2022). The framework provides guidelines for designing curricula, assessments, and teaching methods (Ministry of Education, 2015). The Malaysian CEFR-aligned language curriculum was piloted in 2013 beginning with Year 1 and Form 1 cohorts, with progressive implementation across higher levels in subsequent years (Lee et al., 2022), and it was gradually expanded nationwide. Textbooks, teacher training, and assessment were redesigned to emphasize communicative competence, encouraging students to use English in real-life contexts rather than focusing solely on grammar and vocabulary. Teacher training was further strengthened through the 'Professional Upskilling of English Language Teachers' (Pro-ELT) programme, supported by digital tools, online platforms, and reference materials (Hishamudin & Kee, 2023). This training is exceptionally important for the teachers to prepare them with the necessary teaching skills, strengthen teachers' professional development and support the effective implementation of the national-scale CEFR-aligned curriculum.

The implementation of CEFR has led to changes in classroom practice, especially in the teaching of speaking. Students' speaking competence is no longer centred on grammar accuracy, instead, it focuses more on making meaning and being able to interact in real time. This shift has led teachers to design speaking tasks that promote extended talk, negotiation of meaning, and spontaneous language production. Over the past decade, this reform has also introduced a form of accountability in which teachers are required not only to understand CEFR speaking descriptors but to translate them into observable interactional practices that allow their learners to demonstrate proficiency through authentic spoken performance (Ganaprakasam & Karunaharan, 2020).

2.7.2 CEFR Speaking Skills and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged in the 1970s as the dominant pedagogical approach in English language education. It was developed as a response to the drawbacks of the traditional Grammar Translation Method (GTM) which focused heavily on mastering grammar rules with repetitive drills rather than developing communicative competence (Qasserras, 2023). At its core, CLT shifts the focus from mastering grammar to using language for real communication (Triwibowo, 2022). Teachers should act more as facilitators rather than transmitters of knowledge (Alofi, 2022), while students engage in interactive tasks such as role-plays and discussions that reflect real-life use. It integrates all four skills, views errors as natural, and often employs task-based learning to make communication more purposeful and practical (Alhomaidan, 2025). Similar to curriculum developments worldwide, the CEFR adopts CLT as the foundation of its framework (Jebahi, 2024). It supports language pedagogy grounded in CLT, in which tasks and assessments reflect authentic language use. This aligns closely with the principles of a communicative classroom that emphasises interaction, fluency, and learner engagement.

The CEFR framework uses a set of “can do” descriptors that describe learners’ overall communicative abilities at different proficiency levels, from A1 (beginner) to C2 (proficient). The framework is grouped mainly according to three categories: Proficient users (levels C1 & C2), Independent users (levels B1 & B2) and Basic users (levels A1 & A2). For instance, at the A1 level in speaking, a student “can introduce themselves and answer simple personal questions,” while at the C2 level, a student “can take part in discussions and explain their opinions in detail.” The remaining levels and abilities are described in Table 2.1. This clear description helps in designing the curriculum, selecting effective teaching methods and preparing assessment questions. Therefore, this framework aims at developing learners’ communicative competence, enabling them to use the language effectively in real-life situations (Jebahi, 2024).

Table 2.1

CEFR “Can Do” Descriptors for Speaking Skills

Level	Speaking Descriptor
A1	Can introduce themselves and answer simple personal questions
A2	Can communicate in simple routine tasks requiring direct exchange of information
B1	Can deal with most situations likely to arise while travelling and produce simple connected text
B2	Can interact with fluency and spontaneity with native speakers with much strain
C1	Can express ideas fluently and spontaneously using language flexible for academic and professional purpose
C2	Can summarize information from different spoken and written sources, reconstruct arguments and present with precision

Source: English Language Education Reform in Malaysia: The Roadmap 2015–2025, Ministry of Education, 2015.

In addition to these categories and descriptors, there are also additional and detailed “can do” statements for other skills which are more detailed. Grammar profiling is used to evaluate the students’ level of proficiency, specifically in grammar. Grammar profiling as presented by the basic descriptors of the CEFR six levels are: A1 (Beginner), A2 (Elementary), B1 (Pre-intermediate), B2 (Intermediate), C1 (Upper-intermediate) and C2 (Advanced). While grammar profiling focuses on describing what learners can already produce at each proficiency band, the CEFR’s stance on grammar correction concerns how teachers should intervene during instruction so that accuracy is improved without compromising communicative use (Kao et al., 2025).

With regards to grammar correction, the CEFR also aligns with CLT in the way grammar correction is approached. Although the CEFR does not prescribe a fixed method of correction, it emphasises that grammar should be addressed in a manner that supports communication rather than disrupts it. In line with a communicative orientation, not every error requires correction, only those that interfere with meaning, intelligibility or task completion should be prioritised. Implicit forms of feedback during interaction, such as recasts, reformulation or clarification requests, are preferred over stopping the conversation to explain rules explicitly. Teachers are also encouraged to allow learners to attempt self-repair before supplying the correct form, and explicit correction may be delayed until after a speaking turn so that fluency is not interrupted.

The level of correction is further matched to the learner's proficiency, with greater tolerance permitted at lower levels and higher precision expected at more advanced ones. Overall, this approach promotes grammar correction that maintains communicative flow while still contributing to long-term grammatical accuracy (Kao et al.,2025).

Most importantly, the CEFR places language ability not merely as the acquisition of grammatical knowledge but it is more focused on the ability to use language for real-world everyday situations. Its can-do descriptors at each proficiency band explicitly signifies that language instruction should cultivate observable communicative abilities in activities such as turn-taking, clarification, elaboration and repair. This emphasis directs classroom goals away from isolated grammar drills towards discourse-driven activities that resemble real communicative practice in authentic settings (Jebahi, 2024). In SAR schools, however, English instruction has an additional goal, which should be to adhere with the concept of Islamisation of Knowledge (IOK). Language is not treated as a neutral medium for uncontrolled spoken activities, rather, as a vehicle that must remain in compliance with Islamic epistemic boundaries. Speaking tasks should be designed to encourage communicative participation while filtering topics, examples and discourse moves through Islamic values. Under this condition, the CEFR-aligned aim of enabling students to negotiate meaning and express opinions is retained, but the interactional space is regulated so that communicative growth proceeds without violating the precepts of IOK.

However, despite the alignment between CEFR–CLT communicative goals in SAR classrooms, findings from some prior studies consistently revealed that SAR students' speaking proficiency remains at a moderate level. This suggests that the intended communicative pedagogy is not fully translated into actual interactional practice. In a sense, the principles are present at the level of policy and instructional discourse, but these do not materialise in the moment-to-moment conduct of classroom talk. Such gap is consequential because SAR students need adequate spoken English to progress academically, for future employment, and to participate in wider social and professional settings. The present study is therefore conducted to identify the sources of this stagnation. Do they stem from teacher cognition, classroom interactional formats, or contextual constraints anchored in the SAR environment? By identifying where and why the alignment between policy, belief and practice breaks down, the study generates a basis for refining classroom interaction so that students' speaking ability

can move beyond the current moderate level, rather than remaining locked at the same level. In contrast, if this misalignment is left unaddressed, SAR learners will continue to become stagnant and leaving them insufficiently prepared to face the immediate future.

2.7.3 Teacher's Role in CEFR Communicative Classrooms at SAR Schools

In SAR schools, the teaching of English speaking is not driven merely by the curriculum document but by how teachers position themselves within a CEFR-communicative classroom. Under a CEFR communicative orientation, teachers are expected to function not merely as transmitters of linguistic forms but as facilitators of interaction (Ly, 2024). They model discourse moves, scaffold students' attempts, manage turn-taking, and create conditions for students to negotiate meaning rather than overly focusing on set language forms or recite rehearsed sentences.

In practice, this means that teachers actively shape the interactional structure of the classroom talk. They decide when to withhold explanations to elicit student contribution, how to prompt to extend the strand of talk, and when to slow the pace to allow more learners to join the verbal exchanges. Their role is not to deliver English but to design opportunities for students to experience English in use through prompts that require justifications rather than recall, questions that trigger clarification rather than short answers, and feedback that encourages more participation of students' talk rather than termination of it. In this way, the teacher's agency lies less in presenting language knowledge and more in scaffolding interactional moments where students must mobilise what they know in real-time communication (Ghadiri, 2024).

Additionally, in conventional ESL classrooms, teachers may allow spontaneous open talk. SAR teachers, on the contrary, handle it more cautiously because they feel responsible for controlling the direction and quality of student talk. Instead of allowing unstructured free-speaking, teachers might feel the need to refine, redirect or narrow tasks so that speech production remains purposeful and anchored to Islamic values. Speaking tasks are therefore curated to ensure that interaction builds communicative competence rather than drifting into low-value or mechanical talk.

Understanding the teacher-positioning in SAR CEFR speaking classrooms has direct implications for instructional choices. When teachers treat classroom talk as something that must be managed for quality and relevance, the selection of materials,

prompts and discourse tasks is guided not only by language pedagogy but also by what is considered instructionally appropriate for their learners. This perspective is directly relevant to the research objectives of this study. Any attempts to account for how English speaking is taught in SAR classrooms must be read through the teacher's role in regulating interaction. Therefore, speaking instruction in SAR classrooms depends not only on adopting theories and principles but on the teacher's ability to integrate language knowledge with pedagogical judgement which is the very concern addressed by Shulman's (1986) concept of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) that will be discussed next.

2.7.4 The Importance of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) for Teachers

The last statement regarding the role of language teacher in a CEFR communicative classroom reflects the importance of professional development courses as a useful foundation in guiding teachers to translate curriculum reforms into effective classroom practices. Lee Shulman introduced the concept of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) (1986) in the 1980s to address a critical gap in teaching preparation, where subject-matter expertise and pedagogical knowledge were often treated separately. He argued that PCK represents a special and unique integrated teaching skill, which is the ability to blend subject-matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, making it teachable and comprehensible to students. This includes using effective representations, analogies, examples, explanations, and demonstrations that make the core subject matter more approachable to learners.

Later, Shulman expanded his framework by including seven interrelated components that every teacher should acquire: (i) content knowledge; (ii) general pedagogical knowledge; (iii) curriculum knowledge; (iv) pedagogical content knowledge; (v) knowledge of learners and their characteristics; (vi) knowledge of educational contexts; and, (vii) knowledge of educational purposes and values. Over time, this idea has become one of the most important foundations in teacher education (Shulman, 1987).

However, research findings suggest that SAR teachers are rarely sent to professional development courses, which might limit their ability to adopt more interactive and communicative approaches in teaching speaking (Ilias & Mahmud, 2016; Jamil et al., 2025). Over time, students' opportunities to practice authentic

speaking tasks are reduced, which undermines the development of fluency, pronunciation accuracy, and interactive competence.

Therefore, Shulman's theory is especially valuable in the context of SAR schools, as it emphasises the importance of teachers possessing core pedagogical skills to deliver lessons effectively. Mastering PCK enables language teachers to design meaningful and contextually appropriate lessons, bridging the gap between subject knowledge and classroom realities. It also underscores the responsibility of schools and policymakers to equip teachers with continuous professional development to support effective teaching practices, particularly in speaking classrooms, thus, enhancing students' communicative confidence and long-term language proficiency. This is in line with one of the present study's objectives, which is to investigate SAR English language teachers' knowledge in understanding and applying relevant theoretical frameworks in speaking classrooms, as it determines how effectively students are provided with the opportunities to use English for meaningful communication.

2.8 Role of Classroom Interaction in Enhancing CEFR-related Speaking Skills

Any discussion on speaking skills inevitably involves classroom interaction as it plays a central role in enhancing speaking skills by shaping both classroom atmosphere and students' language development (Yingmei & Liwei, 2022). In a CEFR speaking classroom, interaction is at the heart of communication (Tiwari, 2021). Effective interaction requires active participation from students to practise speaking in meaningful contexts. Teacher questioning is especially paramount, with open-ended questions encouraging critical thinking, richer participation, and deeper understanding (Salmon & Barrera, 2021; Santhanasamy & Yunus, 2022). Active teacher-student exchanges, especially in speaking classrooms, help students build confidence, practise fluency, and strengthen their overall competence (X. Li & Hu, 2024). The teacher acts as facilitator and mediator, guiding students through structured questioning, scaffolding, and giving timely feedback (T. Liu & Aryadoust, 2024). This helps transform the classroom into a collaborative space, conducive for the students to negotiate meaning and express themselves independently. Furthermore, interactive exchanges ensure that speaking is not treated as a separate skill but as part of a holistic language learning process that integrates listening, responding, and critical thinking. By

promoting this cycle of communication, classroom interaction becomes the key driver for nurturing students' communicative competence in English (Tiwari, 2021).

2.8.1 Classroom Interaction from the Perspective of Sociocultural Theory (SCT)

The view discussed in the previous subsection regarding the importance of interaction is further strengthened by Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (SCT), which suggests that learning occurs through social interaction, particularly via mediation, scaffolding and the construction of knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). In a CEFR speaking classroom, mediation occurs when teachers use questions and prompts to guide students' thinking in structured tasks (Truong et al., 2024). Questions like "What do you think of this book?" or "Do you agree with this statement? If you do, why?" compel the students to think critically and verbalize their thoughts in the target language. Activities like picture-based discussions, information-gap activities, or role-plays create opportunities for them to practise speaking in meaningful, real-life contexts. Mediation therefore serves as a bridge between what they already know and the new communicative skills they need to acquire.

Scaffolding refers to the support given by more knowledgeable others, which can include not only the teacher but also the more advanced students to help learners complete tasks beyond their independent ability, often through guided questions, hints, or feedback (Koyuncu et al., 2023). A teacher may provide a starter such as "I think we should..." to help a student continue with the remaining utterances. More advanced peers can also assist by suggesting vocabulary items or correcting pronunciation during group activities. These small supports enable learners to participate actively and gradually build the confidence to speak independently.

Finally, co-construction of knowledge occurs when teachers and students work together through dialogue to share ideas, clarify meaning, and construct understanding collectively (Chen, 2025; Dhiorbháin, 2023). For instance, after completing a speaking task on healthy eating, the teacher may ask students to discuss with their peers to consolidate the information learned. Students share opinions while the teacher reformulates sentences, adds vocabulary, and invites others to respond. Peers also co-construct knowledge by agreeing, questioning or provide stronger arguments. This joint effort turns learning into a shared process and gives students meaningful practice in speaking.

These structured interactions reflect Vygotsky's view on the construction of knowledge within social and cultural contexts, illustrating how speaking skills can be nurtured through guided support and collaborative learning. These interactional processes equip teachers with practical ways to stimulate student participation and develop greater confidence in speaking. By applying deliberate mediation, scaffolding, and co-construction in speaking classrooms, teachers can create conducive and collaborative learning spaces that enable students to develop their communicative competence effectively. These strategies align with the principles of SCT, showing how structured support and social interaction can help improve students' speaking skills.

2.9 Criticism of CEFR-Align Curriculum – Congruence and Incongruence

The preceding section discussed the importance of interaction to ensure that the aims of a CEFR-aligned speaking classroom are achieved. The key question here is how interactive are the classrooms? Do they provide sufficient space and time for meaningful verbal interaction, or are they still dominated by the teacher talk? Can speaking lessons progress smoothly without internal and external challenges that hinder learning? And lastly, are the expected outcomes always successfully achieved?

In Malaysia, English has been institutionalized as the country's second language (Ganaprakasam & Karunaharan, 2020). Children are introduced to English language as early as preschool, at the age of 5-6 years, and continue learning this language throughout primary and secondary school. Indeed, by the end of formal schooling, every student completes eleven years of formal English education (Lee et al., 2022). However, despite its promise, CEFR implementation has faced several criticisms. Many language teachers struggle to interpret the descriptors, adapt materials, and align assessments with communicative goals. Several studies have also show 'congruences' and 'incongruences' between teacher beliefs and their classroom practices (Başar, 2020; Sun & Yussof, 2019; Ye & Hu, 2024). The findings collectively suggest that the effectiveness of adoption depends less on the framework but more on the teachers' ability to internalize and apply it in their speaking classrooms.

This pattern of misalignment at the level of implementation is also evident when the focus is narrowed to SAR schools, where the same issues appear in an even more pronounced form. Interaction is frequently dominated by teacher talk, which limits students' exposure to authentic input in the target language (Musa et al., 2021).

Although CEFR emphasises learner-centred classrooms, SAR teachers often continue to rely on rote learning methods and extensive use of the students' mother tongue, further reducing opportunities for meaningful interaction (Ismail, 2018). This gap underscores the urgent need for targeted pedagogical interventions to equip SAR teachers with knowledge on effective strategies that can be employed to assist students to develop stronger speaking skills. Without such interventions, SAR students risk failing to meet the communicative demands and thereby, undermining the national aspirations behind the CEFR implementation.

If weak interactional practices in SAR schools remain unaddressed, SAR students will continue to produce limited and low-risk utterances that do not strengthen communicative competence over time. In such a condition, their spoken English will remain at a minimal functional level that is insufficient for academic progression, workplace entry, or participation in wider discourse communities, directly contradicting the rationale of CEFR reform. This consequence is directly aligned with the research objectives of this study, which seek to explain why speaking proficiency in SAR remains moderate despite policy alignment, and to identify the interactional and cognitive factors that prevent that proficiency from improving.

Addressing this requires not only classroom-level adjustment but sustained teacher preparation. SAR teachers must be systematically trained in SCT-based interactional strategies, including mediation, contingent scaffolding, uptake-based feedback and extended IRF moves. Without such professional development initiatives, teachers will continue to reproduce traditional instructional habits, replicating teacher-dominated talk and limiting opportunities for co-constructed discourse. This will perpetuate the current stagnation in speaking proficiency, making it unlikely that SAR students will meet the communicative expectations set by CEFR or that the intended reforms will translate into observable learning gains.

2.9.1 More Studies on Congruence and Incongruence

Although SCT is often portrayed as a powerful framework in research literature, its practical implementation is rarely straightforward. The discussion above regarding the incongruence between teacher beliefs and classroom practices is not unique only to Malaysian classrooms. Studies in other countries also show the same pattern; teachers agree with CEFR communicative principles in theory but frequently

return to form-focused teaching in practice. This means the challenge does not lie in the CEFR itself, but in how teachers apply it in real classroom situations. Previous studies have shown that what teachers believe about interaction do not always match what actually occurs in their classrooms (Borg, 2021). Many teachers still rely on grammar drills, lectures, and exam-focused instructions despite supporting communicative principles (Adem & Berkessa, 2022; Alam et al., 2024; Bhandari, 2021; Tiwari, 2021; Tleuov, 2025). Even in technology-mediated classrooms, teachers who value interactivity often revert back to form-focused corrections (Uludağ, 2024).

Ultimately, the success of a communicative curriculum does not rest on policy declarations alone but on whether teachers can foster interactional activities that encourage students to speak, negotiate meaning, and repair breakdowns in real time. When teachers frequently revert to form-focused activities, Malaysian CEFR speaking classrooms become communicative only in principle but not in practice. Such incongruence creates a structural gap between curriculum intentions and proposed pedagogy, a gap that this study seeks to document, explain, and interpret within the SAR context. Without understanding the sources of this misalignment, it is unlikely that CEFR aspirations for speaking competence will materialise in students' actual speaking performance.

2.10 Introducing Language Teacher Cognition

These realities have prompted many researchers to investigate the relationships between teacher beliefs and classroom practices (Başar, 2020; Borg, 2018; Karimi & Nazari, 2017; Mulamba et al., 2018; Parvaresh, 2017). Collectively, these studies show that regardless of how teachers value theoretical perspectives, they often adjust their methods in response to both internal and external constraints. Over time, such recurring evidence became a strong foundation for the development of the 'Language Teacher Cognition' (LTC) framework, which conceptualizes how teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and experiences interact with practice. In his framework on Language Teacher Cognition, Borg (2003, 2006) defines LTC as what teachers:

[...] believe, know, and think and the relationships of these mental constructs to what teachers do in the language teaching classroom. The key questions addressed in teacher cognition research include what do teachers have cognitions about, how do these cognitions develop, how do they interact with teacher learning and how do they interact with classroom practice? (p. 1)

Understanding LTC as a framework, therefore, requires further exploration of its underlying sources, since these elements shape how teacher beliefs and knowledge evolve into actual classroom practices. At the same time, recognising these cognitive sources is essential not merely for descriptive purposes but for explanatory ones as they allow researchers to account for why teachers act in ways that might diverge from policy or rules-based expectations despite acknowledging them. From this standpoint, an incongruence is not interpreted as negligence but as the product of deeper cognitive, experiential and contextual forces that condition teachers' actions in real classrooms.

2.10.1 The Sources of Teacher Cognition

Borg (2003) highlights the significant influence of teacher cognition in shaping teachers' professional lives. He identified four constructs that continually interact and mediate language teacher cognition. They are: (i) prior schooling experience; (ii) professional teacher education; (iii) school contextual factor; and, (iv) classroom teaching practices (see Figure 2.1).

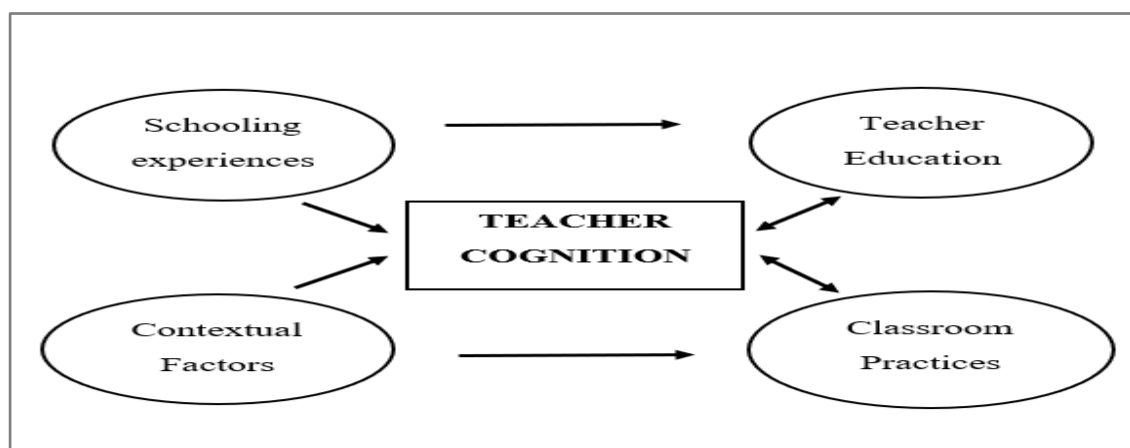


Figure 2.1. Language Teacher Cognition Framework (Borg, 2003)

The first construct, teachers' prior schooling, refers to their experiences as language learners during their school years. Experience in English classes often shape their early cognition about becoming a language teacher. Such experiences often leave lasting perceptions about what effective teaching looks like and what counts as 'real' classroom behaviour. These perceptions frequently persist into professional life and

continue to influence how teachers design, deliver, and evaluate their own lessons. For instance, SAR language teachers who idolize their English teacher during school years may later adopt similar teaching methods when they teach. At the same time, negative experiences, such as being frequently criticised for grammar mistakes during classroom presentations, may motivate respective teachers to avoid treating their students in the same way.

The second construct, professional coursework refers to teachers' formal teacher training or their continuous in-service professional development that may alter their existing cognition of English teaching. Through such coursework, teachers are exposed to new theoretical perspectives, pedagogical models, and evaluative standards that may challenge or refine their earlier perceptions about teaching. However, the extent to which this knowledge is later practised in classrooms relies on how it is internalised and critically appraised against other cognitive and environment demands which may be caused by inside and outside classroom factors. For instance, a training module on communicative language teaching may encourage SAR language teachers to shift their focus from grammar drills to more interactive approaches. In contrast, when these teachers teach in an exam-driven classroom with limited time and heavier performance pressures, they may revert to drill-based teaching strategies despite acknowledging communicative principles.

The third construct, classroom practice, refers to teachers' daily experiences as language teachers and the inside classroom factors that shape cognition. These 'lived' classroom realities expose teachers to a wide range of challenges such as different students' level of proficiency, limited student participation, students' learning styles and time pressure during lessons. These situated demands require teachers to experiment with different strategies, monitor student responses, adapt their methods accordingly or even adjust their classroom decisions in real time. These in turn, may refine and sometimes reshape their original beliefs about speaking instruction. For example, a SAR language teacher who initially value the effectiveness of referential questions in eliciting student talk may revert to tighter and shorter structured questioning when students remain silent or show confusion, not because the teacher rejects the theory, but because the immediate classroom condition makes the original plan unsustainable.

Finally, the fourth construct that is contextual factors, refers to the outside classroom factors such as language policy, curriculum demands, school management, student demographics, and socio-political expectations that may influence language

teachers' teaching strategies. These immediate classroom contingencies frequently compel teachers to make pragmatic adjustments that depart from their initial beliefs or the official pedagogical directives. Such contextual pressures do not necessarily undermine the teachers' beliefs, but they restrict the extent to which those beliefs are translated in their classroom, resulting in incoherence between their beliefs and practice. Meaning, contextual factors may operate as constraints that re-shape teachers' instructional choices. In many cases, teachers cannot modify these structural challenges because they are mandated at institutional or systemic levels, which leaves them with little choice but to adjust their pedagogy downwards to what is realistically manageable rather than to what is theoretically desirable (Borg, 2021). For instance, large class sizes or exam-oriented systems may limit teachers' ability to conduct communicative activities, even if they fully value communicative language teaching. Similarly, strict time allocation, prescriptive schemes of work, or pressure to complete textbook units for standardised assessments can force teachers to cut short interactive tasks and revert to rapid, form-focused delivery. Classroom complaints, low student proficiency, or mixed-ability groups can also discourage teachers in SAR schools from sustaining communicative strategies even when they believe them to be pedagogically effective.

The one-way and two-way arrows in this framework also carry their own specific meanings. A one-way arrow indicates influence that moves in a single direction, such as the way teachers' prior schooling experiences shape their beliefs but cannot be altered by their current practices. In contrast, a two-way arrow reflects a mutual relationship in which influence flows both ways. A one-way arrow also represents non-mutual relationship from the teachers' own schooling experiences and contextual factors. Language teachers' experience as language learners during their school years may shape their initial beliefs about being an effective language teacher, however, their current practices might not necessarily relate to their past schooling experiences. Similarly, school contextual factors may also influence how they plan and conduct lessons, but the teachers might have little to no influence over these broader environmental conditions (Borg, 2018).

In contrast, professional coursework and classroom practice exert a two-way relationship with teacher cognition. Professional coursework, such as teacher training or in-service professional development courses, both shape and are shaped by teacher beliefs. For example, a workshop on communicative language teaching may encourage teachers to adopt more interactive speaking activities, but the extent to which they apply

this will largely depend on their prior beliefs about grammar-focused instruction. Similarly, teachers' classroom experiences directly shape their beliefs as they observe what works and make adjustments. For instance, a teacher may initially believe that drilling is the best way to teach vocabulary but later change this view after seeing that group discussions help students retain vocabulary items more effectively. Together, all these elements interact to shape the complex and evolving nature of teacher cognition (Borg, 2018).

These four constructs of the LTC framework do not function in isolation but they constantly interact, shaping what teachers believe, know, and do in their professional lives. This dynamic interplay shows that teacher cognition is not fixed but continuously evolves as they negotiate their past experiences, professional training, classroom practices, and contextual realities.

In the context of the present study, this interaction is central for explaining both coherence and incoherence between what SAR teachers claim to value in speaking instruction and what they actually practise during classroom interaction. Only by examining how the four sources of cognition operate together can one determine whether teachers' alignment with CEFR-communicative goals is the result of deliberate, cognitively grounded decisions or merely incidental compliance, and likewise whether deviations from communicative practice are driven by personal beliefs, by institutional constraints, or by the strategic adaptations teachers make in order to function within the SAR environment. This is consistent with the objective of this study, which is not merely to report the existence of belief–practice gaps, but to identify the specific cognitive and contextual mechanisms that produce such coherences or incoherence when SAR teachers facilitate students' speaking skills.

2.10.2 LTC in English Language Teaching: Past and Present Research

To gain a deeper understanding of the concept of Language Teacher Cognition, it is important to examine both earlier and more recent research findings that show how these sources operate in practice. Looking at studies across time allows us to trace how ideas on teacher cognition have evolved and to evaluate their relevance in different contexts.

Research shows that teachers' beliefs are shaped at their early years and continue to influence how they teach. Lortie's (1975) concept on the 'apprenticeship of

observation' explains how student-teachers always bring along their initial beliefs about teaching, formed after years of watching their own teachers. They usually adopt strategies they like and reject practices that gave them negative experience (Borg, 2005; Gao & Xu, 2022).

Teacher education also shapes cognition and practice. Pre-service programs can change teachers' views about teaching but not as much as in-service training which often produces stronger, practical impact (Amemasor et al., 2025; Cabaroglu & Roberts, 2000; L. Li, 2012; Uzorka et al., 2024). In-service training promotes professionalism, reflective practice, and better classroom management as it exposes teachers to real classroom challenges which bridges theory with practice (Gan, 2013; Makhmetova et al., 2025; Noreen et al., 2025). Despite this, the relationship between beliefs and classroom practice is not always straightforward. While some studies confirm the coherence between teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices, other studies show otherwise (Başar, 2020; Sun & Yussof, 2019; Ye & Hu, 2024). More often than not, teachers change their methods to fit classroom realities. Teachers trained in communicative approaches often revert to traditional methods when facing low-proficiency students, heavy workloads, and exam pressures (Flint et al., 2024; Richards, 2006; Valencia, 2009).

In addition, teachers' classroom decisions are also shaped by contextual factors such as institutional culture, collaboration with colleagues, and parental expectations. Peer collaboration also plays a role, as teachers adapt their beliefs and practices through professional dialogue and shared experiences with colleagues. Likewise, parental expectations may pressure teachers to emphasize exam-oriented instruction rather than communicative goals, shaping both their classroom decisions and long-term teaching beliefs (Kang & Cheng, 2014; Lőrincz, 2023; Sokha, 2024). These findings suggest that teacher cognition is dynamic and context-bound, evolving in response to multiple external factors that either support or constrain classroom practices.

In a nutshell, research shows that teacher cognition and classroom practices are closely related, but the relationship is not fixed. There have been cases whereby beliefs translate smoothly into practice but more often than not, contextual pressures lead to compromise or even contradictions (Borg, 2021). This flexibility reflects that teacher cognition is dynamic, constantly negotiated between personal beliefs, professional training, and the realities of the classroom. Therefore, drawing from both

earlier foundational studies and recent empirical evidence is essential to provide a balanced and comprehensive understanding of how beliefs translate, or fail to translate into classroom practice.

2.10.3 Limitations of LTC Framework

While the Language Teacher Cognition framework has become an important lens for examining what teachers think, believe, and know, it is not without limitations. Kubanyiova (2012) argued that while the LTC framework is always referred to as a lens to examine teacher beliefs, it often overlooks emotional, motivational, and identity factors shaping classroom practice. A researcher might ask teachers what they believe about questioning in class but ignore how their feelings or identity as non-native speakers affect their teaching. Similarly, Feryok and Oranje (2015) caution that LTC is also limited in describing how cognitive devices evolve over time and interact with broader sociocultural and institutional contexts. For example, a teacher's beliefs about the effectiveness of group activity work may change if the school prioritizes the exam-oriented approach.

One persistent critique is that LTC research often relies heavily on self-reports and interviews, raising doubts about validity and the extent to which teacher beliefs align with their actual classroom practices (Çetin, 2023). A teacher may say in an interview that he or she believes in communicative activities, but in the classroom, she or he still dominates most of the classroom talk. In addition, the framework also provides limited insights into how cognition shapes student learning outcomes, leaving a gap in understanding its pedagogical impact towards the students (Truong, 2024). A teacher may strongly advocate communicative activities, but research on investigating how their beliefs actually help students improve their speaking skills are scarce (Kubanyiova, 2015). Without connecting teacher cognition to student outcomes, it is hard to see the real impact of these beliefs on actual learning experiences.

2.10.4 LTC and Classroom Observation: Why Does It Matter?

The clearest evidence of whether teacher beliefs are congruent or incongruent with practice can be seen in classroom interactions where beliefs are manifested, negotiated, or compromised in real time. Through their questioning, prompting, and

feedback, teachers shape the opportunities for the students to practise, and these choices reflect the extent to which communicative goals are achieved (X. Li & Hu, 2024). When teachers consistently provide space for extended student responses, their classroom discourse reflects congruence with beliefs in communicative teaching. Conversely, when interaction is dominated by teacher talk or restricted to closed questioning, incongruence is evident, as opportunities for oral development are limited.

In the context of SAR schools, the focus becomes even more critical, as teachers are given greater responsibility to deliver a national curriculum while simultaneously balancing religious knowledge and values, a dual demand that often shapes how interaction unfolds in classrooms (Rahman et al., 2023). Such circumstances highlight the pressing need to systematically examine classroom interaction, allowing researchers to determine the extent to which teacher beliefs are reflected in practice. Classroom observation is therefore essential in teacher cognition research, directly linking it to the second objective of the present study, which is to observe how teachers facilitate their student-teacher interaction patterns with the main goal to enhance their students' speaking skills. According to Cabiago (2021), observations offer a unique lens into the realities of classroom events, capturing actual teacher-student exchanges, patterns of talk, the quality of scaffolding and feedback provided. Unlike interviews or surveys, observations enable researchers to access first-hand occurring data, providing transparent and reliable evidence of pedagogical effectiveness. It also makes it possible to evaluate not only what teachers claim to do but how interaction actually unfolds in real time, thereby offering a more comprehensive account of teaching and learning processes.

2.11 Analytical Tools for Classroom Interaction

Classroom interaction provides concrete evidence of teachers' thinking in action reflected through their questioning, speaking activities organised and step-by-step facilitation. Such observation goes beyond teachers' beliefs, showing how teaching truly works in practice (Gosen et al., 2025). However, analysing teacher talk inevitably requires the use of specific tools. Several analytical tools have been discussed in the literature, and these will be reviewed in the following sections.

'FIAC', which was developed by Flanders, classifies classroom interaction into three aspects: teacher talk, student talk, and silent moments (Flanders, 1970).

Verbal exchanges are coded to analyse how teachers and students interact. For example, a teacher's question is coded as teacher talk, while students discussing responses represent student talk. The FIAC framework provides a systematic way to evaluate participation levels in classroom interaction.

'CLASS' is an analytical tool designed to evaluate the quality of teacher-student interactions in educational settings. It concentrates on three domains: (i) emotional support, examining how teachers provide supportive environments that balanced learners' social and emotional well-being; (ii) classroom organization which evaluates how teachers effectively manages classroom activities to fully utilize learning; and (iii) instructional support, which examines how teachers assist students' cognitive development through effective strategies like scaffolding, feedback, and language modelling. Research shows that classrooms with higher CLASS scores tend to have students with better academic and social outcomes, making it a key tool for teacher training and professional development programs (Pianta et al., 2008)

Lastly, the 'IDRF' model, introduced by Wegerif (2010), expands the traditional Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) model by adding a 'discussion' stage of intervention. The stage requires learners to engage in collaborative dialogue before responding to teachers' questions, fostering deeper cognitive engagement (Moate et al., 2010). It is commonly used in online lessons where students discuss a problem in pairs before answering their teachers. The purpose of providing some time for the learners to think and discuss before articulating their ideas is to promote deeper learning and increased participation. This approach is in line with the importance of scaffolding and collaborative learning in classrooms (Mercer, 2019).

2.11.1 Initiation–Response–Feedback (IRF) Model: The Tool

One of the most renowned patterns of classroom discourse is called the 'triadic dialogue' introduced by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) who proposed that classroom discourse is usually organised into five ranks, each hierarchically related. The ranks are lesson, transaction, exchange, move, and act. Due to limits in time and resources, the main focus of this paper will be on only three ranks: exchange, move, and act. Figure 2.2 illustrates this framework.

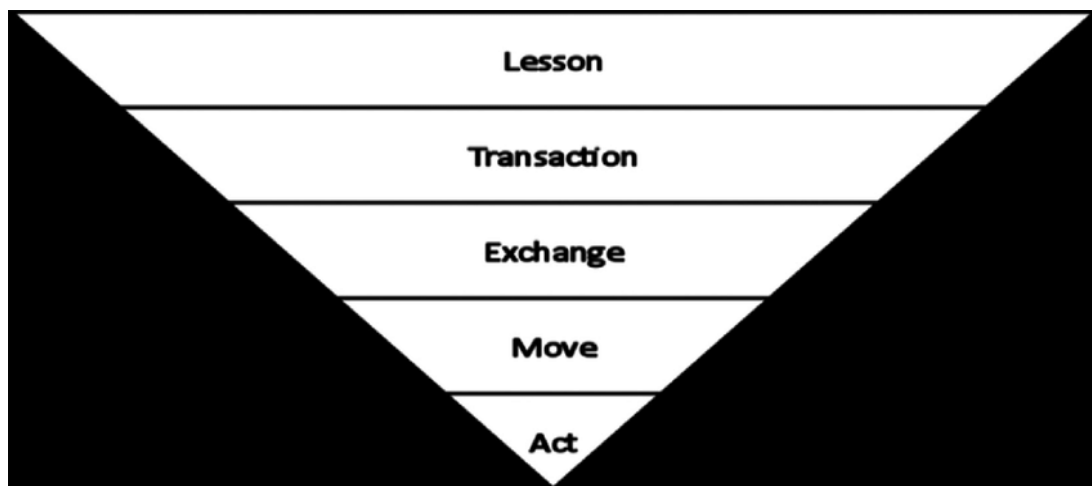


Figure 2.2. Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) IRF Model Rank Level

2.11.2 Exchanges

An exchange refers to a complete dialogue between the teacher and students which usually involves a sequence of interactions. There are two types of exchanges, namely 'Boundary Exchange' and 'Teaching Exchange'. Boundary Exchange marks the transitions between different parts of the lesson. On the other hand, Teaching Exchange marks the stage in which the teacher and students actively participate in verbal exchanges.

2.11.3 Moves

Within each exchange, there are moves, representing individual turn-taking in classroom interactions. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) identified five classes of Moves: framing, focusing, initiating, responding and giving feedback. Framing and focusing normally occur at Boundary Exchanges. An example of common framing is "Let's move on to the next activity," signalling a shift in the lesson. While a good example of Focusing move is "Please turn to page 18" which signifies a new transaction is about to begin.

Classroom interaction is often structured in typical, triadic patterns. According to the authors, the simplest and most common cycle of interaction in a communicative classroom typically consists of three moves: (i) an initiation (I-Move), usually in the form of a teacher question; (ii) a response (R-Move), where a student/students answer; and (iii) a follow-up move (F-Move), where the teacher evaluates the student's answer

and provides feedback. It is the teacher's responsibility to manage this most basic cycle to generate optimum reactions and participation from the learners, helping them to engage in more prolonged, negotiated, genuine verbal encounters to facilitate their speaking skills (Ariska et al., 2025).

2.11.4 Initiation Move (I-Move)

The Initiation move or I-Move refers to the first part in the complete cycle which usually begins with the teacher asking a question, although in rare cases students may initiate the move themselves (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975). There are three types of I-Moves: (i) Informative, where teachers give ideas, information, facts or opinions; (ii) Questioning where teachers request linguistic responses from the students through two types of questions, display questions (close ended) or referential questions (open ended); and (iii), Directives, where teachers direct their students to complete a task by using verbal or non-verbal gestures.

2.11.5 Response Move (R-Move)

The Response Move or R-Move refers to the student responding to questions at the I-Move stage. The students may respond to the teacher's or the other student's initiation questions, or they can choose to respond individually or chorally.

2.11.6 Feedback Move (F-Move)

Finally, the Feedback Move (F-Move) denotes the last part of the IRF cycle. At this stage, the teacher would provide feedback to students' responses and end the discussion before initiating another question.

2.11.7 Acts

Acts describe the detailed actions that take place at each move. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) identified 22 acts that commonly occur in classroom discourse. These acts can be classified under different types of moves, as presented in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2

The Hierarchical Relationship and Types of Exchanges, Moves, and Acts

MOVES	ACTS	SYMBOLS	FUNCTION
Initiation	silent stress	^	to emphasize a marker
Move	marker	m	to mark (transaction) boundaries in the discourse
(I-Move)	starter	s	to prime pupils for a correct response to an initiation
	elicitation	el	to request a linguistic response
	check	ch	to ascertain whether there are any problems preventing successful progress of the lesson
	directive	d	to request a non-linguistic response
	informative	i	to provide information
	prompt	p	to prompt a response to a previous directive or elicitation
	clue	cl	to provide additional information to help students respond to a previous directive or elicitation
	cue	cu	to evoke an appropriate bid
	bid	b	to signal a desire to contribute to the discourse
	nomination	n	to call on or give permission to a pupil to contribute to the discourse
Response	acknowledgment	ack	to show that an initiation has been understood
Move	reply	rep	to provide a linguistic response appropriate to a previous elicitation
(R-Move)	react	rea	to provide a non-linguistic response to a previous directive
	comment	com	to provide additional information relating to a previous informative
Feedback	accept	acc	to indicate that a reply or reaction was appropriate
Move	evaluate	ev	to positively or negatively evaluate a previous reply
(F-Move)	silent stress	^	to highlight a marker
	meta-statement	ms	to help students follow the future structure of a lesson
	conclusion	con	to help students understand the past content of a lesson
	loop	l	to elicit the repetition of a student reply
	aside	z	includes any elements of discourse intended not intended to elicit a reply or reaction, such as the teacher “thinking out loud” or talking to himself.

Source: Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) Method of Discourse Analysis

An example of a simple, complete triadic dialogue using IRF-Moves is shown in Table 2.3 below.

Table 2.3

A Sample of a Short, Complete Triadic Dialogue Exchange

Speakers	Exchanges	Moves	Acts
Teacher	: What is the capital of Malaysia?	I	To elicit (el)
Student	: Kuala Lumpur	R	To reply (rep)
Teacher	: Correct!	F	To evaluate (ev)

2.12 The Rationale for Using the IRF Framework in This Study

The IRF framework demonstrates several strengths over other classroom discourse analytical tools. To begin with, IRF provides a clear and systematic structure consisting of teacher initiation, student response, and teacher feedback, that makes interactional patterns easily observable during teaching exchanges. Moment-to-moment interaction can be easily captured and documented with greater accuracy compared to other tools that rely predominantly on self-reports or broad discourse categories, which often overlook important interactional details (Ariska et al., 2025). In addition, IRF draws attention to how feedback is managed, enabling researchers to examine whether teachers' responses at the third move (F-Move) encourage scaffolding or, conversely restrict competence (Hidayatullah, 2024). This emphasis on feedback distinguishes IRF from Conversation Analysis (CA), which provides a more general account of turn-taking but pays less attention to pedagogical impact, and from Discourse Analysis (DA), which often prioritizes thematic content over interactive moves. Moreover, because IRF patterns are widely observed across diverse educational contexts, the framework is also reliable for application in under-resourced SAR schools. These strengths suggest that IRF is the most suitable analytical tool for the present study, as it not only captures the micro-details of classroom exchanges but also provides a sound basis for evaluating how teacher cognition is translated into practice to support the development of speaking skills.

2.12.1 Limitations of IRF - How Feedback Constrains Interaction

That being said, the short and simple structure of the IRF cycle has been criticized for failing to generate longer interactions that can promote communicative competence (Zulfah et al., 2025). Its rigid triadic pattern manifests teacher-centred classrooms that could not produce sufficient language output from students. Likewise, Balaobao et al. (2024) found that while IRF exchanges can encourage participation in younger learners, they do not consistently foster deeper engagement and communicative development. This limitation is further supported by studies showing that IRF often limits students' opportunities to think critically and verbalize their thoughts resulting in extensive teacher talk time (Hidayatullah, 2024). Similarly, research in Israeli EFL classrooms found that IRF patterns contribute to limited target language exposure, an imbalance in teacher-student talk, and reduced willingness to communicate among learners (Badash, 2024).

In SAR schools, the potential of the IRF framework to enable longer strands of discussion may be restricted by several inside and outside classroom factors. First, when students share the same first language, the issue of mother-tongue interference is prevalent. Students have higher tendency to revert to their mother tongue instead of attempting extended responses in English in daily communication. Over time, this may hamper the development of speaking proficiency (Irene et al., 2023).

Second, students with mixed levels of English proficiency in the same classroom create uneven interaction where more advanced students might respond confidently, while beginner students remain silent and diminishing overall participation (Gustiani, 2018). These realities explain that while IRF offers a useful framework for analysing classroom talk, its effectiveness in SAR settings largely depends on teachers' ability to adapt questioning strategies to address the above issues.

2.12.2 Solution: Free Exchanges to Bound Exchanges

To address this limitation, some scholars suggest modifying the third turn (F-Move) to create more meaningful interaction by probing with follow-up questions that foster deeper thinking within the students, prompting them to participate in longer strands of discussion and encourage them to verbalise their thoughts (Zaswita, 2022).

This can be successfully carried out by utilizing referential questions instead of display questions at this stage. ‘Referential questions’ are high level questions which could stimulate thinking while ‘display questions’ are low level questions in which the answers can easily be found from the teaching materials used (Candilasa, 2024; H. Liu & Wang, 2021).

When the teacher moves beyond the traditional third-turn by opening more space for discussion and deeper thinking, this encourages greater use of language among the students. If the simple IRF exchange (question, answer, feedback) is extended with additional follow-up questions, it can create a longer strand of discussion known as a ‘Bound Exchange’. Compared to Free Exchanges, Bound Exchanges promote more interactive and comprehensive discussions, enabling students to think critically and engage more deeply with the material, thus enhancing their speaking skills. A sample of both Free Exchange and Bound Exchange conversation is provided in Table 2.4 below.

Table 2.4

A Sample of Free Exchange and Bound Exchange

	Speakers	Exchanges	Moves	Acts
Free Exchange	Teacher	: What is the capital of Malaysia?	I	el
	Student	: Kuala Lumpur	R	rep
	Teacher	: Correct!	F	ev
Bound Exchange	Teacher	: What is the capital of Malaysia?	I	el
	Student	: Kuala Lumpur	R	rep
	Teacher	: Do you have any relatives staying in Kuala Lumpur?	Ib	el
	Student:	: Yes, I have. My uncle is staying in KL with his family	R	rep
	Teacher:	: Owh? And where do they stay?	Ib	el
	Student:	: They stay in Cheras	R	rep
	Teacher:	: Good!	F	Ev

In this example, the initial IRF exchange (question, answer, feedback) is extended with an additional initiation (the follow-up question), creating a bound exchange. This encourages more interactive discussions, prompting students to think more critically and engage more deeply with the study material.

To conclude, the simple triadic IRF-Moves has been widely recognized as the most common pattern of classroom interaction across all levels of education. Teachers

have several options at the F-move to generate student's learning. When teachers rely on simple evaluation at the third turn, students' participation will be suppressed. Conversely, when teachers use follow-up questions linked to their students' life experiences, they might generate more student contributions, increase participation, and foster genuine dialogic teaching. Students who participate actively at this stage gain more opportunities to practise speaking, which strengthens their language competence. In this study, the researcher examined how teachers managed the F-move by shifting from simple evaluative feedback to more probing follow-up questions that encouraged their students to verbalize their thoughts and sharpen their speaking skills.

As mentioned in subsection 2.6.1, SCT emphasizes that learning occurs in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where teachers or more capable peers assist learners to complete a task beyond their independent ability (Vygotsky, 1978). This is where SAR school teachers could effectively strategize their F-Moves by scaffolding students' responses with prompts, hints, or rephrased questions, thereby extending interaction and encouraging students to verbalize their thoughts. Mediation through teacher talk also helps in bridging the gap between what students already know and what they can achieve, turning classroom exchanges into collaborative meaning-making opportunities (Lantolf et al., 2020; Nassaji & Wells, 2000). Recent studies confirm that scaffolding embedded in questioning patterns can enhance learners' willingness to communicate and build confidence in speaking (Koyuncu et al., 2024; Truong et al., 2024). In this manner, Vygotsky's SCT offers practical strategies for overcoming the limitations of traditional IRF cycles, and might enable SAR classrooms to become more dialogic, supportive, and conducive to communicative competence.

2.13 Research Gap

Every research effort aims to fill a knowledge gap responding to an issue that may or may not have been raised by earlier studies. The main goal of conducting research is to fill the gaps which might lead to the production of new knowledge. In essence, research seeks to add to the body of existing research literature rather than to rehash it (Miles, 2017).

The issue of moderate language proficiency among students in SAR schools has led some researchers to conduct direct classroom observations in some of the schools

to identify what caused the drawbacks. Some of the studies that employed classroom observations are presented in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5

Previous Studies Involving Classroom Observation at SAR Schools

No	AUTHORS	TOPIC	OBJECTIVES
1	Islam et al. (2019)	Enhancing Quality of Education: A Case Study on An International Islamic School	To identify the factors that can enhance the quality of education in an Al Hilal International Islamic (AH) school located in Kuala Lumpur from parents' perspective among all, the necessity of using English language as a medium of instruction in the class.
2	Othman and Aljuhaish (2021)	Factors Influencing Non-Native EFL Teachers' Identity Construction at a Saudi School in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	To identify factors that influence the professional identity formation of the three teachers
3	Ismail (2013)	Teacher Instructional Practices and Student Achievement in Science Streaming Classes: The Case of Islamic Religious Schools in Kelantan, Malaysia	To identify teachers' instructional practices while teaching subjects of Biology, Chemistry and Physics in Science Streaming Classes.
4.	Baba et al. (2022)	Permasalahan Pencapaian Akademik Sekolah Rendah Agama Bantuan Kerajaan (Sabk) Di Melaka	Investigating the relationship between the school management and the moderate academic performance at SABK schools
5	Kasim (2022)	A Case Study of Malaysian Islamic Education Novice Teachers' Experiences of Student-Centred Learning	This study adds to the research reviewed about the successful experience of novice teachers in implementing student-centred learning, in Islamic Studies classrooms even though they encountered several challenges in their journey.

6	Ismail (2018)	Students' Learning Styles and Motivation in English Language Achievement of SABK Schools in Penang	To investigate the learning styles and motivation of religious school learners and the achievement of the English language
7	Musa et al. (2021)	Understanding Teacher Talk at Islamic Secondary School: A Pilot Study	Investigating the ratio of percentage of Teacher Talk compared to students' Talk
8.	Ilias and Mahmud (2016)	How English language is taught at eight Agama Rakyat Schools in Perak	Investigating how English language is taught based on the criteria of CLT
9.	Jais et al. (2022)	Identifying English Language Learning Strategies Used by Form 3 Learners in a Religious School	Identifying English Language Learning Strategies Used by Form 3 Learners in a Religious School

As can be seen, multiple studies involving classroom observations have been conducted in SAR schools across Malaysia. On the downside, most of them examined Islamic subjects rather than English (Ismail, 2013; Kasim, 2022). Only a few studies focused on English, revealing high reliance on rote learning in SABK English lessons (Ismail, 2018), and the overuse of students' mother tongue (Ilias & Che Ton, 2016; Musa et al, 2021). In addition, there are no studies, at least in the literature, that examine the effects of IRF from the students' perspective. As Kubanyiova (2012) notes, LTC research has mostly centred on teachers, while learners' experiences and benefits from interactional methods are often overlooked. This makes it necessary to investigate how students themselves benefit from IRF sequences in speaking classrooms, which relates with the third research question of this study.

While previous studies highlight useful insights on classroom practices, none have directly examined Language Teacher Cognition (LTC) in and on the use of the IRF framework in facilitating students' speaking skills in SAR schools. This indicates a gap in investigating teacher cognition in relation to teaching speaking, which may help explaining why the moderate mastery of English among SAR students remains insufficiently addressed (Tan et al., 2019).

Investigating teacher cognition about the IRF method is therefore essential, as it can reveal how teachers perceive and implement strategies for developing speaking skills in underexplored contexts like SAR schools. Findings from such research will bridge the current gap while addressing the urgent need to improve English speaking skills, thereby equipping SAR school students with the linguistic competence necessary for their academic and professional futures.

Kubanyiova (2015) argues that one of the limitations of the LTC framework is its lack of emphasis on student learning outcomes. To address this limitation, the present study incorporates interviews with students to gather feedback on how the IRF method impacts their learning experiences. This approach is closely aligned with Research Objective 3, which seeks to investigate how teacher cognition impacts upon their IRF-driven speaking classrooms to support the development of speaking skills. In this study, several student participants were interviewed after lessons in which significant learning instances emerged during teacher-student verbal exchanges. Together, both the students' and teachers' perspectives provide rich insights into how

cognition, practice, and interaction converge to influence the latter's speaking development.

2.13.1 The Importance of Examining IRF in SAR Schools

Studies consistently show that SAR students have relatively limited English exposure outside of their classrooms, making the speaking opportunities that arise during lessons their main and sometimes only source of oral practice (Ilias et al., 2022; Ismail, 2018; Jais et al., 2022; Musa et al., 2021). Under such circumstances, classroom interaction is not merely a vehicle for delivering content, it constitutes the learning environment itself. The way teachers elicit question, respond, and extend talk effectively determines how much cognitive and linguistic work students are required to perform in English. Indeed, if the third turn closes prematurely, the opportunity collapses with it.

Since LTC reflects what teachers think, know and believe, and how their cognitions shape instructional behaviour, combining LTC with a detailed analysis of IRF moves should yield a more in-depth account of classroom practice. IRF provides a close and systematic analysis of the discourse that unfolds in the classroom, while LTC offers insight into the cognitive and pedagogical rationales underlying teachers' behaviour. Taken together, these lenses shift the analysis from describing what happens to explaining why it happens. This explanatory move is critical, because meaningful improvement in classroom practice cannot be achieved by documentation alone but requires an understanding of the reasons that drive instructional behaviour.

In SAR classrooms, divergences between belief and practice are common. Teachers may advocate communicative pedagogy but revert to shorter, less communicative IRF cycles when confronted with constraints such as pressure of high-stakes assessments, restricted instructional time, or students' unreadiness to speak. IRF analysis makes these constraints visible during the verbal exchanges, whereas LTC analysis elucidates the underlying cognitive and pedagogical rationales for the classroom behaviours shown by both teacher and students. Taken together, adjustments in classroom talk can be made to mitigate the constraints and thus improve students' speaking performance. This is particularly crucial in SAR settings, because the

classroom is effectively the only site where SAR students might encounter and practise oral English, meaning that any breakdown in the belief–practice alignment will have a direct and immediate impact on their communicative development. Where teachers’ cognitions support communicative aims, but their practice of IRF patterns remain restrictive, students lose not only interactional practice but also access to cognitive operations (e.g., justification, repair, elaboration) that CEFR intends to cultivate. Conversely, where teachers’ beliefs and IRF moves align, even brief classroom episodes can function as authentic opportunities for linguistic and pragmatic growth despite external constraints. Thus, analysing both LTC and IRF in SAR schools does not merely document instructional behaviour, it exposes the mechanism through which that behaviour either sustains or suppresses opportunities for students to develop speaking competence, which is the central concern of this study.

2.13.2 Congruence and Incongruence Between Cognition and Practice

Although many teachers value communicative and dialogic teaching, research shows that classroom discourse often reverts back to shorter IRF cycles dominated by closed-ended initiations and evaluative feedback, producing incoherence between beliefs and actual practice (Yao & Shao, 2024). These short cycles provide little opportunity for linguistic development and confine students to brief, correctness-oriented responses, thereby leading to passive participation.

In contrast, when teachers purposefully extend the third turn (the F-move) through contingent, open-ended follow-up questions such as “Why do you think so?”, “Can you give an example?”, or “How would this apply in your context?”, longer strands of discussion can be generated that will require students to retrieve, reformulate, justify ideas and verbalize their thoughts. As a result, students should be able to produce speech that is richer in vocabulary and more complex in structure (Kurniawati, 2023). Such dialogic exchanges build learners’ agency and verbal reasoning. With repetition over time, these opportunities strengthen students’ ability to express complex ideas in English with greater confidence and clarity, thereby realising the aims of communicative pedagogy in practice (Mercer, 2019).

For SAR schools, where exposure to English outside class is minimal, such interaction is especially crucial. Beliefs about teaching speaking can only be successfully translated in the classrooms if teachers consistently use IRF moves to push students towards reasoning, elaboration, and extended responses. Further research reveals that richer interaction increases self-efficacy which then enhances the willingness to communicate (Z. Liu et al., 2025), outcomes that are vital for SAR students who often practise only mechanistic rote recitation (Ismail, 2018). Improving IRF quality is therefore more than a mere technical adjustment in questioning, rather, it is a strategic tool to create interactive classrooms that increase participation, sustain motivation, and gradually upgrade students' speaking skill. This point directly informs Research Question 2, as it allows the researcher to examine whether teachers' classroom practices truly reflect their beliefs about teaching speaking, particularly in the ways that they shape IRF cycles to foster meaningful speaking opportunities.

2.13.3 Implications for Teacher Development and Student Learning

The literature reviewed throughout this chapter points to a tentative conclusion, that the development of speaking skills is not a result of curriculum alignment, textbook change, or exposure to English, but is mediated by the teachers shaping and regulating their classroom talk. Teachers shape the interaction through their questioning routines, their length of elaboration, and the point at which they end a discourse. These choices determine whether students will get genuine opportunities to speak or are restricted from doing so. As a result, our students do not develop speaking proficiency by being told about speaking, instead, they acquire it through participation in sustained speaking events. This implies that the quality and frequency of interactional activities function as the means through which oral competence is either enabled or constrained. Accordingly, teacher professional development should focus on building teachers' interactional competence. It should strengthen the teachers' capacity to initiate, sustain, and scaffold oral participation so that what is planned in the curriculum comes out as real spoken utterances (Foster, 2020).

Consequently, within the context of this study, teacher professional development (PD) is necessary for deepening teachers' knowledge of how to employ

IRF effectively in their speaking instruction. This involves how to elicit questions, sustain and regulate oral participation through questioning, scaffolding and feedback timing. Evidence from recent work on teacher learning reveals that video-enhanced reflection and feedback can measurably improve interactional practices, reduce negative evaluation and increase learner talk (Foster, 2020). In truth, one-off workshops are insufficient to improve the teaching of speaking. Meaningful improvement occurs only when teachers engage in sustained, high-frequency practice within actual classroom settings. Meta-analyses and systematic reviews indicate that repeated rehearsal of techniques in situated teaching contexts is the most effective driver of changes in instructional practice and, in turn, of measurable improvement in learner outcomes (Balta et al., 2023).

These relate directly to the objectives of this study, which are to understand how teachers conceptualise IRF and how those conceptualisations are manifested in classroom interaction. Current developments in language teacher cognition research indicate that what teachers think and value about IRF is the most immediate driver of how they manage classroom talk. The findings revealed that the linguistic choices teachers make, the way they manage interaction, and the manner in which they control classroom discourse are directly associated with their learners' willingness to communicate and their opportunities to practise speaking (Wang et al., 2024). Therefore, understanding teachers' facilitation of the IRF method from the lens of LTC is a necessary precondition before any intervention aimed at improving student learning can be meaningfully undertaken.

In the SAR context, PD that is anchored in IRF analysis through the lens of LTC enables teachers to identify how their beliefs and instructional decisions shape students' speaking opportunities. As teacher talk becomes more facilitated, students' ability to articulate ideas coherently and confidently improves. In this way, the SAR universal aspiration to produce graduates capable of conveying Islamic messages at the international level is advanced not only through content mastery but through strengthened pedagogical practice. That being said, as clearly established in this chapter, the development of speaking skills cannot be assumed from exposure alone; it depends on whether teachers can facilitate interaction processes to assist their students

to produce spoken language in real time rather than merely talk or learn about the skill (Foster, 2020)

Taken together, these insights justify the need for empirical examination of how teachers think about speaking and how they operationalise those cognitions in classroom discourse. The following chapter translates these implications into a methodological design for investigating the relationship between teacher thinking and interactional practice in SAR speaking classrooms.

2.14 Summary

Taken together, this chapter has shown that SAR schools operate within a long historical trajectory in which Islamic education evolved from traditional institutions to the present educational system. The rise of integrated Islamic schools and the inclusion of English subject in SAR schools should be viewed as a result of the combination of Islamic epistemology, national curricular compliance, and community expectations. In the SAR context, English speaking also carries an epistemic role as it is expected to support the schools' broader mission of producing graduates who are able to represent Islam credibly in wider social and societal domains. Without a doubt, speaking is cognitively, affectively, interactionally, and pragmatically demanding, and the classroom is the principal site in which SAR students receive the opportunity to practise this productive skill. Since many SAR students have minimal exposure to English, the conduct of interaction inside the classroom is not supplementary to learning but constitutes the learning environment itself. Although the CEFR-aligned curriculum positions speaking as communicative, meaning-driven, and interaction-based, studies show that classroom implementation remains limited.

The chapter also reviewed evidence, both in Malaysia and abroad, of incongruence between teacher beliefs and classroom practices. More often than not, teachers frequently revert to form-focused or exam-driven routines under structural constraints. To interpret these discrepancies, Language Teacher Cognition (LTC) is forwarded as a framework that links teacher beliefs, knowledge, and experiences to instructional behaviour. The Initiation–Response–Feedback (IRF) model was also introduced as an analytic tool to capture how interaction unfolds in real time. In combination, LTC explains why teachers act as they do, while IRF reveals how those

actions are realised in classroom talk. Within SAR settings, this link is analytically important because any deviation from communicative practice translates immediately into reduced speaking opportunities for students. Identifying whether the constraints arise from teachers' cognitions, contextual pressures, or interactional routines is therefore essential for designing meaningful improvements. Chapter 2 has, accordingly, established the theoretical, historical, and empirical grounds for the present study by demonstrating: (i) why speaking matters in SAR schools; (ii) why interaction is the determinant site of its development; (iii) why belief–practice misalignment warrants investigation; and (iv) why LTC and IRF provide an appropriate basis for analysing these constructs.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This study is an investigation into Language Teacher Cognition (LTC) (Borg, 2003) among English language teachers in SAR schools, focusing on classroom interactions and the teachers' contributions to the development of their students' speaking skills. The Initiation Response Feedback (IRF) method (Sinclair & Couldhard, 1975) was used as the primary tool to examine teacher-student interactions and to understand factors contributing to the decline in English proficiency among SAR students. This chapter outlines the research design, justifies the choice of a mixed-method approach, and explains the sampling strategies, research instruments, data collection procedures, analysis, and piloting of instruments.

3.2 Research Paradigm (Pragmatism)

This study is situated in pragmatism, which looks at the reality in SAR classrooms as complex, socially constructed, and can only be clearly understood through multiple perspectives. Ontologically, it assumes that the relationship between teacher beliefs and practices is shaped by the teachers' experiences as language learners, their education, classroom realities, and the constraints of SAR school contexts. Epistemologically, LTC and IRF can be understood neither from numerical evidence nor interpretive data alone; there must be a combination of both to fully comprehend them. Axiologically, the paradigm acknowledges the researcher's ethical responsibility to protect teachers' and students' identities in SAR schools while valuing their voices in explaining challenges. Rhetorically, findings are presented in a formal academic style that integrates statistical patterns with illustrative classroom excerpts. Methodologically, a mixed-method design was deemed necessary, where the integration of both quantitative and qualitative data provides a comprehensive understanding into how teacher beliefs about the effectiveness of IRF were translated into practice (Dawadi et al., 2021).

3.3 Mixed-Method Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-method design that integrates quantitative and qualitative instruments for data collection. Mixed Method Research Design (MMRD) combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches within a single study (Hafsa, 2020). MMRD involves the systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of quantitative and qualitative data in complementary ways. Neupane (2020) further explains that it combines numerical findings from quantitative surveys with non-numerical insights from qualitative inquiries, producing a more comprehensive understanding of the issues being investigated. In educational research especially, this combination is crucial because human cognition, classroom talk, and institutional constraints cannot be interpreted through forms captured by statistics alone. By integrating both bodies of data, MMRD strengthens validity and reliability through triangulation, increases the robustness of findings, and offers a more holistic understanding of the research problem. This integration also reduces the epistemic blind spot of using a single approach, as it allows observable behaviour and reported reasoning to be examined in relation to one another rather than in isolation. This complementary element makes MMRD particularly valuable for studies in education and the social sciences, where complex human behaviours and institutional contexts require both numerical evidence and interpretive data. Accordingly, MMRD is congruent with the pragmatic approach because it allows the researcher to use more than one type of data to answer real research problems. Pragmatism does not insist on one single research tradition, rather it acknowledges whatever method appropriate to produce a clearer answer. By combining quantitative and qualitative evidence, MMRD provides the researcher with a stronger stance to understand the issue than if only one method was used.

3.4 Justification for Choosing MMRD

While surveys are commonly used to generate quantifiable data, they are insufficient on their own (Hameed, 2020), as questionnaires could not visualize actual classroom practices (Borg, 2018). This limitation is particularly critical in LTC studies,

where many of the elements that shape instructional behaviour is unobservable and operate beneath the surface of measurable responses. To strengthen validity, triangulation was employed, combining multiple sources and methods to address the limitations of a single approach, ensuring complementarity and increasing the trustworthiness of this study (Morgan, 2024). Triangulation not only reduces measurement bias, but also enables measuring consistencies, inconsistencies and elaboration across data that strengthens interpretation. In this study, observations recorded behaviours and events in their natural settings, offering direct insights into teaching and learning processes (Renos & Pontillas, 2024), while interviews provided in-depth information about participants' values and beliefs (Monday, 2020). Both procedures complement each other since what is captured through observations can be cognitively justified through interview data, while interview claims can be conversely verified or challenged by the empirical evidence from classroom observations.

This study adopted a mixed-method research design because neither quantitative nor qualitative methods alone could adequately address its objectives. Surveys provided broad descriptive information about the participants, then classroom observations offered first-hand evidence of teaching and learning practices, and finally interviews yielded in-depth explanations of beliefs, practices, and perceptions, including the consistencies or inconsistencies between them.

Thus, to examine the quality and success of classroom interaction in this study, the mixed method research design is advantageous as it helps to generate both quantitative and qualitative data of the spoken interactions between the teachers and their students. Cross-referencing the quantitative and qualitative data would allow for triangulation, which will produce an overall better reflection or evaluation of the notion or concepts investigated.

3.5 Study Design

This study followed a clear sequence of data collection. A questionnaire was distributed to *all* language teachers in 21 private secondary SAR schools in a Malaysian state (Perak) to gather demographic background and their basic understanding of the IRF framework. Pre-observation interviews were then held to explore teachers' beliefs and their readiness before the IRF-based speaking lessons were observed. Classroom

observations provided evidence of real IRF practices during speaking instruction. Student interviews were further included to understand learners' experiences and perceived speaking development in IRF-based classrooms. Post-observation interviews supported teacher reflection after the lessons. A detailed explanation of each step is provided later in subsection 3.13 relating to the Data Collection Procedures.

3.6 Sampling Criteria

3.6.1 Selecting Teachers for the Quantitative Survey

This research involved all English language teachers teaching in 17 private SAR secondary schools in Perak. At the onset of the quantitative phase, every language teacher was invited to take part in answering a set of questionnaires. The SAR Secondary Schools selected for this study were categorised as private Islamic schools registered with the Perak State Islamic Affairs Department (JAIPk). According to the Advisory Board for the Coordination of Islamic Education or *Lembaga Penyelaras dan Pendidikan Agama Islam* (LEPAI) as cited in Tayeb (2018), the Malaysian Ministry of Education stipulated that SAR schools are not under the supervision of the Federal Government and possess several defining characteristics: (1) They are established and maintained by the community; (2) Teachers and staff are not employed by the respective ministries; (3) They are registered as private schools; (4) Each school has its own Board of Directors and committee members, (5) They operate five days per week; and (6), Their funding comes from donations, property endowments, school fees, state government aid, state religious zakat councils, and limited assistance from the Ministry of Education. The list of participating schools is presented in Table 3.1. To ensure research ethics and confidentiality, the names, addresses and telephone numbers of the schools will not be revealed. As Bos (2020) notes, a central principle of research ethics is the protection of confidentiality, which prohibits revealing information about human subjects or their institutions. Therefore, each school is represented by the numerals '1' to '17' replacing the actual school names. This safeguards the dignity and autonomy of participants while preventing potential harm to any individuals or society members.

Table 3.1.

Complete List of 17 Secondary SAR Schools in the State of Perak

NAME OF SCHOOL	DISTRICT
1	Muallim
2	Tapah
3	Manjung
4	Larut Matang /Selama
5	Manjung
6	Ipoh
7	Ipoh
8	Ipoh
9	Kampar
10	Ipoh
11	Parit Buntar
12	Kuala Kangsar
13	Bagan Datuk
14	Teluk Intan
15	Pengkalan Hulu
16	Larut Matang /Selama
17	Teluk Intan

Source: Perak Islamic Affairs Department (JAIP), <https://www.jaipk.edu.my/index.php/institusi/smar>

3.6.2 Selecting Teachers for the Qualitative Survey.

Next, six teachers were selected to participate in the ensuing qualitative phase of the study comprising six pre-observation semi-structured interviews, twelve classroom observations, twelve stimulated recall student interviews and six post-observation teacher interviews. The teachers' names were coded in an anonymous manner: Teacher A (TA), Teacher B (TB), Teacher (TC), Teacher D (TD), Teacher E (TE) and Teacher F (TF).

That being said, during the selection of the participants, unforeseen circumstances required last-minute adjustments to the plan. Initially, with the assistance of each school's principal, the researcher intended to recruit one novice teacher with fewer than two years of experience and one senior teacher with more than five years of experience from the three target schools. This criterion was designed to capture

contrasting perspectives, as combining the insights of novice and experienced teachers can enrich findings. According to Akiri and Dori (2021), combining the experiences of novice and experienced teachers may demonstrate the effectiveness of mentoring support systems encompassing individual mentoring, group mentoring, and mentoring networks that foster professional growth for both novice and veteran educators.

However, unexpected circumstances happened forcing the researcher to modify the sampling strategy. A major difficulty was to find experienced English language teachers in each school, as many of them frequently changed jobs in pursuit of better salaries. This high turnover made it impossible to find experienced language teachers to meet the study's requirements. Another serious issue was that most potential novice teachers were reluctant to participate, citing their lack of TESL qualifications. This left them feeling unprepared and quite hesitant to be part of the study.

Research data suggests that less experienced teachers often lack the maturity and professional vision needed to reliably judge student behaviour or classroom interaction. For example, Kosel et al. (2024) found that in a diagnostic task using classroom video, experienced in-service teachers produced significantly higher judgment accuracy than novice teachers in identifying student learning profiles and interpreting observable cues, novice teachers on the other hand tended to focus on surface behaviours only and missed deeper indicators of engagement. These findings imply that if research samples consist of novice or newly recruited teachers, data on interactional practices may reflect limited diagnostic and interpretive skill rather than stable teaching behaviour.

Upon facing the above difficulties, the researcher revised the sampling strategy by explaining to the teachers that participation would ultimately allow them to explore the effectiveness of the IRF technique in teaching speaking, hence offering a valuable opportunity to enhance their teaching skill and professional growth. Aside from that, a small token of appreciation was also offered as an incentive for those who showed interest to participate. This approach aligns with convenience sampling, a non-probability technique applied when researchers have limited access to populations or sites, making it necessary to recruit participants who are readily available. It is bound to the researchers' choice based on the researcher's accessibility to the study context, participants, and methodological framework. In such cases, any consenting member of

the target group who meets the criteria may be included in the sample (Golzar et al., 2022).

Fortunately, this last-minute change in strategy proved effective at the end of the fieldwork stage and six teachers eventually agreed to participate, enabling the continuation of the study. Prior to detailing the qualitative data collection procedures, it is necessary to provide background information about the six teachers who participated in the qualitative phase of the research, as shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2.

Details of the six selected language teachers involved in the qualitative data collection procedures

	Name	Academic qualification	Experience	Attendance in CPD courses in 2 years
1.	TA	Bachelor in Science	0-5 years	1-2
2.	TB	Diploma in Quantity Survey & Undergoing Degree in TESL	10-15 years	1-2
3.	TC	Bachelor in Islamic Law	0-5 years	0
4.	TD	Bachelor in Accounting	0-5 years	0
5.	TE	Diploma in Business Administration	0-5 years	0
6.	TF	Bachelor in Computer Science	0-5 years	1-2

The table provides information on the academic qualifications, teaching tenure, and the frequency of attending courses on teaching speaking among the six selected teachers. The academic qualifications of the teachers reveal a diverse background, with only one teacher, Teacher B who is actually (currently) pursuing a Degree in Teaching English as A Second Language with Open University Malaysia. The other teachers hold degrees in a variety of fields rather than in English language teaching and learning, such as Science, Islamic Law, Accounting, and Computer Science. Their teaching experience spans from 0-5 years for five teachers except for TB who has been teaching for 12 years. The frequency of attending courses on teaching speaking within the last two years also varies among the teachers. Teachers A, B, and F attended 1-2 courses, while Teachers C, D, and E have not attended any. This disparity indicates that only half of the teachers have engaged in recent professional development specifically focused on teaching speaking, a critical skill in language acquisition.

3.6.3 Selecting Students for Qualitative Survey

Since it was not feasible to ask students to justify their behaviours while the lessons were taking place, a stimulated recall interview with twelve carefully chosen students was the best way to get the participants' retroactive verbal accounts to clarify their actions. The number of student participants was not predetermined; rather, those displaying the most salient learning or non-learning behaviours corresponding to the types of IRF exchanges described by the IRF framework were purposively invited to participate.

3.7 Research Sites

Initially, the criteria for school selection planned required the six teachers to represent both high- and low-performing schools in SPM English results. This stratified sampling method will provide a better understanding of how teaching practices and contextual factors influence student performance (Hennink, 2022). High-performing schools offer insights into effective teaching strategies, classroom management, and institutional support, while low-performing schools highlight challenges such as resource limitations, teacher-student dynamics, or instructional gaps that may hinder progress. However, following the incident described in subsection 3.6.2, the researcher was forced to change the sampling strategy once again. As a result of the unexpected challenges, the researcher had to rely on the schools represented by the six participants (TA - TF) who willingly agreed to collaborate. While this adjustment limited the variety of school contexts initially planned for the study, it allowed the researcher to proceed with the qualitative data collection in a realistic manner.

3.8 Research Instruments

This study employed six research instruments: (1) A set of Questionnaires (see Appendix 1); (2) Pre-Observation Semi-Structured Interview Protocol (Appendix 2); (3) Classroom Observation Descriptors (Appendix 3A) and the Systematic Observation

Scale (Appendix 3B); (4) Stimulated Recall Student Interview Protocol (Appendix 4); and, (5) Post-Observation Semi-Structured Interview (Appendix 5).

These instruments were designed to acquire both quantitative and qualitative data, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' beliefs and classroom practices in relation to the IRF method. Accordingly, the set of questionnaires, which was the only instrument used to gather the quantitative data of this study, was administered to all 21 English language teachers teaching in SAR schools in Perak.

Meanwhile, the remaining five instruments were used to gather qualitative data for the study. The Pre-Observation Semi-Structured Interview Protocol, the Classroom Observation Descriptors, and the Classroom Observation Scale were administered to six selected teachers as focal participants from the total population. The remaining instrument, the Stimulated Recall Student Interview Protocol, was administered to 12 students to enhance the triangulation of classroom interaction findings.

Through these combined approaches, the researcher was able to triangulate the findings and develop a more holistic understanding of teacher cognition about IRF-based speaking instruction in SAR schools.

3.9 Research Ethics

Prior to conducting actual fieldwork, researchers must adhere to established ethical guidelines to ensure that their studies are carried out responsibly. A key requirement is obtaining formal approval from relevant authorities, which in educational research may include school administrators, government agencies, or institutional review boards. Securing such approval not only guarantees compliance with legal and professional standards but also fosters trust and collaboration between the researcher and stakeholders. This not only demonstrates the researcher's seriousness in carrying out the research dutifully and transparently, but it also conveys a sense of respect to the institutions and communities involved. Complying to ethical procedures also enhances the strength and validity of the research findings which in turn increase the reliability.

Failure in complying with research ethics may cause serious consequences. Proceeding with research without obtaining consent from relevant authorities may cause researchers to lose support from the institutions or agencies involved. Their work may

be rejected by academic circles or professional organizations and in extreme cases, they may face legal actions. Additionally, unethical practices also may damage the researcher's reputation and relationships with the community, resulting in a lack of trust and cooperation in future studies.

Strict adherence to research ethics is essential for the success and integrity of any study. Therefore, to ensure this study complies with ethical standards, the researcher took several proactive steps to obtain approval from relevant authorities before beginning the data collection fieldwork. This is to ensure research integrity and to protect the rights and safety of participants.

3.10 Researcher Reflexivity

The researcher, with a background in English language teaching, was aware that her personal identity and prior experiences could potentially influence both data collection and interpretation. Early contact with SAR schools and teachers may have created assumptions regarding the effectiveness of IRF. To minimise such bias, the researcher tried to maintain professional distance during classroom observations, employed predetermined interview protocols, and recorded data verbatim through audio and video. In addition, peer-checking and triangulation of instruments were applied to ensure that the findings reflected the authentic perspectives of teachers and students rather than merely reflecting the researcher's assumptions. These measures reduced subjectivity and enhanced the trustworthiness of the study.

3.10.1 Securing Approval from the University Research Ethics Committee (REC)

The first step was to secure approval from the university's Research Ethics Committee (Appendix 6), which authorised the collection of data. This approval confirmed that the study complied with established ethical standards, including obtaining informed consent, protecting participant confidentiality, and minimising potential risks. Without such clearance, the research could be deemed unethical or invalid, and its findings might not be recognised by academic institutions or professional bodies.

3.10.2 Requesting Permission from the Perak Islamic Religious Department (JAIP)

In addition to university approval, permission was sought from Jabatan Agama Islam Perak (JAIPk or the Perak Islamic Affairs Department) to enter the SAR school premises for data collection (Appendix 7). Since the study involves schools which are under JAIPk's jurisdiction, this step was essential to show sense of respect to local government agency. Failure in obtaining this approval could result in access denial, or legal challenges, risking the entire research process.

3.10.3 Submitting Permission Requests to School Principals

Following that, the researcher submitted official letters to the principals of all 17 SAR secondary schools to request for permission to enter the school premises for data collection. This step was essential to establish direct communication with the schools and explain the research purpose, ensuring the fullest cooperation of school administration. It also helped in facilitating smooth access to both qualitative and quantitative data from both the teachers and students (See Appendix 8).

3.10.4 Distributing Subject Information Sheets and Obtaining Parental Consent

Finally, after obtaining all the approvals, the researcher contacted the student samples and their parents to explain the qualitative data collection procedures. This was followed by distributing a Subject Information Sheet to obtain informed consent for participation in the study. This step ensures that participants and their guardians fully understood the study's purpose, methods, and potential risks before agreeing to participate. It also safeguarded voluntary participation, a cornerstone of ethical research, and protects the researcher from allegations of coercion or exploitation. A sample of a completed and signed form is provided as Appendix 9.

3.11 Construct Validity

3.11.1 Quantitative Instruments

Construct validity refers to how accurate an instrument measures what it intends to measure. In this study, two quantitative instruments were used: the Questionnaire (Appendix 1) and the Classroom Observation Descriptors together with the Systematic Observation Scale (Appendix 3A and 3B). Both instruments were developed based on the two theoretical frameworks underpinning the study, namely the LTC framework and the IRF model. Construct validation was carried out through expert review following procedures recommended by Noble & Healy (2019), using the Content Validity Index (CVI) to quantify expert agreement.

Each item was evaluated according to three criteria: (1) Relevance to the construct; (2) Clarity of wording; and (3) Appropriateness of the response categories. Then, chosen experts rated the items using a four-point scale, and their ratings were converted into the Item-Level Content Validity Index or I-CVI. An I-CVI of 1.00 indicates full agreement among the experts that an item is clear, relevant, and measures the construct it is intended to measure.

Three experts in TESL, applied linguistics, and classroom discourse participated in the validation process. All held postgraduate qualifications and had extensive experience in English language teaching, supervision, and research. They independently reviewed the instruments and recorded their evaluations in structured validation forms. Their background and expertise ensured reliable judgement of the items' clarity and alignment with the theoretical constructs.

3.11.1.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of three sections: Part A (teacher background), Part B (professional development), and Part C (IRF-related beliefs and practices). For the questionnaire, the experts rated each item on a four-point scale. Scores of 3 and 4 were considered acceptable and were used to calculate the I-CVI by dividing the number of experts who rated an item as valid by the total number of reviewers. All items in these three sections received high ratings from the reviewers, resulting in an I-CVI of 1.00

for each item. This shows that the experts agreed that all items were relevant, clear, and appropriate for measuring the intended constructs. Minor suggestions were made to improve wording in several items in Part B and Part C, but no item required removal or major restructuring. Overall, the questionnaire demonstrated strong construct validity.

3.11.1.2 Classroom Observation Descriptors and Systematic Observation Scale

The second instrument consisted of 62 items organised across twelve sections to capture different aspects of classroom interaction and IRF-related behaviours. For the Classroom Observation Descriptors and Systematic Observation Scale, the experts used section-specific rating categories such as Excellent / Good / Adequate / Inadequate or Fully appropriate / Largely appropriate / Partially appropriate / Not appropriate. These were standardised into a four-point numerical scale, and I-CVI values were calculated using the same method as the questionnaire. All of the reviewers rated the items positively, and every item achieved an I-CVI of 1.00. This indicates agreement that the descriptors were clear, theoretically aligned, and appropriate for use in classroom observation. Reviewers recommended small refinements to fix minor wording issues and improve descriptor consistency across sections, but no item required removal, and the overall structure of the scale remained intact. The results confirm that the observation instrument is conceptually robust and suitable for analysing teacher–student interaction in speaking lessons (Appendix 10).

3.11.2 Qualitative Instruments

Qualitative validity, often referred to as trustworthiness, ensures that the qualitative components of a study accurately reflect participants’ perspectives and are aligned with the research objectives. Unlike quantitative validity, qualitative instrument validation does not rely on numerical indices or statistical procedures. Instead, it emphasises processes such as expert consultation, supervisory review, iterative refinement, and conceptual coherence. These strategies are widely recommended in qualitative research frameworks (Miles et al., 2020).

In this study, the qualitative instruments consisted of two components: (1) Open-ended prompts embedded within the questionnaire, and (2) Semi-structured

interview protocol designed to triangulate the quantitative findings and explore teachers' reasoning behind their beliefs and classroom practices. The validity of these instruments was established through continuous supervisory engagement and structured consultation with two doctoral supervisors.

The development process included a series of iterative discussions with the supervisors, during which initial drafts of the qualitative items were examined for conceptual accuracy, alignment with the LTC framework, and their relevance to the IRF interactional model. Both supervisors reviewed each prompt to ensure that the wording was neutral, non-leading, and sufficiently open to allow participants to provide detailed, reflective responses. These discussions also helped refine the operational scope of each question so that it corresponded closely to the constructs examined in the quantitative phase, thereby strengthening coherence between methodological components.

Several refinements were made based on supervisory feedback. Some prompts were rephrased to improve clarity, reduce ambiguity, and avoid overlapping concepts. Certain questions in the interview protocol were also reordered to improve logical flow and to ensure that earlier questions elicited broad conceptual insights, while later questions encouraged deeper reflection on specific instructional practices. In addition, supervisors reviewed the cultural and contextual suitability of the qualitative prompts, confirming their appropriateness for teachers working in Malaysian secondary and religious school environments.

Through this structured dialogue and iterative refinement process, the qualitative instruments were shaped to ensure that they were conceptually sound, contextually appropriate, and capable of generating rich and meaningful data. These procedures collectively enhance the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the qualitative findings in this study.

3.12 Pilot Study and Reliability Check

In addition to validity, reliability is essential for ensuring the trustworthiness of a study. While validity concerns whether an instrument measures what it is intended to measure, reliability refers to the consistency and stability of measurements across time or observers (Morgan, 2024). Together, validity and reliability provide the foundation for generating credible and meaningful research findings.

Before data collection, the Questionnaire and Classroom Observation Scale were pilot tested to evaluate their feasibility. Three English teachers from SAR secondary schools participated in the pilot study but were excluded from the main sample. The procedures mirrored those of the actual study, including gaining permission from the Perak Religious Affairs Department (JAIPk) and the appointment of mediators to distribute the questionnaires. Pilot data were analysed using frequency and percentage analysis.

To assess reliability, an inter-rater was engaged to review the quantitative report, while the accuracy of verbatim transcriptions from classroom observations and interviews was evaluated using Cohen's Kappa coefficient. This peer-checking procedure determines the degree of agreement between raters, with higher levels of agreement indicating greater reliability. Cohen's Kappa follows the format:

$$\kappa = (fa - fc) / N - fc$$

Whereby (fa) stands for total items agreed, (fc) stands for 50% of all the total items and (N) stands for the total number of items.

The main scale used to measure the strength of κ as summarized in Table 3.3 will be used as guidelines. The rubrics created by Landis and Koch (1977) is believed to be the most currently accepted for measuring the strength of κ (Kock, 2021).

Table 3.3
Measurements of agreement for κ

	κ	Strength of Agreement
1.	< 0	Poor
2.	0 - 0.2	Slight
3.	0.21 - 0.4	Fair
4.	0.41 - 0.6	Moderate
5.	0.61 - 0.8	Substantial
6.	0.81 - 1	Almost Perfect

Two English language lecturers from a higher learning institution in Perak participated as inter-raters in this procedure. Both were qualified English educators, certified by local universities in Malaysia and with over five years of teaching

experience. After calculating Cohen's Kappa coefficient which ranges from -1 to 1, the result indicated a strong level of agreement between the raters, confirming the reliability of the data.

3.12.1 Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Report

3.12.1.1 Questionnaire

This subsection presents the consistency reliability of the questionnaire using Cronbach's Alpha. The questionnaire was designed to evaluate several aspects related to teacher demographics, professional development, and IRF teaching strategies. The questionnaire was distributed to two teachers, Sample A and Sample B who did not participate in the actual study. Their responses were analysed to determine the degree of consistency, which shows how well the items in the questionnaire correlate with each other. Cronbach's Alpha was chosen as the primary reliability measure and a higher Cronbach's Alpha score signifies a stronger interrelation among the items. The generated result was 0.90, which represents very strong reliability. A reliability score of this scale suggests that the items in the questionnaire are highly consistent and provide reliable measurements. The high Cronbach's Alpha score (0.90) further suggests that the questionnaire items are strongly related and measure the intended constructs reliably. This also means that the questionnaire can be used confidently in further research without concerns about inconsistent responses.

3.12.1.2 Systematic Classroom Observation Scale

The computed Cronbach's Alpha for the second instrument, the Classroom Systematic Observation Scale is 0.833, indicating good reliability. The high Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.833 proposes that the observation scale affords consistent and reliable data when utilised across different classroom settings. The strong internal consistency suggests that the items are well-structured and measure the intended constructs effectively. A good reliability score also ensures that any data collected using this scale

can be trusted for classroom research, teacher evaluations, and instructional improvements.

3.13 Data Collection Procedures

Before commencing data collection, several protocol measures were established in consultation with the school authorities. With the principals' consent, a mediator was appointed in each school to monitor the process as the six teacher participants were drawn from five different schools. The following subsection outlines the data collection procedures in detail, including the research questions addressed, the methods employed, the expected outcomes, and the instruments used.

3.13.1 Distribution of Questionnaire

The purpose of the activities at this stage was to generate quantitative data to answer RQ1: "What are the teachers' existing knowledge and beliefs pertaining to the role of IRF Moves in teacher-student classroom interaction to facilitate students' speaking skills?"

A set of questionnaires was administered to all 21 teacher participants from 17 private SAR secondary schools in Perak. It consists of three parts. Part A, Demographic Data Analysis, contains questions to obtain the participants' personal details. Part B investigates the frequency of professional development courses attended in the past two years, and Part C contains questions examining the teachers' cognition regarding the effectiveness of IRF in assisting students' speaking skills.

3.13.1.1 Part A: Demographic Analysis

Part A: Demographic Analysis consists of questions obtaining the participants' personal details such as their age, highest academic qualifications, years of service, reasons for teaching English and number of hours spent attending teaching professional courses. Demographic questionnaires are widely used to collect such information and to identify participants who best represent the study population (Kobiruzzaman, 2022). According to Klimczuk (2021), demographic analysis should look at the quantifiable

characteristics of a population including age, gender, ethnicity, education, employment, socioeconomic status, and other relevant traits.

In relation to this study, the demographic data provided an overview of the personal and professional backgrounds of the 21 SAR language teachers. This information on the study sample was essential to contextualise the teachers' beliefs and practices regarding the effectiveness of IRF in assisting students' speaking skills, as well as to identify patterns and diversity within the group of respondents.

3.13.1.2 Part B: Attendance in Professional Development Courses

Part B investigated the frequency of professional development courses attended by the 21 SAR language teachers in the past two years, with the aim of assessing the teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK). According to Shulman (1986, cited in Jiang, 2022), PCK is crucial as it reflects teachers' ability to transform subject matter into forms that are pedagogically meaningful and accessible to students. Regular engagement in professional development is essential for sustaining and expanding PCK, as it exposes teachers to updated methodologies, current language trends, and recent pedagogical research, thereby strengthening their instructional capacity (Abdulrab, 2023).

In the context of this study, the findings highlight the importance of continuous professional development for all 21 English language teachers. Given the evolving demands on students' speaking competence in the global arena, SAR teachers need sustained exposure to training that enhances both their pedagogical and linguistic competencies. Regular participation in professional development activities not only updates teachers on current methodologies and curriculum expectations but also equips them with practical strategies to engage students more effectively in speaking lessons. Therefore, strengthening professional development opportunities is vital to ensure that SAR language teachers remain confident, reflective, and well-prepared to meet the communicative and cognitive needs of their learners.

3.13.1.3 Part C: Teachers' Beliefs and Practice of IRF Method

This study focuses on teachers' beliefs and practices as proposed in the LTC framework by Borg (2003). Borg conceptualizes four major constructs that shape teacher cognition: (1) Teachers' prior experiences as language learners; (2) Teacher education and professional development; (3) Inside classroom teaching experience, and (4) Outside classroom factors. These constructs collectively shape how teachers think, believe, and act in their professional practice.

Accordingly, the items in Part C were designed to capture both the beliefs and practices of the 21 SAR English language teachers concerning the effectiveness of IRF in enhancing their students' speaking skills. Part C comprised of 15 items divided into two main sections. The first four questions explored the teachers' beliefs and included four items measured using a four-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree). These items aimed to elicit the teachers' personal and professional beliefs about IRF and its role in teaching speaking. The four belief-related questions were:

1. English language teachers during my school years inspired me to teach speaking.
2. I have adequate knowledge of teaching speaking using the IRF method.
3. My teacher training or in-service professional development courses provided me with the necessary and adequate knowledge to teach speaking through the IRF method.
4. Classroom internal and external factors deeply influence my teaching strategies.

The second section, consisting of Items 5 to 15, investigated teachers' classroom practices related to IRF implementation. These items were presented in a frequency format (Always, Sometimes, Seldom, Never) and focused on how teachers and students participated in classroom interactions. Among the examples of the practice-related questions include:

I initiate questions to students

My students initiate questions

I always ask display questions

Students contribute more actively to classroom verbal exchanges.

My lessons possess active, dialogic pattern of interaction

In short, the questionnaire served as the main instrument to collect quantitative data, which examined the teachers' cognition about the IRF method in teaching speaking. With the combination of the demographic information (Part A), teachers' basic knowledge of the IRF framework (Part B), and their beliefs and practices (Part C), the study provided a good quantitative illustration of how 21 English language teachers in SAR secondary schools in Perak conceptualised and implemented IRF in their speaking classrooms. The findings from this instrument formed the basis for analysing the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their actual classroom practices, offering valuable insights into the complex interplay between cognition and pedagogy in English language teaching.

The questionnaire was adapted from Ilias and Mahmud (2016) and modified for this study. In the original version, Part C measured teachers' readiness to teach English using the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. For this research, it was revised to focus on teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and perceptions of IRF as a method for improving students' speaking skills.

As mentioned at the beginning of this subsection, the distribution of the questionnaire represented the first step in the data collection procedures of this study. It was conducted to obtain quantitative data from all 21 SAR English teachers to answer Research Question 1. Before commencing the quantitative data collection, the researcher took several ethical measures to ensure compliance with rules and regulations. The researcher emailed each of the 17 secondary SAR school principals and provided a summary of the study together with the official approval letters from the university's REC and the Perak Islamic Religious Department. After the principals granted formal approval, they appointed mediators from each school to supervise data collection. The researcher then requested for the contact details of the English teachers and, with their consent, created a 'WhatsApp' group as the main communication channel with the participants. The researcher converted all survey questions into a Google Form and disseminated them to the 21 teachers via Google Drive and the

quantitative data collection was completed within two weeks. The results are presented in Chapter 4 through tables and figures, showing percentages, frequencies, and mean scores.

Following the questionnaire phase, the subsequent procedures focused on collecting qualitative data through interviews and classroom observations with six selected teachers as the focal participants of this study. Details of these procedures are presented in the following subsections. The qualitative phase was designed to complement the quantitative results and to provide richer insights into how the teachers' beliefs were reflected in their actual classroom practices.

3.13.2 Pre-observation in-depth semi-structured interview (Pre-O Interviews)

The activities in this stage also aimed to provide data to answer RQ1: "What are the teachers' existing knowledge and beliefs regarding the role of teacher-student classroom interaction in facilitating students' speaking skills?"

The next step was to select and invite prospective participants for the qualitative phase. Six teachers from five different schools volunteered for this stage, with each teacher taking part in an individual pre-observation semi-structured interview, also referred to as the Pre-O Interview. The main purpose of the Pre-O Interview was to identify the teachers' current beliefs about the effectiveness of the IRF framework in supporting students' speaking skills. Specifically, the interview explored whether the teachers believed that IRF could help students speak more confidently, respond to questions, and extend their answers. These beliefs informed the teachers' lesson planning and instructional decisions, as their personal assumptions about what works in speaking instruction guided how they executed IRF-based activities in the lessons to be observed. Their beliefs, therefore, played a key role in shaping the preparation and design of their upcoming IRF-driven speaking lessons (Cabiago, 2021).

The interview questions were open-ended, allowing flexible and in-depth exploration of the issues under investigation (Ruslin et al., 2022). Unlike structured interviews, which often yielded limited surface-level responses, semi-structured interviews provide greater flexibility and richer insights into the teachers' preparation for applying IRF in their upcoming classroom observations (Magaldi & Berler, 2020).

As aforementioned, the instrument at this stage was a set of pre-observation semi-structured interview protocols adapted from Kalpana (2017). While Kalpana’s original study explored LTC in relation to the Teaching Speaking Cycle framework (Goh & Burns, 2012), the instrument was modified to focus directly on the IRF method. The questions served as anchor prompts, leading to deeper, sometimes unpredictable discussions and the emergence of new themes that varied across participants

3.13.3 Classroom observations (CO)

The purpose of this stage was to generate data for RQ2: “How do teachers facilitate classroom interaction patterns to improve students’ speaking skills?”

Despite the success of the Pre-O interviews in gathering qualitative data on the teachers’ cognition regarding the effectiveness of IRF method in enhancing students’ speaking skills, these data might not be adequate to fully capture what the teachers actually did in their classrooms. Therefore, it was considered important to triangulate the data by conducting classroom observations (Borg, 2018) to verify whether the practices claimed in the interviews were actually implemented during actual lessons. Classroom observation is widely recognised as a reliable measure of teaching quality, as it provides direct evidence of instructional practices (Borg, 2018). As noted by Cabiago (2021), classroom observation is a three-tiered activity involving pre-observation preparation, the actual observation, and post-observation reflection, all of which are essential for improving the quality of teaching and learning as illustrated in Figure 3.1.

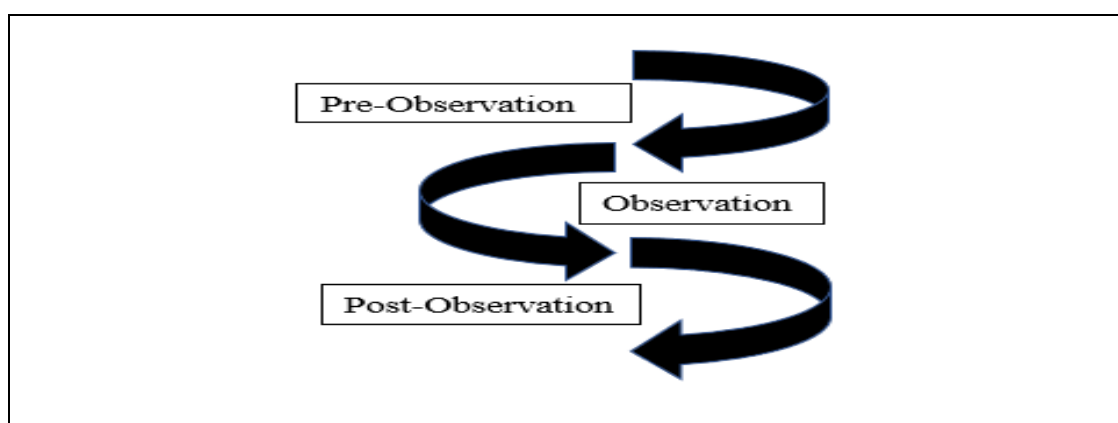


Figure 3.1 Classroom Observation Process (Cabiago, 2021)

Accordingly, the subsequent stage involved 12 actual classroom observations to examine how the teachers executed their pre-planned instructional activities. The purpose of these classroom observations was two-fold; first to obtain first-hand, real-life, and ‘thick’ evidence of how IRF-assisted classroom interactions were carried out in 12 speaking classrooms, and second, to compare whether their instructional practices were congruent with their cognition echoed in their Pre-O interviews.

The duration of each observation was guided by the principle of data saturation (Hennink, 2022; Naeem et al., 2024). Saturation is reached when the data sufficiently captures the variety, depth, and complexity of the topics under investigation, beyond which further inquiry would only produce redundancies. In Malaysian secondary schools, where a single period lasts a minimum of 35 minutes, this duration was deemed insufficient to generate adequate data. Therefore, each of the six teachers was observed in two sets of 70-minute lessons (or two ‘double periods’).

Two instruments were employed at this stage: the Classroom Observation Descriptors adapted from Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) and modified by Jiang (2012), and the Systematic Observation Scale adapted from Galagane (2015). According to Hardman and Hardman (2019), systematic observation provides a framework for quantifying and measuring teacher–student verbal behaviours. In this study, the scale included empty columns to be ticked (/) whenever observable IRF and follow-up moves occurred, as outlined in the descriptors (Appendix 3B), thereby ensuring that all teacher and student ‘acts’ were systematically recorded.

All 12 classroom observations were completed within three months. All six of the English language teachers were involved with each observed twice during double period speaking classrooms. However, only the teaching and learning sessions with active observable levels of IRF exchanges were recorded and analysed. Each class session was recorded to ensure no critical instances were missed, ensuring the quality, transparency, and validity of the study. The recordings also aimed to facilitate the data analysis process.

The data taken from the checklist were then calculated based on the frequency of each act and percentages. This was followed by the data analysis examining the quality of the classroom interactions. Each class was then categorized into ‘Better’,

‘Good’, or ‘Not So Good’ based on the Quality of Classroom Descriptors adopted and adapted from Galegane (2015), as shown in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4

The Classroom Quality Descriptors (Galegane, 2015)

	Better	Good	Not So Good
1	The students talk more than the teacher	The students at some points of the lesson transaction talk more than the teacher	The teacher talks more than the students
2	Most of the students provide numerous responses	About half of the students provide numerous responses	The students provide minimal responses in short sentences
3	The whole lesson shows a number of long strands of discussion.	The strands are evident within the teaching exchange but are less compared to the ‘better’ category.	Only short strands evident

The Classroom Quality Descriptors serves as the guideline in classifying lessons into three levels namely ‘Better’, ‘Good’, and ‘Not So Good’ as described below:

- i. A ‘Better’ class is mostly student-centred, with prolonged discussions. Students talk more than the teacher, giving long and detailed responses, leading to meaningful and engaging exchanges.
- ii. The ‘Good’ category shows a balanced mix of both student-teacher-led interactions. Students actively participate but the teacher still speaks a lot more than the students. Around half of the classroom talk comes from the students, creating a balanced learning environment.
- iii. Finally, the ‘Not So Good’ category can be described as a classroom where the teacher talks the most, and students give very short or one-word answers. There is little discussion, making the lesson feel more like a traditional lecture with minimal student engagement. To systematically classify each observed class into the three levels of ‘Better’, ‘Good’, and ‘Not So Good’, the researcher carried out three analytical steps. First, using the Classroom Observation Checklist a tick (/) was given for observable instances based on the descriptors

so that they can later be mapped accordingly. The researcher then calculated the frequency and percentage for further comparison as presented in Figure 3.3 and explained in the following page.

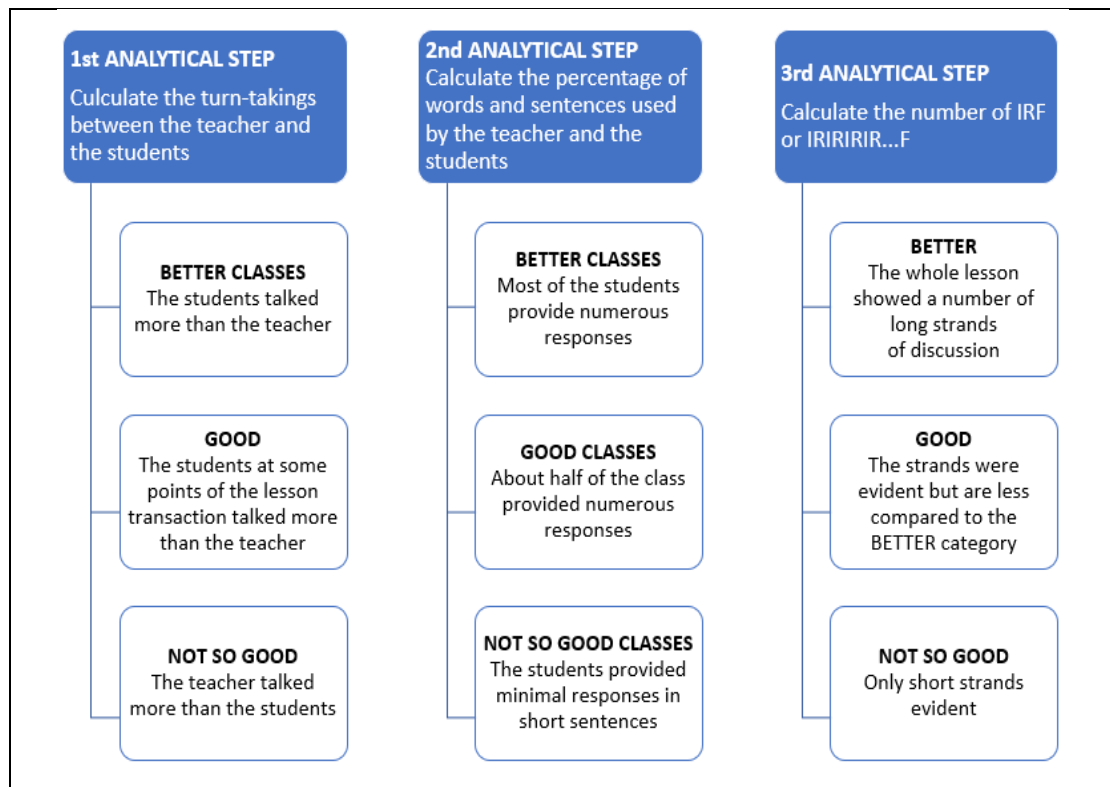


Figure 3.2. Three (3) Analytical Steps Taken in Categorizing the Classes

- i. The percentage of turn-taking instances by the teacher and students and the IRF Moves and types of Acts for each class. (*Rationale:* Teacher dominance showed a teacher-centred approach, while equal or higher student turns indicated a student-centred, interactive classroom.)
- ii. The percentage of words and sentences spoken by both the teacher and students. (*Rationale:* Fewer student sentences and words indicated limited speaking opportunities, while higher student output reflected greater engagement, interaction, and language development.)
- iii. The long/short strand pattern of discussion, generated from excerpts of IRF exchanges between teacher and students over one selected topic. (*Rationale:* Restrictive IRF sequence (monologic) indicates teacher-centred while extended IRIRIRIRIRF sequence (highly dialogic with encouraging follow-ups) reflect student-centred instruction.)

All classroom observations were audio and video-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The recordings not only served as backup data but also provided comprehensive evidence of moment-to-moment interactions, ensuring that all the IRF moves were captured accurately.

3.13.4 Students' Stimulated Recall Interview (SRI)

For triangulation purposes, individual stimulated recall interviews were also conducted with selected students who appeared in the video recordings. The number of student participants was not predetermined but depended on the most salient learning and non-learning instances captured during classroom IRF exchanges. The instrument used at this stage was the Student Stimulated Recall Interview Protocol also adopted and adapted from Galagane (2015).

The interviews were conducted to obtain students' reflections on their feelings while learning speaking through the IRF method, as well as on how the method contributed to the improvement of their speaking skills. This reflection was essential in

providing an in-depth understanding from the students' perspective, of the effectiveness of the IRF interactive method in shaping both their learning experiences and their speaking development. As practiced throughout this chapter, the names of the students and their schools remain confidential. Table 3.4 presents the pseudonyms assigned to these students along with their respective schools.

Table 3.5
Pseudonyms of 12 Selected Students and Schools

NO	SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVES	TEACHER	SCHOOLS
1	Student A	TA	School 1
2	Student B		
3	Student C	TB	School 2
4	Student D		
5	Student E	TC	School 3
6	Student F		
7	Student G	TD	School 4
8	Student H		
9	Student I	TE	School 5
10	Student J		
11	Student K	TF	School 6
12	Student L		

The students were interviewed through online meetings conducted via the Google Meet platform. During each session, they were guided to recall their experiences while participating in both classroom observations. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and to provide a detailed understanding of their responses (See Appendix 11). The data were then analysed using thematic analysis, a method that identifies recurring patterns and themes within qualitative data. This approach enabled the discovery of common themes that reflect the students' perspectives on how the IRF-driven activities influenced their speaking skills. The analysis revealed three salient themes. Firstly, regarding the influence of the IRF method on the students' emotional and psychological states. Next, the ways in which the IRF method helped improve their speaking skills. And finally, suggestions for improving the method to ensure that the students gain maximum benefits. The next

chapter presents these in detail, highlighting the students' insights and reflections on their language learning journey.

3.13.5 Post-observation Semi-Structured Interviews (Post-O Interviews)

Data collection at this stage aimed to address RQ4: "According to the teachers, what are the reasons for the probable congruences and incongruences between teachers' beliefs and classroom practice?"

Each teacher participated in an individual post-observation interview, which served as the final stage of data collection. These interviews provided a platform for the teachers to share their experiences and reflect on their practices, thereby fostering greater awareness of their instructional decisions (Cabiagao, 2021). They also enabled teachers to review lesson details with the researcher / observer and receive feedback to improve future practice (Monday, 2020). To prevent any influence on the second lesson, the interviews were conducted only after the completion of both classroom observations (2 × 70 minutes) (Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sarimah Shamsudin, personal communication, January 23, 2023).

Similar to the pre-observation interviews, the post-observation interviews were semi-structured, beginning with 'anchor' questions that led to in-depth discussion and the emergence of new themes. Drawing on classroom recordings, systematic observation scales, and teacher and student interviews, teachers were asked to explain congruences and incongruences between their beliefs about the effectiveness of IRF moves and their actual classroom practices. They also reflected on how classroom and external factors shaped their instructional decisions.

The instrument for this stage was adapted from Kalpana's (2017) post-observation semi-structured interview protocol. While Kalpana's original study investigated LTC in relation to Goh and Burns' Teaching Speaking Cycle framework, the protocol was modified to align with the IRF method. The revised version included several anchor questions designed to stimulate follow-up discussions.

Quantitative data from the survey and systematic classroom observations were analysed using frequency and percentage and presented in tables. Interpretive data from the pre- and post-observation interviews and the students' stimulated recall interviews

were analysed using the thematic analysis procedures outlined by Miles et al. (2020). The data collection procedures are summarised in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6

Summary of Data Collection Procedures.

	No.	RESEARCH QUESTION	PARTICIPANTS	PURPOSE	PROCEDURES
QUANTITATIVE	1	RQ1: What are the teachers' existing knowledge on the role of IRF-Moves in teacher-student classroom interaction to facilitate students' speaking skill?	All 21 English language teachers at 17 SAR secondary schools in Perak	To obtain teachers' knowledge on the effectiveness of IRF-Moves in classroom interactions in facilitating students' speaking skill.	Distribution of Questionnaire to all 21 language teachers
	2	RQ1: What are the teachers' existing knowledge and beliefs pertaining to the role of IRF-Moves in teacher-student classroom interaction to facilitate students' speaking skill?	Six selected teachers	To obtain deeper insights on the teachers' existing beliefs related to the effectiveness of IRF-Moves in facilitating students' speaking skills,	Pre-observation in-depth semi-structured interview
QUALITATIVE	3	RQ2: How do the teachers facilitate their classroom interaction patterns to help improve students' speaking skill?	Six selected teachers and their students	To examine to what extent both teacher and students modify the IRF-Moves in their classroom interactions to enhance students' speaking skill.	2 x (70-minute) classroom observations for each Teacher A, B, C, D, E and F
	4	RQ3: How do the students benefit from the classroom interaction patterns to help improve their speaking skill?	The selection of students will be based on the observable/non-observable learning instances captured	To obtain the teachers' retrospective verbal accounts to justify their behaviours.	Stimulated Recall Interview (Students)
	5	RQ4: According to the teachers, what are the reasons for the probable congruences and incongruences	Six selected teachers	To get justifications to the probable 'congruences' or 'incongruences'	Post-observation semi structured interviews

between the theory and practice which occur throughout the teacher student classroom interaction patterns?

between their beliefs with their actual classroom practices and subsequently put into evidence

3.14 Conceptual Framework

The research framework is illustrated in Figure 3.3.

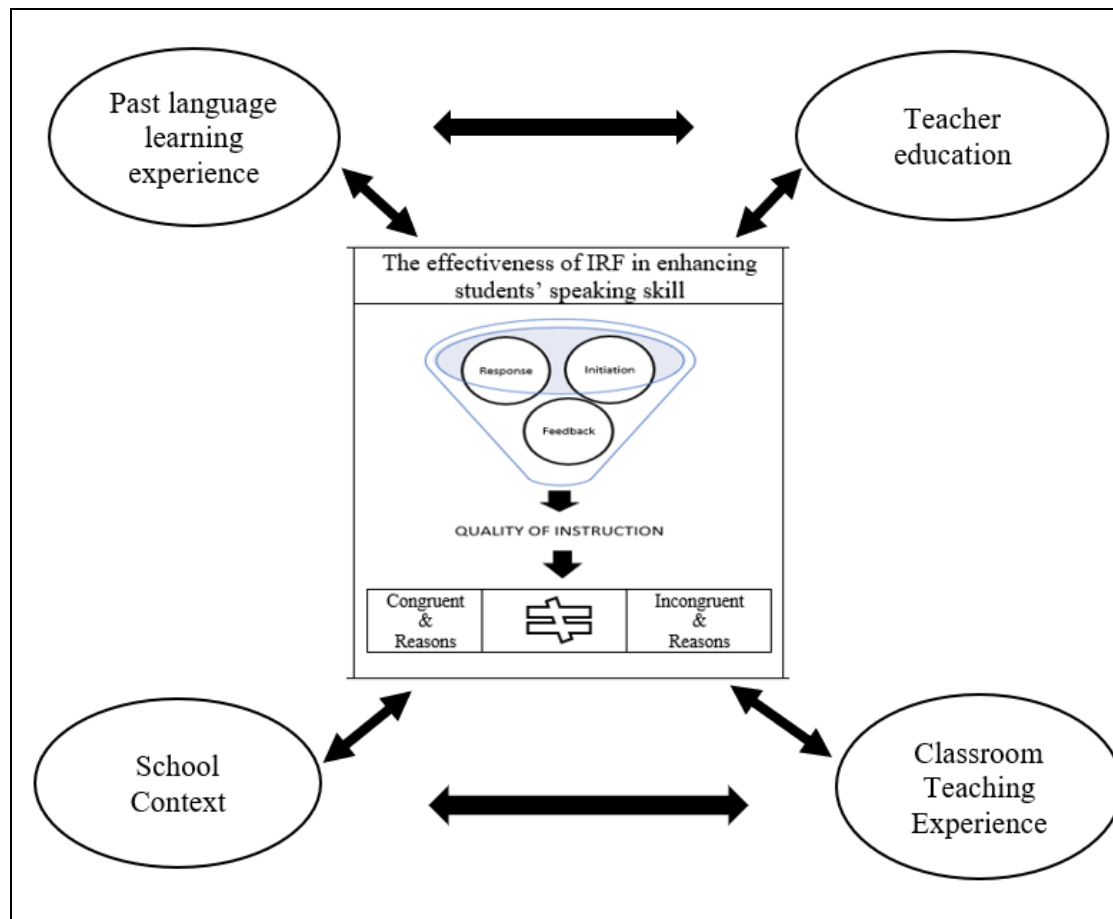


Figure 3.3 Conceptual Framework

Figure 3.3 illustrates the conceptual framework underpinning this study, which explains how multiple teacher-related and contextual factors influence the effectiveness of the Initiation–Response–Feedback (IRF) in enhancing students' speaking skills.

Central to this framework is the effectiveness of IRF, positioned as the primary instructional method shaping the quality of instruction. The IRF sequence, comprising teacher initiation, student response, and teacher feedback structures classroom interaction and creates opportunities for students to speak.

On the other hand, the effectiveness of IRF is influenced by four interconnected dimensions. First, the teachers' past language learning experience shapes their beliefs about how speaking skills should be taught. Second, teacher education contributes professional knowledge, pedagogical training, and theoretical

understanding that inform teachers' use of questioning, feedback strategies, and interactional scaffolding.

Third, classroom teaching experience affects how teachers adapt IRF practices in real instructional situations, including managing student participation and responding to communicative challenges. Finally, the school context, including school management, institutional culture, learner characteristics, and value-based expectations, shapes how classroom interaction is conducted and determines the effectiveness of the speaking instructions.

These factors do not function independently, instead, they interact dynamically as indicated by the bidirectional arrows in the framework. The combination determines the quality of instruction, which may result in either congruent or incongruent practices between beliefs and practice. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the underlying reasons for such congruence and incongruence in order to enhance the quality of teaching and learning of speaking skills.

In conclusion, the framework proposes that students' speaking development is not solely dependent on the presence of IRF itself, but on how IRF is shaped by teachers' cognition, professional background, experiential knowledge, and contextual constraints within SAR classrooms.

3.15 Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis is the systematic process of examining raw data using statistical or logical techniques to define, describe, review, and evaluate findings for informed decision-making (Jabbar & Farhan, 2022). In quantitative research, this process generates valuable insights that are often presented in charts, tables, and graphs, thereby reducing potential errors in interpretation and strengthening the trustworthiness of the results. In qualitative work, extended narratives and 'stories' are presented after extensive coding, categorising and thematising of the textual data collected.

3.15.1 Questionnaires

Quantitative data from the questionnaire scale were analysed using frequency analysis to show patterns in teachers' background and theoretical awareness. The questionnaire summarised personal and professional profiles of all 17 language

teachers, including academic qualifications, motivation for entering language teaching, years of teaching experience, workload distribution, and hours spent on professional development. The instrument also measured the teachers' basic knowledge of IRF and their understanding of its role in supporting students' speaking progress. Results were reported as frequencies and percentages and presented in tables, bar charts, and summary graphs in Chapter 4 to enable clear interpretation and comparison across respondents.

3.15.2 Pre-observation Interviews (Pre-O Interviews)

The Pre-observation interviews with the six selected teachers were carried out to understand their initial beliefs about the effectiveness of IRF in assisting students' speaking skills. This phase examined how the teachers' beliefs informed their lesson planning and guided their instructional execution in IRF-based speaking classrooms. The interviews also explored how the teachers translated their beliefs into planned actions, such as how questions would be initiated, expected student responses, and strategies for feedback delivery.

All the discussion were transcribed verbatim. Thematic analysis (Miles, 2020) was used as the analytical approach to interpret the interview data and generate key themes. The findings were organised and presented in tables to clearly show each theme. Sample quotes from teachers were included to support the themes and maintain data accuracy. The themes were also compared across participants to identify shared and differing patterns in teacher cognition. Table 1.7 shows how the themes are presented. A small example from the full set of emerging themes is shown. The remaining themes are presented in Chapter 4.

Table 3.7

Example of How the Emerging Themes from the Pre-Observation Interview Are Presented

	PRE-O INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	EMERGING THEMES
Part A Experiences as language learners	1. How were speaking skills taught to you when you were in school? Did your teacher use IRF-method	There is a huge difference between the present language instructional approach compared to the one used during their schooling years.

During schools, the approach was mainly Grammar translation Method. Less in IRF use. Teacher C had an anti-apprenticeship experience with her English language teacher. Teacher D had a motivational experience with her English teacher.

3.15.3 Classroom Observation (CO)

The data from the 12 classroom observations with the six selected teachers were collected to understand how their beliefs about IRF were transferred into real classroom practice. The observations focused on how teachers executed their planned actions into observable behaviours, such as the type of initiation moves used, the level of student uptake in responses, and the timing and nature of the teacher's feedback. The classroom observation stage, therefore, provided empirical evidence of the connection between belief, planning, and actual IRF-based speaking instruction. The qualitative data analysis was carried out in several stages as explained below

3.15.3.1 Categorizing 'Moves' and 'Acts'

First, the researcher transcribed verbatim the 'Teaching Exchanges' and classified sentence-by-sentence into Moves and Acts. The example in Table 3.8 is an excerpt from the overall Teaching Exchanges that were observable in Teacher A's first speaking classroom.

Table 3.8
An Excerpt IRF Exchanges in Teacher A's (TA) First Speaking Class

What Is Print Media?				
Transaction	Teaching Exchanges	Moves	Acts	L
TA	So, which of the material you read the most?	TI	elicitation	1
	Is it comics? Do you read comics?			
SS	Yes	SR	acknowledge	2

3.15.3.2 Applying three analytical steps

Using the Classroom Quality Descriptor (Galegane, 2015), as presented in Table 3.4, the researcher classified each of the 12 observed IRF-based speaking classrooms according to the rubric categories: *Better*, *Good*, and *Not So Good*. However, before the researcher could proceed with the classification, three analytical steps were applied as below.

One: Calculating the frequency and percentages of turn-taking between the teacher and the students.

Two: Calculating the frequency and percentages of turn-taking between the teacher and the students of words and spoken sentences produced by teachers and students.

Three: Analysing the interaction patterns using the symbols such as TI (Teacher Initiation), SR (Student Response), and TF (Teacher Feedback). The purpose was to determine whether the dialogue represented a simple restrictive IRF (monologic) or an encouraging follow ups IRIRIRIRIRF (highly dialogic).

All of the results were summarised descriptively and displayed in tables, graphs and charts. Visual summaries of classroom interaction patterns, including the strand length distribution, are presented in graphs for cross-class comparison, with one example of the summary of result provided in Figure 3.4.

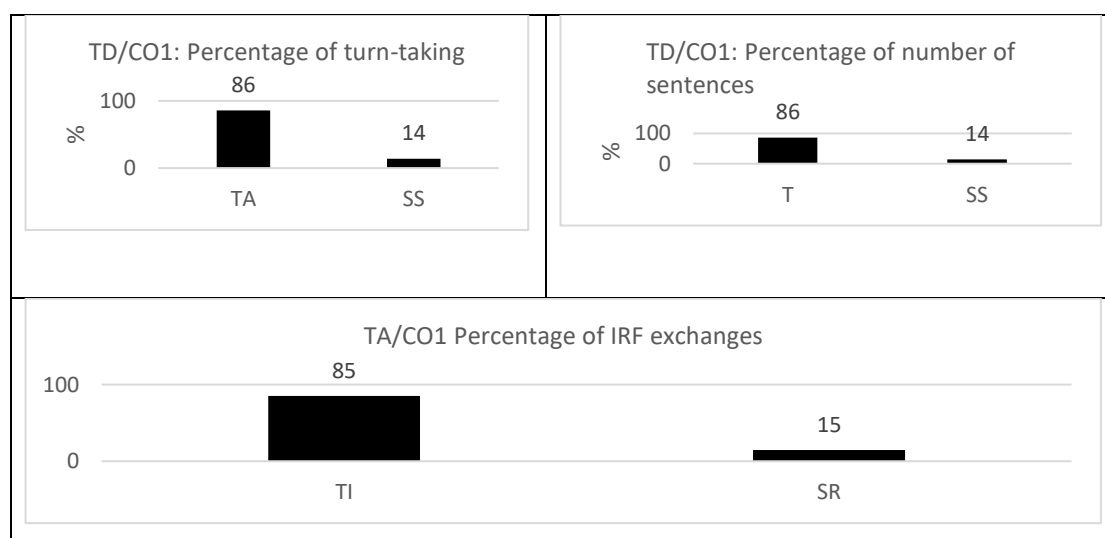


Figure 3.4 An Example of the Summary of Results from the Three Analytical Steps

3.15.3.3 Categorizing ‘Better’, ‘Good’ and ‘Not So Good’ Classrooms

Drawing on the data collected, the researcher categorised all 12 classes into ‘Better’, ‘Good’, or ‘Average’ ones according to the rubric provided by the descriptor.

3.15.4 Students’ stimulated recall interviews (SRI)

Students’ Stimulated Recall Interviews (SRI) with the 12 selected students were conducted to investigate their perceptions and experiences regarding the effectiveness of IRF in enhancing their speaking skills. This phase examined how the students interpreted their experiences learning in the IRF-based classrooms and how the experiences influenced their confidence, willingness to respond, and ability to expand spoken answers during speaking lessons. The interviews also explored how the learners understood and described the effects of teacher initiation, peer responses, and teacher feedback timing on their own speaking progress.

Thematic analysis was then applied to examine the interview data and identify key themes. The findings were structured and displayed in tables to present each theme clearly. Selected quotes are included as evidence to explain and support themes. The themes were also compared across participants to show common and differing patterns in teacher cognition. An example from the excerpts from the themes is shown in Table 3.9 below.

Table 3.9

An Excerpt of Two Emerging Themes Derived from the Students’ Stimulated Recall Interviews

Themes	Students’ beliefs extracted from the SSR interviews
1. IRF reduces language anxiety	IRF reduces language anxiety by providing a structured pattern of interaction where students feel more supported and guided in responding, which lowers their fear of making mistakes.

3.15.5 Post Observation Interviews (Post-O Interviews)

Post-observation interviews with the same six teachers were conducted to examine whether the beliefs stated during the pre-observation interviews were congruent or incongruent with their actual classroom practices. This phase identified areas of conceptual match and mismatch between teachers’ earlier assumptions about IRF, and the interactional patterns observed during speaking instruction. The teachers

were also asked to explain the reasons behind both their congruence and incongruence, including practical, institutional, or personal influences that shaped their decisions. The analysis of the data garnered at this stage were carried out in two phases as explained next.

3.15.5.1 Comparison of Pre-O Interview and Classroom Observation Data

The analysis was carried out by first, making comparisons whether the teachers' beliefs derived from the pre-observation interview were successfully applied in their actual classrooms. The excerpts of the results are illustrated in Table 3.10. Using the same table that was employed to present the themes derived from the Pre-Observation interviews (see Table 3.3), the researcher then added an empty column on the right. During actual classroom observation sessions, the researcher, assisted by an inter-rater, marked (/) for observable instances representing the themes and (X) for those that were unobservable.

3.15.5.2 Reasons for the Congruences and Incongruences

Subsequently, the Post-Observation interview sessions were conducted with each teacher to investigate the reasons for the congruences and incongruences between their beliefs about the effectiveness of IRF and their classroom practice.

Table 3.10

Comparison of Pre-Observation Interviews and Classroom Observations.

Themes	Teacher beliefs extracted from the Pre-O interviews	Observable/Unobservable in The Teachers' Actual Classrooms											
		TA/CO1	TA/CO2	TB/CO1	TB/CO2	TC/CO1	TC/CO2	TD/CO1	TD/CO2	TE/CO1	TE/CO2	TF/CO1	TF/CO2
Teachers' knowledge on CEFR	Helps in teaching speaking by outlining specific proficiency levels, from A1 (beginner) to C2 (proficient)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Teachers' knowledge on CLT	A teacher must be a role model of a competent English language user	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	✓	✓

3.15.6 Expert Review for of Thematic Interpretation

In qualitative research, expert verification procedures are crucial to ensure consistency in both transcription accuracy and the emerging themes. The process requires verification from multiple independent raters. Reliability must be established to confirm that the transcribed dataset, emerging themes, and thematic interpretations remain consistent across raters. Inter-rater reliability was used to quantify the level of agreement among the expert reviewers. When inconsistencies occurred, revisions were made through systematic consensus discussions to support the trustworthiness of the thematic interpretations.

In this study, all moment-to-moment classroom observations and interviews were transcribed verbatim to ensure the authenticity of the conversations. Once the verbatim transcriptions were completed, the researcher analyzed the qualitative dataset and employed thematic analysis using the Miles and Huberman (2019) framework. Coded excerpts, theme categories, and written interpretations were then shared with peers and expert checkers to confirm transcript accuracy, code-to-theme classification, and the coherence of theme interpretation.

The expert reviewers engaged in this procedure were English language lecturers currently teaching in higher learning institutions across Perak. All reviewers obtained formal certification in English language education from Malaysian universities and hold a minimum of five years of sustained experience in English language teaching, ensuring that their evaluative judgments were guided by disciplinary and pedagogical expertise.

To evaluate transcription reliability, this study applied Cohen's Kappa coefficient to quantify the degree of agreement among independent checkers. The coefficient was computed using the formula $K = (f_a - f_c) / (N - f_c)$, where f_a represents the total number of agreed items, f_c represents 50% of total items, and N represents the total number of reviewed items. Cohen's Kappa is a reliability index that can measure inter-rater agreement beyond chance, with values closer to 1.00 indicating stronger transcription consistency. Higher peer agreement reflects greater transcription reliability beyond random concurrence.

The final Cohen's Kappa value yielded 1.0, meeting the benchmark for excellent inter-rater agreement in educational qualitative coding research. This result

indicates strong reviewer consensus, confirming high and stable consistency in transcribed data verification, thematic categorization, and interpretation endorsement providing methodological transparency and audit evidence for this reliability procedure.

3.15.7 Cross-Validation of Emerging Themes

The cross-evaluation of emerging themes was conducted by examining the interaction between themes derived from different instruments. Data were collected through questionnaires, pre-observation interviews, classroom observations, stimulated recall interviews, and post-observation interviews to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the findings. The questionnaire, administered to 21 English teachers across 17 SAR schools in Perak, provided insights into their knowledge, beliefs, and the factors shaping their classroom practices in relation to the IRF method for improving speaking skills. These findings were then compared with themes from pre-observation interviews to confirm consistency

For example, if pre-observation interviews indicated that teachers believed in using more eliciting questions during the F-move to stimulate discussion and improve speaking skills, the researcher cross-checked these views with their questionnaire responses. This comparison confirmed whether the belief was held not only by the six interviewed teachers but also by the wider group of 21 teachers. Classroom observations were then conducted to verify whether the teachers' intended practices were enacted in their lessons. For instance, if a teacher reported planning to use open-ended questions to encourage deeper thinking and idea sharing, the researcher observed whether such questioning strategies were actually implemented. This process allowed for checking the alignment between the teachers' beliefs, plans, and their actual classroom practices.

Stimulated recall interviews were then conducted to gather their students' perspectives on the effectiveness of the IRF method in improving speaking skills. These sessions confirmed whether the observed teaching practices positively influenced students and aligned with their teachers' beliefs. Post-observation interviews explored the reasons behind congruence or incongruence between the teachers' beliefs and classroom practices. For instance, if a teacher in the pre-observation interview said that she or he would consistently provide feedback on students' grammar errors, an essential IRF act, the researcher then checked whether this occurred during the lesson. When it

did (congruence), further discussion identified factors that enabled success, but when it did not (incongruence), the interview explored obstacles that prevented implementation. Throughout this systematic cross-checking of themes, the study ensured the accuracy of its findings and produced a more comprehensive account of how these teachers understood and applied the IRF method in their SAR schools.

3.15.8 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

To maintain focus, the teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of the IRF method in developing their students' speaking skills were analysed through the lens of the four Language Teacher Cognition constructs. These constructs provide a structured framework for understanding the factors shaping teachers' beliefs and practices. Examining the data within this framework highlighted the connections between these teachers' prior experiences, professional training, classroom realities, and the wider school context.

In the final stage of analysis, data from both the questionnaires and interviews were integrated to provide a more thorough understanding of what was really happening. This triangulation not only addressed the research questions but also enhanced the reliability and applicability of the findings. The teachers' successes and challenges in applying the IRF method were interpreted within the four constructs of the Language Teacher Cognition framework, encompassing their experiences as language learners, the training received during teacher education, their classroom practices, and the broader school context

For example, if a teacher did not provide corrective feedback during a lesson, they might attribute this to their students limited English proficiency, reflecting classroom experience. Others might point to the school administration for not offering remedial classes before these students entered secondary school, linking the issue to broader institutional factors. The questionnaires helped to identify general trends in teachers' beliefs and practices, whilst the interviews and classroom observations provided deeper explanations for the teacher's decisions. Together, these complementary sources offered a more complete picture of reality with the questionnaires revealing what the teachers believed and did, whereas the interviews and observations explained why they acted in particular ways. This integrated approach

clarified how teachers applied the IRF method and what challenges arose in teaching speaking. Such a thorough perspective makes the findings valuable for improving teaching strategies in SAR schools.

3.16 Summary

Based on Borg's (2003) Language Teacher Cognition theoretical framework, this mixed-method study was conducted to get an in-depth understanding about LTC from the perspective of teacher-student classroom interactions and how it enhances students' speaking skill. This research involved English language teachers who were teaching in private secondary level SAR schools in the state of Perak, Malaysia. The SAR secondary schools selected are categorized as private Islamic schools registered with the State Islamic Religious Affair Department. The data collection procedures involved the distribution of questionnaires, pre-observation in-depth semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, systematic classroom observation analysis and finally post-observation in-depth semi-structured interviews.

Ultimately, these language teachers are decision-makers who actively and continuously modify their instructional choices whenever and wherever necessary. IRF strategies, for instance, when carefully applied in teacher-student classroom interactions, helped to increase teacher-student interactions, improving students' understanding, enhance students' thinking and language use which will then contribute to the improvement of their overall communicative competence. The next chapter provides empirical data and new insights that will assist teachers in improving the quality of their instruction as well as enhancing their students' language acquisition processes.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

As pointed out by Borg (2003), all teachers' observable instructional behaviours in their classrooms can be likened to the tip of an iceberg emerged on the surface, whereas the huge mass of ice beneath it represents teachers' unobservable mental constructs which continuously shape and reshape their whole thinking processes and instructional decisions. Drawing a parallel analogy, any IRF-Moves shown by the teachers in the classroom interactions can be likened to the tip of the iceberg, but what underlies such behaviours is their continuous thinking processes which are largely influenced by the lifetime experiences such as their experience as language learners, their formal and informal teacher training and professionalism courses, their daily encounters with the students in the classrooms as well as the external contexts of the classrooms itself which eventually shape their instructional decisions. Since this study aims to explore the details of Language Teacher Cognition (LTC) related to using the IRF method, this chapter will present and discuss findings on how effective the IRF method is in improving students' speaking skills, based on LTC framework (Borg, 2003). This framework focuses on "what teachers think, know, and believe, and how these ideas relate to what teachers actually do" (pp. 1).

The data collection procedures for this study were divided into two categories: quantitative and qualitative data collection. The quantitative data collection involved distributing a set of questionnaires to all 21 English language teachers teaching in 17 private SAR schools in Perak to obtain some brief insights regarding (i) the teachers' demographic details, (ii) the teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), and (iii) the teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the IRF method in enhancing students' speaking skills. The quantitative data analysis involved descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores.

The qualitative data were obtained through several methods, including 6 pre-classroom observation interviews, 12 classroom observations, stimulated recall interviews (teachers and students), and 6 post-observation interviews involving 6

selected teachers. The qualitative data were analysed using Thematic Analysis to identify, analyse, and report on the emerged themes across the data.

To guide the presentation of findings, Figure 4.1 illustrates the overall structure of Chapter 4, outlining how data from the five collection methods are organised and discussed. Each data set – questionnaire, pre-observation interviews, classroom observations, students’ stimulated recall interviews, and post-observation interviews is presented systematically to ensure coherence and analytical depth. As shown in the table, every juncture begins with the presentation of findings, followed by a discussion of findings that integrates four analytical components: critical evaluation, linking with literature, triangulation with other data sources, and a mini-synthesis. The final part of each section consists of an overall synthesis, which draws together the main insights to answer the corresponding research question.

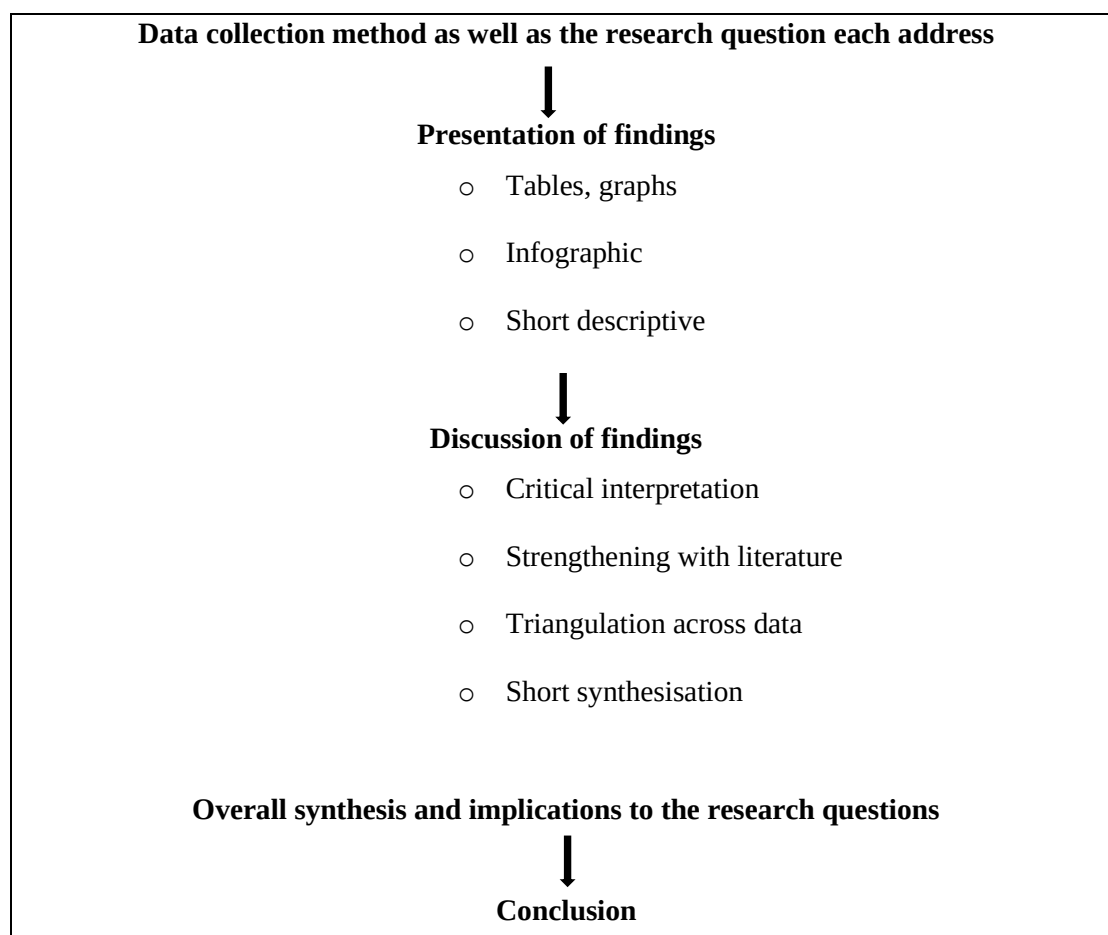


Figure 4.1 Structure of Data Presentation

This organisation is designed not merely to describe the data but to interpret it holistically. By embedding evaluation, cross-referencing, and synthesis at every stage,

the chapter demonstrates how each strand of evidence, quantitative and qualitative contributes to a deeper understanding of teachers' cognition and their use of IRF in facilitating students' speaking skills. In this way, Chapter 4 gives analytical weight to the study, ensuring that the discussion moves beyond surface trends toward a comprehensive explanation of how teachers' beliefs and practices interact within their professional contexts.

4.2 Findings and Discussion of Questionnaire Data

The quantitative data presentation at this stage were meant to generate answer to RQ1 - What are the teachers' existing knowledge and beliefs pertaining to the role of IRF-Moves in teacher-student classroom interaction to facilitate students' speaking skills?

The data collection involved distributing questionnaires to 21 English teachers in 17 private SAR schools in Perak. The questionnaire was divided into three parts, each addressing different aspects of teaching and instructional practices. Part A consisted of questions on demographic details such as age, gender, years of teaching experience, and academic qualifications. Part B examined teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) by considering their frequency of attendance at language teaching-related courses over the past two years. The list of training courses was adapted from Brown (2015) to ensure relevance and alignment with current practices. Part C explored teachers' perceptions of the Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) method in improving students' speaking skills, focusing on their familiarity with the method and observations of its impact on student engagement. The next three paragraphs present the findings from each section.

4.2.1 Part A Findings: Demographic Profiles

Section A of the questionnaire required teachers to provide demographic details such as age, gender, educational background, teaching tenure, and time allocated to professional development activities. These data are displayed in the figures and tables that follow.

4.2.1.1 Years of service

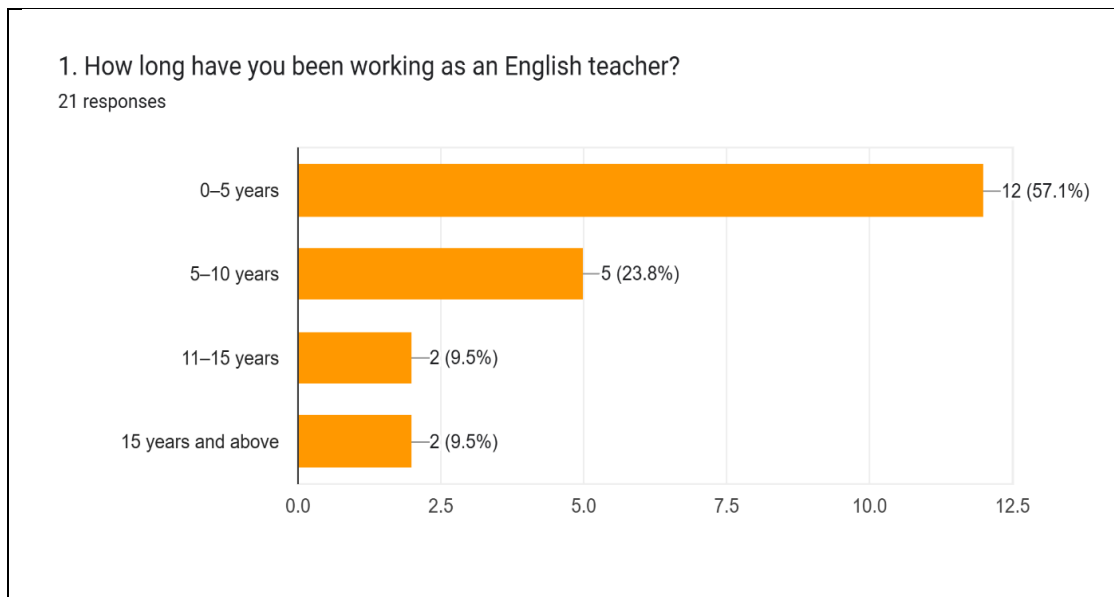


Figure 4.2 – Language Teachers' Years of Service

Figure 4.2 presents an interesting distribution among the teachers based on their years of service. A majority of 12 teachers (57%) had served for not more than five years, followed by 5 teachers (23.8%) with five to ten years of service. Two teachers (9.5%) had served between 11 and 15 years, and another 2 (9.5%) for more than 15 years. This distribution highlights the dominance of newer teachers in the sample while also reflecting the presence of senior educators who also contribute valuable experience and institutional insights.

4.2.1.2 Teaching Experience

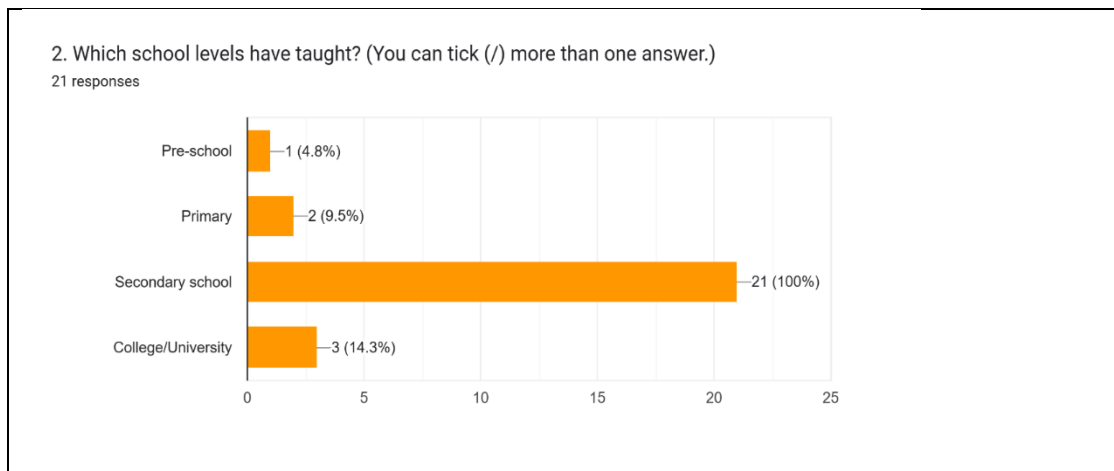


Figure 4.3 – The Teacher's Teaching Experience Spans Across Various Levels of Education.

Figure 4.3 reveals a diverse range of teaching experiences across educational levels. All 21 teachers (100%) were teaching English at the secondary school level, reflecting a concentration of language instruction at this stage. In addition, 2 teachers (9.5%) have had experience teaching English at the primary level, while 1 teacher (4.8%) had taught at both pre-school and higher institutions. These varied teaching backgrounds indicate a rich mix of perspectives and approaches within the English language teaching community at SAR schools in Perak.

4.2.1.3 Highest Academic Qualification

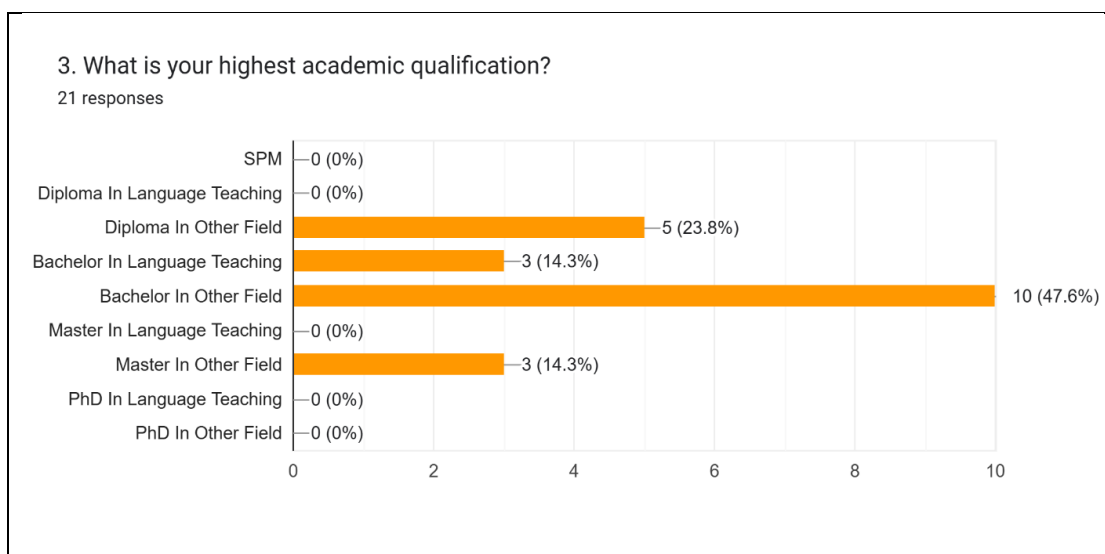


Figure 4.4 – Language Teachers’ Highest Academic Qualification

Figure 4.4 on the other hand describes a diverse range of the teachers’ highest academic qualification. It was found that none of the teachers hold a diploma in language teaching, though 5 (23.8%) have diplomas in other fields. At the bachelor’s level, 3 (14.3%) studied language teaching, while 10 (47.6%) pursued other disciplines. Additionally, 3 (14.3%) possess master’s degrees, but none in language teaching.

Overall, the data indicate the teachers’ varied educational backgrounds and reveal a notable gap in specialized training related to language education. This emphasizes the importance of ongoing professional development and focused training programmes to enhance teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge in English language teaching.

4.2.1.4 Proficiency Level

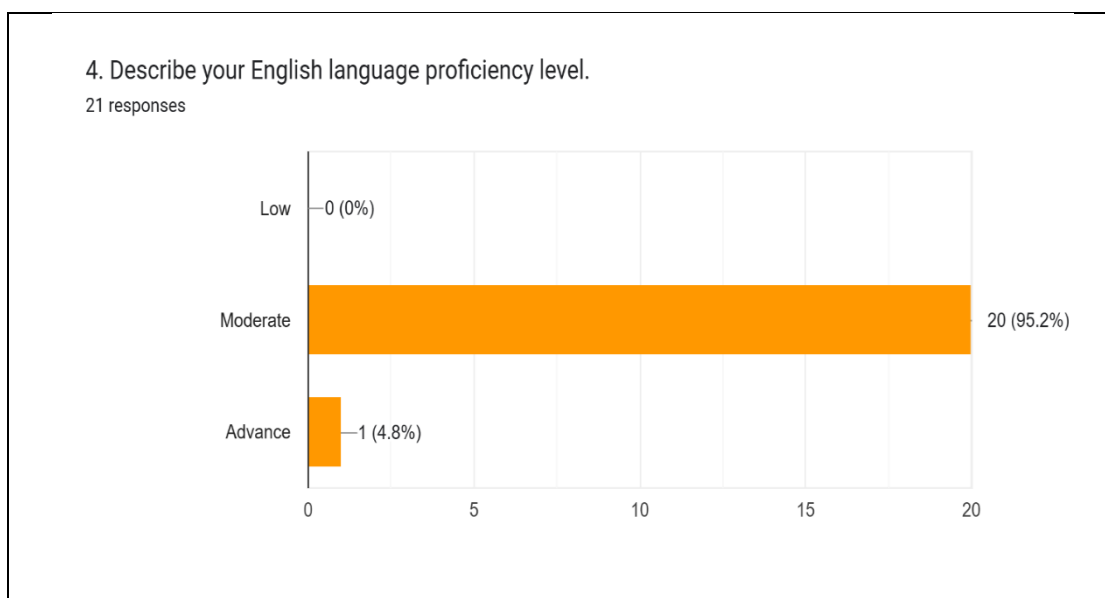


Figure 4.5 – Language Teachers' Proficiency Level

Regarding language proficiency, Figure 4.5 clearly shows that teachers generally perceive their language proficiency at a moderate level. A total of 20 teachers (95.2%) rated their proficiency as moderate, while only 1 teacher (4.8%) indicated an advanced level. These perceptions may be influenced by individual experiences, exposure to language contexts, and personal comfort with language use. Although this self-assessment may limit their ability to position themselves as proficient language users who can effectively support students' learning, it also highlights the need for professional development to strengthen teachers' proficiency and improve the quality of English language teaching and learning.

4.2.1.5 Reasons for Choosing Teaching as a Career

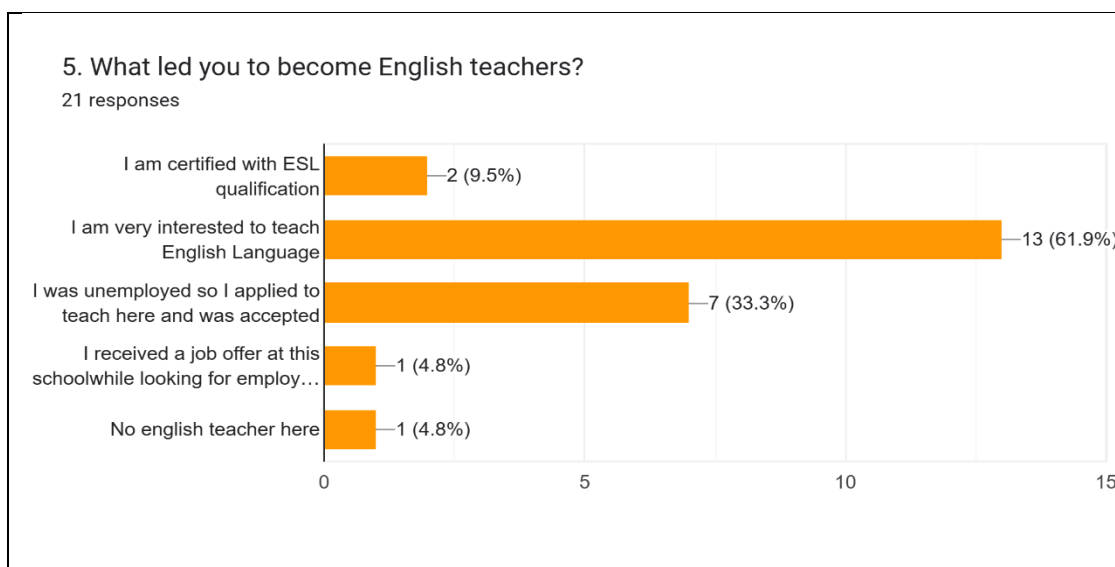


Figure 4.6 – Reasons for Choosing Language Teaching as a Career

For the item investigating the reasons for choosing English teaching as a profession that Figure 4.6 clearly portrays the majority of individuals became English teachers due to a combination of qualifications and genuine interest in language teaching. 2 teachers (9.5%) held ESL certifications, reflecting a deliberate effort to acquire the necessary skills for teaching English as a second language. Meanwhile, 13 teachers (61.9%) expressed a strong passion for teaching English. Interestingly, 5 teachers (33.3%) were both interested and unemployed, indicating that their decision was partly influenced by practical circumstances in addition to personal interest.

4.2.1.6 Minimum Qualification for Language Teacher Recruitment

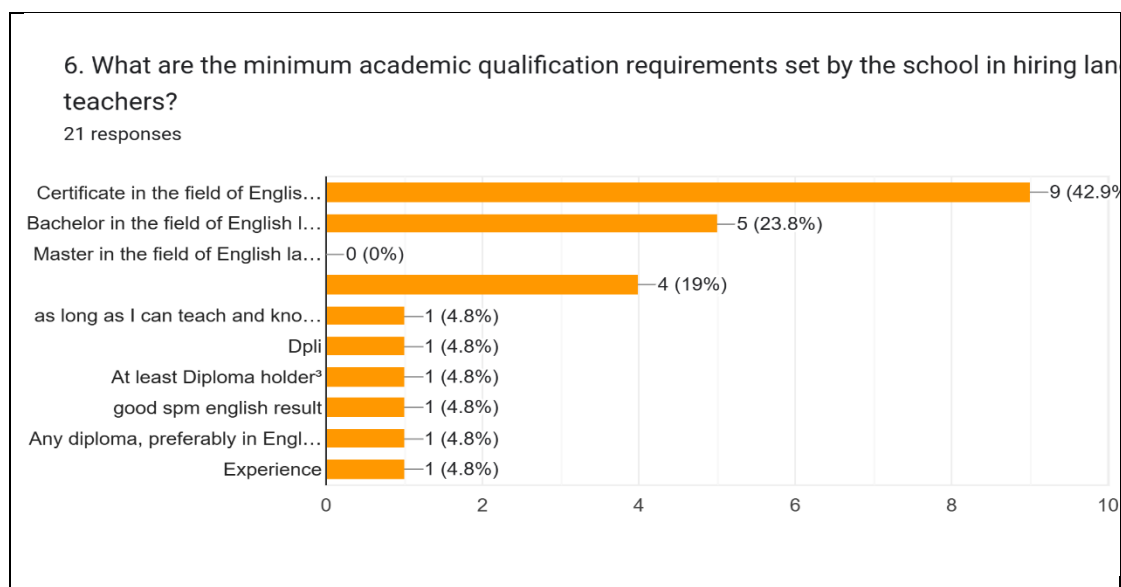


Figure 4.7 – Minimum Academic Qualification Requirement Set by Schools in Hiring Language Teacher

Figure 4.7 reveals the minimum academic qualification required by schools in hiring English language teachers. The data clearly reveals varied expectations. A total of 9 schools (42.9%) required a certificate in English as the most common qualification. Meanwhile, 5 schools (23.8%) specified at least a bachelor's degree in English, while 4 schools (19%) gave a more general response such as "as long as I can teach and know the subject." In addition, 1 school (4.8%) each mentioned other forms of qualifications, including DPLI, at least a diploma, good SPM English results, any diploma preferably in English, or relevant teaching experience. Notably, none of the schools required a master's degree in English as a minimum qualification. These findings suggest that schools tend to emphasize practicality and accessibility, where lower entry qualifications such as certificates or diplomas are widely accepted, while advanced academic degrees are not viewed as essential for entry-level teaching positions.

4.2.1.7 Teaching Hours

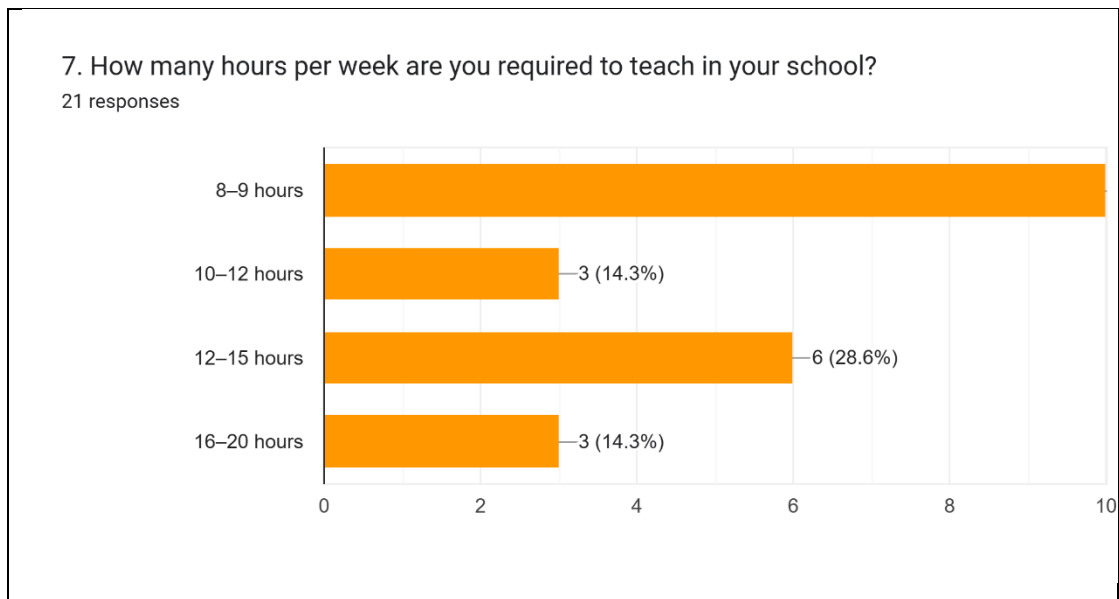


Figure 4.8 – Teachers Teaching Hours Per-Week

For the item on the number of teaching hours required per week in each school, Figure 4.8 shows that the majority of schools, 10 (47.6%), require teachers to teach between 8 to 9 hours weekly. This is followed by 6 (28.6%) schools that expect the teachers to handle 12 to 15 hours per week. Meanwhile, 3 (14.3%) schools each reported higher workloads of either 10 to 12 hours or 16 to 20 hours per week. Overall, the findings suggest that most schools keep teaching hours relatively moderate, with nearly half of the respondents teaching less than 10 hours per week, although a notable proportion still face heavier teaching loads of up to 20 hours.

4.2.1.8 Class Size

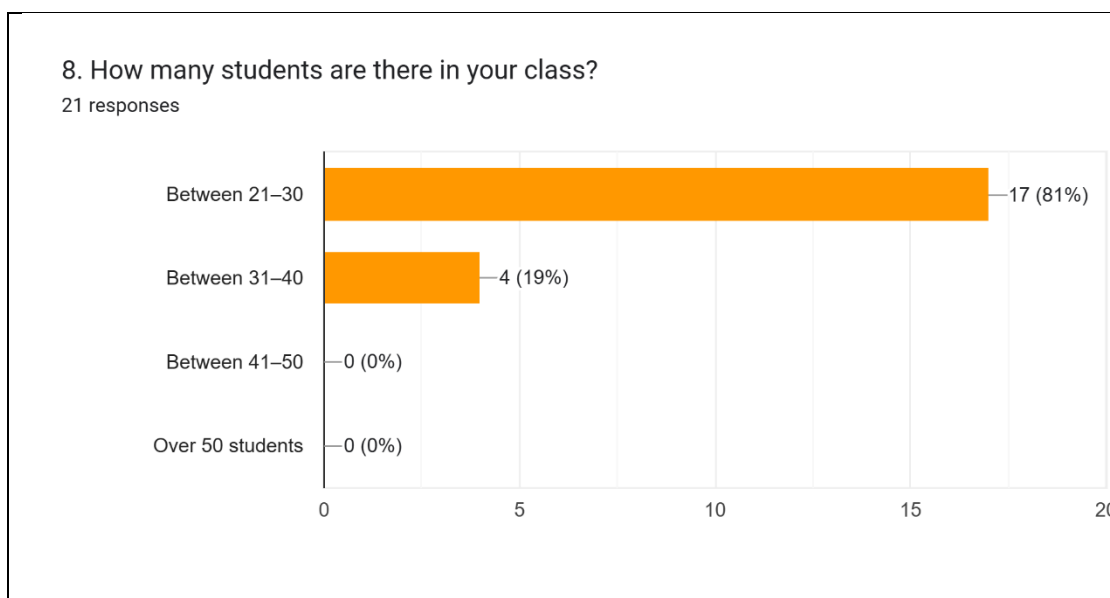


Figure 4.9 – Number of Students in Language Classrooms

Looking at the distribution of students in the classrooms, the Figure 4.9 reveals that majority of schools, 17 (81%), reported having between 21 to 30 students per class. Meanwhile, 4 schools (19%) indicated slightly larger class sizes ranging between 31 to 40 students. None of the schools reported having more than 40 students in a class. These findings suggest that most classrooms maintain a manageable size of fewer than 30 students, which may allow for more effective interaction and individualized attention, although a small proportion of classes still reach up to 40 students.

4.2.2 Discussion of Part A Findings: Demographic Profiles

4.2.2.1 Years of Service

The majority of SAR teachers (57%) had less than five years of service, indicating that the profession is largely composed of early-career educators. This demographic pattern has strong implications for teacher cognition. Teachers at this stage are typically still shaping their pedagogical beliefs and tend to depend heavily on prior learning models or institutional norms. Their enthusiasm for communicative teaching approaches such as IRF may not yet be matched by experience in managing

complex classroom interactions. Consequently, they may rely on teacher-led questioning rather than engaging students in extended exchanges. This tendency highlights a developmental stage where teachers' beliefs and practices are still in transition, balancing between ideal communicative intentions and classroom realities.

This aligns with LTC framework's view that teacher cognition evolves dynamically through classroom experience. Hidayatullah (2024) and Aulia and Rasyid (2025) both observed that novice teachers' beliefs often fluctuate between communicative ideals and the realities of classroom control. The present findings confirm that while early-career teachers show positive dispositions toward IRF, their practice remains shaped by institutional and personal limitations. In triangulation, the interview data revealed that teachers frequently described their lessons as question-answer-explain, echoing a monologic IRF pattern, while observation notes showed limited student initiation. These findings highlight the need for mentoring systems to support new teachers in developing dialogic competencies. Structured induction and peer observation could therefore bridge the gap between IRF knowledge and its effective classroom application.

4.2.2.2 Teaching Experience

All 21 teachers taught at the secondary level, with a few having cross-level experience. This suggests that most teachers' cognition about IRF is contextualised within adolescent classrooms. Such environments demand balancing between examination pressure and communicative participation, which often leads teachers to prioritise structure over spontaneity. This situational tension may explain the cautious and controlled interactional patterns evident in both the quantitative and qualitative data.

Mercer (2019) noted that secondary-level classrooms often promote limited interactional freedom due to curricular constraints. Teachers in such contexts tend to use IRF mainly for classroom management or comprehension checking, not for fostering dialogic discourse. The present data support this claim, as several teachers admitted during interviews that older students were quiet and exam-focused, influencing their preference for teacher-controlled questioning. Classroom observations confirmed that IRF exchanges were short and teacher-initiated, particularly in exam

classes. Hence, targeted professional development is essential to help teachers apply IRF not merely as a routine questioning tool, but as a scaffold for deeper reasoning and learner autonomy within exam-driven settings.

4.2.2.3 Highest Academic Qualification

Only 14.3% of the teachers held degrees in language teaching, while many came from unrelated fields. This diversity implies varied entry routes and differences in pedagogical knowledge. Teachers lacking ELT training may have limited grounding in discourse analysis, affecting their ability to use IRF flexibly. Such diversity in qualification also reflects broader systemic patterns in SAR school recruitment, where pedagogical expertise is often secondary to English fluency.

Musa et al. (2021) observed that non-ELT graduates often rely on generic teaching approaches. However, Aulia and Rasyid (2025) suggest that strong motivation can compensate for such gaps through reflective practice and self-learning. Interview data showed that several teachers learned about IRF informally through online sources. Observations supported this; IRF was often used mechanically without variation in feedback moves. This triangulated evidence implies that while qualification shapes theoretical understanding, intrinsic motivation drives adaptability. Therefore, structured PD courses are vital for bridging theory and practice, ensuring that teachers move beyond procedural IRF use toward informed, interactive application.

4.2.2.4 Proficiency Level

Almost all teachers rated themselves as having moderate in language proficiency. This self-assessment suggests linguistic confidence gaps that may influence the spontaneity and depth of classroom interaction. Teachers may avoid open-ended exchanges for fear of losing control or making language mistakes. As such, proficiency emerges as both a cognitive and affective factor that moderates teachers' willingness to engage in authentic classroom dialogue.

Zaswita (2022) and Candilasa (2024) both noted that teachers' proficiency directly affects classroom discourse. Limited fluency restricts questioning strategies and discourages teachers from inviting extended student responses. Observation data

showed that teachers often simplified their input and provided short feedback. Interviews revealed concerns about students asking unexpected questions, indicating anxiety linked to linguistic confidence. This alignment across data sources shows that proficiency not only affects communication but also shapes belief systems about what counts as safe or effective interaction. Consequently, PD programs that integrate communicative fluency training could strengthen teachers' confidence and enable more sustained dialogic IRF practices.

4.2.2.5 Reasons for Choosing Teaching as a Career

The majority cited genuine passion for English teaching (61.9%), while a third joined due to unemployment. This dual motivation reflects both intrinsic and pragmatic factors influencing teacher identity. The data therefore portray a profession driven by mixed motivations, one grounded in personal interest, another shaped by circumstantial opportunity.

According to Borg (2018), affective factors such as passion significantly influence belief stability. Aulia and Rasyid (2025) add that teachers who enter the profession by chance can develop strong commitment through positive experiences and support systems. Interview narratives supported this, showing that passionate teachers experimented more with IRF, while others viewed it as a mechanical requirement. This variation underscores how emotional investment interacts with cognition: teachers' initial reasons for joining the field influence their openness to interactive methods. Mentoring systems that reinforce reflective and affective engagement can therefore strengthen IRF enactment.

4.2.2.6 Minimum Qualification for Language Teacher Recruitment

Most schools (42.9%) required only a certificate in English, while none demanded a master's degree. This reflects a pragmatic recruitment approach focused on availability rather than specialization. Such leniency, while expanding access to teaching positions, also risks uneven instructional quality across institutions.

Non-selective hiring practices in private (Toh & Yan-Li, 2024) or semi-religious schools (Turu & Sukestiyarno, 2019) often produce mixed teacher

competencies. This diversity affects institutional consistency in instructional quality. Questionnaire responses on PD and IRF awareness correspond to this: teachers' confidence is high but training exposure remains low. Observation data likewise show uneven mastery across classrooms. This suggests that recruitment policy indirectly shapes cognition by setting the baseline for professional discourse within each school. Institutional support for in-service certification and compulsory IRF workshops would help standardize pedagogical competence.

4.2.2.7 Teaching Hours

Nearly half the teachers taught fewer than ten hours per week, but some faced heavy loads of up to twenty hours. Heavy timetables may reduce time for lesson reflection and innovation. In contrast, lighter schedules appear to foster experimentation and reflective lesson design.

According to L. Li and Walsh (2011), workload intensity constrains reflective practice and limits opportunities for implementing communicative interaction. Teachers with lighter loads reported experimenting more with IRF in interviews, while heavily loaded teachers defaulted to lecture-style instruction. Hence, teaching hours not only affect fatigue but also shape the mental space required for belief adjustment and innovation. School leaders should therefore consider workload balance as part of pedagogical policy reform.

4.2.2.8 Class Size

Most classes contained 21–30 students, though some reached 40. Larger classes hinder equitable participation and sustained IRF exchanges. Class size, therefore, directly influences the feasibility of dialogic instruction.

Candilasa (2024) found that large classes restrict feedback quality and shorten student responses. Dialogic IRF practices flourish in smaller groups. Observation data confirm that in large classes, teachers dominated questioning and shortened follow-ups. Smaller classes displayed slightly more peer interaction. This triangulation indicates that structural conditions such as class size must be considered alongside cognition

when evaluating IRF implementation. Schools could mitigate this constraint by encouraging pair or group activities that distribute interactional opportunities.

Across all demographic factors, the findings demonstrate that teacher cognition of IRF in SAR schools is influenced by both personal and contextual dimensions including experience, qualification, proficiency, workload, and environment. The demographic profile portrays a group of enthusiastic but under-supported teachers who require sustained guidance to transform positive beliefs into interactive classroom practice. This synthesis reinforces that cognition does not exist in isolation; it is continually negotiated within institutional, pedagogical, and emotional realities. Hence, demographic insights are not merely background variables but integral to understanding the dynamic relationship between belief, knowledge, and classroom interaction.

4.2.3 Part B Findings: Attendance in Professional Development Courses

Part B consisted of questions that assessed teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), particularly in areas related to English Language Teaching (ELT). The frequency of teachers' attendance at professional development courses was measured using a 4-point Likert-type scale (0 = Never, 4 = Always) with the question: "Within the last 2 years, how many times have you attended the courses listed below?" The findings were presented in the form of frequencies and means, followed by the interpretation of the mean scores using the mean score interpretation rubric originally derived from Embi et al. (2001) and subsequently adopted in Malaysian ELT research (Aulia & Rasyid, 2025; Romli & Abd Aziz, 2015; Sukri & Yunus, 2018), as presented in the Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1

Interpretation of Mean Score Rubric by Embi et al. (2001).

Mean Score	Interpretation
0-1.25	Very negative
1.26-2.50	Negative
2.51-3.25	Positive
3.26-4.00	Very positive

According to this rubric, mean scores ranging from 0.00 to 1.25 are interpreted as a very negative, between 1.26 and 2.50 reflect as negative, between 2.51 and 3.25 as positive, and between 3.26 to 4.00 are classified as very positive.

Table 4.2 presents the findings garnered from Part B of the survey with the question “Within the last 2 years, how many times have you attended the courses listed below?

Table 4.2

The Frequency of Teacher Attendance in Language Teaching-Related Courses Over the Past 2 Years

ITEMS		DEGREE OF FREQUENCY WITHIN 2 YEARS						MEAN	LEVEL
		0	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5	5-6		
1	ESL Theory	16	4	0	1	0	0	0.2	Very Negative
2	ESL Curriculum/Syllabus design	13	6	0	2	0	0	0.4	Very Negative
3	Applied Linguistics	18	2	0	0	1	0	0.1	Very Negative
4	Phonetics	17	3	0	0	1	0	0.2	Very Negative
5	Sociolinguistics	18	2	0	1	0	0	0.1	Very Negative
6	Psycholinguistics	18	2	1	0	0	0	0.1	Very Negative
7	ESL Second language acquisition learning	14	6	0	1	0	0	0.3	Very Negative
8	Material development	14	7	0	0	0	0	0.3	Very Negative
9	Approaches and teaching methods	12	9	0	0	0	0	0.4	Very Negative
10	Teaching reading	11	10	0	0	0	0	0.5	Very Negative
11	Teaching writing	12	8	0	1	0	0	0.4	Very Negative
12	Teaching listening	11	9	0	1	0	0	0.5	Very Negative
13	Teaching speaking	11	9	0	1	0	0	0.5	Very Negative
14	Teaching Grammar	14	7	0	0	0	0	0.3	Very Negative
15	Teaching Literature	14	7	0	0	0	0	0.3	Very Negative
16	Testing and Assessment in ESL	13	8	0	0	0	0	0.4	Very Negative
17	Teaching Literature	12	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	Very Negative

18	English Computer-aided Instruction	15	6	0	0	0	0	0.3	Very Negative
19	Lesson plan	8	12	1	0	0	0	0.6	Very Negative
20	Practicum on English Teaching	20	1	0	0	0	0	0.0	Very Negative
GRAND MEAN								6.2	
AVERAGE MEAN								0.3	VERY NEGATIVE

Overall, the results show consistently low attendance across all training categories, with mean scores ranging between 0.0 and 0.6. The average mean score of 0.3 indicates a very negative level of participation in ELT-related professional development within the last two years. This trend demonstrates that teachers rarely attended courses related to theoretical, linguistic, pedagogical, or practical aspects of English teaching, including areas such as ESL theory, applied linguistics, second language acquisition, teaching the four language skills, materials development, and assessment.

Specifically, the majority of respondents reported have never attended courses across the listed areas. Courses such as ESL Theory, Applied Linguistics, Psycholinguistics, Sociolinguistics, and Second Language Acquisition received particularly low attendance, with mean scores between 0.1 and 0.3. Practical courses such as teaching reading, writing, listening, speaking, grammar, and assessment, also recorded low participation, with mean scores of 0.3 to 0.5. The highest mean obtained was only 0.6, for attending lesson planning courses, indicating slightly better, but still with very limited engagement from the teachers.

The findings therefore suggest that teachers have had minimal exposure to structured, formal professional development opportunities in ELT during the past two years. This lack of continuous upskilling may indicate limited access to professional development programmes or a low degree of institutional emphasis on teacher training. It also raises concern regarding teachers' opportunities to update pedagogical knowledge, stay current with ELT trends, and strengthen instructional competence, especially considering the dynamic and evolving nature of English language education.

4.2.4 Discussion of Part B Findings: Frequency of Attendance to Professional Development Courses

The findings in Part B reveal that teachers demonstrated very low participation in professional development (PD) related to English Language Teaching during the past two years. With an average mean score of 0.3, all twenty course areas spanning ESL theory, applied linguistics, language skills, assessment, and material development, fell

within the very negative range of Embi et al.'s (2001) interpretation scale. This uniform pattern suggests a widespread lack of structured opportunities for ongoing upskilling.

Courses addressing theoretical foundations such as Applied Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition recorded mean scores between 0.1 and 0.3, while more practical domains such as Teaching Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking ranged only from 0.3 to 0.5. The highest mean (0.6) for Lesson Planning merely indicates isolated exposure rather than regular participation, reinforcing the conclusion that continuous learning remains minimal.

Such findings point to a professional landscape where teachers rely primarily on existing knowledge rather than sustained engagement with current ELT advancements.

The results are consistent with earlier Malaysian studies (Romli & Abd Aziz, 2015; Sukri & Yunus, 2018) which reported limited attendance in specialised ELT training, particularly in private and semi-religious institutions. Karlberg and Bezzina (2022) assert that beliefs and practices are mediated through continuous reflection and professional experience; thus, the lack of PD restricts the evolution of teachers' pedagogical thinking.

Aulia and Rasyid (2025) also highlighted that without systematic PD input, teachers often recycle existing routines and fail to integrate new communicative methods such as IRF. In this study, the scarcity of PD exposure therefore mirrors a stagnation in pedagogical growth, which may explain teachers' confidence in their IRF knowledge but limited evidence of dialogic practice.

Interview and observation evidence corroborate these quantitative trends. In the pre-observation interviews, all of teachers admitted that they had never attended any course on IRF or speaking skills, instead relying on peer sharing or online sources for teaching ideas. Classroom observations further confirmed that IRF use remained by teacher-led initiation and minimal feedback, indicating little transfer of advanced pedagogical strategies from professional learning. This triangulation strengthens the conclusion that insufficient PD exposure directly contributes to limited diversification of interactional patterns and reduced awareness of alternative feedback moves.

The consistently low mean scores across theoretical and practical domains indicate that teachers have few formal avenues to update their knowledge of communicative approaches, discourse analysis, and assessment practices. From a

cognitive perspective, this condition hampers belief reconstruction: without new theoretical input, teachers' classroom cognition remains static, reinforcing habitual IRF use.

The implications are two-fold; at the institutional level, SAR schools and education authorities should prioritise structured, ongoing PD programmes focusing on IRF, communicative interaction, and reflective practice. At individual level, teachers require support mechanisms such as peer mentoring, online learning modules, and observation-based feedback to translate conceptual understanding into sustained classroom application.

In summary, the very negative participation index represents not merely low attendance but a systemic gap in teacher cognition development, emphasising the urgency of embedding regular PD into school culture to cultivate reflective and communicative English teaching practices.

4.2.5 Part C Findings: Teachers' Beliefs and Practice of IRF Method

As described in the subsection Data Collection Procedures in Chapter 3, Part C of the questionnaire was developed to examine the beliefs and classroom practices of 21 SAR English language teachers regarding the use of the IRF framework in improving students' speaking skills. It consisted of 15 items divided into two sections: the first four questions measured the factors influencing the teachers' current cognition about IRF. The remaining 11 items focused on their classroom practices to capture how IRF was applied during teacher-student interactions. All the data obtained were analysed and are presented in Table 4.3, which shows the findings and the extent to which these factors influenced teachers' speaking classroom practices.

Table 4.3

Findings and Results Related to the Impact of Teachers' Schooling Experiences, Training, Classroom Practices, and School Contexts on Their Teaching in the Speaking Class.

		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	My English language teachers during my school time inspired me to teach speaking	0	7	3	11
2	I have adequate knowledge of teaching speaking with IRF method	4	14	3	0
3	My teacher training/ continuous in-service teaching courses provide me with the necessary and adequate knowledge on teaching speaking using IRF method	0	13	4	4
4	Classroom internal and external matters deeply shape my teaching strategies	8	13	0	0
		Always	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
5	I initiate questions to students	13	8	0	0
6	My students initiate questions	5	10	3	1
7	I ask display questions	9	11	1	0
8	I ask referential questions	10	11	0	0
9	I speak up more than my students	11	10	0	0
10	Students contribute more in the classroom verbal exchanges	3	10	7	1
11	My lessons are student-centred	7	11	2	1
12	My lessons possess active, dialogic patterns of interaction	3	16	2	0
13	There are many long verbal strands in the classroom verbal exchanges.	1	13	5	2
14	Lack of vocabulary is the biggest factor that influences students' answers	13	7	2	0
15	My teaching outcomes work congruently with my lesson plans	8	10	3	0

Adapted and edited from Ilias & Mahmud (2016), Kalpana (2017)

4.2.5.1 Factors Influencing Teachers' Cognition About IRF

In response to Question 1, which is linked to the first construct of the LTC framework, only 7 of the 21 teachers (35%) agreed that their experiences in English language speaking classrooms during their schooling years influenced their current classroom practices. Question 3, related to the second construct, showed that 18 teachers (86%) strongly agreed or agreed that they possessed adequate knowledge of teaching speaking, particularly regarding the effectiveness of the IRF method. Similarly, 13 teachers (67%) agreed that teacher training and in-service courses adequately equipped them with the knowledge to use IRF in teaching speaking. For the final question in this section, which examined the impact of classroom contexts, all 21 teachers (100%) strongly agreed that both internal and external factors shaped their classroom practices.

4.2.5.2 Teachers' Classroom Practices Related to IRF Implementation.

The subsequent questions examined teachers' use of the IRF method in speaking classrooms. For the statement 'I initiate questions to students', 13 teachers responded always while 8 selected sometimes. In contrast, only 5 teachers reported that students-initiated questions, while 14 indicated this happened sometimes/seldom/never. Regarding questioning techniques, 10 teachers reported they always asked referential questions, compared to 11 who selected sometimes. For display questions, 9 teachers chose always and 12 chose sometimes/seldom.

The next set of items investigated classroom interaction. For 'I speak more than my students', 11 teachers responded always and 10 sometimes. Conversely, only 3 teachers reported that students contributed more to verbal exchanges, while 17 chose sometimes/seldom. Similarly, only 7 teachers claimed their classes were student-centred, and just 3 indicated that lessons followed a dialogic pattern. Moreover, only 1 teacher reported that long verbal strands regularly occurred in classroom interactions, with 20 indicating sometimes–never. These findings suggest that classroom interaction remains largely teacher-centred.

Teachers were also asked about student-related challenges. Thirteen (62%) agreed that vocabulary deficiencies are a constant concern, while 8 considered them

only occasional. When asked whether lessons aligned with teaching objectives, only 8 teachers reported always, while 13 selected sometimes/seldom/never.

Taken together, these results provide important insights into teachers' knowledge and practices in teaching speaking. While a majority (86%) expressed confidence in the effectiveness of the IRF method, the actual classroom practices reported indicate limited use of student-centred approaches and restricted interaction patterns. Teachers acknowledge persistent vocabulary deficiencies among students and inconsistency in aligning classroom practices with instructional objectives. Overall, the findings highlight the need for professional development to enhance teachers' questioning strategies, promote student-centred classroom interaction, and address vocabulary challenges in SAR schools.

4.2.6 Discussion of Part C Findings: Teachers' Beliefs and Practice of IRF Method

4.2.6.1 Factors Influencing the Teachers' Cognition About IRF

A central aspect of teacher cognition relates to the teachers' knowledge and beliefs they hold about the effectiveness of IRF in assisting students' speaking skills. This is reflected in the findings, which showed that 86% of teachers admitted having adequate knowledge of IRF and acknowledged its effectiveness in enhancing speaking. Such findings suggest that teachers perceive IRF not simply as classroom merely mechanical drills, but as a meaningful pedagogical tool to foster oral proficiency. This belief is significant, as teachers' perceptions often act as a catalyst for pedagogical change and its successful adoption in communicative classrooms (Zaswita, 2022). It shows that changes in practice are significantly linked to teachers' prior beliefs (Negrín-Medina et al., 2022). Similarly, Aulia and Rasyid (2025) emphasize teachers who demonstrate positive attitudes towards interactive methods aligned with CEFR serves as a foundation for shifts in classroom discourse.

The results also demonstrate that despite their very limited involvement in PD, teachers in SAR schools possess a basic knowledge of IRF that enables them to employ it effectively in their classrooms. With adequate training and support, this knowledge

could be further strengthened, equipping them to move beyond traditional IRF cycles and expand into more dialogic and student-led patterns of interaction. In answering RQ1, this finding underscores that teachers' cognition of IRF is highly positive and grounded in their recognition of its pedagogical potential.

4.2.6.2 Teachers' Classroom Practices Related to IRF Implementation.

The questionnaire also revealed that teachers frequently initiate questions in their classrooms to elicit student responses. This finding confirms that IRF is embedded in their practice at least at the level of initiation. However, students rarely take the initiation turn and the cycle often ended quickly after teacher feedback. This suggests that while teachers believe in the value of IRF, the interactional patterns remain teacher-centred.

This gap between cognition and practice is not unusual. Candilasa (2024) emphasizes that without proper, structural training, teachers often rely on display questions in their IRF exchanges, rather than employing referential questions that prompt longer strands of verbal responses. Within the context of this study, the finding illustrates that teachers' positive beliefs in IRF's effectiveness are not always successfully translated in their practice. In relation to RQ1, it shows that while teachers cognitively value IRF, they still conceptualise it primarily as a teacher-led strategy rather than as a dialogic framework.

Another significant finding was that 62% of respondents identified students' limited vocabulary as the greatest barrier to implementing IRF effectively. This highlights the extent to which teacher cognition is shaped by learners' proficiency levels. While teachers continue to affirm their belief in the effectiveness of IRF, they also view its success as dependent on students possessing sufficient vocabulary to participate meaningfully in interactional activities. This perspective echoes what mentioned by Kaphle (2024), that vocabulary deficiency is among the most common obstacles to communicative teaching in Malaysian classrooms. Similarly, Musa et al. (2021) emphasise that teachers often modify their questioning strategies by making them shorter, simpler, and less elaborated when dealing with students of limited linguistic ability. In this study, teachers' cognition of IRF is therefore mediated by their perceptions of student proficiency, which shape both their expectations and their

classroom practices. This finding underscores that teacher cognition is not only internally formed but also contextually framed by the realities of classroom interaction.

4.2.7 Synthesis and Implications Related to RQ1

Taken together, the questionnaire findings reveal that teacher cognition is largely shaped by the teachers' demographic profiles such as their teaching tenure, diverse academic backgrounds, exposure to CEFR-aligned curricula as well their experiences. They also generally show positive attitude towards IRF method in enhancing speaking skills. Teachers prioritise speaking as the central skill, acknowledge IRF as an effective framework, and show high confidence in using it in their instruction. These findings are consistent with recent studies which highlight the dynamic nature of teacher cognition.

At the same time, the findings reveal how cognition is mediated by contextual factors both inside and outside the classroom. While teachers consistently expressed belief in the effectiveness of IRF, their classroom practices often remained less interactive and teacher-centred, largely due to students' vocabulary deficiencies. Limited participation in professional development courses further contributed to this gap. Inadequate training in dialogic pedagogy meant that teachers tended to restrict their IRF strategies, avoiding extended follow-ups that could have sustained dialogic strands. This echoes Negrín-Medina et al., 2022, who noted that teachers without sufficient exposure to interactive strategies are more likely to reproduce traditional, monologic practices despite endorsing communicative approaches.

Student-related factors compounded the problem: deficiencies in vocabulary and limited confidence restricted students' ability to produce longer turns, which in turn reinforced teacher dominance in classroom talk (Xuan Mai et al., 2024). When students struggle to elaborate, teachers often revert to extended explanations rather than scaffolding further opportunities (Zaswita, 2022). Thus, the data highlight a tension between belief and practice. Teachers do value IRF as a method for enhancing speaking skills, yet contextual limitations related to training, resources, and learner readiness hinder its full implementation.

In direct response to RQ1, the discussion demonstrates that teachers in SAR schools in Perak perceive IRF as an effective and contextually appropriate approach for

developing students' speaking skills. Their positive beliefs provide a strong foundation, but these must be supported by sustained professional development, curricular alignment, and targeted strategies to overcome student-level challenges. The implication is that SAR schools have the opportunity to transform positive cognition into sustained dialogic practice by addressing systemic and contextual barriers.

4.2.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, the quantitative findings from the questionnaire reveal that all 21 language teachers in SAR schools hold a strongly positive cognition of IRF as an effective method for enhancing students' speaking skills. Their beliefs are shaped by demographic factors, diverse academic backgrounds, and curriculum exposure, and are reinforced by their conviction that speaking is the most essential language skill. At the same time, their cognition is also framed by contextual realities such as limited professional development and students' vocabulary challenges, which influence how IRF is translated in classrooms. These findings provide a coherent quantitative data to answer to RQ1, demonstrating that teachers view IRF as both relevant and beneficial, while also revealing the conditions that support or constrain its full implementation.

4.3 Findings and Discussion of Pre-Observation Interview Data

The presentation and discussion of the quantitative findings in subsection 4.1 provide an overall understanding of the beliefs and practices of all 21 English language teachers in SAR schools in Perak. This subsection, together with the subsequent ones, presents and discusses the qualitative findings derived from six selected teachers. Data collection at this stage employed multiple qualitative methods, which included six pre-observation interviews, twelve classroom observations, stimulated recall interviews with both teachers and students, and finally six post-observation interviews with selected teachers. These multiple data collection methods allowed for a deeper exploration of classroom interactions between teacher-students, providing rich insights into the dynamics of speaking classrooms. Together, these findings form a comprehensive account of teacher cognition and practice in the implementation of IRF in SAR school speaking classrooms.

The first data collection at this stage was the pre-observation semi-structured interview with six selected teachers. The tool utilized was a set of interview protocols developed by Kalpana (2017), with certain modifications made (see Appendix 2). It consists of a series of preamble questions carefully designed to elicit responses demonstrating how the four main constructs of the LTC framework (Borg, 2003) namely, teachers' experiences as language learners, their professional teacher training, and the internal and external classroom factors, shape teachers' cognition regarding the effectiveness of the IRF method in enhancing students' speaking skills. The questions were open-ended, which could lead to deeper issues being raised and the exploration of new topics that stimulated in-depth discussions between both parties before concluding with various perspectives (Magaldi & Berler, 2020).

4.3.1 Pre-Observation Interview Findings - The Emerging Themes

The interviews with the six teachers were transcribed verbatim with the purpose to allow for accurate record of the teachers' responses and to ensure no important data was overlooked (See Appendix 11). This was followed by analysing the qualitative data using Thematic Analysis to identify the emerging themes collectively shared by all participants that help explain the key ideas. The interview questions and responses were subsequently mapped with the four constructs of the LTC framework to ensure that the results would truly illustrate how each of these constructs shapes teachers' cognition regarding the IRF method in teaching speaking. To assist comprehension, the researcher decided to provide the summary of the analysis before elaborating it in the following paragraphs. Table 4.4 presents the salient themes emerged from the findings of the Pre-O interviews.

Table 4.4

Emerging Themes from the Pre-O Interview

	No.	PRE-O INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	EMERGING THEMES
Part A Experiences as language learners	1.	How were speaking skills taught to you when you were in school? Did your teacher use IRF-method	There is a huge difference between the present language instructional approach compared to the one used during their schooling years. During schools, the approach was mainly Grammar translation Method. Less in IRF use Teacher C had an anti-apprenticeship experience with her English language teacher Teacher D had a motivational experience with her English teacher
Part B Teacher education or professionalism development courses	2.	How were the teaching of IRF taught to you when you were a teacher trainee?	All six teachers have expertise in academic fields other than language education. None of the six SAR teachers specialize in language education, so they have never experienced becoming trainee teachers. All of them admitted that they were rarely sent for courses related to speaking instruction particularly on the use of IRF method According to the questionnaire report, the school hardly sends teachers for courses on teaching speaking. Over 2 years, they were only sent once. All teachers actively sought knowledge on teaching using IRF method from teachers at different schools, including English language teachers in government schools.
	3.	What are your views on the use of the CEFR-Aligned Curriculum in teaching English-speaking skills using IRF method	The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) helps in teaching speaking by outlining specific proficiency levels, from A1 (beginner) to C2 (proficient). IRF is among the best method in enhancing students speaking skills.

Part C Classroom experience	4	How do you describe your role as a teacher in a an IRF driven classroom accordingly with CLT?	<p>A teacher in an IRF driven class must be a role model of a competent English language user so that students will be motivated to strive to be the best, just like their teacher.</p> <p>Teachers act as facilitators who guide and support students in the learning process using IRF.</p> <p>Encourages interactional activities such as role-play, pair work, presentation</p> <p>Teachers should minimally resort to the use of the mother tongue.</p>
	5	How should the IRF be taught in the classroom?	<p>In an IRF driven class, teachers must encourage students to speak up.</p> <p>In an IRF driven class, teachers need to foster an interactive atmosphere in all directions including teacher-student, teacher-student, and student-student relationships.</p>
	6	While using IRF method, how do you motivate your students to respond to questions?	<p>In an IRF driven class teachers should utilize open-ended questions to stimulate thinking.</p> <p>In an IRF driven class teachers should utilize follow-up questions (probes) to create a longer strand of discussion</p> <p>In an IRF driven class teachers should encourage the other students to help</p> <p>In an IRF driven class teachers should providing praise and positive feedback on their efforts</p>
	7	Which one do you focus more on while	Emphasis is placed more on fluency of language rather than accuracy of grammar.

Part D School context	8	<p>teaching speaking? Language fluency or grammar accuracy?</p> <p>Please explain how important it is for SAR students to master speaking skills.</p>	<p>Gradually improve grammar.</p> <p>Minimize error correction.</p> <p>The importance of mastering speech for religious school students - as an inter-ethnic communication for Islamic preaching.</p> <p>For university admission qualifications.</p> <p>To secure employment</p>
	9	<p>Are the school principals very supportive with the efforts to upgrade students' speaking skills?</p>	<p>With regard to the development of English language, the principals of the SAR schools are very supportive.</p> <p>Teachers frequently organize co-curricular activities such as English Day, English Week, and debates, either between SAR schools or by participating in similar programs at government schools</p>

Table 4.4 illustrates how the pre-observation interview questions were systematically mapped onto the four constructs of Language Teacher Cognition (LTC), framework namely, teachers' experiences as language learners, teacher training, classroom experience, and school context (Borg, 2003). These interview questions were enveloped within these constructs, ensuring that each item was theoretically grounded. The emerging themes shown on the right reflect how teachers' responses were clustered according to these constructs, revealing patterns such as differences in their own learning histories, the absence of formal TESL training, their conceptualisation of IRF roles and practices in the classroom, and the extent of institutional support. This mapping strengthens the construct validity of the study, as the themes were not developed in isolation but anchored within an established theoretical framework. The subsequent sub-headings will present the findings from the pre-observation interviews in detail, addressing each construct one by one.

4.3.1.1 Prior Learning Experiences and Their Influence on IRF Cognition

The first question in the Pre-Observation Interview protocol is, 'How was IRF method taught to you when you were in school?' The question was carefully designed so that the responses would reflect the first construct of the LTC framework - how teachers' experiences as language learners impact teacher cognition.

All six participants agreed that the English language instruction during their formative years in primary and secondary education emphasized more on developing students' reading and writing skills rather than oral proficiency. Previously, the SPM English Language examination encompassed Reading (Paper 2) and Writing (Paper 1). Speaking assessment was conducted through classroom-based assessments and its result was charted into the overall result without revealing the actual score on the result transcript. With the commencement of the 2021 SPM, the English Language paper has been upgraded encompassing four components: Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening. As mentioned by Teacher E:

'In the era of Grammar Translation method, there were no interactive methods used in the classroom. Back then, learning language focused on grammar alone. Now, we are in the era of CLT, or Communicative Language Teaching. CLT promotes interactive classrooms. It really

emphasizes the process of interaction, and teaching language becomes quite challenging (TB/Pre-OI/595-601).'

The conversation eventually led to discussing the teachers' childhood experience with their English language teachers in their language classrooms. Four out of the six teachers could not recall any classroom language learning experiences that could be linked to their current cognition. However, one of them, Teacher D, acknowledged that her English teacher was an inspiration for her effective language teaching. The teacher tended to offer praise and encouragement to fellow students, which greatly influenced her attitude toward learning English and subsequently her teaching-speaking approach.

'I can still remember, she used to praise me even though my English was not very good. Her approach made me feel always motivated to learn English, therefore, I am using the same method to help my students feeling the same while learning English (TD/Pre-OI/66-67).'

Her experience contrasts with that of Teacher C, who recalled a negative encounter with her English teacher during Form 5. Teacher C had been a student at the same SAR school where she is now teaching. On one occasion, her English teacher mistakenly taught the comparative and superlative forms of the adjective good as 'gooder' and 'goodest' instead of 'better' and 'best'. Even as a student, Teacher C recognised the error. With the SPM examination approaching, she and her classmates became anxious and promptly submitted a formal report to the school principal, requesting a properly qualified English teacher. This incident later motivated her to strengthen her own language proficiency so that she would not repeat such mistakes with her students. As she explained:

'When I was in secondary school, I studied at the school which I am currently teaching. Back then, it was quite difficult to find good English language teachers. It reminds me of this one teacher. She taught us 'good, gooder, goodest'. Although I was in Form 1, I knew that was wrong. So, my friends and I complained to the management and requested a new teacher since we were close to our SPM examination. (TC/ Pre-OI/173-186).'

Generally, the teachers' recollections of experience revealed that their language learning during schooling years were characterised by limited emphasis on

speaking skills, with instruction focused mainly on grammar, reading, and writing. While most of them could not recall specific classroom influences, two of them shared both positive and negative experiences with their English teachers that left lasting impacts on their beliefs about teaching speaking skills. These recollections form the backdrop for understanding how their early experiences as learners connect with their present views on language teaching.

4.3.1.2 Teacher Training and Cognition of IRF

The second question in the pre-observation interview protocol, ‘How was the IRF method of teaching taught to you during your teacher training?’ carries considerable weight. The question was carefully designed to shed light on how the second component of the LTC framework - ‘Professional teacher education/formal professionalism development language teaching courses,’ shapes the teachers’ cognition in teaching speaking. This question examined whether teachers had adequate knowledge to teach speaking through IRF. Drawing on Shulman’s CK and PCK framework, it highlights the need for subject mastery, pedagogical skills, and ongoing professional development to meet learners’ needs in speaking instruction.

The findings reveal that none of the six teachers hold academic credentials in fields related to language education. Teacher A has a Bachelor’s degree in Accounting; Teacher B holds a Diploma in Quantity Surveying and is currently pursuing a degree in TESL; Teacher C has a Bachelor’s degree in Islamic Law; Teacher D has a Bachelor’s degree in Science; Teacher E holds a Diploma in Business Administration; and Teacher F has a Bachelor’s degree in Computer Science (Networking).

Consequently, all teachers acknowledged that they had never enrolled at any teacher training institute and therefore had never experienced being trainees. When asked whether they had attended professional development courses specifically on teaching speaking, they unanimously admitted to rarely being sent by their schools for language-related courses, particularly in the area of teaching speaking skills. At the time of this interview, three out of the six teachers reported had been sent only once to attend a course on teaching speaking, while the remaining three had never had the opportunity. The findings from the questionnaire also revealed a similar trend; all six teachers

collectively confirmed that they had been sent for such courses only once in more than two years.

'We rarely attend courses. When one colleague goes, he will conduct in-house training with us when he returns. We rarely to courses (TB/ Pre-OI /25).'

'We do have courses from time to time, and JAIP (the religious authority) has a budget for that, but it's not as frequent as government teachers (TB/ Pre-OI /415-418).'

Nevertheless, their interest in language teaching persists and they actively seek knowledge about teaching speaking using IRF from peers in different schools, including English teachers in government schools. In fact, Teacher B and Teacher E are currently pursuing studies at degree level in TESL at Open University while Teacher C once took a 6-month speaking course to further improve her speaking skills.

'I joined a Telegram group which has many KPM (Ministry of Education) English language teachers from all over Malaysia. The group has been very helpful. The teachers create their own audio materials, make their own sets of questions, and share them in the group. So, I can use the materials as my teaching aids (TB/Post-OI / 204-208).'

Friends from the government schools. They are very generous to share information with us (TE/Post-OI/96-98).

After graduation, I realized that I may face difficulties in securing a job due to my inability to converse well in English. Therefore, I went for a 6-month course on speaking English (TC/ Pre-OI /243-244).

'I am currently in my second year in Open University, studying TESL (TB/Pre-OI /673).'

Question 3, on the other hand, focused on exploring the fundamental knowledge possessed by all six teachers regarding the English language curriculum adopted in Malaysia. Being part of the Malaysian education system, SAR schools are also required to implement the CEFR-aligned curriculum in their language education system. All six teachers admitted to having undergone training on CEFR-aligned Language Curriculum. From the interview, it was evident that all teachers were well-versed in the

National CEFR-Aligned curriculum despite limited access to the course. This is clearly demonstrated by both Teacher B and Teacher C, who showed a thorough understanding of the CEFR objectives and structure, as well as its practical implementation in their teaching.

This CEFR book is great because it provides guidance on how to teach with prepared objectives. We just need to apply the suggested teaching techniques (TB/ Pre-OI /555-556).

'First, I see the benefit of CEFR in helping students with speaking skills. Under the old syllabus, the students' score in Speaking Test were not included in the SPM English exam result. But with the CEFR syllabus, the marks are divided equally for reading, writing, speaking, and listening, so each part gets an equal percentage. Speaking contributes 25 percent, so students have to work hard on it too (TC/Pre-OI /145-148).'

4.3.1.3 Teachers' Cognition of IRF-Moves in Speaking Classrooms

Question 4-7 focus on exploring how teachers employ IRF method in their speaking classrooms. When asked about the roles of a language teacher in an IRF driven classroom (Question 4), all six teachers agreed with the notion that in an IRF classroom, teachers need to model themselves as proficient language user to encourage students to speak. Teachers also described their role in an IRF-driven classroom within the framework of CLT as being role models of competent English language users. They explained that when teachers demonstrate proficiency, students are motivated to strive towards similar standards.

'In an IRF class, at first, if we just ask the students to speak, they won't speak. So, I make sure to speak well at the beginning of each lesson. Then, they will imitate (TB/Pre-OI/605-606).'

In addition to this, the teachers viewed themselves as facilitators who guide and support students in the learning process through IRF. They also highlighted that part of their role involved encouraging interactional activities such as role-plays, pair work, and presentations.

'I often conduct classroom group discussions. I make sure there will be at least one person with better proficiency in each group each group who acts like a leader to help the others (TF/ Pre- OI /106-108).'

Another aspect frequently mentioned was the importance of minimising the use of the mother tongue so that students could maximise their exposure to English.

'Imitation and repetition. We speak English, they listen and they repeat after us (TC/ Pre-OI /278-279).'

In response to Question 5, the teachers stated that IRF should be taught in a way that encourages students to speak up. They explained that an IRF-driven class must cultivate an interactive atmosphere where communication takes place in multiple directions. This included teacher-to-student, student-to-teacher, and student-to-student interactions.

For me, IRF method elevates students' confidence in speaking (TF/Pre-OI/133-134).

As I mentioned earlier, I like to group my students by different skill levels. The strong ones help the weaker ones (TB/(Pre-O)/651-652).

For Question 6, the teachers explained that motivating students to respond during IRF required several strategies. They reported using open-ended questions to stimulate students' thinking and follow-up probes to extend the discussion into longer strands. In addition, they encouraged students to support one another when responding. The teachers also mentioned that praise and positive feedback were important elements in motivating students to participate actively.

Finally, all six teachers admitted that they prioritized fluency over grammatical accuracy (Question 7). They explained that excessive corrections of learners' grammatical mistakes could impede students' progress and reduce their enthusiasm for participation. As a result, they suggested that language teachers should allow weaker to moderate learners some space to practise speaking without constant interruption for grammatical errors. At the same time, all teachers agreed that grammar errors should

still be addressed in subtle ways so that learners could gradually develop stronger grammatical competence over time.

I always explain to my students that they must always try to speak, even if their grammar is weak. Grammar can be learned later. Occasionally, I correct their grammar (TB/(Pre-O)/177-180).

First, we correct the students' grammar but avoid being too proper. It is important to correct their grammar mistakes immediately so they don't forget... and we won't forget either (TC/(Pre-O)/362-365).

4.3.1.4 School Context and Support for IRF-Driven Classrooms

The next question in the Pre-O interview was: “Please explain how important it is for SAR students to master speaking skills” (Question 8). Apart from exploring the significance of speaking skills in the SAR context, the responses also raised aspects of the broader vision and mission of the schools in relation to English language learning.

The teachers highlighted that the underlying philosophy of Islamic education in Malaysia is to prepare individuals to fulfil their role as Caliph of God. In this regard, all SAR schools share the goal of nurturing individuals who are spiritually and intellectually strong in meeting global and social challenges (Sidek et al., 2023). Reflecting this mission, all six teachers unanimously stated that mastering the English language particularly in speaking is essential for SAR students due to several reasons.

The first reason given was that English serve as a tool for communication in spreading Islamic teachings at the international level. Teachers explained that when SAR students are proficient in speaking English, they are better positioned to share Islamic values with people from diverse backgrounds and nationalities across the world. As expressed by some of the teachers:

So, when I started teaching, I realized about the need to promote the importance of learning English for the purpose of 'dakwah' (TC/ Pre-OI /43-44).

To me, I always tell my students to make English language as a tool for 'dakwah' (TF/ Pre-OI /45-46).

English may be necessary to spread Islamic message. Not just maybe, it is indeed necessary for our students to use this language to attract non-Muslims to better understand Islam (TB/ Pre- OI /48-50).

Not only that, several teachers also stated that the school constantly reminded them of its broader goal to produce future Muslim preachers. In line with this vision, teachers were encouraged to incorporate noble values while teaching English. A few teachers illustrated how they integrated such values into their lessons, thereby underscoring the importance of character development alongside language learning. For instance, Teacher B emphasised that English can serve as a global language connecting people from diverse cultures and backgrounds. Nevertheless, she pointed out that such exposure does not require students to adopt practices that conflict with their religious beliefs. As she explained:

When I teach, I would always adjust the content to fit with our religious context. I introduced them to Halloween and Easter, but I also reminded them that in Islam, we are forbidden from celebrating these festivals. However, we still learn about them for the purpose of knowledge. This helps open our minds to other people's cultures (TB/Pre-OI /512-514).

Teacher C on the other hand mentioned that when she organized debates or speech competitions in English, she encouraged her students to choose topics related to Islam. She believes linking language learning with religious content, could create a motivating language learning while strengthening their beliefs. As she mentioned:

'We organize debates in English. We also hold speech competitions on Islamic issues (TF/ Pre-OI /69-70).'

Second, strong proficiency in English is vital for students' academic progression, particularly for university admission, as most institutions employ it as the medium of instruction. Students with moderate command of the language may encounter significant difficulties in comprehending instructional materials and in communicating effectively with lecturers and peers. Beyond academic, speaking competence is also a key factor in securing employment opportunities. Sectors such as tourism, hospitality, and customer service rely heavily on English to serve international

markets. Thus, individuals with higher proficiency in English are more competitive in the job market and are better positioned to succeed in diverse professional fields.

‘To me it is indeed important, especially when they start their career (TB/ Pre-OI /33-34).’

‘Besides, most universities in our country prioritize candidates with good English skills to be accepted as their students (TC/Pre-OI/56-57).’

For the final inquiry, Question 10, the findings indicate that SAR school principals demonstrated strong support for initiatives to enhance students’ speaking skills. All six teachers reported that their principals actively encouraged them to provide opportunities for students to practise English through a range of co-curricular activities. Commonly highlighted activities included English Day and English Week, during which the entire school community participated in programmes designed to promote the active use of English. Debate competitions were also mentioned, either organised internally among SAR schools or through participation in events hosted by government schools. These activities were regarded as valuable platforms for students to practise speaking in formal and competitive contexts. According to the teachers, principals consistently supported such initiatives and provided institutional backing, enabling English language activities to become an integral part of the school culture.

To enhance understanding, a summary of the themes emerged from the pre-observation interviews is presented in Figure 4.10.

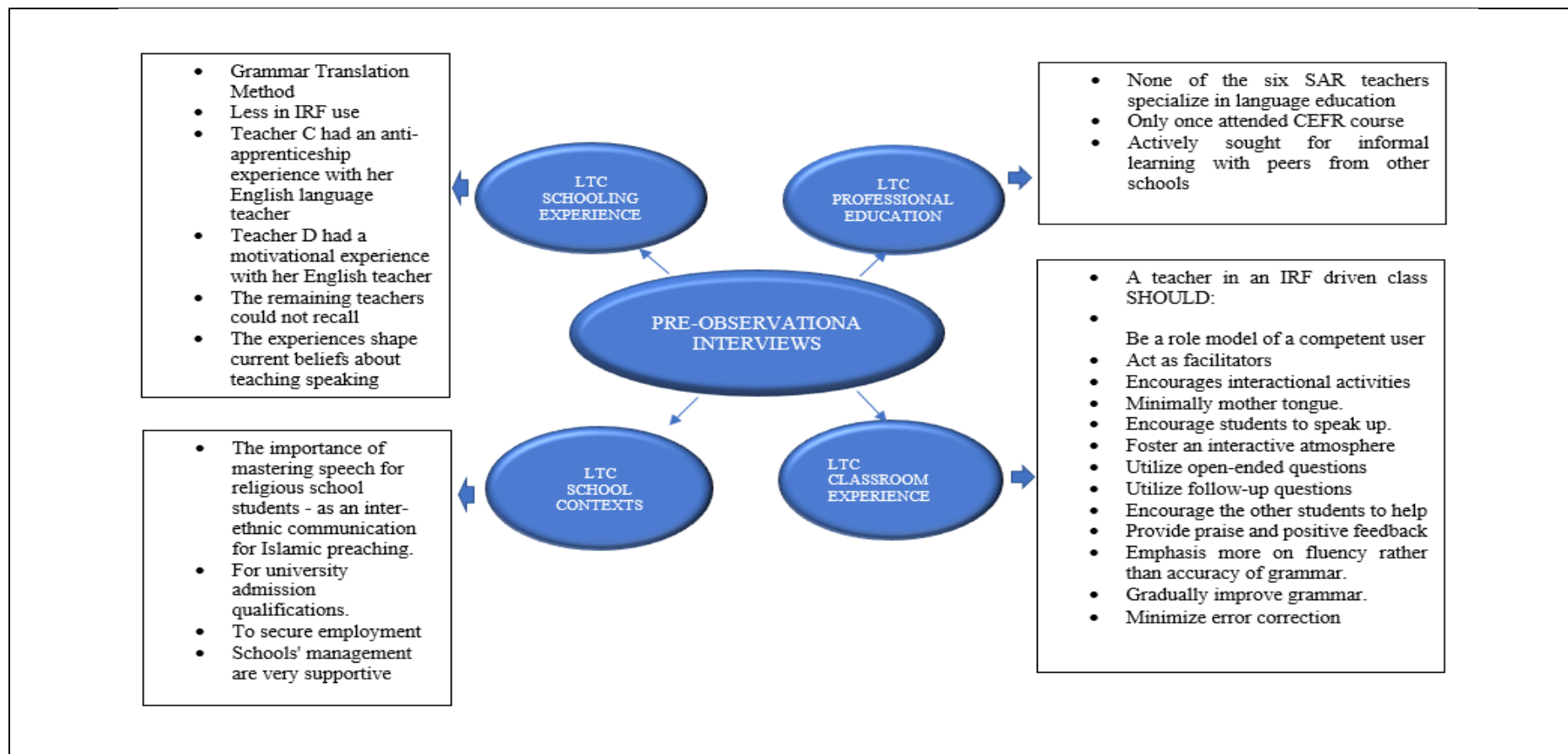


Figure 4.10 A Summary of the Findings from the Pre-Observation Interviews

4.3.2 Discussion of Pre-Observation Interview Findings - The Emerging Themes

This section discusses the findings from the pre-observation interviews conducted with six teachers, which represent the second data collection procedure used to answer RQ1: What is the teachers' cognition about the effectiveness of the IRF method in enhancing students' speaking skills? While the previous section (4.4) presented the interview data descriptively, the present discussion critically interprets and synthesises the emerging themes in relation to relevant literature and, where appropriate, triangulates them with the quantitative findings. The main purpose of these interviews was to establish teachers' basic knowledge and initial beliefs about the effectiveness of IRF in assisting students' speaking development before later examining how such knowledge was enacted in classroom practice. In other words, the interviews served as a baseline for understanding how teachers conceptualised IRF theoretically, and whether these cognitions would subsequently align or diverge from the instructional behaviours observed in their speaking classes. The aim, therefore, is not only to report what teachers said but also to interpret how their perceptions reflect broader theoretical perspectives, curricular expectations, and institutional constraints that shape the cognition and practice of IRF-driven classrooms.

4.3.2.1 Prior Learning Experiences and Their Influence on IRF Cognition

Teachers' reflections on their own schooling experiences played a significant role in shaping their cognition of IRF. Borg (2003) asserts that there is an abundance of evidence proving prior language learning can influence teachers' instructional practices throughout their careers. All six teachers recalled that their English classrooms in the past were dominated by grammar-translation methods, which offered minimal opportunities for oral interaction and influenced their current beliefs about classroom interaction and speaking skills. The paradigm shift to the 2021 SPM format, which now includes speaking and listening, can be seen as a significant effort to reform the English language education system. Hence, all six teachers acknowledged that there is a huge difference between the present instructional approach compared to the one used during

their school years. This situation also suggests a potential gap in their own learning experiences which may influence their teaching priorities, particularly in teaching speaking skills.

Two teachers shared their valuable experiences in two contrasting but complementary ways. Teacher D drew upon her positive experiences during her primary school years, particularly the encouragement she received from her English teacher, who consistently praised students whenever they spoke up. This became one of the key influences that inspired her to adopt a similar approach in her own teaching. To this day, she intentionally replicates this strategy with her students, offering praise during the feedback move as a means of motivating participation and building confidence. In contrast, Teacher C reflected on her negative experiences of ineffective and monotonous instruction during her secondary school years. Recalling how disheartening it was to remain silent in class, she deliberately rejected such practices and turned to IRF as a means of fostering active engagement and accountability among her students. According to Borg (2021), teachers' experiences with their English teachers during their schooling years play a significant role in shaping their initial cognition. Some may seek to replicate inspiring practices, while others consciously avoid repeating ineffective ones. These illustrate how teachers' cognition of IRF was not formed in isolation but was mediated by their past language learning memories. Teachers' positive experiences encouraged replication, while negative experiences prompted reform and innovation.

This theme reveals that teachers' cognition is reflective rather than static. Rather than simply reproduce what they experienced as students; teachers reflect, reinterpret, and practise them in their instructions. Although cognition is often shaped by the "apprenticeship of observation," teachers are capable of translating their past experiences into meaningful practices (Alvear et al.,2023). Even negative prior experiences can become a source of agency motivating teachers to adopt better teaching practices in the future. This was supported by the data from the quantitative survey findings. While majority of respondents lacked sustained professional development, they admitted that their own experiences as students significantly influenced their current beliefs about teaching speaking. This indicates that personal experience remained a primary resource for shaping cognition. When considered together, these findings suggest that experiential knowledge, both positive and negative, plays a central

role in how teachers conceptualise and apply IRF. In relation to RQ1, this highlights that teachers' positive beliefs in the effectiveness of IRF are grounded not only in curricular directives but also in reflective engagement with their own learning histories.

4.3.2.2 Teacher Training and Cognition of IRF

The findings show that none of the six SAR teachers had formal training in teaching language. Their academic backgrounds were in fields such as Accounting, Science, Business, and Islamic Law. This indicates a gap in Content Knowledge (CK) and Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), both of which are essential for effective language teaching (Shulman, 1987; Backman et al., 2019). Limited participation in professional development further confirms this gap, as teachers reported being sent to language-related courses only once in more than two years.

Despite this lack of formal training, teachers demonstrated strong interest in improving their practice. They relied on peer collaboration, in-house training, and online teacher networks to learn about teaching speaking through IRF. Some also pursued further studies or short courses to strengthen their knowledge. This supports Borg's (2021) view that teacher cognition is shaped not only by training but also by contextual and experiential learning.

Exposure to the CEFR-aligned curriculum also shaped their cognition. All six teachers showed familiarity with CEFR objectives and practices, and some demonstrated a detailed understanding of how CEFR emphasises communicative competence. They connected IRF to this framework, viewing it as a method that complements CEFR's focus on fluency, interaction, and active participation. This is consistent with Zaswita (2022), who found that curriculum reforms encourage teachers to reconceptualise IRF as a communicative scaffold rather than mechanical drills.

A clear contradiction emerged between teachers' low participation in formal courses (mean = 0.3) and their high self-reported confidence in IRF (86%). The interviews explained that curriculum-wide exposure and peer support compensated for the lack of structured training. This shows that large-scale reforms such as CEFR can influence teacher cognition even when professional development opportunities are limited.

In direct response to RQ1, teachers' cognition of IRF is mainly shaped by curriculum alignment and informal learning rather than formal training. They perceive IRF positively as a tool to enhance speaking, but their limited professional preparation highlights the need for more systematic training to strengthen their CK and PCK.

4.3.2.3 Teachers' Cognition of IRF-Moves in Speaking Classrooms

The findings from Part C shed light on how teachers conceptualise their classroom roles and strategies in relation to IRF, providing further evidence to answer RQ1. Teachers consistently described themselves as role models, facilitators, and motivators who are responsible for generating opportunities for oral interaction. This perspective reflects a clear cognition of IRF not merely as a mechanical drill but as a pedagogical framework consistent with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). The emphasis on being role models is aligned with Aulia and Rasyid (2025), who argue that when teachers demonstrate communicative competence themselves, students are encouraged to emulate these behaviours. By positioning themselves as facilitators, teachers also show an awareness of their responsibility to scaffold learners' participation, an understanding that echoes Vygotsky's ideas of guided support within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

The recognition that teachers should minimise the use of the mother tongue further demonstrates their orientation toward maximising English input in the classroom. In SAR schools, where exposure to English outside class is often limited, such a stance is particularly relevant. Hasanah et al., (2024) stresses that meaningful exposure to the target language is a critical factor in building communicative competence, and IRF can provide that exposure systematically. However, as indicated in Part B of the questionnaire, many of the same teachers also reported limited language teaching backgrounds and minimal PD involvement, raising questions about how far these beliefs can be consistently realised in practice. This shows that cognition may be aspirational but not always firmly underpinned by pedagogical expertise.

When explaining how IRF should be taught, teachers highlighted the need to encourage students to speak up and to create a genuinely interactive atmosphere. Importantly, they emphasised that communication should not be limited to teacher–student exchanges but should also include student–student interactions. This perception

reveals a broad understanding of IRF as a method that extends opportunities for talk beyond the teacher's initiation. Such a view supports Mercer (2019) claim that dialogic classrooms thrive when students collaborate through talk, developing reasoning and ideas together. This is significant in the SAR context where many students struggle with confidence: teachers' emphasis on interactional space indicates an understanding that IRF is not simply about eliciting answers but about cultivating a supportive classroom ecology.

The strategies teachers reported for motivating students reinforce this cognition. Their mention of open-ended questions, follow-up probes, and encouragement of peer support show that they see IRF as a tool for extending discussion and stimulating elaboration. These strategies correspond to what Desmukh et al., (2022) identifies as dialogic scaffolding, where teacher follow-ups are used to deepen student contributions. Teachers also recognised the value of praise and positive feedback, which functions as an affective scaffold that encourages students to take risks in oral production. These findings triangulate with classroom observations: in 'Better' classrooms, extended IRIRIR...F strands were evident, demonstrating that probing and follow-ups encouraged students to sustain interaction across multiple turns.

The teachers' prioritisation of fluency over accuracy adds another important dimension to their cognition. By de-emphasising strict error correction, teachers demonstrated awareness that fluency provides a foundation for communicative competence, especially in contexts where anxiety may inhibit speaking. This orientation resonates with Salmanova (2025), who found that an overemphasis on accuracy can discourage participation, while focusing on fluency allows learners to build confidence gradually. Similarly, Musa et al. (2021) emphasise that teachers who prioritise fluency help students to develop resilience in communication, as they learn to express ideas even with imperfect grammar. Triangulation with student interviews further reinforces this: learners themselves highlighted that IRF reduced their nervousness and encouraged them to speak more freely.

Despite these positive cognitions, a tension remains between belief and practice. Questionnaire findings in Part B revealed that teachers had very low participation in professional development, while classroom observations showed that practice often fell short of these reported strategies. For example, although teachers claimed to use open-ended questions and peer encouragement, Not So Good classrooms

were still dominated by display questions and monologic teacher talk. This suggests that teachers cognitively recognise the pedagogical potential of IRF, but contextual constraints such as limited PD, lack of specialised in language teaching, and student-level challenges such as low vocabulary, restrict its consistent implementation.

4.3.2.4 School Context and Support for IRF-Driven Classrooms

One of the consistent themes emerged from the interviews was teachers' strong belief in the importance of speaking skills for their students' academic and professional development. All six teachers emphasised that the mastery of speaking skills was crucial not only for pursuing higher education and employability but also for religious purposes, particularly in enabling students to deliver Islamic teachings at both local and global levels. They highlighted that proficiency in English is essential for Muslim students in SAR schools to engage with international audiences, allowing them to participate in global discourse and contribute effectively to the spreading of Islam. Therefore, speaking competence was seen not only as an academic requirement but as a vehicle for promoting Islamic values on a worldwide platform.

In order to achieve this, all teachers agreed that IRF was an effective pedagogical tool that can help enhance students' speaking skills. The basic structure of the IRF cycle where the teacher initiates, the student responds, and the teacher provides feedback acts as a practical mechanism for eliciting student participation and ensuring verbal practice. A constant practice using IRF offers a pedagogical scaffold that promotes oral proficiency. A constant use over a period of time helps students gain the confidence and fluency needed not only for academic development but also for delivering Islamic teachings effectively. Their views align with Zulfah et al., (2025), who argues that teachers in CEFR-driven settings regard IRF as a reliable strategy that encourages students' active participation. The findings from the quantitative survey reinforced this when 86% of teachers recognised and acknowledged the effectiveness of IRF in enhancing speaking. The interviews deepen this finding by showing how teachers directly connect IRF with their mission of making speaking a central skill, thereby demonstrating a strong and positive cognition that directly answers RQ1.

Teachers' cognition of IRF was further reinforced by the supportive institutional culture of their schools. All six teachers reported that principals and school

management actively promoted English learning by actively conducted events such as English Day, English Week, or debate competitions. These initiatives reflect the schools' serious efforts in achieving school-wide goals through classroom practices.

This perception illustrates the importance of context in shaping cognition. Supportive leadership and positive school culture directly influence the way teachers prioritise skills in the classroom (Hsieh, 2024). This supportive environment is supported by the data from the quantitative survey which shows SAR schools typically maintained moderate teaching hours and manageable class sizes, which are favourable for interactive pedagogy. Teachers' accounts of institutional support suggest that their positive cognition of IRF was positively affected by the school culture. In relation to RQ1, this theme shows that teachers' belief in IRF's effectiveness is not only personally held but also institutionally endorsed.

4.3.3 Synthesis and Implications for RQ1

Synthesising the findings, it is clear that teachers' cognition of IRF is consistently positive, shaped by experiences, curricular awareness, and institutional support. Teachers prioritised speaking as the central skill and interpreted IRF as a structured framework for ensuring active participation. Their own learning histories further reinforced this view, with positive experiences encouraging replication and negative experiences inspiring deliberate change. Familiarity with CEFR principles provided a curricular foundation for teachers to align IRF with communicative pedagogy, while classroom strategies such as praise, probing, and scaffolding demonstrated their belief in IRF's motivational and linguistic value. Institutional initiatives such as English Day and debate competitions further legitimised IRF, embedding it within a wider culture that valued speaking.

These findings are consistent with teacher cognition framework (Borg, 2021) emphasising the contextual and dynamic nature of teacher cognition. It highlights how beliefs are shaped by prior experience, curricular orientation, and institutional culture. The present findings not only align with these studies but also triangulate with quantitative data, which showed that teachers expressed confidence in IRF knowledge and recognised its effectiveness in speaking instruction.

In direct response to RQ1, the discussion demonstrates that teachers in SAR schools hold a confident and positive cognition of IRF as an effective method for enhancing students' speaking skills. Their beliefs are grounded in reflective engagement with their past, shaped by curricular reforms, and legitimised by institutional culture. The implication for SAR schools is that these strengths be harnessed through targeted training and resource support to ensure that positive cognition is fully translated into sustained and effective classroom practice.

4.3.4 Conclusion

In short, the discussion of pre-observation interviews demonstrates that teachers in SAR schools hold a strongly positive cognition of IRF-driven classrooms, viewing the method as an effective scaffold for enhancing speaking skills. Their beliefs are developed by prior learning experiences, awareness of CEFR and CLT principles, and recognises by the school support that values the importance of speaking skills. These findings coherently answer RQ1, that teachers acknowledged IRF as a meaningful and effective approach to enhance competence. However, while interviews reveal what teachers believe and aspire to achieve through IRF, they do not capture how these cognitions are translated in real classroom practice. For this reason, the next section turns to classroom observation data, which provide direct evidence of how teachers implement IRF moves, manage interactional patterns, and facilitate student speaking within actual lessons. This will allow for a deeper examination of the coherence or incoherence between teachers' cognition and their observable practices.

4.4 Findings and Discussion of Classroom Observation Data

The second qualitative data presentation at this stage was meant to generate answers to RQ2 - How do the teachers facilitate the IRF-Moves in the teacher-student classroom interactions to help improve their students' speaking skills?

All twelve classroom observations were completed within three months. As outlined in the data collection procedures in Chapter 3, three analytical steps were undertaken to classify each classroom in accordance with Quality of Classroom Descriptor (Galegane, 2015). These steps involved: (i) calculating the turn-taking

instances between teachers and students, (ii) calculating the number of words produced by both teachers and students, and (iii) analysing the number of short and long strands of discussion observed during the lessons. Accordingly, the presentation and discussion of the classroom findings in this chapter are structured around these three analytical dimensions, illustrating how each class corresponded to the quality indicators. Before presenting and discussing the findings, one strand of discussion was selected from each classroom as representative evidence. Each selected strand reflected several other strands that exhibited similar interactional patterns throughout the lessons. To save space, only the opening lines of each strand were transcribed in the main body of this chapter. These excerpts were sufficient to demonstrate the nature of the IRF sequences. Readers who wish to examine the complete data may refer to the appendices, where the extended transcripts are provided.

4.4.1 Classroom Observation Findings

4.4.1.1 ‘Better’ IRF Speaking Classrooms

This section presents the findings of classrooms that were classified under the ‘Better’ rank. The classrooms were characterised by a higher proportion of student talk compared to teacher talk which reflected active learner participation and more opportunities to develop speaking skills. Four classroom observations were categorized under this rank, TB/CO1, TC/CO2, TD/CO1, and TE/CO2. Table 4.5 presents selected excerpts from the whole classroom interactions for each class. To see the full transcription of the classroom interactions of these classes, please refer to Appendix 12.

Table 4.5

IRF Exchanges in 'Better' Classrooms

Lesson	Speakers	Teaching Exchanges	Moves	Acts	Lines	Lesson	Speakers	Teaching Exchanges	Moves	Acts	Lines
TB/CO1	TB	<i>Fatinah?</i>	TI	nominate	21	TB/ CO2	TB	<i>Did you put any trust to ...</i>	TI	elicit	17
	S1	<i>I want to give my ...</i>	SR	reply	22-23		S1	<i>For example, I put so many trusts ...</i>	SR	reply	18-22
	TB	<i>Hahahaha...of course!</i>	TF	comment	24		TB	<i>And you put aside the</i>	TI	elicit	23
	S1	<i>And I want to treat ...</i>	SR	comment	25		S1	<i>No...the same.</i>	SR	reply	24
	TB	<i>Where you want to bring ...</i>	TI	elicit	26		S2	<i>The next qualities to maintain</i>	SI	inform	25-26
	S1	(and the class continued)	SR	reply	27		TB	(and the class continued)	TI	elicit	27
	TB		TI	elicit	28		S2		SR	reply	28
	S1		SR	reply	29		S1		SI	cue	29
	TB		TI	elicit	30		TB		TI	nominate	30
	S1		SR	reply	31		S3		SI	elicit	31
	TB		TI	elicit	32		S1		SR	reply	32-35
	S1		SR	reply	33						
	TB		TF	accept	34						
Lesson	Speakers	Teaching Exchanges	Moves	Acts	Lines	Lesson	Speakers	Teaching Exchanges	Moves	Acts	Lines
TC/CO2	Ss	<i>Alia! (students shout)</i>	SI	nominate	1	TE/CO2	TE	<i>Another question?</i>	TI	elicit	45
	TC	<i>How about Alia and</i>	TI	nominate	2		S1	<i>What do you like about</i>	SI	elicit	46

4.4.1.1.1 Turn-Taking

Table 4.6 presents the frequency and percentage of Turn-Taking in the ‘Better’ classrooms, involving four classes.

Table 4.6

The Percentage of Turn-Takings in ‘Better’ Classrooms.

Class	Total	Teacher	Students	Rank
TB/CO1	133	40 (30%)	93 (70%)	Better
TB/CO2	222	88 (40%)	134 (60%)	Better
TC/CO2	164	80 (49%)	84 (51%)	Better
TE/CO2	176	30 (17%)	146 (83%)	Better

In Class TB/CO1, students took 93 turns, representing 70% of the total, while the teacher contributed 30%. Similarly, in Class TB/CO2, students accounted for 60% of the turns, with the teacher contributing 40%.

In Class TC/CO2, the distribution was nearly balanced, with students contributing 51% and the teacher 49% of the turns. However, Class TE/CO2 showed the most student-dominated pattern, where students produced 83% of the total turns and the teacher only 17%.

Overall, the pattern across all four ‘Better’ classrooms indicates that students were actively engaged in the interaction, contributing more turns than their teachers.

4.4.1.1.2 Number of Sentences Spoken and Words Used

Table 4.7

Percentage of Number of Sentences and Words Spoken by Teachers and Students in ‘Better’ Classrooms.

Teacher / Lesson	Total of Sentences	Teacher’s Sentences	Students’ Sentences	Teacher’s Words	Students’ Words	Rank
TB/CO1	142	60 (42%)	82 (58%)	427	433	Better

TB/CO2	222	70 (48%)	75 (52%)	570	701	Better
TC/CO2	208	96 (46%)	112 (54%)	695	1055	Better
TE/CO2	208	38 (18%)	170 (82%)	124	1507	Better

The findings in Table 4.7 show that ‘Better’ classrooms were marked by active student participation, with learners consistently producing more sentences and words than their teachers. In TB/CO1, the number of sentences was fairly balanced, yet the near-equal word counts suggest students elaborated on their ideas as fully as the teacher. In TB/CO2 and TC/CO2, students not only contributed slightly more sentences but also generated substantially more words, creating a strongly dialogic environment.

The clearest evidence came from TE/CO2, where students dominated sentence production (82%) and word count (1507 compared to the teacher’s 124). This indicates that students were not only engaged but also produced extended discourse that went beyond short IRF cycles.

4.4.1.1.3 Pattern of Interactions

With regard to pattern of interactions, these ‘Better’ classrooms were marked by longer, more dialogic exchanges that went beyond the simple IRF cycle, aligning closely with Galegane’s (2015) description of effective speaking classrooms. Here, teachers acted mainly as facilitators through prompts, checks, and scaffolds, while students dominated the talk.

In TB/CO1, for instance, the teacher nominated a student and sustained the dialogue through repeated elicitation moves such as “Where you want to bring...” and “And...?” These prompts encouraged elaboration rather than short replies. Similarly, in TB/CO2, the teacher initiated with “Did you put any trust to...,” which led to several turns of student elaboration. Follow-up prompts like “And you put aside the...” maintained the flow, allowing multiple students to contribute. Such iterative cycles transformed the exchanges into extended IRIRIR...RF strands, giving students more

opportunities to practise speaking meaningfully and to strengthen fluency, accuracy, and confidence.

4.4.1.2 ‘Good’ IRF Speaking Classrooms

This section discusses the findings of classrooms that were placed in the ‘Good’ rank according to the distribution of teacher–student interaction. These classrooms displayed a more balanced pattern of talk, with students beginning to contribute more actively while teachers retained a guiding role. Four classroom observations are included under this rank: TA/CO2, TC/CO1, TD/CO1, and TD/CO2. The analysis that follows outlines the findings through three analytical processes, illustrated with tables and selected examples from the classroom data. Table 4.8 presents the excerpts from the whole classroom interactions of the four ‘Good’ classrooms. For further details, the complete transcription of all classes in this category is provided in Appendix 13.

Table 4.8

IRF Exchanges in 'Good' Classrooms (TA/CO2, TC/CO1, TD/CO1 and TD/CO2)

Lesson	Speaker	Teaching Exchanges	Moves	Acts	Lines
TA/CO2	TA	So how when you say that the advantages of digital media...is we do not need to spend a lot of money?	TI	Elicit	41
	S	I don't think we ...	SR	Reply	43
	TA	No, I am ...	TI	reply elicit	45
	S	Games?	SR	reply	46
	TA	Games.	TF	accept	47

Lesson	Speaker	Teaching Exchanges	Moves	Acts	Lines
TC/CO1	TC	Okay Suha. Hm...how do your parents teach you about saving water?	TI	Nominate	20
	Student	My parents teach me ...	SR	reply	21
	TC	Oh okay.	TF	accept	22
	Student	Using bucket...	SR	reply	23
	TC	Oh, then ...	TI	elicit	24
	Student	To wash car	SR	reply	25
	TC	Good	TF	accept	25

Lesson	Speaker	Teaching Exchanges	Moves	Acts	Lines
TD/CO1	TD	Okay second?	TI	elicit	6
	S	Easy to get information	SR	reply	7
	TD	Easy to get information	TF	accept	8
	TD	Okay what you... Errr...cursing on media social.	TI	elicit	9
	S		SR	reply	10

Lesson	Speaker	Teaching Exchanges	Moves	Acts	Lines
TD/CO2	S	I am going to present	SI	Inform	16
		First, cyberbully is ...			17
	TD	Are you involved ...	TI	elicit	20
	S	I had seen ...	TR	reply	21
	TD	Okay. Right.	TF	accept	22

4.4.1.2.1 Turn-Taking

Table 4.9

The Percentage of Turn-Taking in ‘Good’ Classrooms.

Class	Total	Teacher	Students	Rank
TA/CO2	133	77 (58%)	56 (42%)	Good
TC/CO1	125	56 (45%)	69(45%)	Good
TD/CO1	86	42 (49%)	44 (51%)	Good
TD/CO2	47	23 (49%)	24 (51%)	Good

The distribution of turn-taking in classrooms ranked as ‘Good’, as presented in Table 4.9 indicates that interaction was generally well balanced between teachers and students. In TA/CO2, the teacher contributed 77 turns (58%), while the students produced 56 turns (42%), suggesting that teacher talk still outweighed student responses. In contrast, TC/CO1 showed a reverse pattern, with students producing 69 turns (55%) compared to the teacher’s 56 turns (45%), reflecting a more active learner presence. Similarly, TD/CO1 and TD/CO2 displayed nearly equal participation, with students contributing 51% of the turns in both cases. These patterns confirm that classrooms categorised as ‘Good’ demonstrated active participation and reduced teacher dominance, though the depth of student contributions varied.

4.4.1.2.2 Number of Sentences and Words

Table 4.10

Percentage of Number of Sentences and Words Spoken in ‘Good’ Classrooms.

Teacher / Lesson	Teacher’s Sentences	Students’ Sentences	Teacher’s Words	Students’ Words	Rank
TA/CO2	75 (52%)	70 (48%)	570	701	Good
TC/CO1	60 (43%)	78 (57%)	368	755	Good
TD/CO1	53 (47%)	60 (53%)	230	366	Good
TD/CO2	27 (30%)	60 (70%)	534	62	Good

Table 4.10 shows the distribution of sentences and words in classrooms categorised as ‘Good’. In TA/CO2, the teacher produced more sentences (75, 52%), but

students contributed more words (701 vs. 570), suggesting their turns were longer and more elaborated. In TC/CO1, students dominated both measures, producing 78 sentences (57%) and 755 words, indicating active participation and extended responses. TD/CO1 showed a near balance in sentence count, but students contributed substantially more words (366 vs. 230), again pointing to greater elaboration.

By contrast, TD/CO2 was an anomaly. Although students produced the majority of sentences (70%), their word count was far lower (62 vs. 534). This reflects extremely short turns, likely one- or two-word replies, with the teacher still controlling the flow of discourse.

4.4.1.2.3 Pattern of Interactions

With regard to the pattern of interactions, these classrooms displayed more balanced interaction than ‘Not So Good’ classrooms but lacked the sustained dialogue of ‘Better’ ones. Teachers provided opportunities for students to respond and occasionally extended exchanges with follow-up elicitations, yet turns often remained short and rarely developed beyond the basic IRF cycle into IRIRIRF sequences.

As Galegane (2015) notes, ‘Good’ classrooms are marked by an emerging balance in talk distribution, where teachers use follow-ups to prompt elaboration but seldom sustain long strands. This was evident in TA/CO2 (lines 41–47), where a teacher elicited views on digital media, received a short reply, and added a follow-up, but the exchange ended quickly without progressing into extended dialogue.

Other examples confirm this trend. In TC/CO1 (lines 20–25), the teacher elicited two successive replies before closing with feedback, while in TD/CO1 (lines 6–11), the teacher accepted answers without further development. These sequences reflected IRIRF patterns rather than the longer IRIRIRF chains of ‘Better’ classrooms. Similarly, in TD/CO2 (lines 16–22), a student presentation on cyberbullying was followed by a brief teacher prompt and short reply before closing.

Overall, ‘Good’ classrooms offered more speaking opportunities than ‘Not So Good’ ones but still limited students’ chances to elaborate, justify, or negotiate meaning. They occupy a middle ground: more dialogic than teacher-dominated classrooms, yet falling short of the sustained multi-turn dialogue achieved in ‘Better’ classrooms.

4.4.1.3 *'Not So Good' IRF Speaking Classroom*

This section presents the findings of classrooms that were classified under the 'Not So Good' rank based on the distribution of teacher–student interaction. These classrooms were characterised by a higher proportion of teacher talk compared to student talk, which limited opportunities for learners to take initiative in speaking. Four classroom observations are categorized under this rank: TA/CO1, TE/CO1, TF/CO1, and TF/CO2. The following analysis presents the results through three analytical processes, supported by tables and examples drawn from each classroom. Table 4.11 presents selected excerpts from the whole classroom interactions for each class. For reference, the full transcription of all the classes ranked in this category is provided in Appendix 14.

Table 4.11

IRF Exchanges in 'Not So Good' Classrooms (TA/CO2, TE/CO1, TF/CO1 and TF/CO2)

Lesson	Speaker	Teaching Exchanges	Moves	Acts	Lines	Lesson	Speaker	Teaching Exchanges	Moves	Acts	Lines
TA/CO2	TA	So I am so happy to born on the internet era.	TI	inform	36	TE/CO1	TE	How to write a short story?	TI	elicit	24
	TA	So the internet starting from the H+ now to 5G.	TI	inform	37		TE	Okay first of all you have to understand.	TI	inform	25
	TA	So if I received the H+ signal on my phone at that time, I am extremely happy.	TI	inform	38		TE	You have to know how to write a short essay.	TI		26
		So I am also only use internet explorer on my PC during that time.			39		TE	For example, if you want to ride a bicycle you have to know how to ride a bicycle.			27
	TA	Now there are various types of browsers which are Google Chrome, Firefox, Bing	TI	inform	40		TE	So first of all, you have to understand that a short story is not same as novel.	TI		28
	TA	types of browsers which are Google Chrome, Firefox, Bing	TI	initiate			TE	How many pages for novel?	TI	elicit	29
	SS	Yahoo	SR	reply	41		Ss	One hundred...	SR	reply	30
	TA	Yahoo. So many. Err...okay.	TI	inform	42		TE		TF	accept	31
	TA		TI	inform	43		TE		TI		32
	TA		TI	inform	44		TE		TI		33
					45		TE		TI	elicit	34
					46		TE		TI	elicit	34
TF/CO1	TA		TI	inform	47	TF/CO2	Ss		SR	reply	35
	TA		TI	inform	48		TE		TF	comment	36
	TF	Okay, is there other rules for us to identify when we should add 's'?	TI	elicit	107		TF	Okay, is there other rules for us to identify when we should add 's'?	TI	elicit	107

TF	When we should add 's' to the verb?	TI		108
TF	When?	TI		109
TF	What is the rule?	TI		110
TF	One rule is the subject is singular.	TI		111
TF	Another one, do you still remember the three rules of Simple Present?	TI	elicit	112
Ss	's'...'es'...'ies'...	SR	reply	113
TF		TI	elicit	114
TF		TI		115
TF		TI	inform	116
TF		TI		117
Ss		SR	reply	118
TF		TF	accept	119

TF	When we should add 's' to the verb?	TI		108
TF	When?	TI		109
TF	What is the rule?	TI		110
TF	One rule is the subject is singular.	TI		111
TF	Another one, do you still remember the three rules of Simple Present?	TI	elicit	112
Ss	's'...'es'...'ies'...	SR	reply	113
TF		TI	elicit	114
TF		TI		115
TF		TI	inform	116
TF		TI		117
Ss		SR	reply	118
TF		TF	accept	119

4.4.1.3.1 Turn-Taking

Table 4.12

The Percentage of Turn-Taking in ‘Not So Good’ Classrooms.

Class	Total	Teacher	Students	Rank
TA/CO1	145	75 (52%)	70 (48%).	Not So Good
TE/CO1	109	72 (66%)	28 (34%)	Not So Good
TF/CO1	197	127 (64%)	70 (36%)	Not So Good
TF/CO2	189	96 (52%)	90 (48%)	Not So Good

The data presented in Table 4.12 shows all four classrooms categorised as ‘Not So Good’ were characterised by a teacher-centred interactional pattern. Students were given some opportunities to speak, however, the frequency of student turns were substantially lower than of the teacher. In TA/CO1 and TF/CO2, although the differences between teacher talk and student talk were relatively small, but they still did not reach the level required to be considered ‘Good’. In contrast, TE/CO1 and TF/CO1 displayed a clear imbalance, with teachers taking almost two-thirds of the turns. This is an indicator of limited interactional quality.

4.4.1.3.2 Number of Sentences and Words

Table 4.13

Percentage of Number of Sentences and Sords spoken in ‘Not So Good’ Classrooms.

Teacher / Lesson	Teacher’s Sentences	Students’ Sentences	Teacher’s Words	Students’ Words	Rank
TA/CO1	129 (86%)	21 (14%)	1372	98	Not So Good
TE/CO1	135 (80%)	34 (20%)	1047	80	Not So Good
TF/CO1	178 (69%)	81 (31%)	1011	143	Not So Good
TF/CO2	176 (55%)	145 (45%)	1126	473	Not So Good

The data in Table 4.13 shows that all four lessons were ranked as ‘Not So Good’ due to the dominance of teacher talk. In TA/CO1 and TE/CO1, teachers produced 80–86% of the sentences and over 1000 words, while students contributed fewer than 100 words. Interaction was therefore largely teacher-centred, with minimal student

input. Although TF/CO1 and TF/CO2 showed a slight rise in student participation, the quality of interaction still fell short of the features typical of ‘Good’ or ‘Better’ classrooms.

4.4.1.3.3 Pattern of Interactions

With regard to pattern of interactions, the classrooms which were ranked as ‘Not So Good’ were dominated by teacher talk, leaving little room for student participation. In TA/CO2 (lines 36–48), the teacher spoke for thirteen consecutive turns, while students produced only a brief reply (“Yahoo,” line 41), forming an IIIIRIIIF pattern. Similar dominance appeared in TE/CO1 (lines 24–36), where the teacher gave a long explanation on writing a short story and students responded minimally, and in TF/CO1 (lines 107–119), where display questions elicited only a short “yes.”

This overwhelming teacher talk restricted students’ opportunities to practise extended speech, limiting fluency and communicative competence. Students were largely passive listeners, unable to negotiate meaning or co-construct dialogue, which reduced their willingness to take risks in language use over time.

4.4.2 Discussion of Classroom Observation Findings

The findings from the classroom observations provide critical insights into how teachers facilitated IRF-Moves in real interactional settings, thereby answering RQ2: How do the teachers facilitate the IRF-Moves in the teacher–student classroom interactions to help improve their students’ speaking skills?

Contrastive to the descriptive patterns presented earlier, this subsection deeper discusses the findings by critically evaluating how the observed IRF exchanges encouraged or hindered students’ opportunities to speak. It will integrate a comparison across the three classroom categories: ‘Better’, ‘Good’, and ‘Not So Good’ to compare the interactional quality between classes. It also draws upon relevant literature reviewed in Chapter 2 to strengthen the interpretation of these patterns. Furthermore, the discussion triangulates evidence from classroom observations with data from the questionnaire and interviews to examine the consistency between teachers’ beliefs and their actual practices. The section concludes with a brief synthesis to capture how the

three analytical dimensions: turn-taking, number of sentences and words, and the length of IRF strands collectively shape students' speaking development.

4.4.2.1 'Better' IRF Speaking Classrooms

4.4.2.1.1 Turn-Taking

The analysis of turn-taking (Table 4.5) revealed that in the 'Better' classrooms, students took turns more than the teachers, indicating a higher level of participation and interaction. For instance, the student dominance, as seen in TB/CO1 (70%) and TE/CO2 (83%), implies that classroom talk in those classrooms were largely student-centred. This demonstrates that the teachers in these classrooms were able to create a very supportive learning space where learners took initiative and sustained dialogue, consistent with the principles of dialogic pedagogy.

Critically, this finding also reveals that teacher talk became deliberately reduced to allow student-led negotiation of meaning, a feature absent in the 'Not So Good' classrooms, where teacher-turn frequently exceeded 70%. When compared to the 'Good' classrooms, where student and teacher turns were more evenly distributed, the 'Better' classrooms demonstrated a deeper level of learner autonomy. This aligns with the view that extended student talk signifies not only participation but cognitive engagement, as learners are given space to formulate, express, and refine ideas collaboratively (Kołsut & Szumilas (2023).

When triangulated with findings from the pre-observation interviews, the pattern of discussion in the 'Better' classrooms clearly promoted communicative IRF interaction, providing opportunities for the students to explore ideas through talk. These beliefs were clearly translated in practice, illustrating the congruence between cognition and classroom behaviour. Conversely, the pattern of discussion in 'Not So Good' classrooms, though aware of IRF principles, reported difficulty implementing them due to students' limited proficiency and time constraints, which likely led to more teacher-led patterns.

4.4.2.1.2 Number of Sentences and Words

The quantitative data in Table 4.9 further confirm that students in the ‘Better’ classrooms not only took more turns but also produced longer and more meaningful utterances. The near-equal number of words between teacher and students in TB/CO1 and the dominance of student word count in TE/CO2 suggest that interaction moved beyond minimal responses into long elaborated discourse. This is clearly consistent with the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) framework, which underpins IRF-based scaffolding, where students express their opinions, clarify meanings, and assisted each other in verbalizing their thoughts (Vygotsky, 1978).

In comparison, ‘Good’ classrooms demonstrated a balanced pattern of classroom talk pattern, the student’ shorter responses indicated limited discourse elaboration. Students responded actively but relied on teacher prompts to sustain talk. This aligns with Hardman & Hardman, (2019), who argues that participation without elaboration limits deeper learning. The ‘Not So Good’ classrooms, on the other hand, were dominated by monologic teacher talk with short or one-word student replies, a pattern commonly associated with traditional, transmission-oriented pedagogy (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975).

These quantitative findings also align with the questionnaire data, where 86% of teachers reported believing that IRF enhances speaking proficiency. However, only teachers in the ‘Better’ classrooms demonstrated this belief effectively through extended student output. This triangulation supports Borg’s claim that while teacher cognition shapes instructional choices, contextual factors such as student proficiency and teaching confidence determine the degree of congruence between belief and practice (Borg, 2003)

4.4.2.1.3 Pattern of Interaction

The qualitative observation data further reveal that there were many longer and dialogic IRF strands in ‘Better’ classrooms, extending into IRIRIRIR...F patterns. The teachers in ‘Better’ classrooms utilised prompting and scaffolding strategies to sustain discussion, transforming ordinary mechanical question and answer sessions into collaborative meaning-making instances. For instance, follow-up prompts like “And

you put aside the...” observable in TB/CO1 and TB/CO2, encouraged students to elaborate, resulting in richer, multi-turn interactions.

In contrast, ‘Good’ classrooms displayed fewer extended strands. Although the teachers initiated interactive questioning, the dialogue often lapsed to short IRF cycles once the teacher’s question was answered. IRF exchanges appeared interactive but remained teacher-controlled. On the other hand, the ‘Not So Good’ classrooms were totally absent of long strands, as teachers dominated the discussions and student responses were confined to single utterances, confirming limited communicative engagement.

From a critical standpoint, the presence of sustained IRF sequences in the ‘Better’ classrooms reflected teachers’ skill in dialogic scaffolding, possessing an ability to respond contingently to students’ contributions (Mercer, 2019). This shows pedagogical expertise that transforms IRF from a mechanical questioning pattern into a tool for meaning negotiation and fluency development. The data also corroborate the student stimulated recall interviews, where both teachers and students described these lessons as conversational and encouraging, demonstrating strong alignment between observed interaction and participants’ perceptions.

Synthesising across these three analytical dimensions turn-taking, word production, and strand length, it is clear that ‘Better’ classrooms implemented the IRF framework most effectively. Students were given greater agency to initiate and sustain dialogue, while teachers acted as facilitators providing timely scaffolds, indicating high congruence between teacher beliefs, instructional behaviour, and student engagement.

In comparison, ‘Good’ classrooms exhibited moderate alignment, showing interaction but less elaboration, while ‘Not So Good’ classrooms reflected an incongruence between teacher beliefs and actual practices. Overall, these findings validate the central argument in Chapter 2 that IRF, when implemented dialogically within the ZPD, promotes linguistic competence, confidence, and communicative autonomy among learners (Kolsut & Szumilas (2023); Mercer, 2019). The triangulated data thus affirm that the quality of classroom interaction, rather than the mere presence of IRF and determines its effectiveness in fostering speaking development.

4.4.2.2 ‘Good’ IRF Speaking Classrooms

4.4.2.2.1 Turn-Taking

The findings from Table 4.9 show that turn-taking in the ‘Good’ classrooms was generally balanced, with both teachers and students contributing almost equally to the flow of interaction. This signifies a positive shift from the teacher-dominated talk observable in the ‘Not So Good’ classrooms. However, when compared with the ‘Better’ classrooms, the proportion of student turns yet reflected sustained student-led classroom discourse. Although the teachers in these classrooms still played a guiding role, initiating most exchanges and steering the sequence of responses, the students’ answers failed to show in-depth expansion. This finding aligns with the view that classrooms in the mid-range of interactional quality often exhibit shared talk distribution, yet the talk remains largely teacher-managed (Galegane, 2015).

From a critical perspective, this pattern proposes that while teachers in the ‘Good’ classrooms created opportunities for students to speak, they still showed some restrictions in inviting in-depth discussions. Such moderation may arise from contextual factors highlighted in Chapter 2, such as teachers’ concern over syllabus completion or students limited linguistic resources (Kołsut & Szumilas (2023); Nassaji & Wells, 2000). The pre-observation interview data also support this interpretation, where several teachers admitted that maintaining equal participation was challenging when students were passive or hesitant. Thus, while the turn-taking data suggest a balanced exchange, the quality of participation still leaned toward teacher-led regulation.

4.4.2.2.2 Number of Sentences and Words

As presented in Table 4.10, the ‘Good’ classrooms revealed an intricate relationship between the number of sentences and words spoken by teachers and students. Undeniably, students in ‘Good’ classrooms produced either more sentences or more words compared to the ‘Not So Good’ classrooms, where teacher talk dominated both metrics. However, these sentences were often short and lacked elaboration, as seen in TD/CO2, where students produced 70% of the sentences but used far fewer words than the teacher. This reflects a surface-level participation rather than critical engagement with ideas.

When compared with the ‘Better’ classrooms, where students produced both a higher quantity and quality of talk, the ‘Good’ classrooms showed less developed responses. Students’ contributions often consisted of brief statements or partial answers that required teacher follow-ups to sustain the dialogue. These findings are consistent with studies by Mercer (2019) and Kolsut & Szumilas (2023), who argue that balanced turn distribution does not automatically lead to dialogic interaction unless teachers scaffold students to extend their ideas. The shorter utterances found here suggest that the IRF exchanges remained at a display-question level, focusing on recall rather than open reasoning.

Triangulation with the interview data strengthens this interpretation. Several teachers were aware that while they encouraged student talk, students’ low proficiency limited opportunities for longer strand of discussion. Similarly, stimulated recall data revealed that teachers often believed a short answer was sufficient evidence of understanding, thereby closing the interaction prematurely. These findings suggest that while participation was visible, communicative depth was still constrained.

4.4.2.2.3 Pattern of Interaction

In terms of IRF patterns, the ‘Good’ classrooms exhibited more dialogic exchanges compared to the ‘Not So Good’ classes, but they often lacked the extended strand of discussions as shown in the ‘Better’ group. Most of the interactions observed followed the short triadic IRF pattern, occasionally extending into IRIRF sequences but rarely into longer IRIRIR...F strands. This indicates that teachers put some effort to sustain the talk but often reverted to a monologic pattern after one or two student responses. Such findings correspond with the idea that ‘Good’ classrooms demonstrate emerging dialogic tendencies but limited continuity (Galegane, 2015).

From a theoretical standpoint, this intermediate pattern reflects what Vygotsky (1978) described as partial scaffolding, where teacher guidance initiates student participation but does not fully enable independent construction of meaning. The data from the classroom observations confirm that students were responsive but yet autonomous and independent in verbalizing their thoughts. This contrasted with the ‘Better’ classrooms, where teachers’ follow-up questions and prompts facilitated deeper cognitive engagement and longer verbal chains. The shorter and less sustained

sequences observed were also consistent with the notion of “pseudo-dialogue,” where apparent interaction masks limited student reasoning (Kołsut & Szumilas, 2023).

Triangulating these findings with data from pre-observation interviews and survey results further reinforces this interpretation. While teachers expressed strong beliefs in the value of IRF for promoting speaking fluency, they also acknowledged that large class sizes, time pressure, and students’ reluctance to speak in English hindered sustained dialogue. These contextual constraints help explain why the ‘Good’ classrooms achieved balanced but not extended interactional patterns.

Taken together, the ‘Good’ classrooms represent a transitional stage between teacher-dominated and student-led interaction. Quantitatively, the data indicate that both teachers and students shared turns and contributed comparable amounts of talk. Qualitatively, however, the exchanges lacked the depth and continuity seen in the ‘Better’ classrooms. While students spoke more frequently, their utterances were shorter and less elaborated, suggesting limited linguistic autonomy. Compared to the ‘Not So Good’ classrooms, these lessons showed improvement in participation but still fell short of fostering sustained dialogic engagement.

The convergence of data from classroom observations, interviews, and questionnaires highlights a key implication: teachers in the ‘Good’ classrooms possessed adequate knowledge of IRF but required stronger scaffolding strategies to extend interaction beyond the basic IRF cycle. As Chapter 2 established, dialogic teaching and effective follow-ups are central to communicative competence and fluency development (Kołsut & Szumilas, 2023); Mercer, 2019). Therefore, while the ‘Good’ classrooms achieved a balanced discourse environment, further pedagogical support is needed to help teachers transform balanced talk into sustained, meaning-making dialogue.

4.4.2.3 ‘Not So Good’ IRF Speaking Classrooms

4.4.2.3.1 Turn-Taking

The turn-taking data in Table 4.12 indicate that all four classrooms categorised as ‘Not So Good’ were dominated by teacher talk. While students were occasionally invited to respond, the frequency of student turns was substantially lower than that of

the teacher. Even in TA/CO1 and TF/CO2, where the proportion of teacher-student turns appeared relatively close, the exchanges still lacked the reciprocity and balance observed in the ‘Good’ or ‘Better’ classrooms. In contrast, TE/CO1 and TF/CO1 displayed a clear asymmetry, with teachers taking nearly two-thirds of the turns.

This finding reveals an interactional pattern that is predominantly teacher-centred. Such imbalance limits opportunities for students to engage in meaningful exchanges, which, according to Gümüşok & Balıkcı (2020), is crucial for developing dialogic learning. When compared with the ‘Good’ classrooms, where teacher talk often served to prompt student responses, or the ‘Better’ classrooms, where students dominated discussion and teachers acted as facilitators, the ‘Not So Good’ classrooms exhibited limited dialogic space. The pattern aligns with pre-observation interview data, where several teachers expressed uncertainty about how to sustain student talk and often relied on display questions to manage participation. This triangulation supports the interpretation that teacher beliefs and classroom realities were not yet fully aligned, suggesting an incongruence between cognition and practice.

4.4.2.3.2 Number of Sentences and Words

The data in Table 4.13 further confirm the teacher-centred pattern. Across all four classrooms, teachers produced between 69% and 86% of the sentences and significantly higher word counts compared to students. In TA/CO1 and TE/CO1, the imbalance was particularly stark, as students contributed fewer than 100 words in the entire lesson. Although TF/CO1 and TF/CO2 showed a moderate increase in student talk, their participation remained brief and often confined to one-word or short-sentence answers.

From a critical standpoint, these findings demonstrate that linguistic productivity was largely confined to the teacher. As highlighted by Mercer (2019), such dominance reduces students’ opportunities for output, interactional negotiation, and syntactic development which are the core processes needed for second language acquisition. Compared with the ‘Good’ classrooms, where student talk occasionally balanced teacher talk, and the ‘Better’ classrooms, where students produced longer, elaborated turns, the ‘Not So Good’ classes reflect minimal engagement with communicative teaching principles. This was consistent with questionnaire results

reported in Section 4.1.8, where some teachers acknowledged that limited proficiency and time constraints hindered student participation. Hence, the restricted quantity and quality of student utterances observed here triangulate well with teachers' earlier perceptions of structural and contextual barriers.

4.4.2.3.3 Pattern of Interactions

The interactional pattern in the 'Not So Good' classrooms was characterised by long monologic stretches of teacher talk. In TA/CO2 (lines 36–48), for instance, the teacher spoke for thirteen consecutive turns, producing an IIIIRIIIF sequence that left little opportunity for students to contribute meaningfully. Similar patterns were recorded in TE/CO1 and TF/CO1, where display questions elicited minimal responses such as “yes” or “okay.” The predominance of teacher-led talk resembles the situations which constrains student involvement and limits the potential for genuine communicative exchanges (Mercer, 2019; Vygotsky, 2015).

Critically, this pattern stands in stark contrast to the extended IRIRIR...F sequences observed in the 'Better' classrooms, where teachers' follow-up moves invited elaboration and deeper reasoning. Hardman and Hardman (2019) argue that sustained IRF cycles promote fluency and conceptual development by allowing students to build on their own and others' ideas. In the 'Not So Good' classrooms, however, the truncated IRF patterns curtailed such opportunities, resulting in limited linguistic and cognitive engagement.

These findings also align with data from the post-observation interviews, where some teachers admitted that their focus on syllabus completion and examination preparation left little room for interactive speaking practice. This triangulation between observational and interview data reinforces the interpretation that institutional pressure and classroom management concerns shaped a teacher-dominated discourse style.

In summary, the 'Not So Good' classrooms displayed restricted interactional quality across all three analytical dimensions: turn-taking, number of words and sentences, and discussion strand patterns. The dominance of teacher talk, low student verbal output, and absence of extended IRF sequences collectively signified limited communicative engagement. When compared with the 'Good' and 'Better' classrooms, it is evident that interactional control shifted progressively from teacher-led to student-

centred exchanges as classroom quality improved. The triangulated data from questionnaires, pre-observation interviews, and classroom observations suggest that while teachers understood the principles of IRF, their implementation was constrained by contextual factors such as student proficiency, curriculum pressure, and limited exposure to interactive pedagogy. Overall, the ‘Not So Good’ classrooms exemplify a traditional transmission model of teaching that prioritised teacher explanation over student dialogue, thereby hindering the full realisation of communicative learning.

4.4.3 Synthesis and Implications for RQ2

Synthesising these observations, the effectiveness of IRF facilitation for speaking skills depends on how teachers managed turn-taking, sentence and word production, and the structure of IRF strands. In ‘Better’ classrooms, high levels of student turns, longer sentences, and larger word counts were facilitated through extended IRIRIR...F patterns, leading to genuine speaking development. In ‘Good’ classrooms, moderate balance produced partial gains, but the lack of sustained scaffolding limited deeper fluency. In ‘Not So Good’ classrooms, teacher dominance suppressed student talk, rendering IRF ineffective for oral development.

This analysis provides a clear answer to RQ2: teachers facilitated IRF with varying degrees of effectiveness, and its impact on speaking skills was strongest when scaffolding extended interaction within the ZPD. Where such scaffolding was absent, IRF became very mechanical with little benefit. This synthesis aligns with the survey results showing strong teacher belief in IRF’s potential, and it complements the pre-observation interviews where teachers articulated enthusiasm for using IRF to promote fluency and confidence. The triangulation indicates that while teachers’ cognition is highly positive, only in certain classrooms those with extended scaffolding was this belief realised in practice.

The triangulated findings also reveal an important gap. Teachers’ belief in IRF, recorded in the survey and interviews, did not automatically lead to effective facilitation in classrooms. While all teachers professed positive cognition, only some demonstrated practices consistent with scaffolding principles. This suggests that cognition alone is insufficient; without training and reflective practice, IRF risks becoming a routine very mechanical rather than a scaffold for learning.

Furthermore, the synthesis highlights how turn-taking patterns, sentence length, and word counts are not merely quantitative markers but indicators of qualitative opportunities for speaking. When students controlled more turns and produced longer utterances, they were practising fluency, risk-taking, and meaning negotiation skills essential for communicative competence. Conversely, where teacher dominance compressed student talk into single words, students were denied the very opportunities IRF is meant to provide.

These findings have direct implications for SAR schools. Teachers in pre-observation interviews stressed that speaking proficiency was central not only for university and employability but also for the broader mission of preparing students for Islamic teaching in international contexts. The observations show that only in classrooms with extended scaffolding did students receive training consistent with these ambitions. Where classrooms fell into monologic routines, students were left unprepared for the communicative demands of higher education, the workplace, or global engagement.

In addition, the synthesis demonstrates that differences in IRF facilitation are not trivial but have long-term implications for learners' trajectories. 'Better' classrooms set a foundation for communicative competence, 'Good' classrooms provided partial progress, while 'Not So Good' classrooms risked reinforcing passivity. The contrast underlines that speaking skills are not enhanced by exposure alone but by the quality of facilitation within IRF. This calls for targeted professional development to ensure teachers exploit the full dialogic potential of the method.

4.4.4 Conclusion

The classroom observations reveal that IRF has significant potential for enhancing students' speaking skills, but its effectiveness depends on how teachers facilitate the moves. In 'Better' classrooms, effective scaffolding, balanced turn-taking, and extended strands enabled students to practise fluency, elaboration, and communicative competence. In 'Good' classrooms, facilitation was moderately effective, giving students opportunities but limiting their growth. In 'Not So Good' classrooms, teacher dominance and ritualised IRF cycles prevented meaningful speaking practice. Thus, IRF is not inherently effective; it becomes effective only when

used as a scaffold to push students into their ZPD, encouraging them to speak more, speak longer, and speak with greater confidence. These findings are strengthened by triangulation: teachers' positive cognition of IRF (survey and interviews) was confirmed in some classrooms but contradicted in others, showing that practice not belief alone determines the actual effectiveness of IRF in enhancing speaking.

The conclusion therefore reinforces the importance of moving beyond surface-level application of IRF. Teachers must be equipped not only with knowledge of its structure but also with skills to use it as a scaffold for extended dialogue. Only then can classrooms move from ritual to dialogic practice, ensuring that students are genuinely prepared for the linguistic and communicative challenges ahead. For SAR schools in particular, this is crucial: the aim is not only to equip students for university and employment but also to empower them to participate in international discourse and fulfil their broader mission of *dakwah*. To achieve this, IRF must be enacted not as a routine but as a scaffold that creates sustained opportunities for authentic communication.

4.5 Findings and Discussion of Students' Stimulated Recall Interview Data

The third qualitative data presentation at this stage was meant to generate answer to RQ3 - How do the students benefit from the IRF-Moves in the teacher-student classroom interactions to help improve their speaking skills? Upon completing the twelve classroom observations, twelve individual Stimulated Recall Interviews (SRIs) were conducted with selected students to provide deeper insights into the dynamics of teaching and learning in IRF-driven classrooms. The SRIs involved students who had participated in the observations, with two students chosen from each class, yielding a total of twelve participants. Selection was based on teachers' recommendations, with one student identified as having a higher level of language proficiency and the other as moderately weaker. To see the full transcription of the classroom interactions of these classes, please refer to Appendix 13.

4.5.1 Students' Stimulated Recall Interview Findings

4.5.1.1 IRF Method Reduces Language Anxiety

All of the students agreed that they often experienced high levels of anxiety when asked to speak in front of others. Many acknowledged that the most challenging aspect was expressing their thoughts and opinions publicly before their teacher and classmates. The main cause of this anxiety was the fear of judgment, which became more intense when they attempted to articulate their ideas in English. This may be attributed to the emphasis on individual performance, which heightened their fear of making mistakes or being judged by both their teacher and peers. As mentioned by S12 and S4:

'Whenever I wanted to speak, I got stuck. I could not arrange words together because I was so nervous (S12/SRI/18-19).'

'When I learn English language, I always feel nervous to speak in front of others (S4/SRI/9).'

During the interviews, most students agreed that the interactive activities in the IRF-driven classes played a pivotal role in reducing their anxiety and nervousness. The supportive and less intimidating atmosphere gradually helped them manage these feelings, while the open flow of dialogue where both teachers and students took turns prevented the one-sided communication that often elevated their nervousness. They noted that this type of interaction felt less like a formal and more like a casual verbal exchange, thereby reducing the pressure to be flawless. A few students also mentioned that the collaborative nature of IRF contributed to this sense of ease, as exchanges were not limited to teacher–student interaction but included peers, creating a more relaxed, peer-supported environment. As mentioned by S9:

'When teacher used that method, we felt less fear talking to her (S9/SRI/9).'

Both S4 and S2 further reinforced on the effectiveness of IRF in reducing nervousness, as their peers also assisted during the question-and-answer sessions.

'Using that method, teacher asked question, I answered and my friends also helped me to answer the question. I felt less nervous and more excited to come forward to speak (S4/SRI/40-41).'

'With this method, we would practise speaking and at the same time being helped by others (S2/SRI/58-59).'

Therefore, the IRF method not only fosters language development but also brings a sense of support among students, making speaking less intimidating and more encouraging.

4.5.1.2 IRF-driven Lessons Were Enjoyable and Engaging

Many students also found the IRF-driven lessons were very enjoyable and engaging. The teachers' and friends' continuous follow-up questions encouraged spontaneous dialogue and reduced the pressure often associated with more traditional, rigid classroom settings. When students felt that their learning environment was enjoyable, they were more likely to engage actively in the classroom interactions. As mentioned by S5:

'For me, it was fun. Before this, I used to stay quiet in class, but with this method (IRF), everyone tried to speak, even though the grammar isn't quite right (S5/SRI/64-66).'

The IRF method enables not only teachers to initiate questions but also students to take the lead. Many students reported feeling more comfortable interacting with peers than with the teacher, explaining that the formality and hierarchy of teacher–student talk often heightened their fear of being judged. In contrast, peer interaction created a more relaxed atmosphere where the pressure to perform flawlessly was reduced. This sense of comfort lowered anxiety and encouraged students to express themselves more freely without fear of mistakes.

Students also highlighted their enjoyment of group discussions conducted on Mahjong paper as preparation for presentations. The collaborative nature of this task promoted teamwork and mutual support, allowing them to seek help and offer assistance in return. This fostered a cooperative environment in which sharing ideas and receiving feedback felt less threatening. Peer support reduced the fear of negative judgment, as students perceived themselves as working toward a shared goal rather than competing against one another. As S8 and S7 noted:

'I feel happy because I put forth my arguments in the group discussion (S2/SRI/15-16).'

'During the group discussion, each one of us had to contribute ideas and it was really fun! (S7/SRI/76-77).'

4.5.1.3 IRF Method Provides a Supportive Environment

IRF-initiated classrooms promote three forms of communication. The first is between the teacher and an individual student, giving direct attention and feedback that makes the learner feel supported. The second is between the teacher and the whole class, allowing students to learn not only from the teacher but also from peers' responses. The third, and most inspiring, is student-to-student interaction. In the interviews, many students said this was most helpful, as they felt more comfortable speaking with classmates. It gave them a less formal setting to practise and share ideas. This reflects the view that peer collaboration serves as scaffolding within the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978). Overall, students believed that the mix of interactions in IRF classrooms improved their learning and confidence. As mentioned by S2:

'We usually felt embarrassed to speak with the teacher compared to speaking with friends (S2/SRI).'

'When I spoke in front of the class, I tried to make sure my friends understood. When my friends asked questions, I tried to answer their questions. Not only that, I tried to help my friends who were doing presentations to answer the questions (S3/SRI/66-70).'

The above statements prove that IRF method has not only elevated students' confidence in speaking but also nurtured a supportive classroom environment where students actively help each other to practise speaking.

4.5.1.4 IRF Method Boosts Confidence Level

Almost all students agreed that the IRF method played a significant role in boosting their confidence to speak after sustained practice in a structured yet interactive environment. Initially, they were nervous to speak, but with regular IRF practice, they gradually became more confident. Consistent feedback from teachers and peers helped them overcome their fear. S11 further noted that IRF activities also supported the development of listening, reading, and writing, showing how these skills reinforce one another.

'Above all, the IRF method helps boost confidence. When we feel confident in speaking class, our confidence in reading and writing will also increase automatically (S11/SRI/36-39).'

S11 added that the IRF method increased her own and her peers' interest in practising speaking beyond the classroom, as it made them feel comfortable experimenting with the language and encouraged greater engagement in speaking both inside and outside class.

4.5.1.5 IRF Method Helps Enhancing Speaking Skill

During the interviews, most students highlighted that teachers' follow-up questions played an important role in improving their speaking skills. These questions required them to verbalize their thoughts, which in turn enhanced their ability to speak.

For students with moderate proficiency, speaking in class was often challenging due to limited vocabulary. However, follow-up questions encouraged them to continue speaking, even when they hesitated. The most helpful moments occurred when teachers provided cues or clues that triggered recall of forgotten words. This enabled students to

construct longer sentences, and over time they became more confident and developed a wider range of vocabulary and expressions.

'I always felt 'stuck' when I wanted to speak. But with this method, the teacher and friends always help, so I feel more confident to speak now (S12/SRI/64-66).'

Overall, the students agreed that the teachers' follow-ups in the IRF method were a key factor in helping them develop their speaking skills. Even though it could be difficult at first, they felt that this method pushed them to become better speakers by making them think more and express their ideas clearly.

4.5.1.6 Teacher's Follow-Ups Questions Lead to Spontaneity

A few students expressed that teacher follow-ups were effective in developing spontaneity in speaking. The follow-up stage pushed them to think quickly and respond on the spot, which challenged them to be more spontaneous. While some students admitted that prompts and probes sometimes felt uncomfortable, they also acknowledged that these encouraged independent thinking and reduced hesitation in speaking. For certain students, the increased pressure was difficult as they preferred more time to prepare, yet others viewed it as valuable practice for real-life communication, where quick thinking is essential. Overall, the follow-ups were seen as building confidence, even if the process sometimes felt forced, as highlighted by S1, S3, and S8.

Maybe when using this method, students are forced to speak on the spot. When they get used to it, they will become more comfortable and start to enjoy speaking in English (S1/SRI/).

'This method makes us feel challenged to speak on the spot and pushes us to try to understand (S3/SRI/48-50).'

'I felt challenged because my friends can speak spontaneously, so I had to speak too to be on the same level as them (S2/SRI/31-32).'

4.5.1.7 A Powerful Motivational Tool

The IRF method was also found to act as a powerful motivational tool, as expressed by all 12 students. They reported that it encouraged them to speak not only during class but also with peers outside the classroom. Many explained that in IRF-driven lessons, the structured interaction created a supportive environment where they felt comfortable responding to both teacher questions and prompts from classmates. The feedback they received helped them improve and motivated them to continue speaking.

Several students also mentioned that before experiencing IRF, they often felt shy or anxious about speaking in front of others. However, once they became familiar with the feedback process, they were more willing to engage in conversations, even when making mistakes, as they came to see errors as part of learning.

One student (S11) shared that after completing two IRF-driven classes, speaking no longer felt difficult as before. Previously, she believed that speaking with friends required careful preparation, strong grammar knowledge, and high proficiency before even attempting conversation. Her participation in the IRF classes changed this perspective. Through the teachers' follow-ups and peer prompts, she felt constantly supported, which made speaking less daunting. She also began applying the same strategies with her friends outside class using prompts, probes, and feedback to assist one another. This mutual support built her confidence, made speaking feel more natural, and encouraged her to experiment with language in real-life situations.

'With this simple technique we would gradually feel like we can handle English better. Over time, students' confidence will boost and we will realize that English isn't too hard to learn compared to before. Before this, whenever we wanted to speak, we had to prepare a script and checked the grammar earlier to make sure everything was 100 percent correct. This delayed the process. Eventually, once we no longer feel English is hard, writing and reading also won't seem difficult anymore (S11/SRI/32-39).'

4.5.1.8 Favouritism of Peer Support

All twelve students shared that the IRF method gave them more opportunities to interact with their classmates making them feel more comfortable sharing ideas, as

they were less nervous or shy compared to speaking directly to the teacher. They valued the active and supportive environment which helped reducing the fear of making mistakes. Several students also mentioned that they learned new words and expressions from their peers, which contributed to their confidence in speaking before the whole class.

Because the teacher was not the sole initiator of questions, students agreed that they had more chances to participate in conversations. This increased practice helped them improve sentence formation and express ideas more clearly. Speaking with friends also gave them the confidence to take risks in using English, overcoming one of the most common barriers in language learning.

Overall, the students agreed that IRF, particularly through peer support, was highly beneficial for improving speaking skills. They enjoyed learning from each other, felt motivated to practise more, and believed that continued peer-to-peer interaction would gradually enhance their fluency and confidence in English.

'I feel more comfortable with friends (S9/SRI/30).'

'I'm not sure about other students, but when I talk with my friends, I get more input than when I talk with the teacher. We feel more relaxed with friends (S11/SRI/67-70).'

4.5.2 Discussion of Students' Stimulated Recall Interview Findings

The stimulated recall interviews provided valuable insights into how students perceived the role of IRF-Moves in supporting their speaking skills. This section discusses the findings to address RQ3: How do the students benefit from the IRF-Moves in the teacher-student classroom interactions to help improve their speaking skills? It critically interprets the results in relation to recent literature, triangulates with the data from the questionnaire, pre-observation interviews and classroom observations, and evaluates the overall effectiveness of IRF for student learning.

The discussion is framed around the concept of scaffolding within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978), which emphasises how guidance enables learners to perform beyond their independent level. The Classroom Quality Descriptors (Galegane, 2015) also serve as an anchor, particularly in distinguishing between dialogic and monologic interaction. Students' reflections revealed benefits in

affective, cognitive, and social domains, but also pointed to conditions under which IRF was more or less effective.

4.5.2.1 Emotional and Psychological Benefits of IRF

One of the benefits of IRF method identified by students was a reduction in anxiety. Many described IRF method created a less intimidating atmosphere, especially when interaction involved peers rather than only the teacher. Speaking with friends lessened the fear of making mistakes and the feeling of being judged by an authorised person. This corresponds with Ilias et al. (2022), who found that supportive feedback from peers reduces learners' anxiety and increases willingness to speak. In the same vein, Aulia and Rasyid (2025) proposed that adaptable teaching approaches can reduce affective barriers by fostering an encouraging classroom environment.

From a ZPD perspective, this sense of emotional safety is a prerequisite for effective scaffolding. When students feel safe and comfortable, they are ready to take the linguistic challenge. This is evident from the data garnered from the classroom observations involving 'Better' classrooms, where the IRF exchanges was dialogic, and students appeared more confident to produce longer strands of discussion. The data from the questionnaire and the pre-classroom observation confirmed this.

4.5.2.2 Engagement and Motivation

Students further described IRF as engaging and enjoyable. They valued interactive activities particularly the group work discussions, which made learning more dynamic and motivated them to contribute. Candalisa (2024) resonates that dialogic IRF increases student engagement, and Sukri and Yunus (2018), highlighted that collaborative task enhance motivation in Malaysian classrooms.

Motivation was not only emotional but also practical. Students noted that the more engaging the IRF session, the more they spoke, producing higher numbers of sentences and words. This triangulates with classroom observations: in 'Better' classrooms, where IRF was extended, student turn-taking was significantly higher. In contrast, 'Not So Good' classrooms were described as less enjoyable, with limited

student contributions. These findings suggest that IRF can be a motivational driver, but only when facilitated beyond ritualised patterns.

4.5.2.3 Confidence Building through IRF

Confidence emerged as another strong theme across all interviews. Students emphasised that consistent participation in IRF helped them reduced shyness and fear of evaluation. They identified both teacher prompts and peer encouragement as the key factors contributing to this situation. This aligns with Musa et al. (2021), who reported that supportive teacher feedback boosts students' self-efficacy and confidence. From a ZPD perspective, scaffolding in the form of probing questions and feedback enabled students to realise they could accomplish more with guided support compared to working independently. Data from the questionnaire support this notion when most teachers believed IRF helps students build confidence, and the students' reflections provide direct evidence of this process. However, data garnered from the classroom observations showed otherwise. In 'Not So Good' classrooms which were dominated by teacher talk, students did not show similar confidence. Thus, the effectiveness of IRF in building confidence is conditional on dialogic facilitation.

4.5.2.4 Development of Speaking Skills

Apart from affective benefits, students also attributed IRF method to linguistic advancement. All of them agreed this method enabled them to learn new vocabulary from peers, construct longer sentences, and improve fluency. In particular, they valued teacher follow-ups for encouraging elaboration rather than short replies. Candalisa (2024) concludes that extended IRF promotes oral fluency, while Zaswita (2022) acknowledges the use of referential questioning expands student utterances.

The evidence triangulates with some of the data from the classroom observations. In the 'Better' classrooms, students produced higher word count and more extended discourse, while 'Not So Good' classrooms restricted them to minimal responses. This demonstrates that IRF contributes to skill development only when extended into dialogic sequences. Without sustained scaffolding, as Galegane (2015)

emphasises, IRF collapses into mere mechanical drills with little impact on fluency or discourse organisation.

4.5.2.5 Spontaneity and Real-life Communication

Another emerging theme garnered from the interview was the value of spontaneity. Many students highlighted that IRF follow-ups demanded immediate response that forced them think and speak spontaneously. It acts as a very effective training for real-life conversations. Aulia and Rasyid (2025) claim dialogic IRF simulates authentic turn-taking which fosters real-world communication skills.

The broader implication is that IRF functions not only as a tool to foster accuracy, it also develops responsiveness. Students felt more prepared to handle unplanned exchanges, which is a core feature of communicative competence. However, the benefit depended on scaffolding: when follow-ups were supportive, spontaneity was productive; when questions were too rapid or unsupported, some students reported stress. Thus, spontaneity is both an advantage and a potential challenge of IRF.

4.5.2.6 Peer Support as a Core Benefit

Peer support emerged as one of the strongest benefits. Students preferred speaking with classmates, reporting that it made them feel more comfortable and allowed them to learn new words from peers. This finding is supported by Sukri and Yunus (2018), who noted that peer collaboration promotes participation, and Ilias et al. (2022), who emphasised the centrality of peer interaction for building confidence.

From a ZPD perspective, peers acted as “more capable others,” scaffolding each other’s learning. Triangulation shows consistency: teachers in the interviews also identified peer collaboration as valuable, and classroom observations revealed that in ‘Better’ classrooms, peer talk complemented teacher scaffolding. This suggests that peer support is not supplementary but central to the success of IRF.

4.5.2.7 IRF as a Motivational Tool Beyond the Classroom

A notable finding was that several students reported practising IRF-like exchanges outside the classroom. They explained that the questioning-and-response model was useful for informal practice with peers, motivating them to use English in daily conversations. This aligns with Aulia and Rasyid (2025), who argue that adaptable teaching fosters autonomy, and Candilasa (2024), who found that peer-driven IRF structures encourage continued learning.

This suggests that IRF has a lasting motivational impact, extending beyond the classroom into learners' social spaces. Triangulation adds weight: the survey showed that teachers saw IRF as a long-term tool for improving fluency, while students confirmed its motivational influence outside formal lessons. The summary of these benefits is provided in Figure 4.11

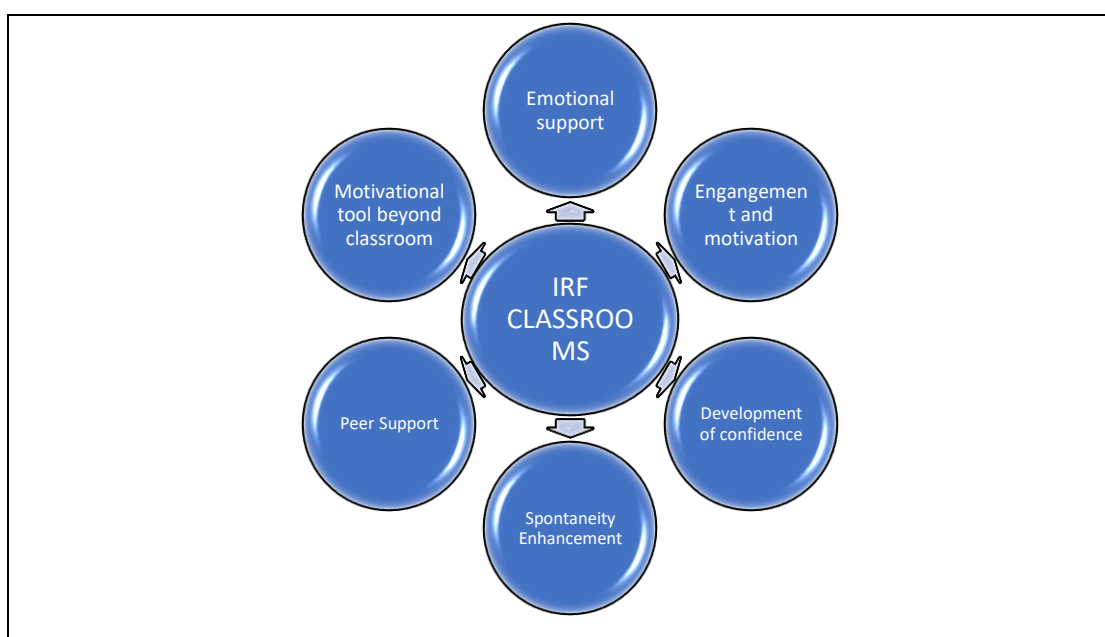


Figure 4.11. Summary of Findings from Students Stimulated Recall Interviews

4.5.3 Synthesis and Implications for RQ3

Synthesising the findings, students benefitted from IRF across three interconnected domains, (i) Affective (reduced anxiety, higher confidence, and

increased motivation), (ii) Cognitive (longer utterances, vocabulary gains, fluency, and spontaneity) and (iii) Social (peer scaffolding, collaborative learning, and enjoyment).

These domains triangulate with other data sources. Teachers in the survey and pre-observation interviews highlighted confidence and participation as key benefits of IRF. Classroom observations confirmed these outcomes in ‘Better’ classrooms, where dialogic scaffolding was evident, but showed their absence in ‘Not So Good’ classrooms. Students’ voices thus validate teacher beliefs while also revealing that benefits are conditional on practice.

The answer to RQ3 is that students benefit significantly from IRF-Moves, but the extent of benefit depends on how the method is facilitated. When IRF is extended and scaffolded, students gain fluency, confidence, and spontaneity. When IRF is ritualised, benefits are limited to minimal participation without meaningful growth.

4.5.4 Conclusion

The stimulated recall interviews confirm that IRF can strongly enhance students’ speaking development when facilitated dialogically. Students reported lower anxiety, stronger confidence, increased motivation, and tangible gains in fluency and vocabulary. Peer interaction emerged as central to these benefits, making speaking less intimidating and more collaborative. At the same time, the findings caution that such benefits are conditional. In classrooms where IRF collapsed into ritual, students did not experience the same growth.

In answering RQ3, the evidence shows that IRF is most effective when used as a scaffold that combines teacher follow-ups with peer support, creating a safe yet challenging environment. By fostering affective comfort, cognitive growth, and social collaboration, IRF can prepare learners not only for classroom participation but also for authentic communication beyond school.

4.6 Findings and Discussion of Post-Observation Semi-Structured Interview Data

The fourth qualitative data presentation at this stage was meant to generate answer to RQ4: According to the teachers, what are the reasons for the probable congruences and incongruences between the theory and practice that occur throughout the teacher-student classroom interaction patterns?

The data garnered from the Classroom Observations (CO) may provide some insights to the extent the teachers manipulated the IRF-Moves to assist students' speaking skills. However, were their teaching strategies in both classrooms truly aligned with their cognition regarding the effectiveness of IRF as expressed in the Pre-Observation Interviews (Pre-OI) or were only some of them successfully met? Borg (2018) states that in studies on teacher cognition, most teaching practices employed by teachers in the classroom are coherent, but more often, incoherent with their beliefs and what they planned beforehand. Coherence occurs when teachers' beliefs about teaching speaking align with their classroom practices, while incoherence arises when external factors force them to act against those beliefs. In line with RQ4, this section examines beliefs, observed practices, and the reasons for the coherence or incoherence. To see the full transcription of the classroom interactions of these classes, please refer to Appendix 14.

4.6.1 Post-Observation Semi-Structured Interview Findings

Table 4.14 provide a comprehensive analysis of various IRF-Acts observable across the twelve classes. The left side of the table presented the shared themes derived from the pre-observation interviews, reflecting their beliefs on the use of IRF in teaching speaking. On the other hand, the right side of the table showcases the findings obtained through the Systematic Classroom Observation form, which was used to document the actual implementation and quality of IRF-Acts during the classroom sessions. The symbol √ represents aspects that were 'Observable' in the Classroom Observation therefore, coherent with what reflected by the teachers in the Pre-Observation Interviews. The symbol MO (Moderately Observable) means the aspect was mentioned by all teachers, but only a small number of teachers demonstrated it

consistently in class, while a few did not apply it as stated. Moderately Observable themes therefore indicate partial coherence due to inconsistent implementation across teachers. On the other hand, the symbol X represents 'Mentioned in the pre-observation interview but unobservable' in the Classroom Observation therefore, incoherent with what reflected by the teachers in the Pre-Observation Interviews, highlighting a potential gap between what the teacher believes and what they implement in their actual teaching practice.

The comparison results are discussed descriptively based on themes that were congruent with pre-observation (clearly observable and moderately observable) and themes that were incongruent with pre-observation (unobservable). This is followed by an explanation of the reasons for congruence and incongruence.

Table 4.14

Comparison Between Teachers' Beliefs and Practices TA/CO1, TE/CO1, TF/CO1, and TF/CO2.

THEMES DERIVED FROM THE PRE-OBSERVATION INTERVIEWS		OBSERVABLE/UNOBSERVABLE IN THE TEACHERS' ACTUAL CLASSROOMS											
		TA/CO1	TA/CO2	TB/CO1	TB/CO2	TC/CO1	TC/CO2	TD/CO1	TD/CO2	TE/CO1	TE/CO2	TF/CO1	TF/CO2
Part C Classroom experience	1. CEFR Helps in teaching speaking by outlining specific proficiency levels, from A1 (beginner) to C2 (proficient).	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	2. A teacher must be a role model of a competent English language user	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	√	√
	3. Teachers acts as facilitators who guide students in the speaking activities	MO	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	MO	√	MO	√
	4. Encourages interactional activities such as role-play, pair work, presentation	MO	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	MO	√	MO	√

5. Teachers should maximally use the target language.	MO	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
6. In an IRF driven class, teachers must encourage students to speak up.	MO	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	MO	√	MO	MO
7. In an IRF driven class, teachers need to foster an interactive atmosphere in all directions including teacher-student, teacher-student, and student-student relationships.	MO	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	MO	√	√	√
8. In an IRF driven class teachers should utilize open-ended questions to stimulate thinking.	MO	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	MO	√	MO	√
9. In an IRF driven class teachers should utilize follow-up questions (probes) to create a longer strand of discussion	MO	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	MO	√
10. In an IRF driven class teachers should encourage the other students to help	MO	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	MO	√
11. In an IRF driven class teachers should providing praise and	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

positive feedback on their efforts

12. Gradually improve grammar.

X X X X X X X X X X X X X

13. Minimize error correction.

X X X X X X X X X X X X X

Keywords

TA/CO1	Teacher A's Classroom Observation 1	TC/CO1	Teacher C's Classroom Observation 1	TE/CO1	Teacher E's Classroom Observation 1
TA/CO2	Teacher A's Classroom Observation 2	TC/CO1	Teacher C's Classroom Observation 2	TE/CO1	Teacher E's Classroom Observation 2
TB/CO1	Teacher B's Classroom Observation 1	TD/CO1	Teacher D's Classroom Observation 1	TF/CO1	Teacher F's Classroom Observation 1
TB/CO2	Teacher B's Classroom Observation 2	TD/CO1	Teacher D's Classroom Observation 2	TF/CO1	Teacher F's Classroom Observation 2
√	Mentioned & Observable in the Classroom Observation therefore, coherent with what reflected by the teacher in the Pre-Observation Interviews				
X	Mentioned in the pre-observation interview but unobservable				
MO	Moderately observable in the Classroom Observation				

4.6.1.1 Themes Congruent Between Beliefs and Practice (✓ & MO)

4.6.1.1.1 Mentioned and Clearly Observable (✓)

This subsection presents themes that show total coherence (✓) between what teachers stated in pre-observation interviews and what they demonstrated in their IRF-based speaking classrooms. The focus is on themes where beliefs and practice aligned consistently across the observed lessons.

With regard to the effectiveness of CEFR, in the Pre-Observation (Pre-O) interviews, all six teachers stated that this framework strongly supported their instructional planning, particularly when addressing mixed proficiency learners. They mutually agreed that they used the CEFR framework to plan their speaking lessons, especially in preparing activities suitable for students with variety of language proficiency levels from A1 (beginner) to C2 (proficient). This was fully evident in the classroom observations where every teacher was seen utilizing the CEFR workbook in their lessons. They structured their lessons according to the students' abilities, giving them tasks suitable to their proficiency level. This indicated that the teachers successfully used the CEFR framework in their classrooms, creating a well-organized approach to teaching speaking.

On the importance of providing praise and positive feedback on students' efforts in the IRF-based classes, all teachers expressed agreement with this principle in the Pre-O interviews. The findings also showed that teachers consistently agreed on the importance of providing praise and positive feedback to motivate students in speaking activities. This was clearly observable in all classrooms without exception, indicating full coherence between beliefs and practice. This full consistency across interview and observation data suggests that teacher cognition on positive third-turn IRF acts was shared, understood, and practised efficiently, strengthening the trustworthiness of this theme.

Regarding the necessity of teachers to maximally use the target language, all teachers advocated this practice during the Pre-O interviews with the reason that it would encourage students to work harder to become efficient English language speakers. The findings showed that the teachers reported doing so in their classrooms. Eleven out of twelve instances indicated consistent use of English as the medium of

instruction. Only one teacher was observed with occasional use of the mother tongue translation, suggesting that while the majority maintained English throughout their lessons, occasional reliance on the mother tongue still occurred in TA/CO1. Although one lesson reflected moderate mother tongue use, the overall consistency across eleven classrooms still indicated a high coherence on the target-language advocacy was between beliefs and practice.

4.6.1.1.2 Mentioned and Moderately Observable (MO)

This subsection presents themes that demonstrate partial congruence with pre-observation interview statements. Moderately observable (MO) themes refer to aspects that were mentioned by all teachers during pre-observation interviews, but only a small number of teachers failed to implement them consistently in the observed IRF-based speaking classrooms. The focus of this subsection is therefore on themes where coherence largely existed, but the observable classroom application varied across teachers and lessons.

The themes that demonstrated partial congruence between teachers' pre-observation (Pre-O) statements and classroom practice. All teachers mentioned the same CLT and IRF-driven principles during Pre-O interviews. These included teachers should act as facilitators in speaking activities, encourage interaction through role-play, pair work, and presentations, foster multidirectional communication between teacher-student and student-student, use open-ended questions to elicit responses, encourage follow-up probes to extend discussion strands, and promote peer assistance during speaking exchanges.

The findings from the classroom observations showed coherence between what teachers mentioned in the pre-observation (Pre-O) interviews and what practised in the actual classrooms in 9 out of 12 lessons, indicating that the themes were observable in most classrooms. All lessons demonstrated the stated CLT and IRF-driven principles except for three - TA/CO1, TE/CO1, and TF/CO1, which consistently reflected moderately observable practice. These three MO lessons showed the same principles but at lower or inconsistent frequency, differing from the level of consistency implied in the interviews. The evidence confirms that teachers understood these

practices conceptually, but classroom implementation varied in only a small number of lessons.

4.6.1.2 Themes Incongruent Between Beliefs and Practice (X)

Table 4.14 also presents that, out of the full set of themes generated from the pre-observation (Pre-O) interviews, there were three themes which failed to be implemented across all observed lessons. In one theme, all teachers agreed that English teachers should model themselves as competent English language users to encourage students to work harder to become proficient speakers. However, the classroom observation data showed inconsistencies between interview statements and actual classroom practice. Only Teacher F demonstrated this belief in her classrooms, as observed in TF/CO1 and CO2. In addition, the classroom observation records also showed that the remaining teachers made countless grammatical mistakes throughout the class, reflecting a gap between their beliefs and applied language competence.

With regard to the theme providing subtle grammar corrective feedback, as suggested by CLT, there was a major incoherence between what teachers stated during the Pre-O interviews and their actual classroom practices. In the interviews, the teachers acknowledged the importance of balancing fluency with subtle grammar corrective feedback. However, classroom observations revealed that, despite students making massive grammar mistakes in all the lessons, none of the teachers (A to F) provided grammar corrective feedback during real-time speaking exchanges in the observed IRF-driven interactions. This shows a significant incoherence between beliefs and actual feedback practice. This indicates that while teachers understood the need for grammar correction conceptually, it was absent in their enacted IRF feedback moves.

Finally, with regard to the theme of error correction, all six teachers stated that error correction should be minimised so as not to interrupt students' flow of speaking. This belief underlines their understanding that constant correction can discourage students from participating. Yet, unlike the earlier reported contrast in grammar corrective feedback, this principle was not unobservable across all lessons but showed variable enactment depending on the classroom context.

To enhance understanding, a summary of emerging themes from the comparison between Teacher Beliefs and Classroom Practices is presented in Figure 4.12

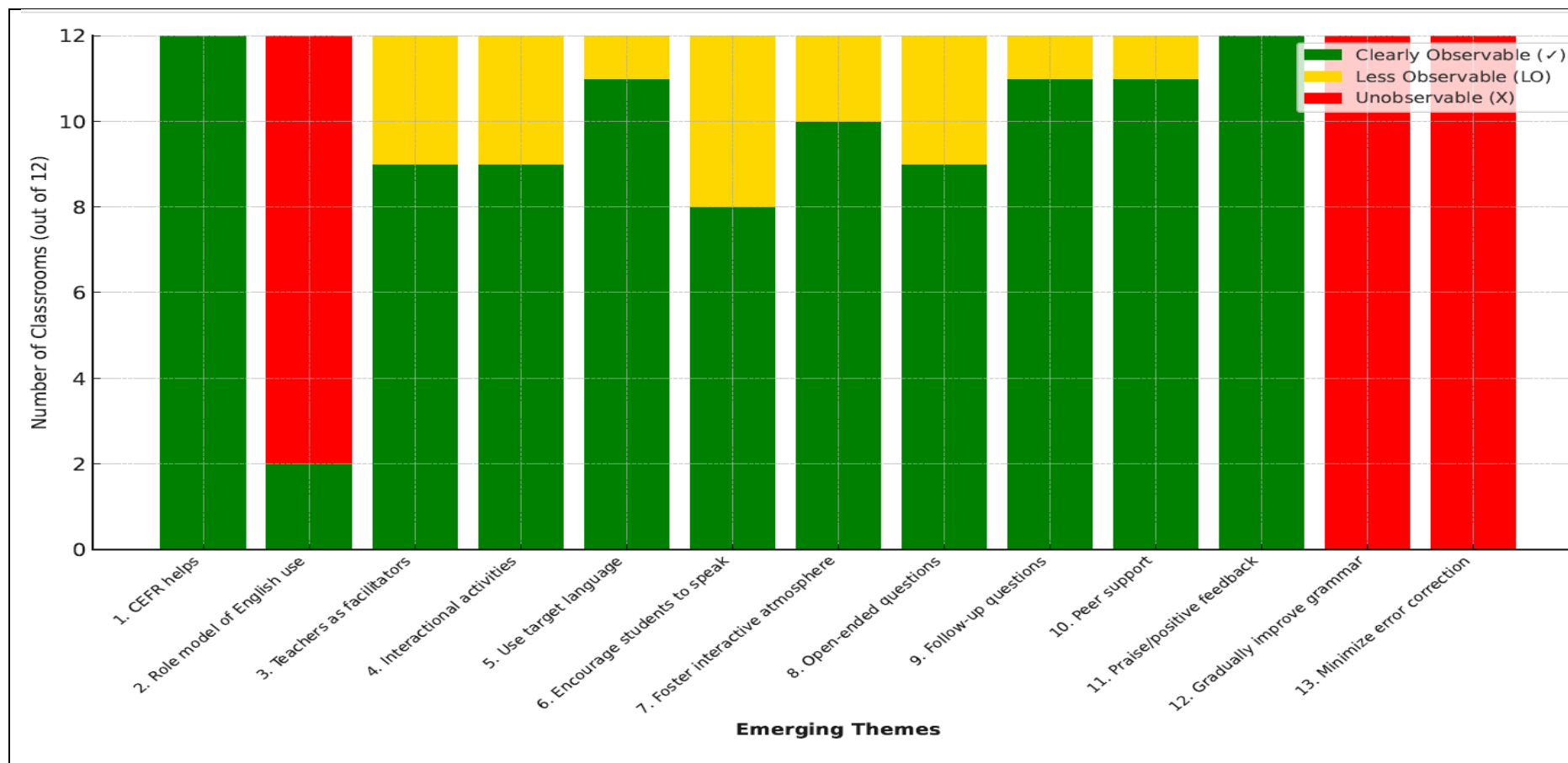


Figure 4.12. Infographic Summary of Emerging Themes – Comparison between Teacher Beliefs and Classroom Practices

4.6.1.3 Reasons for Coherence

4.6.1.3.1 Impact of Limited but Targeted Professional Courses

When asked during the Post Observation Interviews, the observable coherences between the themes emerged in the Pre-Observation interviews and the reflected practices in all the twelve classroom observations can largely be attributed to the limited yet impactful courses that the teachers rarely attended. Although all six teachers in the study acknowledged that they have very limited access to continuous professionalism courses, the limited exposure seems to have significantly strengthened their Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) and influenced their ability to successfully apply the principles in their classrooms.

“Because we are teaching in a private school, we can't really afford it. We are not under the management of PPD. We don't often get called for courses, only for few very important ones.”
(TE/POI/114-115)

The courses, though rarely attended, have provided the teachers with the essential knowledge and skills needed to effectively implement new educational approaches. The consistency in the teachers' understanding and application of the CEFR-Aligned Curriculum and CLT principles demonstrates the power of targeted professional development. On the other hand, the single limited course they attended on the use of IRF method in teaching speaking has helped them to demonstrate commendable understanding of the method.

4.6.1.3.2 Informal Learning through Peer Collaboration and Digital Communities

Although SAR teachers are rarely sent for formal courses, they are proactive in seeking knowledge on their own. Many of them join WhatsApp groups with teachers from government schools to exchange ideas and resources. They also organize in-house training sessions within their schools to share knowledge and improve their teaching skills. Additionally, they receive guidance from more experienced teachers, ensuring continuous learning and professional development despite the limited opportunities for external training.

“About three years ago, I joined a Telegram group. The group was created for English teachers from all over Malaysia. This group is very helpful to us.” (TB/POI/203-205)

4.6.1.3.3 Support from Senior and Experienced Teachers

Even though teachers admitted their knowledge is limited, many referred to Google searches or turned to senior colleagues for guidance. Senior teachers often provided advice or shared resources, filling the gap left by the limited training opportunities.

“Even though I have the knowledge, I still need to refer more to Google, and if I don’t know, I will ask the senior teachers at school. They will help, or I will also ask Teacher Fatima from Pahang, Bukit Jerantut.” (TF/POI/86-89)

Realising the limited opportunities to attend formal professionalism courses, Teacher E consistently seeks advice and guidance from her senior colleagues. Teacher E ensures that by leveraging continuous professional growth and support from experts, it could compensate for the lack of training she endures.

“Teachers need to learn a lot, not just in school, but also through other platforms like courses or sharing information with other teachers. For example, as a new teacher teaching Form 1 students, I need to often meet with other teachers. This is because we can actually learn a lot from other people’s experiences.” (TE/POI/85-89)

4.6.1.3.4 Effectiveness of CEFR and IRF Training

The limited trainings that teachers had attended were impactful enough to equip them with the necessary tools to translate theoretical knowledge into effective classroom practices as observed in the classroom observations. Exposure to the CEFR-Aligned Curriculum and CLT principles enhanced their confidence in applying communicative approaches. Meanwhile, the single course on IRF provided them with practical insights into applying the method in speaking classes.

4.6.1.3.5 Quality over Quantity in Professional Development

The findings underscore the importance of quality over quantity in professional development. Even though the number of courses attended was very limited, those few that were offered were impactful enough to influence teachers' cognition and practices. This shows that even a single, well-designed training programme can produce significant improvements in teaching.

As a result, some of their beliefs extracted in the pre-classroom observations were not, at some degree, successfully put into practice in their first class. For instance, among all, they found it challenging to facilitate active teacher-student/students' interactive activities which led students to respond with a simple yes or no answers, failing to initiate long strands of IRF exchanges throughout the sessions.

4.6.1.4 Reasons for Incoherence

4.6.1.4.1 Teachers' Limited Language Proficiency

Looking carefully across all 12 classroom observations, there were two notable instances evident which reflected a high degree of incoherence compared to what was derived in the pre-observation interviews. The first instance relates to the quality of the teachers' language proficiency, which ranged from moderate to weak, particularly for Teachers A, B, D, and E. For example, Teacher A relied entirely on reading from a prepared script during in her classes. Meanwhile, the other teachers made numerous grammatical and pronunciation errors, which further highlighted the disparity between their intended language proficiency and their actual classroom performance.

4.6.1.4.2 Absence of Corrective Feedback on Grammar Errors

The second significant incoherence evident across all classes involved the absence of corrective feedback on the massive grammatical errors made by the students. Despite the importance of addressing these errors to improve students' language skills, the absence of such feedback indicates a gap between the teachers' understanding of effective language teaching practices and their execution of these practices in the

classroom. This suggests that while the teachers may have been aware of the need for corrective feedback, they struggled to implement it, possibly due to a lack of confidence in their own language abilities or a fear of discouraging students.

4.6.1.4.3 Content-Focused Lessons Over IRF Practice

Meanwhile, besides the two instances discussed above, there were some other forms of incoherence in the classroom practices there were evident. Another salient issue was most of the discrepancies came from Teachers A's, E's, and F's first classrooms. These three classes showed a similar pattern of incoherence in several instances across all twelve observed classes which stemmed from the same underlying factor; the teachers' decision to conduct a totally content-wise lesson. Despite being advised to conduct an IRF-initiated speaking classroom, the teachers came up with lessons which prioritized on delivering facts. For example, Teacher A reviewed a topic from the textbook on 'Print Media,' Teacher E delivered a lesson on the characteristics of a short story, while Teacher F taught grammar explicitly, focusing on verbs. Although all of them mentioned that they purposely came out with the particular activities as preparation for students' verbal presentations in the next class, and they still initiated verbal discussions during the lesson, it cannot be denied that it was indeed challenging to encourage long strands of students' verbal participation throughout the lessons.

4.6.1.4.4 Teachers' Non-Linguistic Backgrounds and Lack of Training

When asked during the post-observation interviews, it was revealed that the incoherence between pre-observation interviews and classroom observations can be attributed to several factors, including the teachers' non-linguistic academic backgrounds, misunderstandings of teaching methodologies, and the challenges posed by the student demographics.

With regard to the first issue, the moderate to weak level of proficiency among some of the teachers, they admitted that this may stem from their different academic backgrounds. Several teachers mentioned that they do not come from fields specifically related to the teaching and learning of English. This lack of specialization likely contributed to their difficulty in modelling correct language use in the classroom. As mentioned by Teacher E and D:

'Most of us are not English language option (TE/POI/).

I think my English is less proper, since I don't have any background in TESL (TD/POI/45).'

This was further worsened with the limited access to development courses that may help them to improve their language competence as well as courses on how to teach speaking in particular. As mentioned by Teacher E:

'Most of us are actually not trained as English teachers. So, the school needs to provide teaching aids to help us during lessons (TE/POI141-143).'

This includes those teaching other subjects as well. Like I said, there is a lack of courses. Maybe the administration needs to take a bigger role to approach the district office (PPD) and get us to go to courses (TE/POI118-119).

'I haven't been sent for any courses in the past 2 years (TF/POI/93).'

4.6.1.4.5 Misunderstanding of CLT and Error Correction

When asked about the total absence of providing corrective feedback to the students' massive grammar errors, all teachers attributed this to their strict adherence to the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), particularly its stance on error correction. The teachers expressed a strong belief that frequent correction of students' grammatical errors could demotivate them from speaking, which is why they chose to minimize such corrections during class. As mentioned by Teacher D:

'I don't want to demotivate them to speak because of their grammar inability (TD/POI/333-336).'

Teacher B reflected that she rarely corrects students' grammatical mistakes to avoid the students become demotivated.

'Some of my students don't care about grammar, they just talk. Never mind about grammar actually (TE/POI/430-431).'

So, we put grammar aside. Even if the mistakes are all over the place, as long as they try to speak. Sometimes I will correct them (TB/Pre-OI/72).

'I was too nervous, so I overlooked the students' grammar mistakes (TA/POI/261).'

Teacher F explained that if her students make grammatical mistakes, she allows them to continue without immediate correction. She avoids pointing out the errors right away to prevent demotivating the students. Instead, she addresses the mistakes later, either through individual feedback or by conducting a separate class focused on grammar. However, in all 12 observed classes, grammar corrective feedback was entirely ignored, leaving students without direct guidance on their grammatical errors.

'I would allow them to finish their sentence first. I want them to develop confidence first (TF/POI1/39-140).'

These findings reveal that teachers may have misunderstood the concept of controlled and subtle corrective feedback as proposed by CLT. They firmly believed that prioritizing fluency means downplaying grammatical accuracy.

4.6.1.4.6 Student Demographics and Language Backgrounds

In discussing the misconception, we cannot avoid being exacerbated with another issue - the weak-moderate level of language proficiency possessed by a most SAR students who predominantly came from religious schools with limited exposure to English. This problem was further intensified by the decision made by the schools to mix the Tahfiz students, who possess little to no English exposure, with the students from the regular classes, adding more challenges to the already moderate performance of English language in those schools. Tahfiz students have almost no exposure to English. After completing their Quran memorization, they enter schools with their main purpose only to be able to sit for the SPM exam. This is because in our country, passing SPM is required if they want to continue their studies at a higher level. Besides that, this is also necessary in securing employment as well as to pursue their Islamic education abroad.

'Imagine they stopped schooling in regular school when they were in standard 2 or 3. Then they registered in 'pondok' schools to memorize the Quran and became a 'tahfiz'. After that, they enrolled here simply to sit for the SPM exam (TB/POI/238-239).'

'Some enrolled here to take the SPM exam to help them secure a job. Some simply wanted to continue their religious studies in Egypt (TB/POI/258-259).'

However, when these students are placed in the same classes with the regular students who have been learning English since primary school, it could be very challenging for teachers to teach a class where students have very different levels of English proficiency.

'But it's really quite difficult for teachers to handle students who have no basic in English (TC/Pre-OI/120).'

'It affects the overall SPM result because they are very weak. For the speaking test, we can only help by giving ideas. Their grammar is also just average (TD/POI/126-128).'

4.6.1.4.7 Parental Priorities and Societal Expectations

Finally, the priorities of parents, who often emphasized religious education over English language learning, added another layer of complexity. Teachers felt pressured to align their teaching practices with the expectations of parents, who valued religious knowledge more highly than proficiency in English. This societal pressure likely influenced the teachers' reluctance to focus on English language development, contributing to the incoherence observed in their classroom practices.

'Some parents care about their child's English language results, but most of them don't (TA/POI/414).'

'The child is interested but the parents want their child to focus on religious knowledge first (TB/POI/413-414).'

'Some parents told me they just want their child to pass English (TB/POI/431-432).'

4.6.1.5 Conclusion

To conclude, the findings from the classroom observations reveal significant incoherence between teachers' cognition regarding the effectiveness of IRF method in teaching speaking and their actual teaching practices, particularly in terms of language proficiency and feedback on grammatical errors. Teachers' limited language skills, and lack of professional development opportunities, exacerbate the issue. In addition, the absence of corrective feedback, influenced by a misunderstanding of Communicative Language Teaching principles, further widened the gap between their intended teaching methods and classroom execution. The integration of Tahfiz students with little exposure to English into regular classes, combined with parental emphasis on religious education over English proficiency, added further challenges. These factors collectively point to a need for improved teacher training, clearer pedagogical strategies, and a more supportive learning environment for students with diverse backgrounds.

4.6.2 Discussion of Post-Observation Interview Findings

The post-observation interviews provide critical insights into RQ4: What are the reasons for coherence and incoherence between teachers' beliefs about the IRF method and their actual classroom practices? While Sections 4.7.2 and 4.7.3 presented the findings, this section interprets those findings through a more critical lens, synthesising data from the questionnaire, pre-observation interviews and classroom observations to reveal the causing factors that either strengthen or hindered the alignment between teacher cognition and practice.

Coherence describes situations where the teachers' beliefs about the effectiveness of IRF method as garnered through the pre-observation were clearly observable in their classroom practices, whereas incoherence occurs when such beliefs were less observable or unobservable during their instructions. Understanding the gap between teacher beliefs and classroom practices is essential for explaining the extent to which teachers are able to translate professional knowledge into practice to support students' speaking, as well as for identifying the factors that create restrictions so that further actions can be taken to improve instruction.

This discussion is structured around several themes identified from the findings: (i) the influence of limited but impactful professional development and informal peer learning which contribute to the coherence, (ii) curricular and institutional support which strengthen teacher beliefs, (iii) language proficiency gaps and misunderstanding of CLT as major sources of incoherence, (iv) the influence of classroom realities and student demographics, and (v) the unresolved tension between fluency and accuracy.

4.6.2.1 Reasons for Coherence

4.6.2.1.1 Professional Development and Informal Learning as Drivers of Coherence

One key element that contributed to coherence between the teacher beliefs and classroom practices was the impact of limited yet impactful professional development, particularly through the single CEFR course attended by all six teachers. Despite showing extremely low participation in professional development within two years, as revealed in the findings from the questionnaire, teachers reported high confidence in using IRF strategies. Although all six teachers acknowledged attending the CEFR course only once, classroom observations revealed that they consistently implemented CEFR-aligned practices such as role play, pair work, debates, and explicit emphasis on speaking as a core skill. In other words, a single, well-targeted CEFR course provided a common pedagogical frame that teachers could transfer into lesson design, making these practices clearly observable in most classes.

This notion suggests that the value of professional development lies more in its quality than in its frequency. As Candilasa (2024) points out, teachers without structured training often fall back on display questions, thereby restricting opportunities for meaningful interaction. Yet, even a single well-designed course can equip teachers with impactful strategies, such as the use of referential prompts to draw out longer responses and sustain IRF exchanges, a pattern that was clearly evident in many of the observed lessons. In this study, the CEFR course that all six teachers attended acted as a catalyst for coherence between their beliefs and classroom practice.

Equally important was the informal learning. Teachers described their active participation in WhatsApp/Telegram groups with public school teachers, in-house

sharing sessions and consultation with senior colleagues kept them updated with new teaching approaches. These professional networks compensated with the lack of formal training and helped teachers adapt CEFR guidance to their contexts. Findings from the classroom observation supported this, with stronger IRF interactional practice in some of the classes. Hidayatullah (2024) emphasises that formal or informal sustained exposure to meaningful target-language use, formal or informal, builds communicative competence. In this study, informal exposure and collaboration reinforced the one-off CEFR course, together producing coherence between teacher beliefs and observable methods.

4.6.2.1.2 CLT Principles, and Institutional Support in Sustaining Coherence

The classroom observations also revealed that interactive techniques such as group discussion, role play and classroom presentations were consistently observable in most classrooms. This indicates that the teachers had successfully integrated CLT principles into their CEFR-aligned speaking instructions. This was consistent with what they highlighted in the pre-observation interviews, teachers should acknowledge their responsibility to facilitate communicative opportunities, model competent English language users and encourage students to interact during the lessons. The integration of CLT principles into their teaching reinforced CEFR objectives, since both emphasise learner participation, communicative competence, and authentic language use.

The concept of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) (Shulman, 1987) further explains this coherence. PCK stresses the integration of subject matter, in this case, the linguistics features with various pedagogical strategies to transform content into meaningful learning. By engaging with CEFR and CLT, teachers demonstrated their understanding of the elements of PCK. They adapted curriculum objectives into practical classroom strategies, such as using IRF questioning techniques or designing interactive activities. Even though their formal training was minimal, the curricular benchmarks and communicative orientation acted as scaffolds that strengthened their PCK. This explains why coherence between teacher beliefs and classroom practices was more clearly observable in relation to curriculum-linked and communicative activities.

Institutional encouragement further strengthens this alignment. Teachers reported that their principals actively supported English-language initiatives by organising English Days, English Weeks, and inter-school debate competitions. Such

events created a wider school culture that valued English communication beyond the classroom. This was reflected in lessons where teachers encouraged extended responses, collaborative speaking tasks, and peer support activities. Students also appeared more motivated to engage in communicative tasks, sustaining longer IRF exchanges. Within the framework of language teacher cognition, (LTC), these elements reflect the influence of contextual factors such as curriculum requirements, professional development opportunities, and school management, shape how teacher beliefs are enacted in practice.

Recent literature also supports this link between curriculum, pedagogy, and leadership. Hidayatullah (2024) highlights that curricular framework such as CEFR functions as a scaffold that guides teachers in designing meaningful communicative activities. Similarly, Deshmukh et al., (2022) argue that dialogic and communicative principles, when combined with institutional support, are crucial for sustaining extended interaction in language classrooms. In the context of SAR schools, the combination of CEFR training, teachers' understanding of CLT, and institutional encouragement not only provided structural direction but also acted as a catalyst for coherence, ensuring that teacher beliefs about speaking were consistently reinforced by both policy and practice.

In summary, coherence was strengthened when teachers' beliefs aligned with the structural demands of the CEFR curriculum, the pedagogical orientation of CLT, and the knowledge integration described in the PCK framework (Shulman, 1987). Combined with the institutional culture of the school, these elements ensured that even with minimal training, teachers were able to apply communicative principles consistently, thus reinforcing their cognition of IRF as an effective approach for enhancing speaking skills.

4.6.2.2 Reasons for Incoherence

4.6.2.2.1 Language Proficiency Gaps and Misunderstanding of CLT

While some coherence was observable through teachers' understanding of CLT principles, several important incoherence also emerged due to language proficiency gaps and misinterpretation of communicative pedagogy.

On the one hand, the interviews showed that teachers understood key aspects of CLT. They consistently described their role as facilitators of interaction and believed in promoting opportunities for students to practise speaking in communicative ways. This was visible in lessons where teachers organised group discussions, role play, or peer collaboration, demonstrating their awareness of how CLT aligns with CEFR's emphasis on interaction and participation. Such practices reflect partial coherence between teacher beliefs and classroom practices, as both emphasised authentic use of English for communication.

On the other hand, serious incoherence was evident when teacher proficiency and error correction practices were examined. Classroom observations revealed that teachers with moderate to weak proficiency often struggled to model accurate English. Some, such as Teacher A, relied heavily on scripted reading, while others frequently made numerous grammatical and pronunciation errors during classroom interaction. These errors were not minor slips but recurring patterns that students were repeatedly exposed to, raising concerns about the quality of input learners received. This problem was compounded by the fact that the teachers had limited professional development in teaching speaking, with most reporting only one CEFR training and very few other courses in the past two years. The lack of systematic professional training meant that their language weaknesses were never formally addressed, leaving them unable to improve their proficiency to the level required for classroom modelling. This resulted in clear incoherence: although teachers believed in their role as competent language models, their moderate proficiency and restricted professional training undermined their ability to perform this role effectively.

In addition, a major incoherence stemmed from how teachers interpreted CLT's position on error correction. In the interviews, they argued that grammar correction should be minimised to avoid demotivating students, a view that influenced their classroom practice. Yet, in all 12 lessons observed, grammar corrective feedback was unobservable, even when students made repeated errors. This indicates a misinterpretation of CLT. While CLT discourages constant interruption, it does advocate for subtle and supportive corrective feedback to balance fluency with accuracy. Studies such as Candilasa (2024) and Mercer (2019) note that without some form of feedback, students risk fossilising errors, limiting long-term progress. Thus, teachers' overemphasis on fluency and neglect of accuracy resulted in incoherence

between their belief that “grammar can be addressed later” and the observed absence of corrective strategies in the classroom.

Viewed through the lens of PCK framework (Shulman, 1987), this incoherence reflects a weakness in integrating content knowledge (CK) with pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). Teachers were aware of communicative strategies but struggled to connect them with the linguistic accuracy required for effective language development. Their knowledge of pedagogy was not fully matched with the content mastery necessary for modelling correct English and giving feedback. As a result, while coherence was seen in their facilitative role and use of interactional activities, incoherence became apparent in their inability to balance fluency with accuracy, their persistent grammatical errors, and the absence of professional training to strengthen their linguistic competence.

4.6.2.2.2 Classroom Realities and Student Demographics as Constraints

Another important reason for incoherence between teacher beliefs and classroom practices was the reality of classroom contexts, particularly the diverse student demographics in SAR schools. A major challenge highlighted in both interviews and observations was the integration of Tahfiz students, who had minimal or no exposure to English, with regular students who had at least some foundation in the language. Teachers explained that many Tahfiz students re-enter mainstream education after years focused solely on Quran memorisation, with the main purpose of sitting for the SPM examination. Consequently, these students lacked basic vocabulary, confidence, and communicative strategies.

The impact of this demographic mix was evident during classroom observations. Although teachers believed in fostering communicative interaction through IRF, extended exchanges were often less observable or unobservable in classes dominated by Tahfiz students. Responses were typically limited to one-word answers such as “yes” or “no,” which made it difficult for teachers to sustain longer strands of dialogue. This situation created incoherence between teacher beliefs in promoting interaction and the actual classroom practices, which were constrained by the students’ very limited linguistic repertoire.

Parental expectations added another layer of difficulty. Teachers reported that many parents in SAR contexts prioritised religious knowledge over English proficiency.

As long as their children were able to pass English in SPM, parents were generally satisfied. In some cases, parents even discouraged an overemphasis on English, reinforcing the notion that religious subjects should remain central. This societal and cultural pressure further undermined teachers' efforts to consistently apply interactive strategies, even though they strongly believed in the importance of speaking competence.

These findings can be situated within LTC framework, particularly the school context dimension, which highlights how institutional management and broader educational culture shape teacher cognition and practice. In SAR schools, school management decisions—such as placing Tahfiz students together with mainstream learners, and prioritising religious subjects over communicative English—created contextual barriers that limited the enactment of teacher beliefs. The absence of systematic support structures (e.g., remedial English programmes for Tahfiz students) meant that teachers had to manage classrooms with highly unequal proficiency levels, making sustained IRF interaction difficult to achieve.

This aligns with the idea that meaningful language exposure is crucial but often absent in environments where English is undervalued socially or institutionally. Desmukh et al., (2022) stresses that dialogic teaching requires supportive conditions, not only skilled teachers. When institutional culture does not provide scaffolds, even well-intentioned teachers face incoherence between their beliefs and classroom realities.

In summary, the incoherence here cannot be attributed solely to teachers' limitations, but also to systemic factors embedded in the school context. Student demographics, parental influence, and school management practices combined to constrain the enactment of communicative practices, leading to classrooms where teacher beliefs about IRF and CLT were only partially realised.

4.6.2.2.3 The Fluency–Accuracy Tension in Practice

One of the most critical reasons for incoherence between teacher beliefs and classroom practice emerged in relation to how teachers balanced fluency and accuracy in speaking lessons. During the pre- and post-observation interviews, teachers expressed that while fluency should be prioritised to encourage participation, grammar corrective feedback should still be given subtly to support long-term development of

accuracy. This belief demonstrates their awareness of the need to balance communicative fluency with linguistic competence.

However, classroom observations revealed a different reality. In all 12 lessons observed, grammar corrective feedback was entirely unobservable, even though students made frequent and often repeated grammatical errors. Teachers reported in the interviews that they deliberately avoided correction to prevent students from feeling demotivated. For example, Teacher D explained that focusing on errors could make students lose confidence, while Teacher F admitted she postponed corrections to other times or separate grammar-focused lessons. These practices created a striking incoherence: teachers believed in the importance of subtle corrective feedback, but their actual classroom behaviour showed a near-exclusive focus on fluency.

This imbalance can be understood as a tension within Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) itself. While CLT encourages fluency and discourages constant interruption, it does not advocate for the complete neglect of grammatical accuracy. Scholars such as Candilasa (2024) and Mercer (2019) argue that without corrective intervention, learners risk fossilising errors, which undermines long-term communicative competence. By misinterpreting CLT as requiring total avoidance of correction, teachers inadvertently reduced opportunities for students to refine their linguistic accuracy.

The tension also reflects gaps in the PCK framework. Teachers showed awareness of pedagogical strategies to encourage fluency, such as the use of open-ended questions and group tasks, but they lacked the necessary integration with content knowledge, specifically, the ability to recognise and address grammatical weaknesses without discouraging participation. Limited professional development further compounded this problem, as teachers had not received consistent training on how to provide corrective feedback within a communicative framework.

This fluency–accuracy dilemma also connects with the broader school context in the LTC framework. With large classes of mixed-proficiency students and pressure from parents and administrators to prioritise passing examinations over communicative accuracy, teachers often adopted a pragmatic approach: valuing fluency as an immediate goal while postponing grammar development. Yet, the complete absence of corrective feedback indicates that beliefs about balance were not successfully translated into practice, producing clear incoherence.

In summary, the fluency-accuracy tension demonstrates one of the most significant gaps in SAR classrooms. Teachers' beliefs acknowledged the dual importance of both, but in practice, accuracy was side-lined. This incoherence highlights the need for targeted professional training to equip teachers with strategies for providing subtle, context-sensitive grammar feedback that supports accuracy without undermining fluency.

4.6.3 Synthesis and Implications to RQ4

The findings from the post-observation interviews provide a comprehensive view of the factors that shaped coherence and incoherence between teacher beliefs and classroom practices in SAR schools. Triangulation with questionnaire and classroom observation data shows that coherence was primarily supported by the CEFR-aligned curriculum, teachers' understanding of Communicative Language Teaching principles, and limited but impactful professional development. Although each teacher had only attended one CEFR training, this single course provided sufficient direction to guide their practices, ensuring that communicative activities and a stronger emphasis on speaking were clearly observable in most classrooms. Informal professional learning through peer collaboration, digital platforms, and guidance from senior colleagues further reinforced coherence, allowing teachers to adapt their beliefs into concrete classroom strategies. Institutional encouragement, particularly from principals who promoted school-wide English activities, also helped to embed communicative practices into the broader school culture. Together, these factors strengthened teachers' pedagogical content knowledge as described by Shulman (1987), demonstrating how curriculum, pedagogy, and institutional scaffolds combined to support alignment between beliefs and practices.

At the same time, incoherence emerged in several areas. Teachers' moderate proficiency limited their ability to model accurate English, with classroom data revealing frequent grammatical errors produced by the teachers themselves. This weakness was compounded by a lack of systematic professional development that might have addressed their language competence. Misinterpretations of CLT further contributed to incoherence. While teachers emphasised fluency, they equated this with a near-total avoidance of grammar correction, leaving corrective feedback entirely unobservable across all twelve classes. Classroom realities also exacerbated these

issues. The integration of Tahfiz students with very limited English exposure alongside mainstream learners created wide proficiency gaps that made sustained IRF exchanges difficult to achieve. Parental priorities that favoured religious knowledge over English proficiency reinforced these challenges, reducing the space for communicative practices to flourish. Within LTC framework, these findings underscore the role of school context, both in terms of management decisions and community expectations in shaping how teacher beliefs are transformed in practice.

4.6.4 Conclusion

In direct response to RQ4, the analysis shows that coherence occurred when teacher beliefs were reinforced by curricular frameworks, communicative pedagogy, and institutional encouragement, while incoherence resulted from weak language proficiency, lack of continuous training, misinterpretations of CLT, and challenging school contexts. Teachers were able to translate their beliefs into observable practices when structural and institutional supports were present, but struggled when these supports were absent.

The overall picture suggests that coherence and incoherence are not simply reflections of individual teacher effort, but outcomes of an interplay between professional knowledge, curriculum design, and contextual realities. For SAR schools, this indicates the urgent need for sustained professional development to improve both teacher proficiency and pedagogical skills, clearer training on CLT to balance fluency with accuracy, and stronger support from school management to address the demographic and cultural challenges unique to their context.

4.7 Summary

This chapter has presented and analysed the findings of the study through both quantitative and qualitative strands. The quantitative data from pre- and post-tests revealed clear improvements in students' speaking performance following the implementation of the IRF method within the flipped classroom approach. The gains were particularly evident in the areas of fluency, coherence, and confidence, indicating that the method had a measurable impact on learners' oral competence. These results

were further supported by questionnaire responses, which showed generally positive perceptions among students toward the use of IRF and communicative tasks in enhancing their speaking abilities.

The qualitative data provided deeper insights into these trends. Pre-observation interviews with teachers highlighted their beliefs regarding the effectiveness of IRF, their exposure to professional development, and their understanding of the CEFR-aligned curriculum and CLT principles. Classroom observations then allowed for a systematic comparison between these beliefs and actual teaching practices, focusing on the extent to which coherence or incoherence was observable. Post-observation interviews clarified the reasons behind these patterns, shedding light on how teachers negotiated the challenges of their teaching contexts.

The analysis revealed several key themes. Coherence between beliefs and practices was evident when teachers drew upon the CEFR curriculum, applied communicative strategies consistent with CLT, and benefitted from limited but impactful professional development opportunities. Informal peer learning and strong institutional support from principals further reinforced this alignment. However, incoherence was also prominent. Teachers' moderate proficiency, frequent grammatical errors, lack of sustained professional development, and misinterpretations of CLT, particularly with regard to error correction—undermined the consistency between their beliefs and classroom practices. Additional contextual constraints, including the integration of Tahfiz students with little English exposure and parental priorities that favoured religious education, further limited the enactment of communicative practices.

In summary, the findings suggest that while IRF can be an effective method for enhancing speaking skills, its success is mediated by both teacher-related and contextual factors. Coherence was achieved when curricular frameworks, pedagogical knowledge, and institutional culture provided sufficient scaffolding, but incoherence emerged where teacher proficiency and contextual constraints outweighed these supports. These insights will be discussed in greater depth in the next chapter, which synthesises the findings with the literature and explores their theoretical, pedagogical, and policy implications.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This study empirically investigated the roles of the Initiation-Response-Feedback method in enhancing students' speaking skills within the unique context of SAR schools in Perak, Malaysia viewed through the lenses of the Language Teacher Cognition framework. By employing both quantitative and qualitative methods, the study sought to bridge the gap between teachers' beliefs and their actual instructional behaviours, while also identifying the various internal and external factors that contribute to either the alignment or the discrepancy between the two. This chapter synthesizes the key findings of the study, reflects on the theoretical, pedagogical, financial, and policy implications, and offers recommendations for future research and practice.

5.2 Research Overview

This study investigated teacher cognition within the pedagogical frame of the IRF method in improving students' speaking skills within private *Sekolah Agama Rakyat* (SAR) in Perak. Grounded in the LTC framework (Borg, 2003), this study explored the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices, as well as the contextual factors that influenced alignment or misalignment between the two.

A mixed-methods research design was employed to this end. The initial quantitative phase involved administering a set of questionnaires to 21 English language teachers across 17 SAR schools to collect data on their demographic backgrounds, pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), and their beliefs and practices related to the IRF framework.

The proceeding qualitative phase was designed to explore the deeper, unobservable dimensions of teacher cognition that lie beneath the surface of observable classroom behaviour. It included pre-observation interviews, twelve classroom observations, and post-observation interviews with six selected teachers who became

the focal participants of this study. These data collection methods provided rich insights into how these teachers implemented the IRF framework in real classroom settings and how their actual practices were either congruent with or diverged from their beliefs. In addition, this phase also investigated the impact of the IRF method on students' speaking development through interviews with twelve selected students. The student interviews offered complementary perspectives on how IRF driven lessons influenced their confidence, fluency, and overall speaking competence.

The quantitative data were analysed using frequency and percentages, while the qualitative data were sieved through thematic analysis to identify patterns and emerging themes related to the teachers' beliefs, practices, and contextual challenges. The integration of both datasets offered a comprehensive understanding of how teacher cognition operates in faith-based (Islamic in this case) educational settings, highlighting the dynamic relationship between beliefs, classroom interaction, and the realities of SAR schools in Malaysia.

5.3 Discussion of Major Findings

The study emphasised how teachers' prior language learning experiences, professional training and development, classroom practices, and contextual realities interacted to shape their cognition and pedagogical decisions. The key findings of each research question are summarised in the subsequent sections.

RQ1: "What are SAR English language teachers' beliefs about the effectiveness of IRF in developing students' speaking skills?"

The first data collection instrument at this stage was the distribution of questionnaires to 21 teachers across 17 schools. The quantitative results revealed that all the teachers held positive beliefs about IRF as an effective method for enhancing their students' speaking skills. The teachers agreed that IRF helps students to build confidence, respond more actively, and engage in meaningful communication. They viewed IRF as compatible with communicative language teaching, especially in encouraging fluency and participation. However, these beliefs were influenced by several factors, including the teachers' own experiences as language learners, their professional training, and the Islamic values embedded in their teaching context. The

teachers also perceived IRF not merely as a linguistic tool but as a way to nurture ethical communication, aligning language learning with moral principles.

Following this, six teachers were selected as focal participants for the longer qualitative phase of the study. The process began with six pre-observation interviews aimed at eliciting the teachers' cognition regarding the effectiveness of the IRF method in improving their students' speaking skills. The interviews revealed that all six teachers demonstrated positive attitudes toward the approach, expressing confidence in IRF as a structured framework that supports students' oral participation and confidence. They viewed IRF as an interactive tool that allows students to think critically, express ideas clearly, and develop communicative competence within a respectful, values-based classroom environment even if Initiation-Response-Feedback has been viewed by some quarters as a bit dated withing English language pedagogy. From this study, IRF clearly has not lost its steam in the English language classroom, at least in Malaysian SARs.

RQ2: "How do the teachers facilitate the IRF-Moves in the teacher–student classroom interactions to help improve their students' speaking skills?"

The data from twelve classroom observations revealed three distinct levels of IRF implementation: Better, Good, and Not So Good, based on the Quality of Classroom Descriptors originally created by Galegane (2015). In the 'Better' classrooms, lessons were predominantly student-centred, with students taking more turns, producing longer sentences, and participating in sustained IRIRIR...F exchanges. These classrooms reflected dialogic and scaffolded learning, where teachers encouraged elaboration and fluency. 'Good' classrooms on the other hand showed a balance between teacher and student talk but with shorter IRF sequences. While teachers here provided opportunities for students to participate, the interaction remained moderately teacher-led. Finally, 'Not So Good' classrooms were dominated by teacher talk, with limited student responses and minimal elaboration, reflecting more traditional teacher-led lessons. Overall, the findings are in line with the work of Galegane and illustrated that classroom with stronger IRF facilitation supported greater student engagement and more authentic speaking opportunities.

RQ3: "How do the students benefit from the IRF-Moves in the teacher-student classroom interactions to help improve their speaking skills?"

Data from the stimulated recall interviews with the twelve selected students revealed that the students collectively agreed the IRF method made speaking lessons more comfortable, engaging, and motivating. The tried-and-tested method reduced their anxiety, encouraged participation, and built confidence through supportive teacher prompts and peer interactions. The students admitted that the technique improved their vocabulary development, sentence construction, and fluency, particularly in dialogic classrooms where discussions were extended. The method helped these students to think and respond spontaneously, reflecting real-life communication. Peer collaboration also played a central role, offering comfort and scaffolding. Most interestingly, some of the students even used IRF patterns outside of class, showing that its positive influence extended beyond formal lessons. Again, where IRF has been criticised by contemporary ELT researchers for being too formulaic and mechanistic, in this particular research context (the SAR schools) it fostered confidence, fluency, and active language use.

RQ4: “According to the teachers, what are the reasons for the probable congruences and incongruences between the theory and practice that occur throughout the teacher-student classroom interaction patterns?”

Data from the six post-observation interviews with the teachers revealed that most teachers demonstrated a strong to moderate congruence between their beliefs and their actual classroom practices. Out of the twelve observed lessons, eight classrooms (four categorised as ‘Better’ and four as ‘Good’) reflected clear congruence between what the teachers claimed in their pre-observation interviews and what was later observed in their classroom teaching. These teachers consistently applied the IRF framework to promote student participation, use open-ended and follow-up questions, and provide positive feedback. Their classrooms were characterised by active exchanges and visible student engagement, reflecting a practical understanding of communicative teaching principles.

However, several cases of incongruence were identified, particularly in the ‘Not So Good’ classrooms. The most evident mismatch was observed among teachers with moderate or weak English proficiency, which limited their ability to use the target language effectively or to sustain interactive discussions. Some of these teachers also misunderstood the role of grammar teaching in communicative contexts, completely

ignoring students' frequent grammatical errors although strategized and subtle corrections are encouraged under the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). These inconsistencies were mainly the result of insufficient professional training in ELT. Several teachers reported that they had seldom attended workshops or in-service training related to communicative approaches such as IRF, which inadvertently constrained their instructional competence and confidence in applying interactive delivery methods.

Other contextual factors also contributed to the incongruences. Their students' moderate proficiency levels often constrained classroom dialogue, as the teachers resorted to code-switching or lecture-style delivery to maintain lesson flow. Additionally, several SAR schools combined *Tahfiz* students and daily stream students in the same classroom, creating large gaps in language background and motivation. Some parents' prioritisation of religious subjects over English further reduced students' language exposure and practice opportunities.

Taken as a whole, while the majority of SAR teachers displayed congruence between belief and practice, the few incongruences observed were not due to a lack of pedagogical intention but rather to systemic challenges that they faced such as inadequate training, limited linguistic proficiency, student diversity, and institutional priorities. This suggests that effective IRF implementation in SAR settings requires continuous teacher development and structural support to balance communicative and religious educational goals.

5.4 Implications of Research

This study investigated how the teachers' cognitive processes influenced their use of the IRF method to improve students' speaking skills in SAR schools. The results offer valuable insights into the practical challenges such teachers faced in the classroom while also shedding light on broader educational implications. The findings carry several implications that extend beyond the descriptive results. Without doubt, they provide insights into how teacher cognition, interactional practices, and institutional context influenced the use of the IRF method in SAR schools. These implications can be viewed in three levels. First, the theoretical implications explain how the study contributes to and refines existing frameworks, particularly LTC and the IRF model. Second, the pedagogical implications focus on how the findings can inform teacher

education, classroom pedagogy, and professional development. Finally, the contextual implications highlight how the findings relate specifically to the unique sociocultural and religious environment of SAR schools.

Understanding these implications as an interconnected whole is essential, since theory, pedagogy, methodology, and context do not exist in isolation but interact dynamically in shaping classroom realities. Among these, the theoretical implications form the conceptual foundation of this study, as they clarify how the present findings extend existing knowledge of Language Teacher Cognition and reframe the IRF model as an invaluable cognitive and interactional mechanism. The following subsections discuss these constructs in greater depth.

5.4.1 Theoretical Implications

Language Teacher Cognition incorporates what teachers think, know, and believe, and how these unobservable mental constructs influence their classroom practices (Borg, 2003). Language teachers' beliefs are shaped by their experiences as language learners during their formative school years, their formal teacher training or in-service professional development courses, their daily experiences in classrooms as well as contextual school factors. In short, teacher cognition is not static but evolves over time, influenced by a combination of past and present experiences.

This study contributes to the theoretical development of Language Teacher Cognition and classroom interactions. The findings indicate that the teachers' cognition about the IRF method are closely linked to their actual classroom practices. This reinforces the view that teachers' beliefs and knowledge are not separate elements but interrelated factors that shape teaching patterns and the quality of classroom interactions.

The study also adds depth to the model of IRF by showing that its effectiveness depends on teachers' awareness of the functions of each component (Initiation, Response, and Feedback) and their ability to adapt IRF according to students' proficiency levels in this day and age. The findings from this religious school context further revealed that values and institutional culture play an important role in shaping how IRF is implemented, extending existing theories that are largely based on mainstream school contexts.

Overall, the study strengthens the theoretical understanding that teacher cognition is dynamic and influenced by both internal factors (such as beliefs and competence) and external factors (such as student ability and school culture). It provides a foundation for future research on how language teaching can be aligned with value-based educational contexts.

5.4.2 Pedagogical Implications

The pedagogical implications of this study propose that English language teachers in *Sekolah Agama Rakyat* require more focused guidance in implementing communicative-based approaches, for instance using the IRF method. The findings indicate that when teachers adopted a dialogic approach, their students became more confident and willing to speak, and able to develop fluency naturally. Therefore, the practice of teaching should allow students greater opportunities to express themselves, while teachers act as facilitators rather than mere transmitters of knowledge.

In addition, speaking activities can be designed to include Islamic values such as politeness in communication, respect for others' opinions, and correction delivered with wisdom. Values such as *adab al-hiwar* (courtesy in dialogue) and *amanah* (trustworthiness) in communication should be integrated through questioning routines, feedback, and group activities. The IRF method can thus serve not only as a tool for language improvement but also as a means to nurture learners who are knowledgeable, courteous, and ethical in communication.

Overall, the pedagogical implications of this study emphasise that English teaching in SAR schools should balance linguistic competence with the cultivation of Islamic values. For example, a dialogic and value-based implementation of IRF can strengthen students' language proficiency while fostering *adab* (moral responsibility) in every classroom interaction.

5.4.3 Contextual Implications (SAR Context)

The findings further provide important insights into how English language teaching in *Sekolah Agama Rakyat* can be strengthened through a better integration of communicative pedagogy and Islamic values. The study revealed that SAR English language teachers teach in settings that operate within a very unique school ecosystem.

Not only are the teachers' pedagogical decisions shaped by the national curriculum demands and standardised examination requirements, but they are also peppered with moral, spiritual, and institutional expectations. Teachers' cognition in these Islamic settings should reflect a continuous effort to balance between producing linguistically competent learners and nurturing students' character in line with Islamic principles.

One of the key contextual implications for the SAR system is the awareness that effective English teaching does not contradict Islamic education values, but rather complements it. Language instruction should integrate Islamic values such as *ikhlas* (sincerity), *amanah* and also *adab* (manners). Such integration aligns with the philosophy of Islamic education, which views knowledge not merely as skills acquisition but as moral cultivation.

This suggests that SAR institutions should take more initiative in embedding their language programmes with faith-based pedagogical principles. For example, the teacher training modules can include components on language ethics which allow teachers to modify IRF patterns toward respectful interaction. Curriculum planners at the state or institutional level can also develop communicative materials that reflect Islamic themes that might encourage students to express ideas rooted in moral reflection. These adaptations ensure that communicative English teaching in SAR schools remains authentic to its religious character whilst meeting the standards of the national language curriculum.

Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of institutional support for teachers who are trying to innovate within the SAR environment. Many teachers demonstrated strong beliefs in communicative teaching and interactive learning, but their efforts were often constrained by limited resources and rigid curricular expectations. To sustain progress, SAR authorities, together with related agencies such as JAIPk and the Malaysian Ministry of Education, could establish collaborative platforms to share best practices, provide professional mentoring, and develop teaching materials that integrate linguistic and Islamic objectives.

Overall, the contextual implication of this study is that meaningful English language teaching in SAR schools can only flourish when pedagogical strategies, institutional policies, and faith-based principles are aligned. By supporting teachers to integrate communicative competence with Islamic values, SAR schools can create classrooms that not only improve students' language proficiency but also cultivate

ethical communication, moral reasoning, and confident expressions consistent with modern Islamic identity.

5.5 Future Recommendations

Sekolah Agama Rakyat upholds a distinctive noble vision and mission that underlines the importance of equipping future generations with comprehensive religious and academic knowledge; young Muslims who are prepared to contribute positively to society with integrity, wisdom, and compassion. This vision is aimed at producing well-rounded individuals who can excel in both religious and secular fields, ensuring that they are spiritually, intellectually, and morally developed. To achieve this vision, the mission of SAR schools is to provide a spiritually balanced education that harmoniously integrates religious teachings with academic excellence. This integration is essential in nurturing students' holistic development and preparing them to face the diverse challenges of contemporary life.

5.5.1 Strengthening Financial Capacity of SAR Schools

The success of English language education in SAR schools should begin with strengthening their financial foundation. As privately managed institutions which relies largely on student's tuition fee and public donations as their main sources of income, SAR schools often face financial limitations that restrict their capacity to improve classroom infrastructure, upgrade teaching resources, and invest in teacher development. Unlike government-funded schools, SARs have limited access to grants or institutional support for English language education.

To address this, SAR schools should consider forming structured partnerships with religious authorities and external contributors to develop a more sustainable financial model. For example, the State Religious Councils and Islamic Affairs Departments could establish language development funds that schools can apply to support English teaching initiatives. These grants could be used to improve classroom facilities, purchase audio-visual equipment, and develop in-house English learning resources tailored for SAR students.

Additionally, corporate agencies can also contribute by establishing genuine financial partnerships under their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes.

Instead of sponsoring short-term activities, CSR funds could be channelled directly to the schools to support school infrastructure improvement such as building new classrooms, refurbishing language labs, or providing long-term maintenance for digital equipment. *Zakat* (charity) institutions could also participate by allocating part of their education funds to assist schools serving low-income communities, ensuring fair access to quality English education. This would ease the financial burden on parents while helping the schools maintain their educational standards.

By diversifying funding sources through these three entities which are zakat contributions, state-supported grants, and CSR-based financial partnerships, SAR schools can strengthen their financial sustainability without losing autonomy. A stronger financial base will enable these schools to plan long-term programmes, retain qualified teachers, and implement interactive pedagogical approaches such as IRF more effectively. Financial empowerment is therefore the most immediate and realistic step toward ensuring that English education in SAR schools continues to grow in quality, relevance, and reach.

5.5.2 Teacher Professional Development

Once the financial foundation of SAR schools is strengthened, the next immediate priority is to enhance the professional competence of existing English language teachers there. The findings of this study indicate that while SAR English teachers are dedicated and spiritually grounded, many have had limited access to structured training that integrates communicative language teaching with Islamic educational values. Therefore, professional development for SAR English teachers should be short-term, practical, and aligned with the national examination requirements, while remaining framed within the principles of Islamic pedagogy where language learning serves both communicative and moral purposes.

Collaborative training can be organised with local and national institutions that are familiar with faith-based education and professional English language teaching. For instance, the English Language Teaching Centre (ELTC) under the Ministry of Education, together with Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), and State Religious Departments, could co-develop professional development courses on English language pedagogy embedded with spiritual and pedagogical elements. These courses will not only enhance teachers'

classroom communication skills but also strengthen their pedagogical competence across the core components of English language teaching such as grammar, reading, writing, speaking, and listening. However, each course module should have Islamic educational values interwoven into their content and delivery. Among the suggested course modules are ‘Communicative English in Islamic Classrooms’, ‘IRF-based Questioning for *Tarbiyyah* (educational) Dialogue’, ‘Public Speaking for Islamic Preachers’ or ‘Integrating Islamic Values through Speaking Tasks’. These sessions can expose teachers to techniques that promote students’ language competence while simultaneously inculcating Islamic values.

Local District English Language Officers and Education Resource Centres can further assist by forming regional professional learning communities (PLCs) specifically for SAR teachers. In these PLCs, teachers can design IRF-based speaking activities that include moral and spiritual elements, for example, dialogues about cooperation, kindness or even stewardship of the environment. SAR English teachers may also record their lessons and reflect together on how effectively the moral dimension was conveyed through language interaction.

This approach will allow the teachers to develop confidence and mastery in communicative techniques without detaching from the moral and spiritual framework of SAR education. The implementation of these specialised training courses yields a significant impact on both teachers and students within the SAR education system. Through continuous participation in Islamic-embedded English language pedagogical training, SAR English teachers will enhance their proficiency, pedagogical expertise, and classroom interactional skills. They will become more confident, reflective, and professionally trained language teachers, capable of conducting lessons that are both communicatively effective and spiritually meaningful. As a result, their students’ language proficiency and communicative confidence will also improve, enabling them to express ideas fluently and appropriately within both academic and religious contexts. Hence, this development will help SAR schools fulfil their mission of producing well-rounded individuals who are not only proficient in English but also capable of serving as professional preachers of Islamic values in a globalised world.

5.5.3 Enhancing Teachers' Leadership Competence

When the financial condition of SAR schools becomes more stable, the school management can also initiate professional development efforts beyond language pedagogy alone toward programmes that strengthen teachers' leadership competencies. These programmes are crucial because effective teachers in SAR schools are not only classroom instructors but also mentors, role models, and organisers who shape students' character through meaningful engagement outside classrooms. Leadership courses help teachers cultivate values such as teamwork, discipline, and service while promoting students' confidence and moral growth in line with Islamic principles.

These leadership training programmes may focus on developing teachers' skills in managing English-related co-curricular activities, organising English competitions, and leading student clubs that integrate English language learning with Islamic values. For example, teachers can be trained to plan and conduct activities such as 'English Language Week', public speaking and debating clubs, storytelling for *da'wah*, or theatre performances based on moral themes. Such activities provide authentic opportunities for students to practise English in meaningful, faith-based contexts that strengthen both communication and ethical awareness.

Workshops may also include modules on leadership, event management, and coaching techniques to equip teachers with the confidence to guide students effectively. By gaining experience in leading projects and mentoring student groups, teachers can inspire students to participate actively in school life while learning to express Islamic messages in English. Gradually, these initiatives will produce teachers who are not only professionally competent in the classroom but also capable of leading, motivating, and nurturing students holistically. Through active participation in co-curricular and leadership programmes, teachers' communication and organisational skills will continue to grow, while their students will benefit from a more engaging and balanced education that supports SAR's mission to develop articulate, ethical, and professional preachers for the future.

5.5.4 Infrastructure, Welfare, and Teaching Enhancement

Immediate actions should also be taken towards upgrading school infrastructure, enhancing teacher welfare, and modernising teaching facilities. A

stronger financial position allows SAR institutions not only to sustain educational programmes but also to invest in quality learning environments that support effective language teaching and learning. Improved infrastructure such as well-equipped classrooms, language laboratories, libraries, and digital learning tools will enable English lessons to be conducted more dynamically and interactively. With better access to updated information and communication technologies, teachers can integrate digital resources such as online discussion platforms, multimedia tools, and AI-based pronunciation tools that make English learning more engaging and relevant to students' daily lives.

In addition, financial stability also provides an opportunity to raise teachers' salaries and extend employment benefits. When teachers' welfare is protected and their contributions are recognised, they experience a greater sense of motivation, belonging, and dignity in their work. This will lead to positive congruence in their cognition, as teachers who feel valued are more creative, patient, and committed to improving their students' learning experiences.

At the same time, comfortable and well-maintained school facilities promote a positive learning atmosphere that fosters discipline, focus, and respect for knowledge. Students benefit from a conducive environment where learning is no longer limited by outdated resources or overcrowded spaces. As teachers teach with enthusiasm and students learn with motivation, the overall educational climate becomes livelier and more purposeful. Over time, improved infrastructure and teacher welfare will create a sustainable cycle of quality within the SAR system. Together, these improvements will strengthen the identity of SAR schools as institutions that harmonise academic excellence, technological progress, and Islamic values, thereby realising their vision of producing future preachers and professionals who are intellectually competent, spiritually conscious, and socially responsible.

5.5.5 Policy and Institutional Collaboration

Last but not least, to ensure that English language education in SAR schools remains relevant and spiritually grounded, closer collaboration between educational and religious institutions is essential. Such collaboration should emphasise that English is not merely a tool for communication but also a means of expressing good character, wisdom, and values consistent with Islamic teachings. At the policy level, the Ministry

of Education and State Religious Departments can form a joint advisory panel to coordinate curriculum alignment between communicative language goals and Islamic educational principles. This platform would allow SAR representatives to participate in policy discussions, ensuring that the English curriculum supports both linguistic competence and moral development. For instance, language policies could encourage English teachers to employ speaking activities that promote reflection, empathy, and respectful dialogue, consistent with the Islamic concepts.

In addition, State Religious Councils and education offices could establish a professional network for English teachers in SAR schools. This network could function as a platform for ongoing dialogue and knowledge exchange, enabling the teachers to share experiences, research, and teaching strategies relevant to Islamic communicative contexts. Regular symposiums, regional seminars, and online reflective circles can help sustain this collaboration and encourage a culture of shared learning and collegiality among SAR educators. By institutionalising such partnerships and aligning pedagogical aims with Islamic principles, English teaching in SAR schools can evolve into a model that balances communicative competence with spiritual consciousness. Students will not only learn to speak effectively but also to communicate with integrity, respect, and sincerity reflecting the ethical essence of Islam through language.

5.6 Refinement of Framework

5.6.1 The Need to Measure Teacher Cognition and Practice

Language Teacher Cognition is a widely used framework that helps researchers and educators understand how teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and past experiences influence their thinking. This thinking, in turn, shapes how they act in the classroom. It is valuable because it highlights the importance of understanding what teachers believe, what they know, and how their experiences shape their teaching practices.

That being said, LTC has inherent limitations. While it focuses on understanding teachers' internal thoughts and cognitive processes, it does not fully address how these thoughts are manifested into actions in the classroom (Kubanyiova, 2012). It also does not provide enough insight into how teachers adapt their behaviour to deal with challenges, both inside and outside the classroom. Within the context of

this study, the internal challenges came from the SAR students' low English proficiency levels, their lack of participation, or classroom management issues. On the other hand, the external challenges stemmed from limited resources, lack of access to professional development courses and rigid expectations from parents and the broader community.

To exacerbate matters further, some SAR English language teachers demonstrated a lack of capability to take active roles in changing the situation. They appeared to remain passive in their approach and do not possess the active role of agents of change. There is a large body of research suggesting teachers need to be effective agents who are capable of addressing policy agendas and help improve schools (Sang, 2020). When teachers are empowered to make decisions, reflect on their practices, and adapt to challenges, they can contribute to meaningful changes in their classrooms and schools. This not only improves the quality of teaching but also ensures that the education system as a whole can address diverse learning needs, cultural expectations, and societal demands, fostering better outcomes for everyone involved.

5.6.2 The Need to Measure the Islamic Aspects in Teaching Speaking

The second limitation is LTC lacks focus on the social and cultural aspects of teaching language. English language teachers in SAR schools often have to deal with complex social and cultural expectations to incorporate Islamic values into their English language lessons. However, LTC tends to focus more on teachers' internal cognition, what they know and believe, while paying less attention to how these external pressures impact their teaching. This gap leaves LTC unable to fully explain the adjustments teachers need to make to meet community demands, particularly in culturally sensitive contexts where the expectations of parents, religious leaders, and students play a pivotal role in shaping classroom practices (Feryok and Oranje, 2015).

For instance, parents and members of society may have high expectations regarding the use of the IRF method in teaching speaking. While they primarily hope for their children to excel in the SPM English paper, parents may also anticipate that IRF and other methods can foster their children's language fluency to help them become fluent English-speaking Islamic preachers, both locally and globally. This dual expectation may require extra effort from SAR English teachers who have to prepare students for examinations while equipping them with the speaking skills needed to effectively deliver religious teachings. Such societal and parental demands often require

teachers to adapt techniques such as the IRF creatively and integrating Islamic values into speaking activities to meet these cultural and spiritual goals.

By including Islamic elements in its framework, LTC in SARs could better capture the realities of teaching in culturally sensitive environments and support teachers in addressing the unique needs of their students and communities.

5.6.3 Refinement of the Conceptual Framework: Introducing the FILTC Model

The Faith-Infused Language Teacher Cognition (FILTC) framework emerged as a theoretical response to the contextual realities and moral orientation identified in this study. It conceptualises teacher cognition as a holistic and value-driven system in which *faith* acts as the guiding element that shapes, filters, and sustains pedagogical reasoning. Whilst the LTC model describes cognition as influenced by experience, education, classroom practice, and context, the FILTC framework adds a central moral-spiritual dimension that reflects the worldview of Islamic education.

In the FILTC framework, faith is not treated as an external influence but as an internal compass that informs teachers' intentions, decisions, and professional actions. It interacts dynamically with the four existing domains of cognition, influencing how teachers interpret training, design lessons, and respond to students during classroom interactions. This spiritual orientation gives rise to teaching that is both communicative and ethical, integrating linguistic competence with positive actions.

The framework therefore redefines teacher cognition in SAR schools as a process of spiritual reasoning as much as pedagogical reasoning. Teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and practices are guided by their sense of responsibility as educators entrusted to nurture both language proficiency and moral integrity. Through this integration, the FILTC model positions faith as the unifying element that aligns professional knowledge with Islamic educational goals.

The following subsection describes the five interrelated domains that constitute the FILTC framework as shown in Figure 5.1: (1) Faith and Values; (2) Prior Language Learning Experience; (3) Faith-Embedded Teacher Education and Professional Development; (4) Faith-Embedded Classroom Practice, and (5) Faith-Embedded Contextual Realities. Each domain is discussed in relation to how it influences, and is influenced by, teachers' beliefs and classroom interaction patterns as observed in this doctoral study.

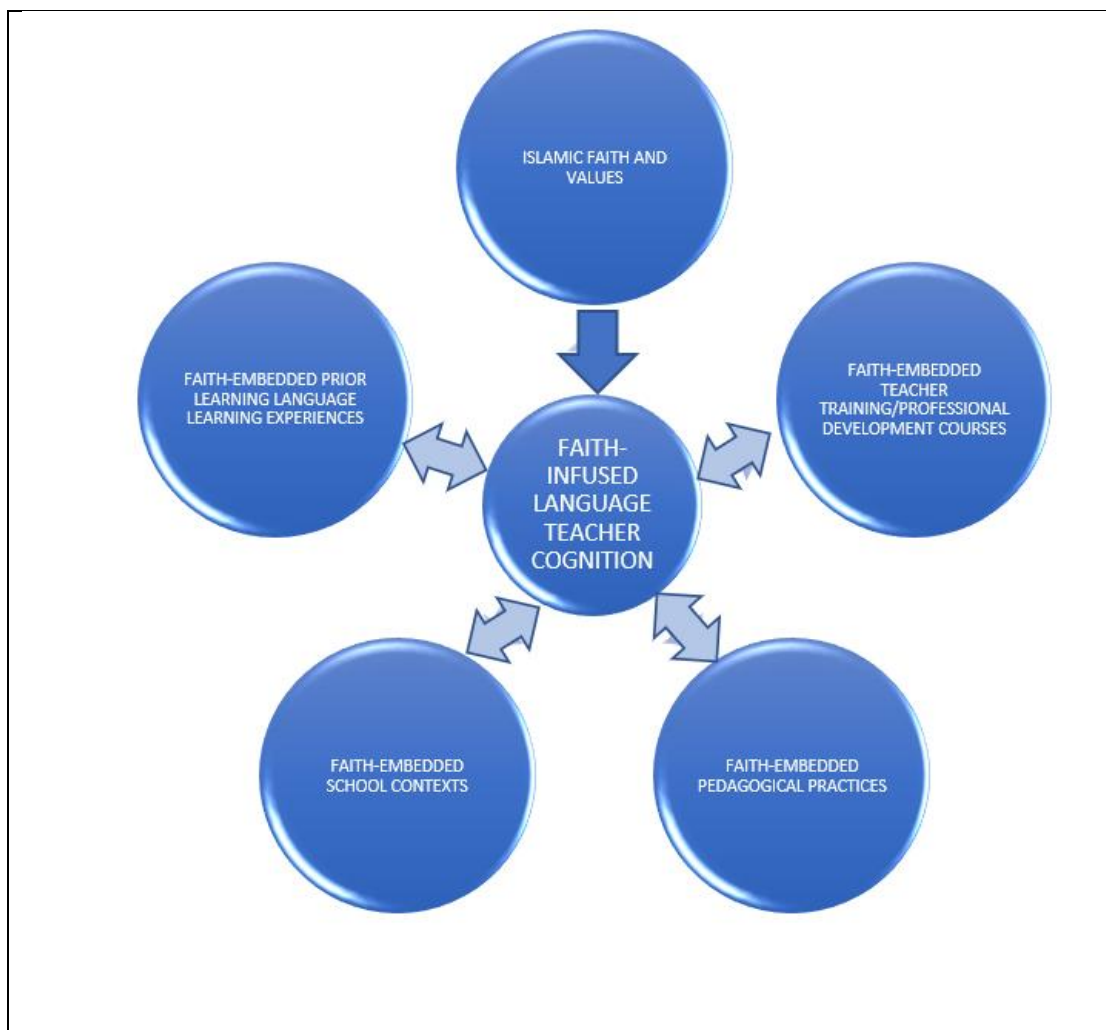


Figure 5.1. Proposed New Framework: Faith-infused Language Teacher Cognition (FILTC)

5.7 Five Domains of FILTC

The Faith-Infused Language Teacher Cognition (FILTC) model conceptualises teacher cognition as a faith-infused and spiritually guided framework shaped by multiple interrelated domains. At the centre of the model lies Faith-Infused Language Teacher Cognition, representing what teachers know, believe, and do in their professional lives. It acts as the essential construct where teachers' knowledge, experiences, and actions unite to form a coherent system of professional thinking and behaviour. This model illustrates the nature of cognition, which is not static. Instead, it evolves through experience, learning, reflection, teaching experience, and engagement with learners. It encompasses teachers' knowledge, pedagogical understanding, classroom decision-making, and moral reasoning derived from their faith. What teachers know reflects both their academic and spiritual understanding of language

teaching, what they believe represents their pedagogical values and moral stance, and what they do signifies their classroom actions and the practical enactment of these beliefs. Through these processes, teachers also contribute back to their immediate school environment by positively shaping learners' attitudes, influencing the culture of their institutions, and promoting an educational atmosphere that integrates language learning with spiritual growth. Thus, teacher cognition functions as both an internal belief system and an outward force that nurtures positive educational change within the SAR Islamic school context.

5.7.1 Islamic Faith and Values

The most important domain within the FILTC model is Islamic Faith and Values. It serves as the divine and moral compass that anchors and guides every element of teacher cognition. The one-way arrow from this domain to the centre illustrates a one-way influence between FILTC and faith. Faith shapes cognition, but cognition cannot refine or challenge faith. For English teachers in SAR schools, faith provides the sole source through which knowledge, teaching, and learning are comprehended. It determines how these teachers perceive their role not merely as transmitters of linguistic knowledge but as educators with a major responsibility to foster students' communication skills and spiritual growth.

For example, an English teacher guided by faith might begin a speaking lesson by reminding students that Islam expects its believers to uphold the values of honesty, humility, and respect in their daily communication. When correcting a student's mistake, the teacher may practise patience and gentleness, embodying prophetic manners rather than focusing solely on linguistic accuracy. Similarly, lesson objectives may be framed around moral themes such as kindness or gratitude, integrating meaningful content while developing language skills.

Faith also shapes how teachers view success. Rather than measuring achievement purely through examination results, faith-oriented cognition emphasises holistic growth, fluency balanced with sincerity, confidence balanced with humility, and critical thinking guided by moral awareness. It also informs teachers' intentions before teaching, ensuring that classroom practice becomes an act of service and devotion, not just a professional task.

5.7.2 Faith-Embedded Prior Learning Experiences

Faith-Embedded Prior Language Learning Experiences explains how teachers' early experiences as language learners continue to shape their present understanding of language teaching. These experiences include how they were once taught English, the types of classroom interactions they experienced, and the attitudes of their former teachers toward the language. Such memories often influence what they consider to be effective or ineffective approaches in their own classrooms. The two-way arrow connecting this domain with teacher cognition reflects a bi-directional influence. Although teachers' current FILTC can no longer change past experiences, their current beliefs and practices and their evolving cognition can still allow them to reinterpret and refine those experiences in light of their professional and spiritual growth.

For example, a teacher who once learned English in a highly teacher-centred classroom may initially adopt similar practices when starting to teach. However, as her or his cognition matures, through reflection, exposure to IRF practices, and deeper understanding of faith values such as justice, compassion and respect, he or she begins to see that meaningful learning requires giving students more voice. In this way, the teacher's cognition does not alter the past experience itself, but it transforms the meaning drawn from it. Through faith-informed reflection, earlier experiences of being a passive learner are reinterpreted as lessons in empathy, motivating the teacher to create more inclusive and interactive classroom environments.

Similarly, teachers who once experienced anxiety or lack of confidence in speaking English may use those memories to guide their approach in nurturing student confidence today. Their cognition enables them to filter negative experiences into productive insights, guided by Islamic principles. Thus, this bi-directional relationship allows teachers to draw moral and pedagogical wisdom from their past while continuously refining their practice in the present.

5.7.3 Faith-Embedded Teacher Training

Faith-Embedded Teacher Training and Professional Development shows that formal and informal teacher training programs, and professional development courses provide professional and pedagogical knowledge for English teachers. These might include workshops on communicative language teaching, IRF-based interaction, CEFR-

aligned lesson planning, teaching of the four language skills, communicative grammar teaching and assessment strategies. However, as teachers teaching English language in faith-based schools, they must not adopt these approaches wholesale. Instead, they should filter and adapt what they learn through the lens of Islamic values. For example, in a course on ‘Teaching Grammar Through Drama’ that might include culturally sensitive themes, teachers can modify the contents to ensure that the course delivery remain respectful and morally appropriate. Rather than rejecting the contents, they can contextualise them by integrating elements of Islamic ethics, such as manners in communication, humility in expressing opinions, and respect for others’ viewpoints.

The two-way arrow in this relationship represents the continuous process of bi-directional influence between training and classroom practice. After attending professional development courses such as designing CEFR-aligned teaching speaking workshop, SAR English teachers might want to apply these new methods in their classrooms. However, once implemented, they might sometimes encounter situations that make them reflect on the suitability of these methods for their students and school culture. For example, a teacher may find that the communicative tasks learned during training do not fit well with the values or classroom dynamics of SAR students, leading to confusion or discomfort.

This classroom experience then becomes feedback that influences how the teacher approaches future training or even contributes to the revision of course content. Some teachers return to the trainers or training institutions to suggest modifications, such as adding examples that embed Islamic values, adjusting topics to include moral themes, or developing modules that balance fluency with noble Islamic manners. Over time, trainers may begin to adapt their workshops based on these insights, producing materials and examples more suitable for faith-based schools.

Through this process, teacher training does not operate as a one-directional transmission of knowledge. Instead, it becomes a reciprocal exchange where professional input and classroom experience continuously shape each other. Training influences classroom practice, and classroom realities, in turn, reshape training content. This two-way movement ensures that teacher development in SAR schools remains relevant, reflective, and aligned with pedagogical effectiveness and Islamic values.

5.7.4 Faith-Embedded Pedagogical Practices

Faith-Embedded Pedagogical Practices illustrate how teachers' beliefs are translated in their day-to-day classroom activities. In this domain, faith functions as guidelines that influences how teachers plan lessons, interact with students, and respond to classroom dynamics. For example, a teacher who believes that knowledge should be shared with sincerity and respect may adopt a more dialogic approach, encouraging students to express their views while maintaining courteous communication. The teacher's choice of questions also reflects faith-based reasoning; rather than relying solely on display questions that test factual recall, the teacher may incorporate referential questions that stimulate reflection, such as asking students to discuss moral lessons from a story or to express opinions grounded in ethical perspectives.

Likewise, the way feedback is delivered is also guided by Islamic values of compassion and encouragement. Instead of highlighting students' errors in a corrective manner, teachers may provide positive feedback, using it as a means to build confidence and self-awareness. Instead of saying, "That's wrong," or "No, that's incorrect," a teacher might say gently, "*Alhamdulillah*, (Praise be to God), you're close to the right answer. Let's look again together," or "That's a good effort, perhaps we can improve it this way, *insha'Allah* (If God wills)." Such expressions carry encouragement, humility, and compassion, reminding students that learning is a shared act of seeking knowledge for Allah's sake rather than a contest of correctness. Thus, creating a supportive learning environment consistent with Islamic principles of nurturing and guidance.

The two-way arrow between this domain and teacher cognition represents how these faith-based practices and classroom experiences mutually shape each other. As teachers implement faith-infused methods, they gain deeper insights into what works best for their SAR learners and reflect on how their teaching aligns with both pedagogical goals and spiritual values. Over time, these reflections refine their cognition, leading to more thoughtful and consistent practice. For example, after observing that students respond more enthusiastically to lessons infused with moral themes such as honesty, teamwork, or gratitude, the teacher's belief in faith-based language teaching becomes stronger. This evolving cognition then influences future lesson planning, reinforcing the cycle between belief and practice.

5.7.5 Faith-Embedded School Contexts

Faith-Embedded School Contexts illustrate one of the most challenging dimensions within the Language Teacher Cognition framework. Traditional LTC studies often highlight issues like teachers find it difficult to adapt to external pressures such as ministry directives, school management expectations, standardised exams, and heavy curriculum demands. These structural forces can limit teachers' autonomy, leaving them with little room to implement innovative or communicative practices. For example, an English teacher who values interactive speaking activities may be forced to prioritise grammar drills or examination formats that reward memorisation rather than communication. Similarly, the pressure to finish the syllabus can discourage teachers from fostering student-led discussions, even when they recognise their pedagogical value.

However, within the FILTC model, this tension is moderated by the presence of faith and values as the guiding compass. When faith precedes all other domains, it strengthens teachers' sense of moral responsibility and courage to advocate for what is right and meaningful for students' holistic development. Teachers who internalise Islamic principles such as *amanah* (trust), *adl* (justice), and *ikhlas* (sincerity) are more likely to act as moral agents within their schools. For instance, a teacher might gently challenge the dominance of exam-oriented practices by proposing co-curricular projects that integrate English communication with Islamic themes such as cooperation, humility, and respect. Another teacher may volunteer to mentor weaker students outside formal hours, viewing it not as an administrative duty but as an act of *khidmat* (service) and *da'wah* (guidance).

The bidirectional arrows between Faith-Embedded School Contexts and teacher cognition capture this dynamic exchange. While school culture, policies, and curriculum frameworks shape how teachers think and teach, teachers themselves are not passive. Guided by faith, they can exert subtle but significant influence over the school environment through consistent moral leadership, ethical professionalism, and compassionate engagement with students. For example, a teacher who models respectful classroom dialogue may gradually shift how students and colleagues perceive communication norms, turning English lessons into spaces of mutual respect and moral growth.

Thus, the bidirectional relationship shows that while structural and policy factors constrain teachers' cognition, faith empowers them to reinterpret those constraints as opportunities for moral action. In this way, faith acts as a catalyst that transforms passive adaptation into purposeful engagement, enabling teachers to balance institutional compliance with spiritual conviction. Ultimately, through this continuous interaction, SAR teachers contribute not only to linguistic development but also to the moral and ethical renewal of their educational institutions.

Overall, this configuration demonstrates that teacher cognition in SAR schools is both influenced by and influences its surrounding domains, except for faith, which remains a one-way, transcendent force. The placement of Islamic Faith and Values at the top of the diagram visually represents its role as the ultimate source of guidance. The other domains form a dynamic cycle of learning, reflection, and adaptation that continuously shape teachers' professional understanding and practice. In short, this model represents a faith-led yet experience-enriched conceptualisation of teacher cognition. Faith provides the ethical compass and spiritual direction, while professional knowledge, early learning experiences, classroom practice, and school contexts interact to refine and sustain teachers' cognition in their daily teaching of English in SARs.

5.8 Implications for Future Research

The findings of this study, which focused on the relationship between teachers' cognition and the implementation of the IRF method in SAR schools, offer valuable insights into the challenges and successes of current teaching practices. However, as with any research, there are several areas where further exploration could deepen our understanding and improve educational outcomes.

One significant area for future research is the long-term impact of the IRF method on students' language development. While this study provided valuable insights into the immediate effects of IRF-based teaching strategies on students' speaking skills, it did not explore the sustained impact over time. Longitudinal studies could address this gap by tracking students' language proficiency and communication skills over several years, providing a clearer picture of how the IRF method contributes to language development in the long run. Another critical area for further study is the variability in the effectiveness of the IRF method across different contexts. This study focused on

SAR schools, which have unique characteristics, including financial constraints and a mix of *Tahfiz* and regular students. Future research could explore how the IRF method performs in different educational settings or schools with more diverse student populations, such as Malaysian government schools or private international schools.

The role of teacher training in the successful implementation of the IRF method also warrants further investigation. This study highlighted the importance of professional development in equipping teachers with the skills and knowledge needed to effectively use the IRF method. However, it also revealed gaps in the availability and quality of such training. Future research could explore the specific types of professional development that are most beneficial for teachers, as well as the impact of ongoing support and mentoring on their ability to implement methods like IRF consistently.

In terms of methodological considerations, this study employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches to gather data from a relatively small sample. While this mixed-methods approach provided a broad view of the research problem, future studies could benefit from larger sample sizes to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Expanding the sample size to include more teachers and schools could help validate the current results and provide a more nuanced understanding of the factors that influence the effectiveness of the IRF method.

Moreover, future research could refine the observational and analytical methods used to assess classroom interactions. While this study utilized classroom observations to evaluate the use of the IRF method, incorporating more advanced technologies, such as video analysis or real-time data collection tools, could provide richer data and more precise measurements of teacher-student interactions. These tools could capture subtle nuances in classroom dynamics that might be missed through traditional observation methods, offering deeper insights into how the IRF method functions in practice.

Finally, future research could explore the broader implications of the IRF method beyond language learning. While this study focused on its application in teaching speaking skills, the IRF method could potentially be applied to other areas of the curriculum, such as reading comprehension, writing, or critical thinking. Investigating its effectiveness in these areas could open up new avenues for improving teaching practices across the curriculum, making the IRF method a more versatile tool for educators.

5.9 Summary

This chapter concludes the study by synthesising the main findings, implications, and theoretical refinement drawn from the investigation of Language Teacher Cognition among English teachers in *Sekolah Agama Rakyat* in the state of Perak, particularly in relation to the use of the Initiation-Response-Feedback method for teaching speaking skills. The chapter began with a summary of the major findings for each research question, demonstrating that while SAR teachers generally hold positive beliefs toward the IRF method, their actual classroom practices are shaped and sometimes constrained by contextual realities. The discussion then moved to the implications of the study, which were outlined at different levels. Theoretically, the study contributed to extending Borg's (2003) LTC framework by proposing the Faith-Infused Language Teacher Cognition (FILTC) model, which integrates Islamic faith and values as a guiding domain influencing teachers' cognition and pedagogical decision-making. Pedagogically, the study emphasised that communicative English teaching in SAR schools should harmonise linguistic competence with Islamic ethos such as *amanah* (trustworthiness), *ikhlas* (sincerity), and *adab al-hiwar* (communication etiquette), ensuring that language learning also nurtures moral and spiritual growth. Contextually, the findings highlighted the importance of institutional support, professional training, and value-based curriculum design to align communicative practices with SAR's spiritual mission.

The chapter also proposed future recommendations to strengthen SAR schools, beginning with enhancing financial capacity through sustainable funding mechanisms, followed by short-term teacher professional development focused on Islamic-embedded communicative pedagogy, leadership enhancement, and infrastructure improvement. These measures collectively aim to empower teachers, enrich classroom practice, and elevate the standard of English education within SAR institutions. Finally, the refinement of the conceptual framework culminated in the extension of the FILTC model, which positions faith as the ultimate compass that informs and sustains teacher cognition. This refined framework not only advances the theoretical understanding of LTC but also provides a contextually relevant foundation for future studies on faith-based language education.

In sum, Chapter 5 encapsulates the study's contribution to theory, practice, and policy. It underscores that meaningful English teaching in SAR schools can be

achieved when communicative competence and Islamic values are harmoniously integrated to produce teachers who are not only linguistically skilled but also spiritually conscious to shape morally upright and confident young Muslim professionals to face the future.

5.10 Concluding Remarks

This study has now reached its end, marking the completion of an in-depth empirical investigation into English language teacher cognition at private *Sekolah Agama Rakyat* in Perak. The main aim of this research was to investigate the underlying factors that contribute to the moderate English-speaking performance among SAR students particularly in the speaking skills and to understand how teachers' beliefs and classroom practices shape these outcomes. Through the exploration of teachers' cognition, particularly their understanding and use of the Initiation-Response-Feedback framework, the study identified both the strengths and the gaps that exist in their current teaching practices. A central focus of this research was to examine the coherence and incoherence between teachers' beliefs and their actual classroom behaviour. Many teachers show strong agreement pertaining to the importance of communicative and student-centred approaches in teaching speaking skills, yet their practices often reflected a mixture of traditional and outdated methods due to contextual constraints. By identifying these points of match and mismatch, the study offered insights into the complex relationship between belief, context, and practice. It further highlighted that where strong coherence exists, classroom interaction becomes more meaningful, engaging, and effective for language development.

Once the causes of limited performance and practice gaps were identified, the next step was to propose ways forward on how effective strategies could be sustained and less effective ones improved. The study suggested that teachers should continue to employ dialogic and reflective teaching techniques, supported by continuous professional development programmes that are both linguistically and spiritually grounded. Such efforts will enable teachers to grow into confident, reflective, and well-trained professionals who can balance communicative skill-building with moral education. Henceforward, this study envisions that when teachers in SAR schools become skilled experts in their field, grounded in both pedagogy and faith, they will not only enhance their students' English-speaking abilities but also uphold the holistic

mission and vision of SAR education, which is to produce well-balanced, morally upright, and globally competent individuals. This aspiration aligns with the broader aim of Islamic education, which seeks to nurture knowledgeable and ethical young professionals who can communicate effectively whilst embodying the values of integrity, respect, and wisdom in every aspect of modern life.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Questionnaire

A. Demographic data

Please put a tick (/) next to your appropriate choice

1. How long have you been working as an English teacher?
☐ 0-5 years
☐ 5 – 10 years
☐ 11-15 years
☐ 15 years and above

2. Which school levels have taught? You can tick (/) more than one answer.
☐ Pre-school
☐ Primary
☐ College/university
☐ Secondary school
☐ Others. Please specify
☐ College/university

3. What is your highest academic qualification?
☐ SPM Course: _____
☐ Diploma Course: _____
☐ Bachelor Course: _____
☐ Master Course: _____
☐ Doctoral Course: _____

4. Describe your English language proficiency level
☐ Low
☐ Moderate
☐ Advance

5. What led you to become English teachers?
☐ I am certified with ESL qualification
☐ I am very interested to teach English Language
☐ I was unemployed so I applied to teach here and was accepted
☐ I was unemployed so I applied to teach here and was accepted
☐ Others: _____

6. What are the minimum academic qualification requirements set by the school in hiring language teachers?
☐ Certificate in the field of English language teaching and learning.
☐ Bachelor in the field of English language teaching and learning
☐ Master in the field of English language teaching and learning
☐ Others (please specify)

7. How many hours per week are you required to teach in your school?
- () 8-9 hours
- () 10-12 hours
- () 12-15 hours
- () 16-20 hours
8. How many students are there in your class?
- () Between 21 - 30
- () Between 31 - 40
- () Between 41 – 50
- () Over 50 students

B. Professional development

Within the last 2 years, how many times have you attended courses listed in the list below? Tick (/) to your answer.

	ITEMS	DEGREE OF FREQUENCY WITHIN 2 YEARS					
		0	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5	5-6
1	ESL Theory						
2	ESL Curriculum/Syllabus design						
3	Applied Linguistics						
4	Phonetics						
5	Sociolinguistics						
6	Psycholinguistics						
7	ESL Second language acquisition learning						
8	Materials development for ESL teaching and learning						
9	Approaches and teaching methods in ESL classrooms						
10	Teaching reading/writing/listening/speaking						
11	Teaching writing						
12	Teaching listening						
13	Teaching speaking						
14	Teaching Grammar						
15	Teaching Literature						
16	Testing and Assessment in ESL						
17	Teaching Literature						
18	English Computer-aided Instruction						
19	Lesson plan						
20	Practicum on English Teaching						

C. Frequency of Attendance to Professional Development Courses

		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	My English language teachers during my school time inspire me to teach speaking				
2	I have adequate knowledge on teaching speaking using IRF method				
3	My teacher training/ in-service professional development courses provide me with necessary and adequate knowledge on teaching speaking with IRF method				
4	Classroom internal and external matters deeply shape my teaching strategies				
		Always	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
5	I initiate questions to students				
6	My students initiate questions				
7	I always ask display questions				
8	I always ask referential questions				
9	I speak up more than my students				
10	Students contribute more in the classroom verbal exchanges				
11	My lessons are student-centred				
12	My lessons possess active, dialogic pattern of interaction				
13	There are many long verbal strands in the classroom verbal exchanges.				
14	Lack of vocabulary is the biggest factor which influence students' answers				
15	My teaching outcomes work congruently with my lesson plans				

*Adapted and edited from Nurulhayati & Che Ton (2016), Kalpana (2017) and Suci Ferdian (2020).

APPENDIX 2

Pre-Observation Interview Protocol

1. How important is teaching speaking skills to SAR students?
2. How was speaking skills taught to you when you were in school/university?
3. How was speaking skills taught to you when you were a teacher trainee?
4. What are your views on the use of CLT in teaching English speaking skills?
5. How should the speaking skill be taught in the classroom?
6. What are the activities you usually use in teaching speaking skills?
7. How do you describe your role as a teacher in a speaking classroom?
8. How much time in your classroom is spent on student-teacher interaction in the target language?
9. To what extent do you use English in your speaking classroom?
10. How do you provide opportunities for your students to speak English in the classroom?
11. How do you motivate your students to speak English in the classroom?
12. Which one do you focus more while teaching speaking? Language fluency or grammar accuracy? Could you give me your reasons why?
13. How do you give feedback to your students' verbal responses? Why?
14. Do you feel that errors must be corrected immediately? How do you practice this in the classroom?

Adapted from Vijayavarathan (2017). These are anchor questions. It is expected the questions could lead to possible in-depth questions that will contribute to richer data pertaining to teachers' existing beliefs regarding classroom interaction and language learning.

APPENDIX 3A

Classroom Observation Descriptors

No.	Label	Sym.	Formal features and functional definition
1	marker	m	Identified by – ‘Ok’, ‘Good’, ‘Excellent’, ‘Correct’, ‘Right’, ‘Alright’. A marker which acts as the head of a framing move usually has a falling intonation or a silent to mark boundaries in the discourse.
2	starter	s	Identified by a statement, a question or a command. To provide information, ask questions or direct attention to an issue with the intention to elicit responses.
3	elicitation	el	Identified by a question. Its function is to request a linguistic response.
4	check	ch	Identified by words or phrases such as ‘Have you finished?’ or ‘What do you mean by...?’ It shows the teacher is not clear or clueless and demands for more explanation from the students. The function of checks is to enable the teacher to ascertain whether there are any problems preventing the successful progress of the lesson.
5	directive	d	Identified by an instruction or a command. Its function is to request a non-linguistic response.
6	informative	l	Identified by a statement. Its sole function is to provide information
7	prompt	p	Identified by words such as – ‘please go on’, ‘quickly please’, ‘hurry up’ ‘have a guess’. Its function is not to elicit responses but to demand for further explanations or actions.
8	clue	cl	Identified by a statement, command or question. Provides additional information which assists students in providing correct feedback.
9	cue	cu	Identified by words or phrases which function solely to evoke an (appropriate) bid
10	bid	b	Identified by verbal and non-verbal items – ‘Miss’, ‘Ms’, ‘Sir’, ‘Teacher’, raised hand, grasping, eager looking. Its function is to show the desire to contribute to the discourse.
11	nomination	n	Identified by nominating words or statements such as ‘you’ ‘anybody?’, ‘yes?’ or ‘who hasn’t said anything yet?’. The function of nomination is to call on or give permission to a pupil to contribute to the discourse.
12	acknowledge	ack	Identified by ‘Okay’, ‘Yes’, ‘Wow’, ‘Mmm...’, ‘Well...’ and some other related non-verbal gestures and expressions. Its function is to show that the initiation has been understood, and, if the head was a directive, that the pupil intends to react.

*Adapted from Sinclair and Coulthard’s (1992) Speech Act categories.

APPENDIX 3B

Systematic Observation Scale

Tick (/) wherever necessary

Class of move	Class of act	Observable/	Non-observable
TEACHER INITIATION /STUDENT INITIATION	elicit*	/	
	direct*		X
	inform*		
	check*		
	(prompt)		
	(clue)		
	(cue)		
	(bid)		
	(bid)		
	(nomination)		
STUDENT RESPONSE /TEACHER RESPONSE	acknowledge*		
	react*		
	reply*		
	(comment)		
TEACHER FEEDBACK	(accept)		
	(evaluate)		
	(comment)		
	Probes		
<p>Key: Parentheses denote optional elements. Asterisks denote core elements. Where there is more than one core element, at least one of them is required to be present, with the exception of the framing move, where both core elements are required.</p>			

*Adapted from Galagane (2015)

APPENDIX 4

Student Stimulated Recall Interview Protocol

1. What were you thinking when your teacher asked this question?
2. Why did you respond the way you did?
3. How confident were you when giving that answer? What affected your confidence?
4. Did you feel encouraged by your teacher's follow-up comment? Why or why not?
5. What did you understand from your teacher's final response in this exchange?
6. How did this feedback affect your next response in the conversation?
7. At this moment, did you want to say more but decided not to? What made you hold back?
8. Do you think the teacher's questions helped you explain your ideas better? In what way?
9. When the teacher said this, did it make you rethink your answer? Why?
10. Did you find it easy or difficult to continue the conversation after this feedback? Explain.
11. What helps you speak more in class—teacher questions, feedback, or something else? Give an example.
12. If the teacher asked the same question differently, do you think you would answer differently? Why?
13. How do teacher questions or responses influence your willingness to speak?

*These are anchor questions. It is expected that the questions could lead to other possible in-depth questions and richer data. Adapted and edited from Galagane (2015).

APPENDIX 5

Post-Observation Interview Protocol

1. Let us look again at the recorded instances at minute 7.00. You have asked a question to Student A. How did you expect the student's answer to be?
2. Based on student A's first answer what do you perceive about her speaking skill?
3. You have continued to ask another display question to Student A at minute 9.00. Why have you used referential question compared to display question at the beginning of the conversation?
4. In addition to the student's verbal responses, did the student's non-verbal element reflect his emotional state at the time? How was he feeling at the particular moment? Do you think his feelings at the moment hinder/encourage him to speak more? Why?
5. How were your interactions with students in the class?
6. Did your students in your class enjoy learning with the help of classroom interaction?
7. Did they optimally benefit the lesson with the help of classroom interaction strategies?
8. What were among the biggest obstacles faced when you tried those strategies in your class?
9. Do you believe interaction quickens the process of language learning within your students?
10. Do you believe that interaction has greatly helped your students' language learning process?
11. What were among the main problems encountered when you try to interact with the students?
12. How do you overcome the obstacles?

*These are anchor questions. It is expected the questions could lead to possible in-depth questions that will lead to more data pertaining to teachers' existing beliefs regarding classroom interaction and language learning. Adapted and edited from Galagane (2015).

APPENDIX 6

Uitm Research Ethics Committee

www.uitm.edu.my



Pejabat
Timbalan Naib Canselor
(Penyelidikan dan Inovasi)

Reference : 600-TNCPI (5/1/6)
Our reference : REC/06/2023 (PG/MR/209)
Date : 20 June 2023

Assoc. Prof. Dr Airil Haimi b Mohd Adnan
(Nurulhayati Ilias – 2019827688)
Akademi Pengajian Bahasa
Universiti Teknologi MARA
40450 Shah Alam
SELANGOR

Dear Assoc. Prof. Dr Airil Haimi,

APPROVAL LETTER - UiTM RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Thank you for submitting your research proposal to the Research Ethics Committee (REC). After considering your application, the Committee approved your proposal titled "Language Teacher Cognition (LTC) in Classroom Interactions and the Facilitation of Students' Speaking Skill at Sekolah Agama Rakyat (SAR) Schools" in Perak.

Details of the approval are as follows:

Ref. number:	REC/06/2023 (PG/MR/209)
Approval Period:	20 June 2023 until 31 December 2023
Authorised personnel:	1. Assoc. Prof. Dr Airil Haimi b Mohd Adnan 2. Nurulhayati Ilias

The UiTM Research Ethics Committee operates in accordance to the ICH Good Clinical Practice Guidelines, Malaysian Good Clinical Practice Guidelines and the Declaration of Helsinki. The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with these guidelines and declaration.

We draw to your attention the requirement that a report on this research, must be submitted every 12 months from the date of the approval or on the completion of the project, whichever occurs first. Failure to submit reports will result in withdrawal of consent for the project to proceed. Amendments, if any, to the study documents are to be submitted to the REC for approval.

If you require further information, please contact the REC Secretariat at 03-55448069/03-55442794 or email at recsecretariat@uitm.edu.my.

Yours sincerely,

EMERITUS PROFESSOR DATO' DR RAYMOND AZMAN ALI
Chairman
UiTM Research Ethics Committee

c.c.: Dean, Akademi Pengajian Bahasa, UiTM

Universiti Teknologi MARA
Aras 3, Bangunan Wawasan
40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, MALAYSIA
Tel: (+603) 5544 2004/2255
Faks: (+603) 5544 2070



APPENDIX 7

Letter Of Permission From The Perak Islamic Affairs Department (Jaipk)

	<p>جاپتن اڪام اسلام ڦيراڪ JABATAN AGAMA ISLAM PERAK TINGKAT 3, KOMPLEKS ISLAM DARUL RIDZUAN JALAN PANGlima BUKIT GANTANG WAHAB 30000 IPOH, PERAK DARUL RIDZUAN</p>	<p>Tel. : 05-208 4800 Faks : 05-255 5512 E-mail : jaipk@perak.gov.my</p>
---	--	--

<p>السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ</p> <p>Nurulhayati Ilias 13 Laluan Meru Permai 8 Halaman Meru Permai Bandar Meru Raya 30020 Ipoh.</p>	<p>Ruj. Kami : JAPk/PEL/10/12/12 (52) Ruj. Tuan : Tarikh : <u>9</u> Jamadilakhir 1442H 22 Januari 2021M</p>
---	---

Puan,

KEBENARAN MENJALANKAN KAJIAN DAN PENGUMPULAN DATA

Dengan hormatnya perkara atas adalah dirujuk.

2. Dimaklumkan bahawa kajian puan bertajuk *Language Teacher Cognition And Classroom Practices: What Language Teachers Think, Know, Believe And Do; A Qualitative Study on English Language Teachers At Private Sekolah Agama Rakyat (SAR) Secondary School In Perak* diluluskan dan hendaklah mematuhi syarat – syarat seperti berikut :

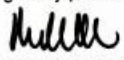
- mendapatkan keizinan pengetua sekolah sebelum menjalankan kajian;
- membentangkan *Gantt Chart Fieldwork Schedule* kajian kepada pengetua dan mematuhi peraturan yang telah ditetapkan oleh pihak sekolah;
- hanya menjalankan kajian berdasarkan *Gantt Chart Fieldwork Schedule* seperti lampiran A; dan
- mematuhi norma baharu yang telah ditetapkan oleh pihak sekolah.

Kerjasama dan perhatian daripada pihak puan amat dihargai dan didahului dengan ucapan terima kasih.

Sekian.

"BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA"

Saya yang menjalankan amanah,


(MADIAH BINTI MOHAMAD)
Ketua Penolong Pengarah,
Bahagian Pendidikan,
b.p Pengarah,
Jabatan Agama Islam Perak.

Naimah/pelbagaiamar

s.k : 1. Pengetua Sekolah Menengah Agama Rakyat
2. Fall Timbul

"SEJAHTERA RAKYAT PERAK DARUL RIDZUAN"

APPENDIX 8

Permission Requests To School Principals

www.uitm.edu.my



UNIVERSITI
TEKNOLOGI
MARA

Akademi
Pengajian Bahasa

Surat Kami : 600-APB (PS.3/2/2)
Tarikh : 24 Oktober 2019

KEPADA YANG BERKENAAN

Tuan/Puan

MEMOHON KEBENARAN MENJALANKAN KAJIAN DAN PENGUMPULAN DATA

NAMA : NURULHAYATI ILIAS
NO. PELAJAR : 2019827688
PROGRAM : LG950- DOKTOR FALSAFAH (PENGAJIAN BAHASA GUNAAN)
FAKULTI : AKADEMI PENGAJIAN BAHASA

Dengan ini dimaklumkan bahawa penama di atas adalah pelajar UiTM dari Akademi Pengajian Bahasa di bawah program LG950 – Doktor Falsafah (Pengajian Bahasa Gunaan), Ijazah Kedoktoran (Penyelidikan).

2. Sehubungan itu, memohon jasa baik pihak tuan/puan memberi kebenaran kepada pelajar berkenaan membuat penyelidikan dan kajian lapangan di organisasi seliaan tuan/puan. Pelajar ini menjalankan kajian bagi proses menyiapkan penyelidikan mereka.

3. Walaubagaimanapun, pihak kami juga akan memastikan bahawa segala data yang dikumpulkan samada dalam bentuk audio atau visual akan hanya digunakan untuk tujuan penyelidikan pelajar sahaja.

4. Segala kerjasama pihak tuan/puan dalam hal ini amatlah dihargai dan didahului dengan ribuan terima kasih.

Sekian.

Yang benar


DR. NOR FAZLIN MOHD RAMLI
Ketua Pusat Pengajian Siswazah (Penyelidikan)

s.k. : Dr. Ainil Haimi Bin Mohd Adnan
Penyelia Utama Pelajar

DR.

Akademi Pengajian Bahasa
Universiti Teknologi MARA
40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, MALAYSIA
Tel : (+603) 5544 2398 / 2402 / 2484
Faks : (+603) 5544 2493


ISO 9001:2015 No. Sijil: 30120156

UITM *at heart*

APPENDIX 9

Subject Information Sheets

REC 4 / 2020/BM Pind. 2(2020)

Research Ethics Committee
Research Management Centre
Universiti Teknologi MARA
40450 SHAH ALAM
Tel: 03-5544-8069, Faks: 03-5544-2096/2767



Subject Information Sheet

Research Title

LANGUAGE TEACHER COGNITION (LTC) IN CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS AND THE FACILITATION OF STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL AT SEKOLAH AGAMA RAKYAT (SAR) SCHOOLS

Introduction of Research

Undeniably, these schools have attracted many parents who are interested in their proposed educational policy, which is a balanced between the academic and Islamic education. However, time and again, the media and the local community will highlight the issue of low to moderate English language performance in Agama Rakyat Schools SAR schools in national standardized examinations compared to other schools. It is indeed worrying, given that once these students leave school, they will be expected to continue their education at higher education colleges and universities where English will be used as the main language of instruction. If they fail to demonstrate outstanding English ability at secondary school level, questions may arise pertaining to their readiness to pursue tertiary level education. Immediate action should be taken to address the problem and further improve the English language performance in these schools.

Purpose of Research

To observe the teaching and learning process of English language in several private SAR secondary schools in in Perak to get some insights on the causes of the moderate achievement of English in those schools and to take proactive measures to overcome it. This can help in putting into realization the schools' aspiration which is to produce human capital who are not only spiritually strong to withstand negative social ills, but also those who possess high level of intellectual ability to meet the global and social challenges.

Research Procedure

1. Distribution of questionnaire to all English language teachers at 17 SAR secondary schools in Perak
2. Pre-observation in-depth semi-structured interview to six selected teachers
3. 2 x (70-minute) classroom observations for each of the six selected teachers
4. Stimulated Recall Interview (Six Teachers)
5. Stimulated Recall Interview (Students). The selection of students will be based on the observable/non-observable learning instances captured
6. Post-observation semi-structured interviews to all the teachers

Participation in Research

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to take part in the study or you may withdraw yourself from participation in the research at any time without penalty.

Benefit of Research

1. Highlighting the roles of SAR schools in the country's educational system
2. Adding current store of knowledge pertaining to the effectiveness of classroom interactions in improving students' speaking skill
3. Improve the quality of student-teacher classroom interactions
4. Insights from students on how classroom interaction could enhance their speaking skill

Research Risk

It is expected that this study will not lead to having negative risks

Confidentiality

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to take part in the study or you may withdraw yourself from participation in the research at any time without penalty. Nurulhayati Ilias, 0195931904

Consent Form₁

To become a subject in the research, you or your legal guardian are required to sign this Consent Form I herewith confirm that I have met the requirement of age and am capable of acting on behalf of myself / as a legal guardian as follows:

1. I understand the nature and scope of the research being undertaken.
2. I have read and understood all the terms and conditions of my participation in the research.
3. All my questions relating to this research and my participation therein have been answered to my satisfaction.
4. I voluntarily agree to take part in this research, to follow the study procedures and to provide all necessary information to the investigators as requested.
5. I may at any time choose to withdraw from this research without giving any reason.
6. I have received a copy of the Subjects Information Sheet and Consent Form.
7. Except for damages resulting from negligent or malicious conduct of the researcher(s), I hereby release and discharge UiTM and all participating researchers from all liability associated with, arising out of, or related to my participation. I agree to hold them harmless from any harm or loss that may be incurred by me due to my participation in the research.

Name of Subject/Legally authorized representative (LAR)

Signature

I.C No

Date

Name of Witness

Signature

I.C No

Date

Name of Consent Taker

Signature

I.C No

Date

- 1 Original signed copy is to be retained by the Principal Investigator.
- 2 Delete whichever is not applicable.
- 3 A witness is only required for oral consent.

Research Ethics Committee
Research Management Centre
Universiti Teknologi MARA
40450 SHAH ALAM
Tel: 03-5544-8069, Faks: 03-5544-2096/2767



ASSENT FORM

Your parent/legally authorized representative (LAR) has given permission for you to be in a project called (state name of project here). We would like to explain it to you, so that you can decide if you want to be in it. If you don't understand, please ask questions. You can choose to be in the study, or not to be in the study, or to take more time to decide.

What is the project about?

To observe the teaching and learning process of English language in several private SAR secondary schools in in Perak to get some insights on the causes of the moderate achievement of English in those schools and to take proactive measures to overcome it. This can help in putting into realization the schools' aspiration which is to produce human capital who are not only spiritually strong to withstand negative social ills, but also those who possess high level of intellectual ability to meet the global and social challenges.

Why do I need to be in this project?

This study is conducted to observe the students' learning process of English language in several private SAR secondary schools in Perak to get some insights on the causes of the moderate achievement of English in those schools and to take proactive measures to overcome it.

What should I do in this project?

Answer all questions asked by giving true statements as secondary school students who are schooling in private Agama Rakyat Schools in Perak

What will happen to me in the project? There is no risk to the respondents

Do I have to be in the project?

You don't have to be in the project if you don't want to. If you are in the project, you may withdraw at any time without making anyone upset.

Who can I talk to about this project?

If you want to ask anything, please do not hesitate to call me at anytime. Name of researcher: Nurulhayati Ilias
Contact number: 0195931904

Will anyone know about what I say or do in the project?

It is strictly confidential. The interview is conducted for the purpose of completing this research only.

Assent Questions

Instructions to minor: Please circle your answer below.

1. Has somebody explained this project to you?	Yes / No	☐
2. Do you understand what this project is about?	Yes / No	☐
3. Do you have any questions about the project?	Yes / No	☐
4. If you have asked a question, do you understand the answer?	Yes / No	☐
5. Do you understand it's ok to stop taking part at any time?	Yes / No	☐
6. Are you ok to take part?	Yes / No	☐
7. Are you ok for your voice to be recorded?	Yes / No	☐
8. Are you ok to be on video?	Yes / No	☐
9. Are you ok to have photographs taken?	Yes / No	☐

(If the minors are unable to read, thumbprint should be taken, in lieu of signature)

If you want to take part, please write your name and sign, or place your thumb print in the box.

Name of participant

Signature

Date



Name of consent taker

Signature

Date

(In instances where the minor is unable to read, or where the research covers sensitive issues, a witness should attest in the section below)

Name of witness

Signature

Date

APPENDIX 10

Construct Validity Evaluation Results

Construct Validity Evaluation Template for Expert Review

Research Instrument: Demographic Analysis Questionnaire for ESL Teachers' Speaking Instruction Practices

Instructions for Expert Reviewers

Dear Expert Reviewer,

Thank you for agreeing to evaluate this research instrument. Your expertise is invaluable in establishing the construct validity of this questionnaire, which aims to investigate ESL teachers' demographic characteristics, professional development experiences, and classroom practices related to speaking instruction using the IRF (Initiation-Response-Feedback) method.

Please review each section carefully and provide your expert judgement on the extent to which the items adequately measure the intended constructs. Your feedback will be used to refine the instrument before pilot testing.

Estimated completion time: 45-60 minutes

SECTION 1: REVIEWER INFORMATION

Name:

Institutional Affiliation:

Position/Title: Senior lecturer

Area of Expertise: (Please tick all that apply)

- ☐ ESL/EFL Teaching Methodology
- ☐ Applied Linguistics
- ☐ Second Language Acquisition
- ☐ Teacher Education and Professional Development
- ☐ Classroom Interaction and Discourse Analysis
- ☐ Educational Research and Assessment
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

Years of Experience in Field: _____

Date of Review: _____

SECTION 2: OVERALL INSTRUMENT EVALUATION

2.1 Clarity of Purpose

Does the instrument's stated purpose align with the construct(s) it intends to measure?

Excellent	Good	Adequate	Poor	Very Poor
[/]	[]	[]	[]	[]

2.2 Construct Definition

Are the underlying constructs (demographic characteristics, professional development, and IRF-related teaching practices) clearly defined and measurable?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
[/]	[]	[]	[]	[]

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Does the instrument demonstrate adequate grounding in relevant theoretical frameworks (e.g., classroom interaction theory, teacher cognition, professional development)?

Excellent	Good	Adequate	Poor	Very Poor
[/]	[]	[]	[]	[]

SECTION 3: CONSTRUCT VALIDITY EVALUATION BY SECTION [PARTIAL SAMPLE]

PART A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Construct Being Measured: Teacher demographic characteristics and background information relevant to ESL speaking instruction

Item-by-Item Analysis

For each item, please evaluate using the following criteria:

Rating Scale: 1 = Not relevant/representative 2 = Somewhat relevant/representative but needs major revision 3 = Relevant/representative but needs minor revision 4 = Very relevant/representative

Item No.	Item Content Summary	Relevance to Construct	Clarity	Appropriateness of Response Options	Recommendations
1	Teaching experience duration	1 2 3 (4)	1 2 3 (4)	1 2 3 (4)	
2	School levels taught	1 2 3 (4)	1 2 3 (4)	1 2 3 (4)	
3	Highest academic qualification	1 2 3 (4)	1 2 3 (4)	1 2 3 (4)	
4	English language proficiency	1 2 3 (4)	1 2 3 (4)	1 2 3 (4)	
5	Motivation for teaching English	1 2 3 (4)	1 2 3 (4)	1 2 3 (4)	
6	School hiring requirements	1 2 3 (4)	1 2 3 (4)	1 2 3 (4)	
7	Weekly teaching hours	1 2 3 (4)	1 2 3 (4)	1 2 3 (4)	
8	Class size	1 2 3 (4)	1 2 3 (4)	1 2 3 (4)	

Specific Concerns for Part A:

Question 1 - Teaching Experience:

- Are the time intervals appropriately distributed? [YES](#)

Question 2 - School Levels:

- Is there duplication in response options (College/university appears twice)? [NO](#)
- Should this error be corrected? [] Yes [☒] No

Question 3 - Academic Qualifications:

- Are the qualification levels appropriate for the target population? [YES](#)
- Is the "Course" specification necessary and useful? [☒] Yes [] No

Question 4 - English Proficiency:

- Is self-reported proficiency sufficient, or should objective measures be included? [SUFFICIENT](#)
- Are the three levels (Low, Moderate, Advance) adequate? Should they be expanded? [ADEQUATE](#)

Question 5 - Motivation:

- Does option 4 duplicate option 3? [NO](#)
- Are the response options comprehensive enough to capture teachers' motivations? [YES](#)

Question 6 - Hiring Requirements:

- Is this question asking about institutional policy or personal qualification?

APPENDIX 11

Pre-Observation Interview (Teacher A) [Partial Sample]

Researcher Oh sama macam sekolah yang lain kakak boleh faham yang itulah. Alright next dari sudut Bahasa Inggeris ya dari sudut Bahasa Inggeris misi sekolah. Okay pengetua memang support lah penguasaan Bahasa Inggeris dikalangan pelajar?

Teacher A Ha ah. Ya.

Researcher Jadi misi kenapa perlu melahirkan pelajar-pelajar aliran agama yang mahir berbahasa Inggeris?

Teacher A First of all memang kalau dalam kelas saya memang menerapkan pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris kepada semua para pelajar. First untuk menerapkan dakwah. Saya bagi contoh dekat dia orang kalau contohkan kalau awak... (lost connection) contoh kalau tanya berkenaan dengan islam so apa yang dia orang nak jawab kalau dia orang tak tahu untuk berbahasa Inggeris.

Researcher Jadi maknanya memang...

Teacher A So itu memang saya ajar macam itu.

Researcher So memang melahirkan pendakwah yang bertaraf antarabangsa lah

Teacher A Ya In Shaa Allah.

Researcher Okay alright jadikan sekolah buat apadia aktiviti-aktiviti sekolah yang diluar kelas ya yang diluar kelas yang mengalakkan yang disusun oleh pengetua ke untuk memantapkan lagi penggunaan Bahasa Inggeris disekolah.

Teacher A Selalunya kami akan buat macam kelas tambahan. Khusus diluar pada waktu pembelajaran di sesi pagi. Dan kelas tambahan memang fokus pada grammar sahaja.

Researcher Oh kelas tambahan...

Teacher A Ya kelas tambahan.

Researcher Okay kelas tambahan fokus kepada grammar sahaja menarik. Jadi memang dibuat di...maksudnya untuk semua pelajar?

Teacher A Ha untuk semua pelajar daripada tingkatan 1 sampai tingkatan 5.

Researcher Cikgu-cikgu yang mengajar memang cikgu dekat sekolah itu ke atau panggil orang luar?

Teacher A Tak ada. Kalau untuk Bahasa Inggeris memang saya seorang sahaja yang ajar.

Researcher Good. Jadi kenapa you rasakan perlu kelas tambahan grammar ini?

Teacher A Sebab kalau dekat sekolah agama rakyat sekarang macam dekat sekolah saya masih lagi terhad sebab kami mengabungkan kokurikulum akademik dengan kokurikulum macam Nahu dengan Tauhid itu kan. So masa untuk pembelajaran itu memang sangat terhad.

Researcher Hm...

Teacher A Untuk pagi saya selalunya fokus kepada silibus, silibus yang diberikan dan disediakan kemudian untuk tambahan grammar itu saya buat luar waktu kelas.

Researcher Oh bagus. Jadi ini memang idea Shira lah?

Teacher A Saya lah. Alhamdulillah macam itu lah.

Researcher Oh siap dengan kena buat paper work semua-semua lah. Ada nama khusus tak program itu?

Teacher A Nama itu tak ada cuma saya buat macam pemulihan grammar macam itu je lah.

Researcher Okay faham. Jadi dia dijalankan itu pukul berapa?

Teacher A Biasanya saya akan jalankan kelas itu pada pukul 2.30 hingga 3.30 petang tapi campur.

[session continues]

APPENDIX 12

Classroom IRF Exchanges (TA/CO1) [Partial Sample]

	IRF EXCHANGES		ACTS
TA	Good morning	FO	Inform
TA	Ok for today, we will learn from Download Textbook theme Science and Technology, Unit 7 page 83.	TI	Inform
TA	So please open your textbook	TI	Inform
TA	On page 83	TI	Inform
TA	So the topic is The Media.	TI	Inform
TA	What page teacher?	TI	Inform
TA	83. So today we will conducting speaking.	TI	Inform
TA	So this the learning standard for speaking.	TI	Inform
TA	The main skill speaking is 2.1.3.	TI	Inform
TA	Explain and justify..	TI	Inform
TA	And also speaking 2.1.	TI	Inform
TA	Use formal and informal register appropriately in familiar and some unfamiliar contexts	TI	Inform
TA	(Reading from book) Ok. Before the internet became popular, Print Media was the main source of news.	TI	Inform
TA	People read the news and magazine to find out what was going on.	TI	Inform
TA	Now digital media is giving Print Media a tough competition as people have switched to getting news from websites, social medias and even to messaging apps.	TI	Inform
TA	Do you know ant messaging apps that deliver news to you? Like Telegram application, Whatsapp.	TI	Inform
TA	There are so many actually.	TI	Inform
TA	The debate between print and digital media continues to grow in today ever evolving media landscape.	TI	Inform
TA	So I will take all of you in a journey to explore the intricacies, means, complexities, confusion, difficulty of both mediums and discuss on the advantages and disadvantages.	TI	Inform
TA	So both have disadvantages and advantages.	TI	Inform
TA	So let's dig into the world of print media and ongoing debates surrounding them.	TI	Inform
TA	So what is print media?	TI	elicitation
SS	Newspaper	SR	Reply

TA	So let's give you a brief explanation about print media.	TI	Inform
TA	Print media refers to any form of communication that is physically printed or published on paper.	TI	Inform
TA	So physical material. Like newspapers...then?	TI	elicitation
SS	Journal	SR	Reply
TA	Journal good. Then? Flyers. Anything else?	TI	elicitation
SS	Comics	SR	Reply
TA	Comics. Okay.	TI	Inform
TA	It's physical.	TI	Inform
TA	Do you know brochures?	TI	elicitation
TA	Also flyers?	TI	elicitation
TA	It can provide information or entertainment to its readership.	TI	Inform
TA	So print media has been a cornerstone of communication for centuries.	TI	inform
TA	A looong... time ago, we only used print media. So let's go to digital material.	TI	Inform
TA	So what is digital material?	TI	elicitation
SS	Computer	SR	Reply
TA	So the definition is all communication transmit electronically through devices such as computer, laptop...	TI	elicitation
SS	Handphone...	SR	Reply
TA	Television, smartphones, radio and any other digital platforms. Such as social media platforms. Facebook, Instagram, tiktok...good.	TI	elicitation
SS	Twitter	SR	Reply
TA	Twitter, now known as X.	TI	Inform
TA	Then other than that?	TI	Inform
TA	The newest one I know is Thread.	TI	Inform
TA	It same as Instagram.	TI	Inform
TA	But we can post a sentence to it rather than compared to Instagram. Instagram we need to post a picture.	TI	Inform
TA	And a caption.	TI	Inform
TA	But the thread, we can post the words only.	TI	elicitation
SS	Look like X	SR	Reply
TA	Yeahh it looks like X application	TI	Inform
TA	Okay. Back to your textbook on page 83	FO	
TA	So which of the material you read the most? Is it comics? Do you read comics?	TI	elicitation
SS	Yes	SR	Acknowledge

APPENDIX 13

Student Stimulated Recall Interview (S1 & S2)

[Partial Sample]

Researcher: Baik, saya ingin bertanya tentang pengalaman awak terlebih dahulu. Saya ingin tahu sama ada awak seronok atau tidak. Selain itu, saya juga ingin tahu bagaimana perasaan awak terhadap kaedah pengajaran ini dan sama ada kaedah ini dapat membantu memperbaiki kemahiran pertuturan Bahasa Inggeris awak. Awak bebas untuk bercakap dan menyatakan apa sahaja. Saya beri lebih kurang sepuluh minit. Awak boleh meluahkan perasaan, berkongsi pandangan, serta menjelaskan kebaikan aktiviti ini dalam membantu kemahiran pelajar. Silakan.

Student 1: Pada pendapat saya, kaedah ini membuatkan pelajar lebih berani untuk tampil ke hadapan dan mampu melatih diri untuk bercakap walaupun mereka tidak yakin bahawa mereka boleh bercakap. Kaedah ini juga menambah perbendaharaan kata mereka. Mereka akan berfikir tentang perkataan yang perlu digunakan dan akan mencari perkataan tersebut, sekali gus menambah perbendaharaan kata serta membantu mereka bercakap dengan lebih baik di hadapan orang lain.

Researcher: Baik. Amani pula, bagaimana perasaan awak?

Student 2: Seronok kerana dapat berdebat dengan rakan-rakan dalam kumpulan. Kami dapat berkongsi banyak perkara.

Researcher: Semasa perbincangan itu, ya? Semasa perbincangan untuk pembentangan, iaitu yang dibuat di atas kertas mahjong itu?

Student 2: Kemudian semasa pembentangan.

Researcher: Semasa pembentangan... (sambungan terputus). Terdapat sedikit masalah talian. Baik, sambung semula. Semasa pembentangan itu, apa yang awak rasa?

Student 2: Pelajar yang sebelum ini tidak berani bercakap pun menjadi lebih berani.

Researcher: Itulah yang saya ingin tahu. Bagaimana teknik itu boleh menyebabkan pelajar yang tidak boleh bercakap menjadi berani untuk bercakap? Dari sudut yang bagaimana? Adakah aktiviti itu memaksa atau memaksa mereka berfikir?

Student 2: Ya.

Researcher: Cuba terangkan.

Student 1: Mereka rasa tercabar kerana rakan-rakan lain boleh bercakap. Jadi mereka berfikir bahawa mereka juga perlu bercakap supaya setaraf dengan rakan-rakan lain.

Researcher: Baik, bagus. Maksudnya mereka tidak mahu ketinggalan, betul?

Student 1: Ya.

Researcher: Baik. Saya minta maaf, saya ingin bertanya tentang Bahasa Inggeris SPM. Tidak mengapa. Sebenarnya, matlamat perbualan ini adalah untuk mengetahui bagaimana aktiviti ini membantu pelajar yang sudah mahir dan juga pelajar yang berada pada tahap sederhana dalam Bahasa Inggeris. Seperti yang Tasnim 313atakana tadi, aktiviti ini memaksa kita untuk bercakap kerana rasa tercabar apabila orang lain bercakap dan kita tidak mahu ketinggalan. Betul? Dari segi perbendaharaan kata pula, ia membantu menambah kosa kata.

Student 1: Ya, betul.

Researcher: Bagaimana pula dengan tatabahasa, Amani? Bagaimana aktiviti ini membantu tatabahasa awak? Apa yang cikgu ajarkan tentang tatabahasa semasa bertutur?

Student 2: Perlu banyak berlatih bercakap atau menonton cerita dalam Bahasa Inggeris.

Researcher: Baik. Cuba ceritakan kenangan yang paling membuatkan awak berasa sangat seronok semasa sesi kelas tersebut. Amani dahulu. Mesti ada situasi atau babak tertentu yang paling menyeronokkan. Adakah awak terlibat dalam pembentangan pada hari itu?

Student 2: Ya, terlibat.

Researcher: Babak apa yang Tasnim rasa paling menyeronokkan?

Student 1: Bagi saya, semasa pembentangan kerana saya bukan seorang yang berani untuk bercakap. Oleh itu, saya rasa saya perlu bercakap kerana telah ditetapkan siapa yang perlu bercakap. Jadi saya perlu memberanikan diri untuk bercakap di hadapan rakan-rakan lain.

Researcher: Baik. Amani pula?

Student 2: Semasa perbincangan kerana setiap orang perlu memberi isi untuk ditulis di atas kertas. Jadi kami bekerjasama dan ia terasa menyeronokkan.

Researcher: Baik, bagus. Awak rasa di sekolah, adakah aktiviti seperti ini dijalankan? Tasnim, di SMKA ada buat aktiviti seperti ini?

[session continues]

APPENDIX 14

Post-Observation Interview (Teacher A)

[Partial Sample]

- Researcher: Ya, anak ikut, ya?
- Teacher A: Tidak, tadi dia tidak ikut, tetapi ayahnya hendak pergi mengajar di sekolah, jadi ditinggalkan di sini.
- Researcher: Hmm, ayahnya mengajar di mana?
- Teacher A: Di SABK.
- Researcher: SABK. Jadi, suami Syaerah memang guru dari sekolah kerajaan?
- Teacher A: Ya, dia mengambil DPLI.
- Researcher: Oh, DPLI. Jadi dia boleh memohon untuk menjadi guru, betul?
- Teacher A: Ya, hari itu dia masuk sebagai interim.
- Researcher: Dia mengajar subjek apa?
- Teacher A: Subjek Bahasa Arab.
- Researcher: Bahasa Inggeris? Oh, bahasa. Interim memang untuk bahasa, ya?
- Teacher A: (Tidak jelas) Ya.
- Researcher: Jadi sekarang dia masih dalam interim lagi?
- Teacher A: Tidak, sudah tetap.
- Researcher: Oh, sudah tetap. Alhamdulillah.
- Teacher A: Ya, dia masuk pada tahun 2017.
- Researcher: Ya, 2017.
- Teacher A: Semasa dia mengambil DPLI dahulu, saya banyak membuat tugasan.
- Researcher: Selepas ini, Syaerah pula akan sambung belajar.
- Teacher A: Ya, insya-Allah.
- Researcher: Sambung di mana?

Teacher A: Entah, mungkin di OUM, sebab ada kawan yang sedang belajar di OUM.

Researcher: Ya, setakat ini Cikgu Husna, Cikgu Izzatul, dan Cikgu Syuhada sedang sambung belajar. Baiklah. Saya telah melihat video-video tersebut. Secara keseluruhan, boleh dikatakan baik.

Teacher A: Ya Allah, dia mengganggu pula. Maaf, saya hendak beredar sekejap.

Researcher: Hendak ke mana? Dia hendak ikut agaknya.

Teacher A: Bukan, kakaknya yang mengusik dia.

Researcher: Baik. Dari segi prosedur, semuanya mengikut prosedur yang betul. Cuma agak kurang dari segi interaksi antara pelajar dengan pelajar.

Teacher A: Ya, mereka agak malu.

Researcher: Itulah yang ingin saya tanyakan. Selepas meneliti rakaman video yang saya rakam, saya akan mengkategorikan kelas kepada kurang interaktif, interaktif, atau sangat interaktif. Kesemua kelas berada dalam kategori sangat interaktif. Kelas ini, kelas C, sangat interaktif. Rakaman yang saya hantar kepada Syaerah memang sangat baik. Kelas-kelas lain juga berada dalam kategori interaktif, alhamdulillah. Namun, kelas Syaerah agak kurang. Boleh cikgu jelaskan kenapa? Contohnya, semasa pembentangan pelajar perempuan, saya perhatikan semua pelajar perempuan tampil ke hadapan, sedangkan sebenarnya dua atau tiga orang sudah memadai. Mengapa keadaan itu berlaku?

Teacher A: Sebab jika hanya seorang atau dua orang, mereka memang tidak akan bergerak.

Researcher: Oh, saya faham.

Teacher A: Ya.

Researcher: Jadi maksudnya mereka melakukannya secara berkumpulan?

Teacher A: Ya, secara berkumpulan, tetapi yang bercakap hanya seorang atau dua orang sahaja.

[session continues]

AUTHOR'S PROFILE



Nurulhayati Ilias is a lecturer in the Department of Education at Kolej Poly-Tech MARA (KPTM), Ipoh, with over two decades of teaching experience in both primary and tertiary education. Her teaching expertise covers a wide range of English language courses, including speaking, writing, grammar, and communication skills, particularly at the diploma level. She has been actively involved in curriculum development, mentoring, and academic supervision, reflecting her commitment to enhancing students' communicative competence and academic performance. Nurulhayati's research interests centre on language teacher cognition, classroom interaction, and the development of speaking skills, particularly within the context of Sekolah Agama Rakyat (SAR) in Malaysia. Her work frequently integrates the Initiation–Response–Feedback (IRF) framework to examine how teacher beliefs shape classroom practices and student participation. She has presented extensively at national and international conferences and has contributed to numerous journal articles, conference proceedings, and academic books. In recognition of her scholarly contributions, she has received multiple awards, including Best Paper Awards at international conferences and institutional recognition for research and publication excellence. She also serves as the Head of Research and Publication Unit at KPTM Ipoh, demonstrating strong leadership in academic research and innovation. Beyond academia, she is actively engaged in professional and community organisations, contributing to the advancement of language education and community development. Her dedication to teaching, research, and service continues to shape her contributions to the field of English language education in Malaysia.

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