



Teacher's strategies for managing talkative students at ELSI Padang

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Abstract

This study explores the strategies employed by ELSI teachers in managing talkative students within an English-only classroom environment. Talkative students can bring positive energy and active participation into classroom interaction, yet excessive talkativeness may disrupt lessons and limit quieter students' chances to speak. This research aimed to reveal how teachers transform such behaviour into meaningful learning opportunities that promote motivation and engagement. A qualitative case study design under a post-positivist paradigm was applied, involving classroom observations and interviews with an experienced teacher at ELSI Padang. The data were analysed thematically using Self-Determination Theory (SDT) as the analytical framework to understand how teachers fulfil students' psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The findings revealed six major strategies: balancing participation, motivating students through recognition and competition, fostering a supportive and enjoyable English-only environment, adapting teaching methods to learner diversity, maximizing peer influence, and maintaining positive perceptions toward talkative students. These strategies allowed the teacher to transform talkative behaviour into a motivational asset that enhanced students' participation and confidence in speaking English. The study provides valuable insights for teachers and practitioners in non-formal English education contexts on managing active classroom dynamics effectively.

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) remains a vital component of global education, equipping learners with the communicative competence needed to engage across cultures and professional contexts. In the twenty-first century, English is no longer viewed merely as a school subject but as a fundamental life skill for participation in international communication, academic exchange, and economic development (Ilyosovna, 2020; Khalilova, 2023). In Indonesia and many other non-English-speaking countries, English proficiency is considered a marker of educational and professional advancement. However, classroom instruction in formal education alone often proves insufficient to build the fluency and confidence required for real-world communication (Harmer, 2015; Murray, 2007). Consequently, non-formal institutions such as private English courses have become increasingly important in complementing formal schooling, providing spaces where learners can practice English intensively and meaningfully.

Non-formal English courses frequently adopt an English-only environment, where both teachers and learners use English as the sole medium of interaction. This immersive approach is believed to accelerate language acquisition by simulating authentic communicative situations and minimizing dependence on the first language (Auerbach, 1993; Wei, 2013; Yphantides, 2021). Research suggests that the more learners are exposed to meaningful English input, the more effectively they internalize linguistic forms and communicative strategies (Azzolini et al., 2022; Jones, 2007). Yet sustaining an English-only atmosphere demands not only the teacher's consistency but also learners' willingness to participate actively in English. Motivation, confidence, and emotional support thus become key components of success in such settings (Guay, 2021; Vasconcellos et al., 2020).

While English-only classrooms encourage authentic communication, teachers often face a major challenge: uneven student participation. Some students remain hesitant to speak because of fear of errors, while others—particularly talkative students—may dominate classroom interaction. Talkative learners usually exhibit enthusiasm and verbal confidence, which can enhance communicative practice if well managed. However, without guidance, their talkativeness can disrupt lesson flow and limit quieter students' participation. Kayi-Aydar (2014) observed that talkative behaviour, when balanced properly, promotes linguistic development and social engagement, but excessive dominance can create classroom imbalance. Similar findings were reported by Tulviste et al. (2011) and Sedova and Navratilova (2020), who highlighted that student participation patterns directly influence peer opportunities to learn. Therefore, teachers must develop strategic approaches that maintain inclusivity while recognizing the potential of talkative learners as active contributors to classroom dynamics.

In EFL classrooms—particularly in English-only contexts—teachers play a central role in shaping participation patterns and maintaining equitable communication. Effective classroom management involves not simply controlling behaviour but facilitating productive engagement (Anbalagan & Cyril, 2021; Keser & Yavuz, 2018). Chang (2024) emphasized that in immersive environments, teachers must demonstrate adaptive management, combining linguistic support with emotional awareness. Similarly, Yang (2024) stressed that autonomy-supportive teaching—

where learners' voices are acknowledged—builds trust and motivation, especially in language learning contexts that rely heavily on spontaneous communication. When teachers guide participation positively rather than suppressing talkativeness, learners tend to display higher engagement and persistence (Han & Graham, 2024; Vasconcellos et al., 2020).

From a motivational standpoint, the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) formulated by Deci and Ryan (2000, 2017) offers a powerful lens for understanding how teacher behavior affects learners' motivation and engagement. SDT identifies three basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—as central to sustaining intrinsic motivation. When teachers provide autonomy-supportive environments, learners feel ownership of their learning; when competence is reinforced through constructive feedback and achievable challenges, learners gain confidence; and when relatedness is nurtured through warm and respectful relationships, learners feel valued and secure (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Guay, 2021). Conversely, classrooms that neglect these needs risk producing students who are compliant but unmotivated. In English-only environments, where communication and self-expression are central, supporting these psychological needs becomes essential for maintaining motivation and participation.

Applying SDT to classroom management implies that managing talkative students is not about restricting expression but channeling energy constructively. Teachers must create conditions where autonomy, competence, and relatedness are all fulfilled through balanced participation. For example, autonomy can be supported by allowing students to contribute ideas freely while maintaining turn-taking norms; competence can be fostered through praise and feedback that recognize meaningful contributions; and relatedness can be built through humor, empathy, and collaboration (Harmer, 2015; Mercer & Littleton, 2007; Pranikoff, 2017). In this sense, SDT provides not only a theoretical foundation but also a practical framework for promoting positive classroom behavior and communication.

Previous research has explored various aspects of classroom management, participation, and motivation. Muhammad et al. (2021) noted that excessive talkativeness is one of the most common behavioral challenges teachers face, often requiring emotional self-regulation and reflective practice. Sedova and Navratilova (2020) demonstrated that structured participation—through clear turn-taking and guided questioning—helps balance contributions among vocal and quieter students. Studies by Becerra et al. (2020) and Handayani et al. (2020) emphasized that interactive and supportive classroom activities improve engagement and reduce anxiety, allowing both active and hesitant learners to participate more comfortably. Likewise, Mahmudah and Ardi (2020) found that humor and warmth foster student willingness to speak English, illustrating how teacher affect influences motivation.

Despite these valuable insights, research focusing specifically on talkative students in non-formal English-only environments remains scarce. Most existing studies have examined general classroom management (Anbalagan & Cyril, 2021; Keser & Yavuz, 2018) or motivation in formal school settings (Alturki & Aldraiweesh, 2024; Han & Graham, 2024), leaving a notable gap in understanding how teachers in language institutions handle verbal dominance. Moreover, while SDT has been widely applied in education to examine motivation (Guay, 2021; Vasconcellos et al., 2020),

little attention has been given to how its principles translate into practical classroom strategies for balancing participation. This gap is particularly relevant in Indonesian non-formal contexts, where communicative enthusiasm is valued, but social norms emphasize politeness and turn-taking (Triastuti, 2020). Investigating how teachers manage talkative students through the SDT lens therefore extends both motivational theory and classroom management practice.

ELSI Padang (English School Indonesia) provides a compelling site for such investigation. As a well-established non-formal English institution in West Sumatra, ELSI applies a strict English-only policy across levels, creating an authentic yet challenging environment for both teachers and students. Preliminary observations revealed that talkative students often energized discussions and stimulated peer responses, but sometimes discouraged quieter learners from speaking. Interestingly, some teachers were able to transform this talkativeness into productive engagement, maintaining both energy and inclusivity. This observation inspired the present study, which systematically explores how ELSI teachers manage talkative students in an English-only environment and how these practices align with SDT principles.

Drawing upon SDT, this study assumes that teacher strategies are most effective when they address learners' psychological needs. When talkative students receive autonomy-supportive feedback, competence-building challenges, and strong interpersonal connection, their verbal behavior can become a motivational resource rather than a disruption (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Han & Graham, 2024). By examining these dynamics in an authentic teaching context, the present research bridges theoretical understanding with practical pedagogy. It contributes to the literature in three major ways. First, it provides empirical evidence on teacher strategies for managing talkative learners within motivational theory. Second, it strengthens the application of SDT in language classroom management, extending its relevance beyond motivation studies. Third, it offers pedagogical implications for teachers in non-formal institutions, emphasizing reflective strategies that balance participation, promote inclusivity, and sustain learner engagement (Harmer, 2015; Mercer & Littleton, 2007; Vasconcellos et al., 2020).

In summary, this study investigates how ELSI teachers manage talkative students in English-only classrooms through the theoretical framework of Self-Determination Theory. By combining qualitative observation and interview data, the research aims to reveal how teacher strategies satisfy learners' psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness while maintaining balanced classroom interaction. The findings are expected to advance both theoretical insights in language education and practical guidance for teachers striving to transform talkative behaviour into an asset for communicative learning.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design under a post-positivist paradigm. The rationale for choosing this approach was to obtain an in-depth understanding of the strategies used by teachers in managing talkative students within a natural classroom setting. The post-positivist paradigm acknowledges that while an objective reality exists, researchers can only approximate it through systematic

observation and interpretation. This philosophical stance allowed the researcher to critically interpret teachers' behaviour and reflections while minimizing bias.

A case study design was chosen to provide a contextualized description of how one experienced ELSI teacher managed talkative students in an English-only environment. The case study approach enabled detailed observation of classroom events and teacher decision-making processes that would be difficult to capture using quantitative instruments. The participant was selected purposively based on specific criteria, including teaching experience, classroom management skill, and proven ability to handle talkative students effectively. The class observed consisted of six teenage learners enrolled in the intermediate program at ELSI Padang—two talkative and four quieter students—offering a balanced setting for data collection.

Data were gathered through non-participant classroom observation and semi-structured interviews, both chosen for their complementarity. Observation was conducted to capture authentic classroom interactions without researcher interference, while interviews provided the teacher's personal perspectives and reasoning behind the observed practices. This triangulation of methods enhanced the study's credibility and validity by comparing observed behaviours with the teacher's own interpretations.

The data were analysed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase procedure: familiarization, coding, theme generation, reviewing, defining, and reporting. Thematic analysis was chosen because it allows flexible identification of recurring patterns and meanings within qualitative data. To ensure reliability, the researcher conducted repeated data readings, cross-checked observation notes and interview transcripts, and verified consistency between data sources.

Finally, the interpretation of the findings was guided by Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017), which served as the analytical framework for understanding how the teacher's strategies supported students' autonomy, competence, and relatedness. This theoretical integration strengthened the study's internal coherence and analytical rigor, allowing readers to critically evaluate how the chosen methods addressed the research problem.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the study and discusses their significance in relation to the research question and the theoretical framework of Self-Determination Theory (SDT). The findings are drawn from classroom observations and teacher interviews conducted at ELSI Padang, focusing on how the teacher managed talkative students in an English-only environment. Six major strategies emerged from the thematic analysis, each representing the teacher's distinctive approach to balancing participation, maintaining motivation, and fostering a supportive classroom climate. The results are presented first to describe the patterns identified from the data, followed by the discussion that interprets these findings in light of SDT's key principles—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—and previous research on classroom management and student motivation.

Research Findings

The data collected from classroom observations and interviews revealed six major strategies used by the teacher in managing talkative students in an English-only

environment. These strategies emerged from a systematic thematic analysis and represent consistent behavioural and instructional patterns across classroom situations.

Finding 1: Balancing Participation

The first strategy identified was the teacher's effort to maintain balanced participation between talkative and quiet students. During classroom interactions, talkative students often responded quickly and dominated discussions. To prevent this imbalance, the teacher actively redistributed speaking turns and called on quieter students to share their opinions. He used prompts such as, "Let's hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet," or directly addressed a quieter learner's name to encourage contribution. Observations showed that this practice reduced dominance and increased inclusivity during group discussions. The teacher explained that this strategy helped all students feel equally valued and prevented talkative learners from monopolizing attention.

Finding 2: Motivating Students through Recognition and Competition

The second strategy involved using recognition and friendly competition to sustain students' motivation. The teacher often praised students who demonstrated effort or improvement in speaking English. Simple acknowledgments such as "Good try!" or "That's a great answer!" were frequently used to reinforce participation. In addition, the teacher occasionally incorporated short competitions such as vocabulary games or quick-response activities. Talkative students were particularly responsive to this approach, as it allowed them to channel their enthusiasm into structured classroom challenges. Observation notes indicated that this method successfully increased engagement while maintaining discipline.

Finding 3: Fostering a Supportive and Fun English-Only Environment

Another key strategy was creating a classroom atmosphere that supported continuous English use without pressure. The teacher consistently spoke in English, but his tone was friendly and humorous, which reduced students' anxiety about making mistakes. He encouraged students to use English naturally, even if their grammar was not perfect. This environment made talkative students feel confident to express themselves while motivating quieter students to participate. The use of humour, jokes, and casual expressions was observed to maintain students' comfort and attention throughout the lesson.

Finding 4: Flexible Teaching Adaptations

The teacher demonstrated flexibility in adapting his instructional methods according to students' personalities. For example, when managing talkative students, he frequently used pair work and small group discussions, which allowed them to express their energy productively. Conversely, when quieter students appeared hesitant, the teacher shifted to guided questioning or modelling techniques to help them contribute. These adaptive methods ensured that each student's communication style was accommodated, reducing the potential negative effects of talkativeness while fostering collaborative learning.

Finding 5: Maximizing Peer Influence

The teacher also leveraged peer influence to regulate classroom behaviour. Rather than directly reprimanding talkative students, he often used peer models to encourage balanced interaction. For instance, he praised students who listened attentively or supported their peers during group tasks, implicitly signalling the desired behaviour. He also assigned talkative students leadership roles during certain activities, such as facilitating a group discussion, to make their verbal strengths beneficial to the class. This approach turned potential distractions into leadership opportunities and helped build a cooperative classroom culture.

Finding 6: Maintaining Positive Perceptions toward Talkative Students

Finally, the teacher maintained a consistently positive perception of talkative students. He regarded their enthusiasm as a sign of interest and engagement rather than as disruptive behaviour. In the interview, he explained that talkative students could serve as indicators of class energy and understanding, as their responses often reflected how well others followed the lesson. This perception shaped the way he responded to talkative behaviour—with patience, humour, and constructive direction. By interpreting talkativeness positively, the teacher avoided confrontational discipline and promoted a more encouraging classroom atmosphere.

Summary of Findings

Across all six strategies, the results indicated that effective management of talkative students in an English-only environment requires a combination of behavioral regulation, motivational support, and emotional sensitivity. The teacher's actions showed a consistent focus on maintaining balance, ensuring inclusivity, and sustaining a positive climate for communication. Table 1 summarizes the key strategies identified from the data.

No.	Strategy	Description
1	Balancing participation	Equal distribution of speaking turns among students
2	Recognition and competition	Use of praise and games to maintain motivation
3	Supportive environment	Friendly tone and humor to sustain English use
4	Adapting methods	Adjusting techniques to student personalities
5	Peer influence	Using peer modeling and leadership roles

- 6 Positive perception Viewing talkative students as assets, not problems

Table 1. Summary of teacher strategies in managing talkative students

The findings collectively illustrate how the teacher managed talkative students not through suppression, but through constructive engagement. His strategies emphasized inclusion, emotional connection, and motivation, setting the foundation for a discussion on how these practices align with the principles of Self-Determination Theory.

Discussion

The findings show that managing talkative students in an English-only environment requires a blend of pedagogical, motivational, and interpersonal strategies rather than purely punitive control. Across the six identified strategies, the teacher consistently sought to preserve inclusive participation while harnessing talkative students' energy for learning. Interpreted through Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the strategies function to satisfy the psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which together strengthen intrinsic motivation and constructive classroom participation (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Balancing participation.

The teacher's deliberate redistribution of turns and solicitations of quieter students reflect effort to equalize participation opportunities. Rather than silencing vocal learners, he used prompts and directed questions to create space for others. This practice aligns with classroom approaches that structure turn-taking and attention distribution to support equitable engagement (Stivers et al., 2009; Pranikoff, 2017). From an SDT perspective, such balancing supports learners' autonomy by allowing voice while also protecting relatedness among peers: quieter students feel included and valued when explicitly invited to speak. The approach therefore reduces the dominance of talkative students without undermining their autonomy to express ideas.

Motivating students through recognition and friendly competition.

Frequent, specific praise and light competitive activities functioned as competence-supportive strategies. The teacher's "good job" feedback and short games provided immediate informational feedback that affirmed students' developing abilities — a classic source of competence in SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Prior research also shows that playful challenges and recognition reduce anxiety and increase willingness to communicate in EFL settings (Handayani et al., 2020; Putri & Sari, 2020). Importantly, these techniques channeled talkative students' verbal energy into task-focused interaction, thereby increasing overall class engagement while sustaining discipline.

Fostering a supportive and enjoyable English-only environment.

The teacher's warm tone, humor, and tolerant stance toward errors created a low-threat English-only context in which students felt safe to speak. Such an environment satisfies relatedness (students feel connected and cared for) and lowers affective

barriers to participation (Mercer & Littleton, 2007; Mahmudah & Ardi, 2020). The observed practice of validating attempts over penalizing mistakes aligns with research indicating that supportive teacher attitudes promote spontaneous use of L2 and reduce avoidance behaviours (Fredricks & Warriner, 2016). In short, the teacher's social style made the English-only requirement feel manageable rather than oppressive.

Flexible teaching adaptations.

Adaptive instruction — using pair/small-group work when energy needed channeling, then switching to guided questioning for quieter learners — illustrates pedagogical responsiveness. This flexibility enables differentiated opportunities that meet students where they are, a practice shown to enhance self-efficacy and engagement (Triastuti, 2020; Harmer, 2015). In SDT terms, adaptive methods provide both competence support (appropriate challenge, scaffolding) and autonomy support (meaningful choices regarding modes of participation). The teacher's willingness to shift formats prevented unilateral domination while maintaining activity momentum.

Maximizing peer influence.

Using talkative students as peer models or informal helpers reconfigured dominance into leadership and peer scaffolding. When talkative students corrected pronunciation or modeled responses, they fulfilled social roles that benefited both themselves and classmates. Peer-led dynamics like these align with studies showing that peer interaction can boost participation and learning outcomes when structured (Sedova & Navratilova, 2020; Becerra et al., 2020). Moreover, assigning constructive peer roles satisfies relatedness (social recognition) and competence (opportunity to demonstrate understanding), converting potential disruption into classroom resource.

Maintaining positive perceptions toward talkative students.

Crucially, the teacher's baseline attitude — viewing talkative students as indicators of engagement rather than merely as problems — shaped his practical responses. This positive interpretive stance is consistent with reflective classroom management models in which teacher beliefs guide intervention choices (Ardi et al., 2020; Warren & Center, 2006). By assuming good intent and valuing vocal contributions, the teacher avoided punitive interactions that could harm relatedness and autonomy. In short, perception became a subtle but powerful strategy: it reframed behaviour as opportunity and enabled strategies that supported psychological needs rather than undermining them.

Integration with Self-Determination Theory and prior literature.

Taken together, the six strategies demonstrate how autonomy (balanced voice and choice), competence (feedback, games, and tailored support), and relatedness (warmth, peer roles, and positive framing) collectively supported motivated participation in an English-only setting (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017). The present findings extend prior research by showing how SDT principles can be operationalized specifically for managing talkative learners in non-formal, English-only courses — a context less represented in literature that often focuses on formal schooling. The results corroborate and extend earlier studies that advocate for

structured talk moves, positive feedback, and peer-supported interaction as means to promote equitable participation (Pranikoff, 2017; Reeve & Jang, 2006; Sedova et al., 2019). They also provide practical nuance: teacher perception and small-format role assignments are low-cost, immediately implementable tactics that align with motivational theory.

Implications and limitations (brief).

Practically, the study suggests teachers should combine turn-structuring, competence-affirming feedback, adaptive pedagogy, and peer-leadership to transform talkativeness into a learning resource. Theoretically, it shows SDT's usefulness for interpreting classroom management as motivational design. Limitations include single-case focus and small class size, which constrain generalizability; future research should replicate these insights across multiple teachers and institutional contexts to strengthen external validity (Sedova & Sedlacek, 2023; Vongvilay et al., 2021).

In conclusion, managing talkative students effectively in an English-only environment is less about silencing and more about channeling — channeling verbal energy into structured, motivationally supportive practices that satisfy autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When teachers adopt such practices, talkative learners become catalysts for engagement rather than obstacles to it.

CONCLUSION

This study explored how a teacher at ELSI Padang managed talkative students in an English-only environment, using Self-Determination Theory (SDT) as the guiding framework. The research found that talkative behavior, while potentially disruptive, can be redirected into meaningful classroom participation when managed with strategies that support students' autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The teacher in this study used a combination of structured activities, positive feedback, turn-taking prompts, and relationship-building techniques to maintain engagement without silencing enthusiasm.

These findings affirm the importance of responsive classroom management in non-formal language education. Rather than viewing talkative students as obstacles, teachers can recognize their verbal energy as a motivational resource. By applying SDT-based strategies, educators can ensure that all students—talkative and quiet—have opportunities to participate and feel valued in class discussions. This has particular relevance in English-only classrooms, where communication is both the medium and the goal of learning.

Practically, the study suggests that teacher training in non-formal institutions should include psychological and pedagogical strategies for managing diverse student behaviors. Teachers should be encouraged to understand the motivations behind talkative behavior and to develop techniques that balance participation. These findings may also benefit curriculum developers and school administrators seeking to promote inclusive and engaging learning environments.

Future research should explore multiple classrooms or teachers to broaden understanding of how talkativeness is handled across different contexts. Studies could also investigate student perspectives to complement teacher insights. By continuing to examine teacher strategies through motivational theory, future work can further support learner-centered practices in EFL education.

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