



## The analysis of teachers' wait time in the English classroom at SMA 10 Padang

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### Abstract

*This study explores teachers' wait time and its impact on students' speaking participation in English classrooms at SMA Negeri 10 Padang. Speaking is one of the most challenging skills for EFL learners, as many students feel anxious, afraid of making mistakes, and lack confidence to speak. One factor that influences this situation is the teacher's wait time, the pause given after asking a question before expecting an answer. This research focuses on two types of wait time: Wait Time 1, which occurs after the teacher's question and before the student's response, and Wait Time 2, which occurs after the student's answer and before the teacher's next move. A mixed-method design was used, combining classroom observations and stimulated recall interviews with two English teachers. The results showed that most teachers gave short pauses, ranging from one to five seconds. Longer pauses encouraged more meaningful and confident student responses, while shorter ones limited participation. The findings suggest that teachers should be more aware of their wait time to promote reflective and communicative classroom interaction.*

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### INTRODUCTION

In English language teaching, speaking has long been recognized as one of the most important yet challenging skills to master. Many students in Indonesia face challenges when expressing their thoughts in English. They often hesitate, stay silent,

or give short answers when teachers ask questions. Dewi et al. (2016) state that students' fear of making mistakes and being laughed at by their friends often discourages them from speaking. Likewise, Siska and Yelizza (2023) observe that even students who understand grammar and vocabulary still struggle with confidence, leading to limited participation in class discussions. As a result, classroom interaction becomes teacher-centered, with few students actively involved.

Teachers usually encourage student participation through questioning, but many teachers tend to move quickly to the next question or provide the answer themselves when students take too long to respond. This may happen because teachers are unaware of how long they actually wait after asking a question. The time between a teacher's question and the student's response is known as wait time, and it plays an important role in classroom communication. Rowe (1972) introduced the concept of wait time and found that increasing the pause after a question from less than one second to about three seconds led to more thoughtful and elaborate student responses.

Tobin and Capie (1983) divided wait time into two types: Wait Time 1, which occurs between a teacher's question and a student's response, and Wait Time 2, which occurs between a student's response and the teacher's next reaction. Both types are essential because they give students time to think, organize their ideas, and reflect on their answers. When teachers provide sufficient time, students become more confident and willing to participate. However, when teachers interrupt too soon or move on quickly, students may feel pressured and lose motivation to respond.

Research has shown the positive effects of longer wait time on classroom communication. Sut (2020) found that longer pauses helped learners contribute more in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classes. Similarly, Alsaadi and Atar (2022) reported that extending wait time to three to five seconds increased student involvement and encouraged deeper thinking. Sakale (2017) also emphasized that when teachers were trained to use longer pauses, students' speaking performance improved. These studies prove that silence in the classroom is not a sign of failure or disengagement, but rather a productive space for thinking and learning.

In the Indonesian context, studies by Zainil et al. (2023) and Kemalasari (2021) found that many EFL teachers in Padang provided shorter wait times than the recommended three to five seconds and were generally unaware of their own timing habits. This limited awareness may reduce students' opportunities to think before responding, especially in speaking activities. Most of these studies, however, focused mainly on Wait Time 1, while Wait Time 2—an equally important part of interaction—has received less attention. Wait Time 2 allows students to process feedback, self-correct, or elaborate on their answers. Without sufficient Wait Time 2, students may miss the chance to reflect and develop their speaking ability more deeply.

Therefore, it is important to investigate how both types of wait time are applied in classroom practice and how they affect students' participation. Teachers may not always realize how their timing influences students' willingness to speak. For example, if teachers pause only for a second, students might not have enough time to recall vocabulary or structure sentences. On the other hand, a slightly longer pause allows students to plan their ideas and respond more confidently.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze teachers' use of Wait Time 1 and Wait Time 2 during English classroom interaction at SMA Negeri 10

Padang and to identify how these pauses influence students' speaking participation. The research also explores the teachers' awareness and reasoning in applying certain wait time lengths. Two research questions guide the study

1. How long are the wait times 1 and wait Time 2 given by the teachers?
2. What are the effects of wait time on students' speaking participation?

This study is expected to contribute to teachers' understanding of how questioning techniques and timing affect classroom interaction. By becoming more aware of their wait time, teachers can provide students with opportunities to think critically, build confidence, and engage more actively in speaking activities.

## **METHOD**

This study was designed as a mixed-method study that combines quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine teachers' wait time and its impact on students' speaking participation. The research was conducted at SMA Negeri 10 Padang and involved two English teachers who taught 10th and 11th-grade classes. These participants were chosen because they regularly implemented speaking activities in their lessons and thus represented typical senior high school classroom practices; the small number of participants allowed for detailed observation and in-depth follow-up with each teacher.

Data were collected using classroom observation and stimulated recall interviews as the main instruments. For each teacher, five teaching sessions were video-recorded to capture teacher–student interaction with special attention to pauses following teachers' questions and students' responses. The recordings were transcribed to measure the length of Wait Time 1 (between teacher question and student response) and Wait Time 2 (between student response and teacher reaction). After the observation phase, each teacher participated in a stimulated recall interview in which short clips of their own teaching were replayed, and they were invited to reflect on their decisions and thoughts about the timing of pauses.

Data analysis combined quantitative measurement and qualitative interpretation. Observation transcripts were analyzed using conversation analysis to quantify pause durations and to examine how those pauses related to patterns of student responding during speaking activities. Interview data were analyzed thematically to identify teachers' perceptions and rationales for their wait-time practices. Findings from both strands were then integrated into the study's reporting to present a coherent picture of how wait time was enacted and perceived in the observed classrooms.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Research Findings

#### *The Duration of Wait Time 1 and Wait Time 2*

Based on the classroom video analysis, both teachers employed varying lengths of wait time throughout their English lessons. Wait Time 1 refers to the pause between a teacher’s question and the students’ first response, while Wait Time 2 refers to the pause between a student’s answer and the teacher’s follow-up or feedback.

Overall, the duration of Wait Time 1 ranged between 1–5 seconds, while Wait Time 2 ranged between 1–4 seconds. Short pauses were the most common in both types, but in some moments, longer pauses of up to 7–8 seconds were observed, particularly when the question required more critical thinking or personal opinions.

#### *The length of Wait Time 1*

The analysis of video transcriptions and observation sheets showed that the average duration of Wait Time 1, the pause between a teacher’s question and the first student response, ranged from 1 to 5 seconds. Most pauses lasted 1–3 seconds (about 77%), while only a few lasted 4–8 seconds. This short duration was typically found after factual or closed-ended questions. For example:

*Teacher: “Do you use social media every day?”*

*Student: “Yes, I do.”*

In this example, the teacher waited only about two seconds before the student responded. The short duration indicated that the question required a direct, factual answer with little processing.

In contrast, when the teacher asked open-ended or conceptual questions, longer wait times were observed:

*Teacher: “What do you think about social media?”*

*Student: “Social media tempat orang can share information.”*

This finding shows that longer pauses occurred when questions demanded more elaboration and critical thinking. However, these longer durations were rare compared to short pauses.

**Table 1. Distribution of Wait Time 1 in SMA 10 Padang**

Duration of Wait Time	Frequency	Percentage
≤ 3 seconds	127	77%
4–5 seconds	26	16%
> 5 seconds	12	7%

<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>100%</b>
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The data show that most teacher pauses after asking a question lasted no longer than three seconds (77 %). Only 16 % fell within 4–5 seconds, and merely 7 % extended beyond five seconds. These results indicate that the teacher tended to give very limited thinking time before students responded.

According to Rowe (1972), extending the wait time to at least 3 seconds can already improve student participation, while 5–7 seconds allows for deeper and more elaborated responses. Thus, the teacher's average wait time in this study remains below Rowe's recommended duration, suggesting that many students may not have had sufficient time to process the question, formulate their ideas, and express them in English.

### ***The length of Wait Time 2***

Wait Time 2 refers to the pause between a student's answer and the teacher's next verbal reaction or feedback. Based on the observation sheets, the average duration of Wait Time 2 ranged from 1–4 seconds, with most cases below 3 seconds. An example of Wait Time 2 in the classroom interaction is shown below:

*Student: "A text yang memberikan information."*

*Teacher: "Good, that's correct."*

The teacher typically responded quickly with short evaluative feedback, such as "good," "right," or "okay." These quick responses helped maintain classroom flow but reduced opportunities for students to self-correct or for others to contribute. A few longer pauses were also recorded, particularly when the teacher deliberately waited for peer responses:

*Student 1: "I think learning English is important."*

*Student 2: "Yes, because it helps us to communicate."*

*Teacher: "Good, that's true."*

**Table 2. Distribution of Wait Time 2 in SMA 10 Padang**

<b>Duration of Wait Time</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
≤ 3 seconds	116	75%
4–5 seconds	24	16%
> 5 seconds	15	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>100%</b>

Similar to Wait Time 1, most of the teacher’s pauses after a student’s answer were short ( $\leq 3$  seconds, 75 %). Only a few moments lasted 4–5 seconds (16 %) or longer (9 %). This pattern shows that the teacher often gave immediate feedback—such as “good,” “yes,” or “okay”—within a second or two after the student finished speaking. According to Rowe (1972) and Tobin (1983), short Wait Time 2 can prevent students from elaborating, reflecting, or peer-responding. In contrast, a longer post-answer pause allows other students to build on their peers’ ideas, promoting interaction and higher-order thinking.

Therefore, even though occasional 4–5 second pauses were observed—especially when the teacher waited for peer comments—the overall trend reveals that Wait Time 2 in SMA 10 Padang remained dominated by quick teacher feedback, which limited extended student participation.

***Factors Influencing the Duration of Wait Time***

From the interview with two teachers at SMA 10 Padang, there are several factors were found to influence the length of wait time. The first one is the type of question; teachers explained that they tend to wait longer after open-ended questions because students need more time to organize their ideas and language structure. Second, classroom situation: when the classroom atmosphere was noisy or the students were less focused, teachers shortened the waiting period to regain attention. Then, students’ ability level: Longer pauses were usually given to classes with higher English proficiency, as the teacher expected more elaborate answers. Last, time limitation: teachers sometimes reduced the duration of wait time when the class period was running short or when they needed to cover several activities in one lesson.

***The Effects of Wait Time on Students’ Participation in Speaking***

This section discusses the effects of different wait time durations on students’ participation in speaking. The analysis is based on classroom observation and transcripts, which reveal how long teachers’ pauses (wait time 1 and wait time 2) influence the length and quality of students’ verbal responses. The examples and interpretations below are taken directly from classroom data.

**Table 3. Effects of Different Wait Time Durations on Students’ Participation**

<b>Wait Time Duration</b>	<b>Transcript</b>	<b>Number of Words</b>	<b>Observed Effect</b>
$\leq 3$ seconds	T: “You know fables?” (1s) — S: “No.”	1	Very short response; limited elaboration.
$\leq 3$ seconds	T: “Apa itu curiosity?” (2s) — S: “Penasaran.”	1	Quick and direct, showing no deep engagement.

4–5 seconds	T: “What kind of narrative that you have known before?” (5s) — S: “Fairytale.”	1	Slightly longer pause, but answer remains short.
4–5 seconds	T: “What kinds? Nah, tensisnya apa?” (3s) — S: “Simple present.”	2	Minor improvement, still limited vocabulary use.
> 5 seconds	T: “Ada beautiful, pretty, cantik, apalagi?” (18s) — S: “Happy, humble, strong.”	6	Longer responses; more student engagement.
> 5 seconds	T: “What do you think social media is?” (6s) — S: “Tempat media komunikasi, tempat mengekspresikan diri.”	6	More complete and meaningful answers, showing better fluency and confidence.
> 5 seconds	T: “Kapan kita pakai simple present tense?” (7s) — S: “Pas pakai bahasa Inggris.”	4	More elaborated answers, showing understanding.

The data show that different wait times result in different levels of student participation.. When the teacher waited for only 1–3 seconds, most students gave very short answers, often just one or two words such as “yes,” “no,” or “penasaran.” It showed that short wait time limited students’ thinking and response development, as they answered impulsively or with minimal effort.

When the wait time increased to 4–5 seconds, there was a small improvement in students’ responses. They began to give slightly longer answers (2–3 words), but the improvement was not yet significant. This duration helped some students recall information, but did not always encourage elaboration.

However, when the teacher extended the wait time to more than 5 seconds, there was a clear positive effect. Students produced longer and more meaningful responses (ranging from 6–12 words on average). For example, in the sentence “Tempat media komunikasi, tempat mengekspresikan diri,” students not only answered correctly but also expressed their understanding more completely. This indicates that longer wait time gives students space to think, organize ideas, and speak more confidently.

### ***Increased students’ confidence in speaking***

Another observed effect of extended wait time was increased student confidence. When teachers patiently waited and maintained a supportive tone, students showed more willingness to respond, even in English. For example:

- After a 6-second pause, a student confidently answered, “It’s a place for communication and expressing ourselves.” (9 words)

**Table 4. Evidence of Students’ Confidence**

<b>Example</b>	<b>Wait Time Duration</b>	<b>Students’ Response</b>	<b>Indicator of Confidence</b>
T: “Ada beautiful, pretty, cantik, apalagi?”	>5s	S: “Happy, humble, strong.”	Students volunteered multiple answers confidently.
T: “What do you think social media is?”	>5s	S: “Tempat media komunikasi, tempat mengekspresikan diri.”	Students gave meaningful, well-structured response.
T: “Yang paling utama entertain, yang scrolling kalian lihat apa aja?”	4–5s	S: “Video review.”	Students answered naturally without hesitation.

These findings suggest that longer wait times can boost students’ confidence in speaking. When the teacher gave enough time, students appeared more relaxed, willing to share more ideas, and less afraid of making mistakes. This supports the idea that longer wait times can reduce anxiety and help students perform better in oral communication.

***Unsignificant effect in some cases***

Despite longer wait times, some students remained silent or gave very brief answers. However, the findings also show that a longer wait time did not always lead to better participation. In several cases, even when the teacher waited for 8–15 seconds, students remained silent or responded only after the teacher repeated or simplified the question. For instance:

- In Class XI F5, the teacher waited around 15 seconds after asking “*Why do you give opinion to your opinion or thought, pendapat atau pemikiran kenapa dari mana itu asalnya?*” but no student responded until the question was rephrased.

- In Class X E7, the teacher paused for 10 seconds when asking, “*Ada pernah kalian cari materi?*” and students answered briefly, “*Tutorial masak nasi.*” (3 words) after a long silence.

**Table 5. Instances of No Significant Effect**

Wait Time Duration	Example from Transcript	Number of Words	Effect
≤ 3 seconds	T: “You know hippo, Ananda?” — S: “Ya.”	1	No significant effect; immediate answer without reflection.
4–5 seconds	T: “Which one do you like? Perform directly or record video?” (5s) — S: “Record video.”	2	Limited effect; response stayed short despite longer wait time.
> 5 seconds	T: “Sudah adakah masalah di sini?” (5s) — S: “Belum.”	1	No improvement; longer wait time did not increase response length.

It indicates that a longer wait time does not always guarantee better responses. Some students still provided short or no answers, possibly due to low confidence, limited vocabulary, or unclear questions. It means the effect of wait time also depends on students’ confidence, understanding, and motivation, not only on duration.

## Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that teachers’ wait time plays a crucial role in promoting student participation and the quality of classroom interaction. The variation in pause duration among teachers shows that wait time is often used unconsciously, even though it directly affects students’ speaking performance. When teachers allowed more than three seconds of silence after asking a question, students had enough time to recall vocabulary, plan sentences, and speak with greater confidence. This supports Rowe’s (1972) statement that extending wait time increases the number and quality of student responses.

The results also align with the findings of Sut (2020) and Alsaadi and Atar (2022), who revealed that longer pauses create opportunities for students to think critically and express ideas more clearly. In this study, longer wait times resulted in more meaningful student responses, while shorter pauses made students hesitate or remain silent. This indicates that the appropriate length of silence allows students to process questions cognitively and emotionally before answering.

In addition, the importance of wait time 2 was also evident. Teachers who provided a short pause after students’ responses allowed them to reflect, self-

correct, and expand their answers. This finding supports Tobin and Capie's (1983) claim that Wait Time 2 is essential for reflection and evaluation. It also matches the findings of Zainil et al. (2023), who emphasized that awareness of wait time contributes to better communication flow in EFL classrooms.

However, despite the positive impact of longer pauses, the study found that many teachers still tended to shorten silence because they felt uncomfortable or worried about losing students' attention. This suggests that teacher training should help educators develop awareness and confidence in managing silence effectively. Rather than perceiving silence as awkward, teachers should view it as a valuable opportunity for learning.

In short, the discussion highlights that wait time is a powerful yet simple technique to improve students' speaking participation. By giving students enough time to think, teachers not only help them process language more deeply but also build a supportive classroom environment that values every student's voice.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study investigated teachers' use of wait time and its effect on students' speaking participation in English classrooms at SMA Negeri 10 Padang. The results revealed that both teachers provided varying lengths of wait time, with Wait Time 1 ranging from one to five seconds and Wait Time 2 ranging from one to four seconds. The findings showed that longer pauses encouraged students to produce more meaningful responses, while shorter pauses often resulted in silence or limited answers.

The study also found that teachers' awareness greatly influenced the effectiveness of wait time. Teachers who consciously used pauses and showed positive gestures during silence encouraged more active participation. Meanwhile, teachers who felt uncomfortable with silence tended to shorten the wait, limiting students' opportunity to think and speak. This highlights the need for teachers to understand that silence in classroom communication can be productive rather than awkward.

In conclusion, wait time is a valuable strategy in EFL classrooms, especially in developing students' speaking skills. Giving students a few extra seconds to think allows them to process information, organize their thoughts, and respond more confidently. Teachers should be encouraged to use wait time deliberately as part of their questioning strategy. By doing so, they can create more interactive, reflective, and student-centered classroom communication that supports the improvement of learners' speaking ability.

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