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Inclusive Strategies in Teaching Speaking: A Narrative Inquiry from an Islamic School in Southern Thailand

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Abstract

This study explores how classroom participation is encouraged in an English-speaking class at a dual-curriculum Islamic secondary school in a Muslim-minority area of Southern Thailand. Employing a narrative inquiry design, the research draws on classroom observations, in-depth interviews, and reflective conversations with a teacher to examine how pedagogical choices shape student engagement. The findings show that participation is promoted through three interconnected dimensions: creating psychological safety, using effort-based assessment, and teaching grammar through culturally relevant references. Rather than grouping students by proficiency level, the teacher makes interaction more accessible by normalizing mistakes, incorporating encouragement into grading practices, and connecting language teaching to students' moral and religious values. However, these strategies are continually adapted to constraints such as large class sizes, diverse proficiency levels, limited instructional time, and fluctuating student motivation. The study highlights that engagement in multilingual, faith-based environments develops through flexible, relational, and context-aware teaching practices. It contributes to discussions on classroom participation and culturally responsive pedagogy in English language education and offers insights for educators in similar minority and religious school settings.

1. Introduction

Inclusive education has become an important priority in many Asian countries, including Indonesia and Thailand. Both countries have introduced legal frameworks to ensure that all students have equal access to education. In Indonesia, this commitment is reflected in the 2003 National Education System Law and the 2009 Ministry of Education Regulation on inclusive schooling. In Thailand, similar commitments appear in the 1999 National Education Act and the 2008 Persons with Disabilities Education Act (UNESCO, 2020). These policies show that inclusion is no longer optional. It is now a key educational responsibility. As Ainscow (2020) explains, inclusive education requires schools and teachers to adjust learning environments to students' needs, rather than expecting students to fit into fixed systems.

In multilingual classrooms, inclusion also involves language participation. Students may differ in linguistic background, learning pace, and confidence when using the target language. Because of this, teachers need to create opportunities for all learners to participate meaningfully (Florian, 2014; Kefallinou et al., 2020). In English Language Teaching (ELT), inclusive practice is not only about supporting students with disabilities. It also includes helping learners who feel anxious, hesitate to speak, or avoid participation because they are afraid of making mistakes (Mendoza & Heymann, 2024).

This issue becomes more visible in Southern Thailand, where the classroom is shaped by linguistic, ethnic, and religious diversity. Although Muslims make up only a small minority in Thailand overall, they are the majority in the Deep South provinces. In Yala, for example, around 81.2% of the population is Muslim, while about 18.7% is Buddhist. Many people in this region are Ethnic Malays who speak Pattani Malay as their first language. As a result, schools such as Thamavitya Mulniti School (TVM) must respond not only to differences in learning needs, but also to differences in language background. Most students use Pattani Malay and Thai in daily life. However, some students, especially those identified as *Muwallad*, return from Arab countries with stronger Arabic and English, but limited Thai. This multilingual situation makes inclusive speaking instruction more complex, because teachers must help students communicate across different levels of proficiency and language experience.

In Islamic schools, inclusive teaching is also closely connected to religious and cultural values. Teachers often work as cultural mediators who balance faith-based values with contemporary teaching practices (Fitria, 2023). These schools usually apply a dual curriculum, combining religious studies with national academic subjects. On the one hand, this creates opportunities for culturally responsive teaching, where English can be presented as a tool for wider communication without threatening students' identities (Nafiah, 2020; Zalisman, 2020). On the other hand, the dual curriculum may reduce time for communicative practice. In some cases, limited access to technology also restricts classroom

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interaction (Astuti et al., 2024; Putri et al., 2025). Because of these conditions, teachers often need to rely on simple, context-sensitive strategies to keep students engaged.

Among the four language skills, speaking presents particular challenges in inclusive classrooms. Speaking requires not only language knowledge, but also confidence and willingness to participate. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is often seen as supportive of inclusion because it emphasizes meaningful interaction rather than isolated grammar practice (Spada, 2007; Sato & Oyanedel, 2019). From a sociocultural perspective, speaking development is supported through scaffolding provided by teachers and peers (Awadelkarim, 2021). At the same time, students' self-efficacy and motivation strongly influence whether they are willing to speak in class (Liu et al., 2025; Lee & Chen Hsieh, 2019).

In practice, however, many teachers who claim to use communicative approaches still rely heavily on grammar-focused instruction (Chero, 2022). This tension can discourage learners, especially those who already feel anxious about speaking. In inclusive classrooms, teachers therefore need to support communication while also reducing the fear of making mistakes.

Preliminary observations at TVM show that one teacher, Teacher W, uses several strategies to support students' participation in speaking activities. She provides conceptual scaffolding by linking English expressions to familiar Islamic concepts. For instance, she compares "should" to *Sunnah* and "must" to *Wajib* to help students understand modal meaning through a familiar cultural frame. She also uses bonus points to reward students who are willing to participate, even when their grammar is not yet accurate. These practices suggest an effort to build confidence as well as linguistic understanding.

However, previous studies on English teaching in Islamic schools have mostly focused on broader issues, such as institutional priorities, curriculum integration, and the role of Islamic values in education (Nafiah, 2020; Fitria, 2023; Astuti et al., 2024). Less attention has been given to micro-level classroom interaction, especially in speaking lessons within multilingual faith-based settings. Research has also rarely examined how inclusive teaching is practiced in Islamic schools located in minority Muslim contexts such as Southern Thailand. This study provides micro-level narrative insight into inclusive speaking pedagogy in a multilingual Islamic school.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the inclusive strategies used by an English teacher and the challenges she faces in facilitating speaking instruction at Thamavitya Mulniti School. This research is guided by the following questions:

1. What strategies does the teacher use to teach speaking in an inclusive classroom?
2. What challenges does the teacher encounter when implementing these inclusive practices?

2. Method

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative narrative inquiry to examine an English teacher's lived experience in implementing inclusive strategies during speaking instruction. Narrative inquiry was chosen because it allows the researcher to understand how teachers interpret classroom events, make sense of their practice, and reflect on challenges across time and situations (Clandinin, 2022). The study did not aim to measure instructional effectiveness. Instead, it focused on how inclusive speaking practices were enacted and negotiated in a specific school context.

Setting and Participant

The study was conducted at Thamavitya Mulniti School (TVM), a private Islamic secondary school in Yala, Southern Thailand. The school implements a dual curriculum that combines Islamic studies with national academic subjects, including English. The participant was one female English teacher, referred to as Teacher W to protect her identity. She had eight years of teaching experience in this Islamic school context. She held a degree in Business English and later moved into classroom teaching. She was selected because she regularly taught speaking in mixed-ability classes and was identified during preliminary observations as using strategies intended to widen student participation.

Data Collection

Data were collected from three sources to strengthen the narrative account and allow triangulation across materials. First, a semi-structured narrative interview was conducted face-to-face. The interview explored the teacher's professional background, her understanding of inclusive teaching, and her experiences in facilitating speaking participation. The questions encouraged storytelling and reflection, while follow-up prompts were used to clarify particular episodes, rationales, and perceived constraints.

Second, participant observation was conducted over several weeks during the teaching period, excluding the examination week. The observations were carried out in selected sessions from three speaking classes taught by Teacher W: 2/13, 3/3, and 3/14. These classes represented a Grade 8 girls' class, a Grade 9 boys' class, and a Grade 9 girls' class. They were chosen because they formed the main instructional contexts in which the researcher was able to observe Teacher W's speaking lessons. During the observed sessions, the researcher joined the classroom as a co-teacher or intern teacher.

The observations focused on teacher–student interaction, participation patterns, and classroom strategies used to reduce speaking anxiety and support inclusion. Field notes were written as reflective teaching notes and supported by an observation checklist to maintain consistency across sessions. Limited video recordings were used only to support recall during note writing and interview follow-up. They were not treated as primary data for formal video analysis.

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Third, document analysis was conducted on relevant instructional materials, including lesson plans and student score sheets. These documents were reviewed to examine how speaking activities were organized and how participation-based rewards or assessment considerations were applied in classroom practice.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were read repeatedly to build familiarity with the dataset and identify meaningful segments related to inclusive speaking strategies and classroom challenges. Initial coding was carried out across the full dataset, focusing on recurring ideas such as encouragement, reward systems, anxiety reduction, scaffolding, and constraints related to time, class size, and differences in student proficiency.

The codes were then compared and grouped into broader themes that reflected patterns in the teacher's experience and decision-making. Credibility was strengthened through triangulation by comparing findings across interview data, observation notes, and documentary evidence (Nowell et al., 2017). An audit trail was also maintained through dated field notes, coding memos, and analytic summaries to document how interpretations developed throughout the study.

3. Result

This section presents the findings derived from thematic analysis of the semi-structured narrative interview, participant observation, and document analysis. Following Braun & Clarke's (2021) thematic analysis procedures, the dataset was coded inductively and then organized into patterns that represented how inclusive speaking instruction was enacted in everyday classroom practice. In line with narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2022), inclusion is treated here as a situated set of pedagogical decisions rather than a fixed checklist. Inclusive pedagogy, as Florian & Beaton (2018) argue, concerns extending learning opportunities to all learners without publicly marking some as different or deficient.

Across the three data sources, three strategy themes emerged alongside one theme capturing contextual constraints. Collectively, they show that inclusion in this classroom is embedded in the teacher's interactional stance, assessment structure, and cultural framing, while remaining continuously negotiated amid structural limitations.

Table 1. Final Thematic Structure of Inclusive Speaking Strategies and Data Triangulation

No	Theme	Core Focus	Interview Evidence	Observation Evidence	Document Evidence
1	Constructing Psychological Safety in Speaking	Creating a low-anxiety environment where students are not compared and errors are tolerated.	*"I don't care about your grammar. I want you to speak." / "They are afraid that I will compare them with the smart ones."*	Item 5 & 7: Encourages shy students and tolerates errors; Item 11: Low-anxiety atmosphere observed	Bonus column in score sheet supports participation regardless of accuracy
2	Structuring Participation as Inclusive Assessment	Embedding inclusion into grading through a consistent 5-point bonus system.	*"If I didn't give any point, they don't want to do it." / "My bonus is no limit." / "I will still give you 5 points, no matter."*	Item 4 & 8: Bonus system used to invite participation ; participation visibly increases.	"Bonus" and "Project Speech" columns; bonus applied consistently across students.
3	Embedding Moral and Cultural Values in Speaking Practice	Explaining grammar and regulating classroom interaction through familiar Islamic values.	*"Should is like sunnah... Must is like wajib... Can't is like haram."*	Grammar combined with speaking tasks (Item 3); respectful listening norms observed.	Lesson plan integrates modal verbs into interactive speaking task; scaffolding hints provided.
4	Negotiating Structural and Contextual Constraints in Inclusive Practice	Managing inclusion amid large classes, limited time, uneven proficiency,	*"Their level is very different." / "The classroom is too small." / "The time is*	Item 9: Teacher adjusted methods when students were tired or	Lesson plan includes scaffolding for mixed ability learners; Score sheet

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		motivation, and resource constraints.	*pretty short."*	passive; Item 1: Strategic code-switching observed.	shows effort rewarded despite lower formal scores.

Constructing Psychological Safety in Speaking

The first and most prominent theme concerns the construction of psychological safety in speaking activities. Across the interview, observation notes, and document analysis, Teacher W consistently prioritized reducing students' fear of speaking rather than pushing immediate grammatical accuracy. In this classroom, inclusion was enacted by creating conditions in which students felt safe to participate.

During the interview, Teacher W explained that many students hesitated to speak because they feared being compared with more capable classmates. As she stated,

"They are afraid that I will compare them with the smart ones."

This suggests that the barrier to participation was not only limited proficiency, but also anxiety about judgment and public evaluation. To respond to this, she reframed speaking activities around courage and effort rather than correctness. She stated,

"I don't care about your grammar. I want you to speak. That's it."

This reflects a clear pedagogical stance: students were encouraged to speak first, while accuracy was treated as something that could develop gradually.

Observation data support this account. Checklist items 5 and 7 showed that shy or hesitant students were verbally encouraged and that errors were addressed supportively. Rather than interrupting students while they were speaking, Teacher W usually allowed them to finish before offering light correction or guidance. Item 11 also indicated that the classroom atmosphere remained low-anxiety and supportive. Students were willing to respond, laugh during activities, and attempt answers even when they were unsure. These patterns show that psychological safety was not only expressed in the interview, but also visible in everyday classroom interaction.

Document evidence further strengthens this finding. The score sheet included a dedicated "Bonus" column, and most students received points in this category. This suggests that encouragement was not given occasionally or selectively, but was embedded in the classroom routine. Students were not only told that effort mattered; they also saw that effort was formally recognized.

This pattern is consistent with inclusive pedagogy, which emphasizes widening participation without marking some learners as deficient (Florian & Beaton, 2018). It also aligns with studies showing that willingness to speak is shaped by emotional safety, confidence, and classroom climate, not only by linguistic ability (MacIntyre et al., 1998; Lee, 2022). In this case, tolerance for imperfect grammar helped reduce fear and created more room for students to take risks in speaking.

Taken together, this theme shows that psychological safety served as the starting point of inclusive speaking instruction in this classroom. By reducing fear of comparison and normalizing imperfect language use, Teacher W opened space for wider student participation.

Structuring Participation as Inclusive Assessment

While psychological safety forms the emotional foundation of inclusion in this classroom, the data show that inclusion is not left at the level of encouragement alone. It is embedded structurally in the assessment system. This theme shows how speaking participation is deliberately integrated into grading practices through a consistent and visible bonus-point system.

In the interview, Teacher W clearly positioned bonus points as central to her speaking instruction. She explained that many students would not participate without a concrete incentive:

> *"If I didn't give any point, they don't want to do it."*

This statement suggests that speaking participation is not automatic for many learners in this setting. It needs deliberate support through tangible reinforcement. Similar patterns are reported in Islamic-school contexts where communicative English receives less attention than intensive religious subjects, and students' speaking development often depends on structured support that sustains engagement (Syahmi et al., 2025).

Teacher W further described how the bonus mechanism worked in practice and how it remained open to repeated attempts:

> *"I give you 5 points to stand up and speak about this topic."*
> *"I will still give you 5 points, no matter."*
> *"My bonus is no limit."*
> *"Who got the highest bonus from me, I will give you a gift or some reward."*

These remarks show that the bonus system was routine, predictable, and intentionally open-ended. The phrase "no limit" is particularly important because it frames participation as continuously available rather than scarce. In this way, students who need repeated attempts still have access to recognition.

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Observation evidence confirms that this system was implemented consistently during classroom activities. Checklist items 4 and 8 documented that the teacher invited both volunteers and non-volunteers to speak and used the five-point bonus to encourage hesitant students. Participation increased noticeably once the bonus points were announced. Students who had previously avoided eye contact began raising their hands, even when their responses were brief or grammatically incomplete. This indicates that assessment did not simply record participation after it happened, but actively shaped participation as it unfolded.

Document analysis further strengthens this finding. The student score sheet included a clearly labeled "Bonus" column and a "Project Speech" category, indicating that speaking participation was formally recorded rather than treated as informal encouragement. Almost all students showed bonus points in the documentation, suggesting that the opportunity was applied broadly across the class rather than reserved for high-performing students. In many classrooms, participation is encouraged verbally but remains invisible in formal grading. Here, participation became measurable and cumulative, shifting speaking from optional behavior to recognized academic effort. This pattern is consistent with participation-based grading approaches in EFL contexts, where explicit participation marks can increase learners' oral involvement and make classroom speaking more accountable within assessment routines (DeCaro et al., 2022).

From an interpretive perspective, the bonus structure functions as formative reinforcement. It rewards attempts during the learning process, not only polished performance, which is consistent with formative assessment principles that emphasize support during learning rather than only outcome measurement (Zhang et al., 2024). In this classroom, the connection between participation and evaluation is explicit. Bravery in speaking produces visible points that influence grades. This is also supported by research showing that students' participation is shaped by classroom conditions and participation structures, not only by individual disposition (Sulis, 2022; Mammadova, 2025).

At the same time, the bonus system broadened the criteria for academic success. The score sheet showed that some students who received lower marks in midterm grammar assessments still accumulated substantial bonus scores. This suggests that effort and engagement were valued alongside accuracy. Such a grading structure complicates purely merit-based notions of achievement, but it can also be understood as an inclusive move that expands the pathways through which students can succeed. This is consistent with Florian & Beaton's (2018) argument that inclusive pedagogy extends learning opportunities without labeling certain students as deficient. Rather than creating a separate remediation track for weaker speakers, Teacher W expanded the definition of achievement by legitimizing participation as academic value.

Importantly, the interview data also suggest that the bonus system was not purely transactional. It carried emotional meaning linked to the fear of comparison described in Theme 1. By guaranteeing the same five points regardless of fluency, Teacher W reduced performance hierarchy and communicated that speaking is about courage rather than competition. This message was also supported by task design. For example, in the modal verb's activity ("What Are the Rules?"), students worked in groups to produce clues and guess rules, and the planned scaffolding and participation rewards aligned the speaking task with the assessment structure.

This practice can also be read as a pragmatic response to structural constraints. Large class sizes, sometimes reaching forty or more students, limited opportunities for individualized feedback. Under such conditions, embedding inclusion into assessment offered a workable classroom-level strategy. Rather than correcting every grammatical error in real time, the teacher prioritized increasing the number of students willing to speak. Reviews of inclusive education similarly note that limited time, capacity, and resources often constrain individualized support in everyday classrooms (Somad & Haryanto, 2024; Malizal & Rahman, 2024).

The bonus system also reflects the idea that speaking development requires frequent opportunities for use. Learners are more likely to develop confidence and oral engagement when classroom interaction creates repeated opportunities to speak (Liu et al., 2025; Sulis, 2022). By linking bonus points to repeated speaking attempts, Teacher W created a cycle of practice in which students spoke more often and gradually became more accustomed to speaking in class.

However, the bonus structure did not eliminate formal assessment of accuracy. Midterm and writing scores remained part of the grading system, and categories such as Writing, Speech, Project, and Bonus suggest a mixed assessment approach. Accuracy was still evaluated, but it was no longer the sole determinant of success. This tension is common in contexts where teachers endorse communicative participation while institutional expectations still prioritize grammar outcomes (Chero, 2022). In this classroom, inclusion was strengthened through the bonus mechanism, yet it operated alongside grammar-oriented evaluation rather than fully replacing it.

In this classroom, inclusion became institutionalized at the classroom level through assessment. Participation was not only encouraged verbally, but also counted, recorded, and rewarded, allowing speaking to become a more accessible and valued form of academic effort.

Embedding Moral and Cultural Values in Speaking Practice

The third theme emerging from the data is the integration of moral and cultural values into speaking instruction. In this classroom, inclusive practice was shaped not only by participation structures or assessment, but also by religious and cultural principles that influenced how students interacted with one another. These

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values functioned as everyday norms that guided classroom behavior during speaking activities.

During the interview, Teacher W explained that before asking students to speak, she often reminded them about respect and patience. She emphasized that when one student is speaking, others must listen quietly and avoid laughing at mistakes. In her words, students must learn to "respect your friend" and "be patient when someone is speaking." She framed these reminders not only as classroom management, but also as part of character formation. This suggests that speaking practice in her classroom was supported by moral expectations about how students should treat one another.

Observation data support this account. Observation checklist item 6 showed that students generally listened without interrupting. Even when a student struggled to complete a sentence, peers did not mock them or correct them publicly. Across speaking activities, the classroom atmosphere remained orderly and supportive. This indicates that moral norms were not only stated by the teacher, but also enacted in classroom interaction.

From a theoretical perspective, this approach aligns with culturally responsive pedagogy because Teacher W drew on values that were already meaningful within students' school and community life (Gay, 2018). In Islamic education-oriented ELT, values such as respect, patience, and responsibility are often treated as part of the learning process rather than as separate moral lessons (Astuti et al., 2024). Recent work also suggests that culturally responsive teaching in Islamic boarding school contexts can draw on learners' cultural and religious repertoires to support awareness and participation, especially when English may feel distant from everyday identity (Fatmawaty et al., 2026). In this classroom, respect was turned into a concrete speaking rule that helped protect learners during oral performance.

Document analysis further strengthens this interpretation by showing that values were embedded not only in teacher talk but also in task design. In the lesson plan titled "What Are the Rules?", students worked in groups to identify and present rules using modal verbs such as *must* and *must not*. The topic itself focused on norms and behavior, connecting language practice with moral reflection. This value-based framing was also visible in the way Teacher W explained modal verbs through familiar Islamic categories, such as linking *should* to *sunnah*, *must* to *wajib*, and *can't* to *haram*.

This made the speaking task feel aligned with the school's broader values rather than disconnected from students' daily lives. Research in Islamic boarding school contexts similarly notes that English instruction is often more sustainable when it fits institutional norms and students' lived routines (Fitria, 2023). Materials-based studies also suggest that integrating Islamic values and local wisdom into English content can increase relevance and support comprehension (Nafiah, 2020).

Cultural values also shaped how correction was handled. Instead of pointing out errors directly in front of peers, Teacher W often reformulated students' sentences gently. When a student produced an inaccurate form, she repeated the intended meaning in a more accurate sentence while maintaining a supportive tone. This practice aligns with communicative grammar teaching, where correction supports meaning-making without breaking interaction or discouraging learners (Chero, 2022). In this classroom, reformulation functioned not only as correction, but also as care.

Interview data also suggest that Teacher W did not separate academic learning from moral education. She treated speaking English not only as language practice, but also as part of building confidence and character. This helps explain why these values remained visible across classroom interaction, task design, and feedback. Rather than being added to the lesson from outside, moral expectations formed part of how speaking was organized and experienced in this setting.

Taken together, this theme shows that inclusive speaking instruction in this classroom was relational and culturally grounded. Moral and cultural values helped create a speaking environment in which students were expected not only to participate, but also to protect one another's dignity while doing so.

Negotiating Structural and Contextual Constraints in Inclusive Practice

While the previous themes highlight the strengths of Teacher W's inclusive speaking strategies, the data also reveal that these practices were continuously negotiated within structural and contextual constraints. Inclusion in this classroom did not occur in ideal conditions. It was implemented amid uneven proficiency levels, large class sizes, limited facilities, time pressure, fluctuating motivation, multilingual complexity, and sociocultural expectations.

One of the most consistent challenges mentioned in the interview was the wide gap in students' English proficiency. Teacher W described the mixed-ability reality across classes:

> *"In every class, you should have a student who is very smart. And there are also many students, their English is very poor. And it's pretty difficult as a teacher to teach them because their level is very different."*

This gap was also visible in the observation data. During group tasks, stronger students tended to dominate discussion, while lower-proficiency students gave shorter responses unless they were directly invited to speak. This suggests that inclusive speaking instruction in this setting required more than giving the same task to everyone. It required the teacher to keep access open for students with different levels of confidence and ability.

Large class size made this challenge even harder to manage. Teacher W

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reported that most classes contained around forty students, and some reached fifty:

> *"I used to teach a class halfway around 50. So difficult. The classroom is too small for them."*

Under these conditions, mobility, monitoring, and individualized scaffolding became difficult to sustain. As a result, Teacher W often relied on strategies that could work across the whole class, such as participation rewards and low-pressure speaking opportunities, rather than intensive individual feedback.

Limited instructional time also affected implementation. Teacher W explained that each lesson effectively lasted about 35 minutes after transitions across the school campus:

> *"The time is pretty short for us. We cannot plan. We have many activities in a class. Sometimes, if I decide to play a game, I just have to play only one game."*

This time pressure forced pedagogical compromises. Speaking tasks had to be simplified, and feedback often had to be shortened. Research on classroom engagement suggests that speaking development depends on repeated opportunities for use and sustained interaction across lessons (Sulis, 2022; Liu et al., 2025). In compressed lesson periods, maintaining that continuity becomes more difficult.

Physical resources further constrained classroom practice. In one boys' class, the television was not functioning properly, limiting the teacher's use of slides and visual prompts:

> *"This class is hard for me. I cannot use TV. The remote is broken. So it's pretty hard for me to prepare the lesson."*

Although this may seem like a minor problem, it reduced the range of activity options available for interactive speaking tasks. In such moments, improvisation became a practical response to material limitations.

Student motivation was another recurring challenge. Even though the bonus system increased participation, Teacher W acknowledged that many students depended on external encouragement:

> *"If I didn't give any point, they don't want to do it."*

Observation notes similarly showed that volunteering increased after bonus points were announced, suggesting that participation was strongly shaped by classroom conditions and perceived reward. Research on engagement also notes that speaking participation is influenced by instructional structures, enjoyment, and perceived payoff, not only by learners' individual willingness (Sulis, 2022; Lee,

2022). In Islamic-school contexts, structured participation systems may raise short-term engagement, although their long-term effect on learner autonomy may vary (Syahmi et al., 2025).

Fatigue, especially in afternoon classes, also affected participation. Teacher W explained:

> *"Sometimes, when I plan to teach them grammar, but it's the afternoon class. Many students are sleepy already and then I have to change something else."*

Observation records confirmed lower energy levels in later sessions. In some cases, planned grammar explanations were replaced with games to regain students' attention. In a dual-curriculum environment, fatigue became another factor shaping how much students were ready to speak. This is consistent with research showing that anxiety, pressure, and limited academic buoyancy can weaken willingness to communicate (Lin et al., 2025).

The multilingual composition of the classroom added another layer of complexity. Students came from Thai, Malay, and in some cases Arabic-speaking backgrounds, creating uneven comprehension patterns. Although Teacher W aimed to maintain English use, she sometimes shifted briefly to Thai for clarity:

> *"Sometimes I have to speak Thai to them. When I have to tell them something very important."*

This suggests that inclusion was also managed through flexible language use. When full English risked excluding lower-level learners from understanding task instructions, brief shifts to Thai became a practical way to maintain access.

Classroom management constraints also varied across groups. Teacher W described one boys' class as particularly difficult to handle, suggesting that group dynamics shaped how speaking routines could be implemented.

Taken together, this theme shows that inclusive speaking instruction was continuously shaped by structural and contextual pressures. These constraints did not cancel Teacher W's inclusive approach, but they required her to adapt it through small, practical decisions that kept participation possible under limited conditions.

4. Discussion

Building on these four themes, the discussion highlights how inclusion in Teacher W's classroom was enacted through a combination of emotional support, participation structures, cultural relevance, and ongoing adaptation to classroom realities. Rather than treating inclusion as a separate intervention for a small group of learners, her practice reflects the idea that access can be widened by reshaping ordinary classroom conditions so that more students are able to take part (Florian

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& Beaton, 2018). In this case, the most important shift appears at the affective level. Fear of comparison is reduced, errors are treated as part of learning, and students are encouraged to speak before being pushed toward accuracy.

Research in Thai EFL contexts similarly shows that inclusive speaking depends heavily on how teachers manage classroom climate and participation when oral performance exposes learners to peer judgment (Attachoo & Imsa-Ard, 2024; Thongwichit & Ulla, 2024). This suggests that psychological safety is not an additional feature of instruction, but a central condition for participation. This interpretation is also consistent with willingness-to-communicate scholarship, which shows that classroom-affective conditions, anxiety, and confidence interact to shape whether learners speak at particular moments (MacIntyre et al., 1998; Lin et al., 2025). What this study adds is a closer view of how such safety is produced through ordinary teacher decisions in a multilingual Islamic school, rather than through formal inclusion programs alone.

The study also confirms that cultural and religious meaning can function as a practical scaffold in speaking lessons. Teacher W's use of religious analogies, such as explaining modals through familiar categories like *wajib* and *sunnah*, offers a concrete form of culturally responsive teaching in an Islamic school context. This supports and extends discussions that integrating Islamic values into ELT is not limited to moral messaging, but can also make instruction more comprehensible and relevant for learners (Astuti et al., 2024; Fitria, 2023). In this case, religious references were not used as decoration.

They worked as a cognitive bridge that helped students interpret grammar through concepts they already understood. That bridge matters for inclusion because it reduces the sense that English is culturally distant from students' everyday lives. More broadly, this suggests that in multilingual and faith-based classrooms, culturally responsive pedagogy may support participation not only by affirming identity, but also by making linguistic content easier to access.

At the same time, the findings highlight a limitation that broad inclusion narratives often understate. Inclusion is shaped not only by pedagogical intention, but also by structural realities in the school system. Even when the teacher builds participation and safety, her decisions are continuously negotiated within large classes, short periods, limited facilities, and fatigue produced by a dual curriculum. This aligns with wider inclusion discussions that emphasize policy ideals but often leave classroom-level constraints underexplored (UNESCO, 2020).

In this context, time pressure and cognitive load are not minor classroom issues. They directly affect who has the energy to speak and who withdraws. The implication is that inclusive speaking strategies in faith-based schools are not only pedagogical but also logistical, because students' learning capacity is distributed across competing institutional demands. Engagement research further suggests that such constraints shape participation because classroom involvement is sensitive to task conditions, energy, and perceived interactional support (Sulis,

2022; Lee, 2022). This also points to a limitation of Teacher W's strategy: although her practices widened access to speaking, they could not fully overcome institutional constraints that lay beyond the classroom.

A further tension appears between fluency-oriented inclusion and an accuracy-oriented assessment culture. Teacher W consistently promotes speaking attempts and delays overt correction during oral tasks, but institutional grading still gives weight to grammar-heavy outcomes. This pattern reflects what Chero (2022) describes, namely that teachers may endorse communicative approaches while evaluation systems continue to privilege accuracy, creating a mismatch between classroom participation goals and formal assessment standards.

In this study, the bonus-point system helped the teacher protect inclusion by formally valuing effort and participation, yet it remained layered on top of an exam structure that still signaled grammar as a main measure of success. This supports the broader argument in UNESCO (2020) that inclusive education requires coherence across pedagogy and evaluation. Without alignment, inclusive practice risks depending on individual teacher initiative rather than becoming a stable institutional norm. The bonus system itself also deserves a more critical reading. While it appears effective in encouraging initial participation, its long-term sustainability remains uncertain if students continue to depend on external rewards rather than gradually developing intrinsic confidence to speak. In that sense, the strategy may function well as an entry point into participation, but it may not be sufficient on its own to sustain willingness to communicate over time.

Taken together, the study offers both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it contributes to inclusive pedagogy by showing that inclusion in speaking classrooms can be understood as a relational and adaptive practice shaped through emotional, cultural, and evaluative decisions rather than through formal differentiation alone. It also extends discussion of inclusive ELT beyond disability-focused framings by foregrounding language anxiety, multilingual classroom realities, and moral-cultural identity as important dimensions of participation.

Practically, the study suggests that teachers in multilingual and Islamic school contexts may widen access to speaking by combining low-anxiety interactional norms, effort-based assessment, and culturally meaningful scaffolds. More broadly, the findings imply that inclusive pedagogy in multilingual classrooms and Islamic education settings requires not only responsive teacher strategies, but also institutional conditions that support sustained participation.

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5. Conclusion

This study examined how inclusive speaking instruction is enacted in a dual-curriculum Islamic secondary school in Southern Thailand and identified the challenges accompanying such practice. The findings show that inclusion in this context is not realized through formal differentiation policies or separate remedial tracks. Instead, it is enacted through everyday instructional decisions that reshape classroom interaction. Psychological safety is cultivated by reducing public comparison and normalizing imperfect grammar. Participation is embedded structurally through a visible bonus-point system that legitimizes effort and encourages repeated speaking attempts.

In addition, grammar is mediated through culturally familiar references that connect linguistic form to students' moral and religious frameworks. At the same time, these strategies are continuously negotiated under constraints such as large class sizes, limited instructional time, uneven proficiency, fluctuating motivation, resource limitations, and sociocultural expectations.

The study suggests that inclusive pedagogy in speaking classrooms operates less as a fixed model and more as a relational and adaptive practice. In this case, inclusion is sustained through the alignment of emotional climate, assessment structure, and cultural positioning. Rather than separating "strong" and "weak" learners, the teacher broadens the meaning of success and redistributes access to participation. This advances the present state of knowledge in inclusive ELT by offering a micro-pedagogical account of how inclusion is produced through interactional moves and classroom routines in a faith-based minority setting. It also extends inclusive education discussions beyond disability-focused framings by foregrounding linguistic diversity, language anxiety, and moral identity as key dimensions shaping classroom inclusion.

Practically, the findings indicate that speaking instruction in multilingual and religious school contexts can be strengthened by designing low-anxiety participation norms, making encouragement visible through participation-based assessment, and using culturally responsive scaffolding to support comprehension and confidence. Teachers working in similar dual-curriculum settings may consider embedding effort recognition into grading structures, planning tasks that provide multiple entry points for mixed-ability learners, and connecting abstract grammar meanings to locally meaningful concepts to reduce social risk and improve access to speaking opportunities.

Future research may examine how students perceive and internalize these inclusive strategies over time, particularly whether participation incentives support the development of intrinsic confidence and sustained willingness to communicate. Further comparative studies across Islamic schools or other minority and multilingual contexts may also clarify how institutional norms, resource conditions, and cultural values shape inclusive speaking pedagogy and its long-term impact on learners' participation trajectories.

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