



Mood Choices and Power Relations in a Junior High School EFL Lesson Segment

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-04-23 Revised: 2026-05-03 Accepted: 2026-06-29 Keywords: classroom discourse, Mood, power relations, Systemic Functional Linguistics, EFL classroom DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i1.10277 Corresponding Author: Hanum Salsabila 2210631060126@student.unsika.ac.id English Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang	<i>This study examines how Mood choices realise and negotiate power relations in a short junior high school EFL lesson segment in Indonesia. Drawing on Systemic Functional Linguistics, the study traces the movement from Mood structure to speech function and then to power orientation. The data consist of eight teacher clauses selected from a recorded and verbatim-transcribed lesson segment in which the teacher opened and framed the lesson, checked students' readiness, reviewed previous material, introduced visual or personal content, and gave one directive. Each clause was coded for Mood structure, Mood type, speech function, and power orientation. The analysis shows that declaratives dominate the segment and function to frame the lesson, define shared knowledge, and maintain topic control. Interrogatives provide brief but meaningful response slots, while one imperative, softened by the politeness marker please, directs student action without abandoning rapport. The findings suggest that power in this segment is asymmetrical but moderated: the teacher maintains institutional control while using inclusive, polite, and affiliative language. Although illustrative rather than generalisable, the study contributes micro-level evidence of how Mood choices mediate classroom authority, participation, and character-oriented values in Indonesian EFL interaction.</i>

1. Introduction

Classroom discourse is central to language education because teaching and learning are organised through talk. Teachers use questions, explanations, feedback, and directives to manage participation and guide learning. The Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) model proposed by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) shows how teachers usually initiate exchanges, students respond, and teachers provide follow-up. Functional accounts also show that pedagogic talk regulates both subject knowledge and classroom participation (Christie, 2002). This pattern can support lesson organisation, but it may also restrict learner contributions when decisions about topic, turn, and evaluation remain largely under teacher control (Cazden, 2001; Wells, 1999). In EFL classrooms, this issue is especially important because classroom interaction is both the medium of instruction and a resource for developing communicative competence (Hymes, 1972; Littlewood, 1981; van Lier, 1996).

The organisation of classroom talk is also an organisation of power. Teachers normally hold institutional authority to open lessons, allocate turns, evaluate answers, and regulate behaviour. Their language therefore does more than transmit subject matter; it positions speakers and listeners in unequal but negotiable roles. Foucault (1980) views power as exercised through everyday practices, while Fairclough (1989) argues that language is a major site where control and social relations are enacted. In classrooms, each question, statement, and command has both a pedagogic function and an interpersonal consequence.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) provides a useful framework for examining these interpersonal consequences. Halliday (1978, 1994) conceptualises language as a social semiotic, and the interpersonal metafunction explains how speakers enact roles, exchange meanings, and negotiate relationships. Within this metafunction, the Mood system is particularly relevant because declarative, interrogative, and imperative clauses typically realise statements, questions, and commands (Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). At clause level, Mood can be scrutinised through elements such as Subject and Finite; at discourse level, its meaning depends on the interactional sequence in which it occurs (Martin & Rose, 2007). These choices position classroom participants as information givers, information demanders, or actors, and consequently contribute to the linguistic construction of authority and participation.

Previous studies have shown that SFL can reveal how classroom roles are organised through grammatical choices. Berry (1981) showed how Mood patterns structure pedagogic exchanges, and Eggins and Slade (1997) related shifts in Mood to shifts in interpersonal positioning. Other classroom studies show that declaratives may support hierarchical control, while interrogatives can create space for student reasoning and participation (Herbel-Eisenmann et al., 2010; Morais & Neves, 2001). In EFL contexts, teacher questions, directives, and declaratives have also been linked to participation and authority (Ho, 2005;

Surjowati et al., 2024).

Despite this body of work, there remains a more precise gap: limited research has traced how clause-level Mood structure moves into speech function and then into interpersonal power orientation in Indonesian junior high school EFL classroom interaction. Many local studies describe interactional patterns or grammatical features, but fewer show how a compact set of clauses can be analysed systematically to connect grammar, classroom exchange, and power. This micro-level focus matters because classroom power is not visible only in broad participation patterns; it is also built clause by clause through ordinary teacher language.

The Indonesian context further strengthens the relevance of this issue. The programme of *Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter* (PPK), mandated in Presidential Regulation No. 87 of 2017 (Indonesia, 2017), positions schools as sites for developing values such as religiosity, mutual cooperation, independence, nationalism, and integrity. In everyday classroom interaction, these values may appear through polite directives, inclusive pronouns, attention to students' wellbeing, and opportunities for participation. Mood analysis can therefore help explain how teacher authority may be exercised while still supporting respect, cooperation, and care.

This study addresses the gap through a micro-analysis of eight teacher clauses from one junior high school EFL lesson segment. The novelty of the study lies in its systematic tracing of power relations from Mood structure to speech function and then to power orientation within a compact Indonesian EFL classroom sequence. The value of the data therefore lies in its analytical density rather than its numerical size. The study is guided by two research questions:

1. How are different Mood types (declarative, interrogative, and imperative) realised in the teacher's talk in a short junior high school EFL lesson segment?
2. How do these Mood choices relate to the construction and negotiation of power relations between the teacher and students in that segment?

By answering these questions, the study offers a small-scale but detailed account of how classroom authority is linguistically realised. Practically, it encourages EFL teachers to reflect on how ordinary choices between statements, questions, and commands may maintain necessary classroom control while also opening space for student response and character-building interaction.

2. Method

Research design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design. The design was appropriate because the study aimed to describe how power relations were realised in naturally occurring classroom talk rather than to test variables or produce statistical generalisations (Miles et al., 2014; Sandelowski, 2000). From the beginning, the study was framed as an illustrative micro-analysis. It treats a short classroom excerpt as a compact case for examining the relation between clause grammar, speech function, and interpersonal power.

Context and participants

The study was conducted in one public junior high school in Indonesia. The participants were one English teacher and one class of eighth-grade students. The class was selected purposively because the teacher agreed to be observed and the lesson represented a typical English lesson in the school. The names of the school, teacher, and students were anonymised. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and participation was voluntary.

Data collection and data set

The data were taken from a recorded EFL lesson conducted during regular classroom time. The researcher sat at the back of the room and did not intervene in the teaching and learning process. After the lesson, the recording was transcribed verbatim. The full transcript contained teacher and student turns from the opening to the closing of the lesson.

For this artefact, a short teacher-led segment was selected for close analysis. The segment contains eight teacher clauses in which the teacher greets students, checks readiness, frames the lesson, reviews previous material, introduces personal or visual content, and gives one directive. The use of only eight clauses is a deliberate analytical decision: the study prioritises depth of interpretation over breadth of coverage. The numerical counts reported in the Results therefore describe only this excerpt and are not intended as statistical evidence for wider classroom discourse patterns.

Data analysis

The analysis used the Mood system in SFL, especially the distinction between declarative, interrogative, and imperative Mood. Each teacher clause was segmented and coded for Mood structure by identifying relevant elements such as Subject, Finite, Predicator, Complement, and Adjunct. This step was important because Mood type was not treated merely as a label; it was linked to the clause resources through which the teacher enacted interpersonal roles. Each clause was then assigned a speech function: statement, question, or command. Finally, each clause was interpreted for power orientation.

Power orientation was coded as authoritative when the teacher controlled the topic, knowledge, or action; collaborative when the teacher explicitly invited student response or contribution; and authoritative (softened) when directive control was mitigated by politeness or inclusive wording. For example, “Are you ready to study?” was coded as interrogative because the Finite are preceding the Subject you. Its speech function was question because it demands information from students. Its power orientation was collaborative because it invites students to confirm readiness, although the teacher still controls the timing and frame of the exchange. This example illustrates the movement from clause structure to interactional function and then to power interpretation.

Data validity

To ensure data validity, the transcript and coding were checked repeatedly. The Mood classification, speech function, and power orientation of each clause were revisited to ensure consistency between the coding criteria and the linguistic evidence. Data display was conducted through tables showing clause examples, frequency patterns, and interpretive categories. The interpretation followed the interactive procedures of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing proposed by Miles et al. (2014). Representative clauses are included in the Results so that readers can see how the claims are grounded in the classroom language.

3. Results

This section presents the Mood analysis of the eight teacher clauses. The results are organised into four parts: complete clause-level coding, Mood types, speech functions, and power orientation. The tables should be read as evidence from a micro-segment rather than as a quantitative description of the whole lesson.

Complete clause-level coding

Table 1 presents the complete set of eight analysed teacher clauses. It makes the analytical pathway transparent by showing how each clause was linked to Mood structure, Mood type, speech function, and power orientation.

Table 1. Complete clause-level Mood and power coding

Teacher clause	Mood structure		Mood type and speech function	Power orientation	Interpretive focus
How are you today?	WH (How)	Adjunct + Finite (are) + Subject (you) + Adjunct (today)	Interrogative – question	Collaborative	Opens interpersonal contact and allocates a response role.
Are you ready	Finite (Are)	+ Interrogative	Collaborative	Checks readiness	

to study?	Subject (you) + Complement (ready to study)	- question		while keeping teacher-led timing.
Our lesson is English now.	Subject (Our lesson) + Finite (is) + Complement (English) + Adjunct (now)	Declarative statement	- Authoritative	Defines the lesson frame and topic.
We have learned about Simple Present Tense.	Subject (We) + Finite (have) + Predicator (learned) + Complement (about Simple Present Tense)	Declarative statement	- Authoritative	Summarises prior knowledge and controls the review.
What did we learn last meeting?	WH Complement (What) + Finite (did) + Subject (we) + Predicator (learn) + Adjunct (last meeting)	Interrogative - question	Collaborative	Invites recall within a bounded expected answer.
This is a picture of my family.	Subject (This) + Finite (is) + Complement (a picture of my family)	Declarative statement	- Authoritative	Introduces visual or personal content as a teaching resource.
I will show you some examples.	Subject (I) + Finite (will) + Predicator (show) + Complement (you some examples)	Declarative statement	- Authoritative	Projects the next activity and maintains progression.
Repeat after me please.	Predicator (Repeat) + Adjunct (after me) + politeness marker (please); Subject/Finite ellipted	Imperative command	- Authoritative (softened)	Directs action while reducing force through politeness.

Mood types in the classroom segment

Three Mood types were found in the eight teacher clauses: declarative, interrogative, and imperative. Their distribution is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of Mood types in the data

Mood type	Frequency	Percentage
Declarative	4	50.0%
Interrogative	3	37.5%
Imperative	1	12.5%
Total	8	100%

The dominance of declaratives indicates that authority in the segment was enacted mainly through the teacher's right to define the lesson topic, prior knowledge, and relevant classroom activity, rather than through frequent commands. Clauses such as "Our lesson is English now and We have learned about Simple Present Tense", assign the teacher the role of organiser and knower. Interrogatives create response opportunities, but those opportunities remain brief and teacher-framed. The single imperative organises collective action through controlled repetition.

Speech functions

The same clauses were classified according to speech function. Table 3 summarises the distribution.

Table 3. Speech functions in the data

Speech function	Frequency	Percentage
Statement	4	50.0%
Question	3	37.5%
Command	1	12.5%
Total	8	100%

This pattern, in the table 3, shows that the teacher alternated between giving information, demanding information, and demanding action. Statements carried the main burden of lesson framing; questions opened short response spaces; and the command shifted students from verbal response to collective action. The pattern therefore supports a teacher-led sequence while still allowing limited learner involvement.

Power orientation

Each clause was also interpreted in terms of power orientation. The categories are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Power orientation in the data

Power orientation	Frequency	Percentage
Authoritative	4	50.0%
Collaborative	3	37.5%
Authoritative (softened)	1	12.5%
Total	8	100%

Authoritative orientation was realised mainly through declaratives that set the topic, recall prior knowledge, and project the next activity. Collaborative orientation appeared in interrogatives that invited students to answer, although the expected responses were narrow. The softened authoritative orientation appeared in the imperative with please. This pattern suggests that classroom power was asymmetrical but moderated: control was maintained, yet some language choices invited response, displayed care, and reduced the force of directives.

4. Discussion

The findings show how a very small excerpt of teacher talk can reveal the connection between Mood, classroom structure, power, and character-oriented interaction. This section interprets the patterns rather than repeating the frequency counts.

Mood choices and institutional positioning

From an SFL perspective, Mood is a central resource for enacting interpersonal meaning. In this segment, declaratives position the teacher as the participant who has the right to define the lesson, summarise learning, and organise knowledge. The clauses, “Our lesson is English now and We have learned about Simple Present Tense”, are grammatically statements, but interpersonally they function as acts of institutional framing. They tell students not only what is true but also what the lesson will attend to.

The interrogatives shift the exchange temporarily toward students. “How are you today?” and “Are you ready to study?” give students a response role and mark them as legitimate participants in the lesson opening. However, the questions remain teacher-controlled and invite short, predictable answers. The imperative Repeat after me please positions students as actors who should follow a pedagogic instruction. The politeness marker please does not remove authority, but it changes the tenor of the command by making the directive more socially acceptable.

IRF and the limits of participation

The Mood pattern also fits the IRF structure described by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). The teacher initiates the main exchanges by greeting, asking, stating, and directing. Students are expected to respond, and the teacher retains the right to move the lesson forward. This organisation supports classroom management and gives the lesson a clear direction, which can be valuable in junior high school EFL contexts where students may need strong scaffolding.

At the same time, the pattern shows the limitation of IRF for learner participation. The interrogatives do not open extended negotiation or student-generated topics; they mainly create short response slots. Collaboration is therefore present but bounded. From the perspective of classroom interactional competence (Walsh, 2011), the teacher demonstrates control and responsiveness, but the segment offers limited opportunity for learners to elaborate, ask questions, or co-construct meaning. Stronger student participation would require follow-up moves that extend rather than close student responses.

Power, politeness, and character education

Critical perspectives on discourse help explain why these small grammatical choices matter. Fairclough (1989) argues that institutional language contributes to social power relations, while Foucault (1980) views power as operating through everyday practices. In the present segment, power is visible in ordinary clauses: the teacher states the topic, asks the questions, and directs the action. Power is therefore not only an abstract institutional condition; it is enacted through repeated linguistic choices.

Nevertheless, the data also show that authority is not expressed as simple domination. Interrogatives such as “How are you today?” and “Are you ready to study?” create affective contact and invite response. Inclusive wording such as *our lesson* and *we have learned* constructs a shared learning frame, even though the teacher remains the main organiser. The directive *Repeat after me please* combines control with politeness. These choices are consistent with the spirit of PPK because they display care, respect, cooperation, and responsibility in routine classroom talk. The finding should not be read as proof of policy implementation, but it shows how character-oriented values can be linguistically supported in everyday teacher-student interaction.

Synthesis and contribution

The study can be synthesised through the sequence Mood - IRF - power - character. Mood provides the grammatical form of exchange; IRF organises the pedagogic sequence; power is realised through control of topic, turn, knowledge, and action; and character-oriented values may emerge through politeness, inclusion, and care. In this model, declaratives support pedagogic framing, interrogatives provide bounded interactional space, and the softened imperative

combines action control with interpersonal mitigation.

This synthesis clarifies the contribution of the study. The article does not claim to generalise from eight clauses to all EFL classrooms. Instead, it demonstrates how power negotiation can be traced systematically from Mood structure to speech function and then to interpersonal positioning in a small but analytically focused data set. For teachers, the implication is practical: changing a classroom relationship may begin with small adjustments in how teachers state, ask, direct, soften, and follow up on students' responses.

5. Conclusion

This study analysed eight teacher clauses from a junior high school EFL lesson segment to examine how Mood choices realise power relations. By tracing Mood structure, Mood type, speech function, and power orientation, the analysis showed that declaratives dominated the excerpt and were used to frame the lesson, review prior learning, and maintain topic control. Interrogatives created brief opportunities for students to respond, while one imperative, softened by please, directed student action in a polite way.

The findings indicate that power in this segment was asymmetrical but moderated. The teacher retained institutional authority, yet the interaction also included care, inclusion, and politeness. This balance is important in the Indonesian context, where classroom language is expected to support both learning and character development. Because the data came from only one short segment, the findings are illustrative and cannot be generalised statistically.

Nevertheless, the study shows that even small stretches of classroom talk can reveal how Mood choices shape authority, participation, and interpersonal values. Future research could examine longer lesson phases, compare several teachers, and include student responses in greater detail to show how power is negotiated across fuller classroom exchanges.

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