Students' Perceptions of Teachers' Verbal Classroom Communication in Slovak Vocational Secondary Schools

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ABSTRACT:
Classroom discourse is central to how young people gain access to curriculum knowledge, yet teacher verbal communication in vocational secondary education remains under-researched. This descriptive comparative study examines how 143 second-year students at two Slovak vocational secondary schools perceived teachers' verbal classroom communication. A questionnaire was administered in a business academy and a technical/vocational school. The survey focused on clarity, space for student expression, checking of understanding, teacher/student talk balance, question type, prosodic resources, voice training, and distracting verbal habits. The findings show that students generally evaluated teacher clarity positively (83% positive responses) and reported that teachers provided adequate space to express opinions (79%). However, 94% reported that teachers spoke for most of the lesson, and 74% characterised teachers' questions as primarily closed-ended. Prosodic resources were used unevenly: volume variation and word stress were reported more often than tempo variation. In addition, 64% of respondents believed that teachers should practise their voice and speech, while 48% reported that teachers' verbal habits distracted their attention. The two schools showed broadly similar patterns. The results suggest a participation paradox: students felt invited to speak, yet lessons remained teacher-dominant, and question formats were mainly convergent. The article discusses implications for dialogic questioning, formative checks for understanding, and voice-related professional development in vocational subjects.

Keywords: classroom discourse; teacher talk; verbal communication; vocational secondary education; student perceptions.

1. Introduction

The quality of teacher-student communication is a language issue as well as a pedagogical issue. In secondary classrooms, young people learn subject knowledge through talk: teachers name concepts, organise participation, frame questions, evaluate responses, and translate curricular terminology into meanings that students can use. Classroom discourse, therefore, functions as a gatekeeping and enabling mechanism. It can open space for reasoning, clarification, and participation, or it can restrict learners to listening and short recall responses. This is particularly important in vocational secondary education, where learners are expected not only to remember content but also to acquire the professional language of a field.

Research on classroom discourse has long shown that teacher talk is not a neutral channel for transmitting information. The allocation of speaking rights, the kinds of questions asked, the feedback that follows student contributions, and the paralinguistic features of teacher speech all help shape what counts as knowledge in the classroom (Cazden, 2001; Mercer & Dawes, 2014; Walsh, 2011). In language education research, these features are often examined in second- or foreign-language classrooms. However, they are equally relevant in content classrooms, where the language of instruction mediates access to disciplinary and vocational knowledge. From a youth-and-language perspective, the question is not simply whether the teacher explains content, but how classroom language positions students as listeners, answerers, or active participants in meaning-making.

Vocational and economically oriented secondary programmes provide a useful context for this issue. Students in such programmes encounter specialised concepts, institutional routines, professional genres, and subject-specific terminology. A teacher's verbal clarity may therefore reduce the linguistic burden of learning; conversely, unclear explanations, excessive teacher talk, or predominantly closed questioning can limit student participation, even when students report being allowed to speak. For this reason, teachers' verbal communication should be examined both as a matter of presentation skill and as a condition for student participation in the curriculum.

This article presents a thesis-based questionnaire study of teachers' verbal communication in two Slovak vocational secondary schools. The original thesis aimed to clarify how professional, or pedagogical, communication takes place in selected secondary schools and to compare the use and perceived effects of teachers' verbal communication tools across two school contexts. This article reframes those findings for an international audience by connecting them to classroom discourse, dialogic teaching, and language-mediated participation in vocational education.

The study addresses four research questions:

1. How do students evaluate the clarity and comprehensibility of teachers' verbal communication?
2. To what extent do students perceive opportunities to express their own views and receive checks for understanding?
3. How do students perceive the balance between teacher talk and student talk, and the openness of teacher questions?
4. What do students report about teachers' use of prosodic resources, voice/speech training needs, and distracting verbal habits?

Together, these questions allow the article to identify strengths and tensions in students' experience of classroom communication.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Pedagogical communication and classroom discourse

Pedagogical communication can be understood as the verbal and non-verbal interaction through which educational goals, curricular content, classroom relationships, and learning tasks are performed. In Central European pedagogical literature, it is often described as communication between participants in the educational process that is oriented toward educational aims, governed by role expectations, and embedded in a specific institutional time and space (Gavora, 2005; Nelešovská, 2005; Průcha, Walterová, & Mareš, 2013). This definition emphasises that classroom communication differs from everyday conversation. The teacher has institutional responsibility for guiding activity, but students' opportunities to participate remain crucial for feedback, comprehension, and learner agency.

Classroom discourse research provides a complementary lens. Cazden (2001) argued that classroom language shapes speaking rights, teacher roles, and the distribution of knowledge. Walsh (2011) similarly emphasised that teachers'

language choices create or restrict learning opportunities. From this perspective, teacher talk has multiple functions: presenting information, managing activity, checking comprehension, inviting reasoning, and building relationships. These functions are not always compatible. A teacher may be clear and well organised but still dominate the interaction; a teacher may invite student opinions but rely largely on closed questions. The quality of classroom communication should therefore be assessed along several dimensions rather than solely on general satisfaction.

2.2. Teacher talk, student participation, and dialogic teaching

A recurring finding in classroom research is that teachers typically occupy a larger share of classroom talk than students. Teacher talk is not inherently negative; explanation, modelling, and guided practice are necessary parts of teaching. The issue is whether teacher talk leaves space for students to formulate ideas, ask questions, and connect new knowledge to their own understanding. Dialogic approaches to teaching emphasise that classroom talk should stimulate thinking, enable students to compare perspectives, and support cumulative meaning-making (Alexander, 2020). Dialogic teaching does not simply mean that students talk more; it means that talk is purposeful, responsive, and connected to the development of understanding.

Empirical research supports the educational importance of teacher-student dialogue. Mercer and Dawes (2014) reviewed decades of research on classroom talk and highlighted the value of interactions that extend beyond initiation-response-evaluation routines. Howe, Hennessy, Mercer, Vrikki, and Wheatley (2019) found that key features of teacher-student dialogue were associated with student outcomes, even after controlling for prior attainment and other factors. Šeďová, Šalamounová, and Švaříček (2014) and Šeďová, Sedláček, Švaříček, and Šalamounová (2016) also demonstrated that professional development can help teachers transform classroom talk by increasing open questions, uptake, and student reasoning. These findings are relevant to vocational education, where students need opportunities to apply professional concepts rather than just hear them.

Recent research from Slovak higher education also underscores how communication channels and digital competences shape learning continuity. Garbarova et al. (2023) found that, during pandemic-related distance learning, students became accustomed to online learning environments while developing digital, technical, and analytical skills through platforms such as Moodle and Microsoft Teams. Although their study concerned higher education rather than vocational secondary classrooms, it reinforces the broader point that learning depends on communicative access to tasks, resources, and teacher support.

2.3. Questioning, feedback, and checks for understanding

Teacher questions are among the most visible mechanisms through which teachers control or open classroom discourse. Closed questions can be efficient when teachers need to check factual recall or procedural knowledge. However, when closed questions dominate, students may learn that the expected contribution is a brief answer rather than reasoning, explanation, or application. Open questions, follow-up prompts, and the uptake of student responses support more dialogic patterns by encouraging students to make their thinking public (Nystrand, 1997; Walsh, 2011).

Checking for understanding is closely related to feedback. Hattie and Timperley (2007) conceptualised feedback as information that helps reduce the gap between current and desired understanding. In classroom practice, a teacher's question 'Do you understand?' may not be enough; students may hesitate to admit confusion or may not know what they have misunderstood. Effective checks for understanding require teachers to elicit evidence of learning, interpret it, and adapt instruction. Black and Wiliam (1998) and Wiliam (2011) positioned such evidence-gathering as central to formative assessment. For the present study, students' perceptions of

whether teachers ask about understanding are treated as one indicator of communicative responsiveness, while recognising that it is not a full measure of formative assessment quality.

2.4. Voice, prosody, and verbal delivery

Verbal communication also includes prosodic and rhetorical resources such as volume, emphasis, pace, pausing, intonation, and clarity of articulation. These features are sometimes treated as secondary to content, yet they influence attention, intelligibility, and classroom atmosphere. In teacher education, voice is both a professional tool and a health concern: teachers rely heavily on their voices, and voice strain can affect classroom effectiveness and occupational well-being. Rhetorical and pedagogical sources therefore recommend conscious use of stress, pace, and pauses to support meaning and student attention (Allhoff, 2016; Kyriacou, 2008; Nelešovská, 2005).

Prosody matters in vocational subjects because teachers frequently introduce unfamiliar terminology. Emphasis can signal key concepts; controlled pace can help students process complex explanations; pauses can mark transitions and provide time for note-taking or thought. At the same time, repeated filler words, distracting gestures, or habitual verbal patterns may draw attention away from content. Students' perceptions of these features are worth examining because they reveal whether teacher verbal delivery supports or disrupts learners' access to the lesson.

Communication quality also extends beyond face-to-face classroom talk to the ethical and effective design of institutional messages. In higher education, Vartiak et al. (2024) argue that responsible communication requires a balance between effective audience engagement and ethical considerations, including transparency, consent, and trust. For the present study, this broader perspective supports treating teachers' verbal delivery as a professional communication practice: clarity, relevance, and sensitivity to recipients influence how learners attend to and interpret educational messages.

2.5. Professional language in vocational classrooms

The original thesis used the Slovak term 'odborná komunikácia', which can be translated as 'professional' or 'pedagogical' communication, depending on context. In vocational classrooms, the two meanings overlap. Teachers communicate professionally as educators, but they also mediate professional language within their subject field. Students need to learn how economic, legal, technical, or administrative concepts are named and used. If students do not understand the language teachers use, their access to vocational knowledge is weakened. Conversely, if teachers invite students to formulate explanations and opinions, students can practise using the language of the field. For this reason, the present article treats teacher verbal communication as a language-mediated dimension of vocational curriculum participation.

3. Method

3.1. Research design

The study used a descriptive comparative survey design. Its purpose was not to test a causal model, but to describe students' perceptions of teachers' verbal classroom communication and to compare patterns across two school contexts. The design is appropriate for an exploratory study because it captures perceptions from a relatively large group of students within a limited time period. A classroom observation reported in the thesis provided contextual insight into the dominance of frontally organised talk in one lesson. Still, the present article focuses on questionnaire data because they allow comparisons across schools.

3.2. Context and participants

Data were collected from second-year students at two Slovak secondary schools with vocational or economically oriented programmes. School A was a business academy. School B was a secondary vocational school with a technical/vocational programme. According to the thesis report, 117 second-year students were enrolled at School A and 82 at School B. In School A, 79 questionnaires were returned, of

which 77 were usable. In School B, 70 questionnaires were returned, of which 66 were usable. Six questionnaires were excluded because respondents selected more than one answer when only one was permitted, or failed to answer all required items. The final analytical sample was therefore 143 valid questionnaires.

The participants were school students in the second year of secondary education (Table 1). The thesis did not report participants' ages, individual achievement levels, or the detailed demographic composition of the survey sample. Because of this, the analysis is limited to school-level comparisons and overall response patterns. The two schools are anonymised in this article as School A and School B.

Table 1. Participants and valid questionnaires

School	School type	Second-year enrolment	Returned questionnaires	Excluded	Valid questionnaires
School A	Business academy	117	79	2	77
School B	Technical/vocational secondary school	82	70	4	66
Total	-	199	149	6	143

3.3. Instrument

The questionnaire consisted of two parts. Part A asked for basic information, including gender and class size. Part B contained eight items on verbal classroom communication. The items addressed:

1. whether teachers speak clearly and use understandable expressions,
2. whether students are given enough space to express their views during the verbal part of the lesson,
3. whether teachers ask whether students understand the material,
4. whether teachers or students speak for most of the lesson,
5. whether teachers' questions are mainly open or closed,
6. whether teachers use selected sound/prosodic resources,
7. whether teachers should practise their voice and speech,
8. whether students associate teachers with distracting verbal or behavioural habits.

Most items used fixed response options such as 'rather yes', 'definitely yes', 'definitely no', and 'rather no'. The item on prosodic resources asked students to respond separately for volume variation, word stress, tempo variation, and strategic pausing.

The instrument was designed for a thesis survey rather than as a previously validated scale. It therefore provides descriptive evidence but should not be interpreted as a psychometric measure of classroom communication quality. Internal consistency was not calculated because the questionnaire items target different features of verbal communication rather than a single latent construct.

3.4. Data collection

The survey was conducted from 20 October to 25 November. Questionnaires were distributed by teachers at suitable moments to minimise disruption to instruction. The questionnaire introduction informed students that the results would be used for academic purposes. The original survey was anonymous in the sense that no student names are reported in the thesis or in the present article.

3.5. Data analysis

The thesis reported response percentages for each item by school and, for several items, overall percentages. The present article recalculates overall positive or dominant-response rates by

weighting school percentages based on the number of valid questionnaires in each school (School A, n = 77; School B, n = 66). Because the raw dataset was not available and the published percentages were rounded, inferential statistics were not conducted. The findings are, therefore, reported descriptively. For the four assumptions formulated in the thesis, the threshold for confirmation was whether more than 50% of students selected the predicted response or response category.

3.6. Ethical considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles governing educational research involving human participants. Ethical approval for the research was granted by the Ethics Committee of DTI University, Dubnica nad Váhom, Slovakia, before the commencement of data collection.

The research reported in this article is part of a broader master's thesis entitled "Specifics of Professional Communication in the Content of Education at a Selected Secondary School," completed at DTI University. The present article is based on data collected within that approved research project.

Participation in the study was voluntary. All participants were informed of the research's purpose, the questionnaire's anonymity, and the intended academic use of the collected data. Respondents were assured that their answers would remain confidential and would be reported only in aggregated form. No personally identifiable information was collected or disclosed during the study. Participation implied informed consent, and participants were free to withdraw from the research at any stage without any consequences.

The study complied with DTI University's ethical standards. It adhered to internationally accepted principles for educational and social science research, including respect for participant autonomy, confidentiality, anonymity, and responsible data management.

4. Findings

4.1. Clarity, student expression, and checks for understanding

Students' perceptions of teacher clarity were generally positive. In School A, 80% of respondents selected either 'rather yes' or 'definitely yes' when asked whether teachers spoke clearly and used expressions they understood. In School B, the positive response rate was 87%. The weighted overall positive response rate was approximately 83%. This suggests that most respondents experienced teachers' verbal explanations as understandable, although a minority in both schools still reported some difficulty.

Students also reported that teachers provided opportunities to express views. In School A, 77% of respondents responded positively, and in School B, 80% did. The weighted overall rate was 79%. This confirmed the first assumption in the thesis: more than half of the students reported that teachers provided enough space for students' own opinions and standpoints. However, the result should be interpreted alongside later findings on teacher talk and question type. Students may feel that they are allowed to speak while still experiencing lessons as teacher-dominant.

A slightly weaker but still positive pattern was found for checks for understanding (Table 2). In School A, 66% of respondents reported that teachers asked whether students understood the material, while in School B, 73% did so. The weighted overall positive rate was approximately 69%. This finding indicates that students generally recognised some teacher attention to comprehension, but it also suggests room for improvement. Around one-third of students in School A and more than one-quarter in School B did not report consistent checking of understanding.

Table 2. Summary of dominant response patterns by school

Survey item	School A	School B	Weighted overall	Dominant interpretation
Teachers speak clearly and understandably (positive responses)	80%	87%	83%	Generally positive
Teachers give enough space to express views (positive responses)	77%	80%	79%	Assumption 1 confirmed
Teachers ask whether students understood (positive responses)	66%	73%	69%	Positive, but weaker
The teacher speaks for most of the lesson	94%	95%	94%	Assumption 2 confirmed
Teachers' questions are mainly closed	77%	71%	74%	Closed questioning predominates
Teachers should practise voice and speech (positive responses)	69%	57%	64%	Assumption 3 confirmed
Teacher habits are noticed and distracting	48%	48%	48%	Assumption 4 not confirmed

4.2. Teacher/student talk balance and question type

The strongest pattern in the data concerned the distribution of talk. In School A, 94% of students reported that the teacher spoke for most of the lesson when new material was being covered. In School B, the corresponding figure was 95%. No students reported speaking for most of the lesson, and only 5-6% reported that teachers and students had equal speaking time. This confirmed the second thesis assumption that more than 50% of students would perceive the teacher's verbal contribution as longer than students' contributions.

Students' perceptions of question type reinforced teacher dominance. In School A, 77% of respondents reported that teachers' questions were mainly closed, meaning that only one correct answer was expected. In School B, 71% reported mainly closed questions. The weighted overall rate was approximately 74%. This result suggests that, although students perceived some space for expression, the dominant question format remained convergent rather than open. The combination of teacher talk dominance and closed questioning points to a classroom discourse pattern closer to traditional recitation than to dialogic teaching.

4.3. Prosodic resources in teacher speech

Students' responses showed uneven use of prosodic resources. Volume variation and word stress were reported relatively often, while tempo variation was less frequent (Table 3). In School A, 74% of respondents reported that teachers used volume variation, and 66% reported that teachers used word stress on important points. In School B, the corresponding figures were 73% and 84%. The weighted overall rates were approximately 74% for volume variation and 75% for word stress.

Table 3. Students reporting teachers' use of prosodic resources

Prosodic resource	School A positive	School B positive	Weighted overall positive
Volume variation during explanation	74%	73%	74%
Word stress on important content	66%	84%	75%
Tempo variation	35%	33%	34%
Strategic pause to gain attention	81%	95%	88%

Tempo variation was the weakest prosodic feature. Only 35% of students in School A and 33% in School B reported that teachers varied the tempo of speech. The weighted overall positive rate was about 34%. This means that nearly two-thirds of students did not perceive teachers as regularly slowing down or speeding up their speech to support understanding or attention. Strategic pausing was reported more positively: 81% in School A and 95% in School B indicated that teachers used pauses to gain attention, yielding a weighted overall rate of approximately 88%.

4.4. Voice training and verbal habits

Students were divided but generally supportive of the idea that teachers should practise their voice and speech. In School A, 69% selected either 'rather yes' or 'definitely yes'. In School B, the positive rate was 57%. The weighted overall rate was approximately 64%, confirming the third thesis assumption. This result does not necessarily indicate that students judge teachers' voices negatively; rather, it suggests that many students view voice and speech as teachable professional skills, comparable to the speech training used by presenters and broadcasters.

The fourth thesis assumption was not confirmed. The assumption predicted that more than 50% of students would report being bothered by teachers' verbal parasites or habits. In both schools, 48% of respondents reported associating a teacher with such a habit and that it distracted their attention. A further 40% in School A and 43% in School B reported noticing such habits but not being distracted by them. Thus, almost nine out of ten students noticed some teacher habit, but fewer than half both noticed it and found it distracting. This suggests that habitual verbal patterns are salient to students, but their perceived effect varies (Table 4).

Table 4. Thesis assumptions and descriptive outcomes

Assumption	Criterion	Observed result	Outcome
Students report enough space to express their views	>50% positive	79% positive	Confirmed
The teacher's verbal contribution is longer than the student's contribution	>50% report that the teacher speaks most	94%	Confirmed
Teachers should practise voice and speech	>50% positive	64% positive	Confirmed

Verbal habits distract students	>50% report distraction	48%	Not confirmed

4.5. Comparative summary across the two schools

The two schools showed broadly similar patterns. Teacher talk dominance was almost identical, and the proportion of students reporting mainly closed questions differed only moderately. School B showed somewhat more positive results for clarity, checks for understanding, word stress, and strategic pausing. School A showed a higher proportion of students who believed teachers should practise their voice and speech. However, because the analysis is descriptive and the original item-level data were not available, these differences should be interpreted cautiously. The most important finding is not a sharp contrast between schools, but a shared profile: clear teacher explanations and perceived opportunities to speak coexisted with teacher-dominant talk and predominantly closed questioning.

5. Discussion

The findings reveal a mixed communicative profile. On the positive side, most students perceived teachers as clear and understandable, and most reported that teachers provided enough space for student expression. These results are important in vocational secondary education because clarity supports access to specialised terminology and concepts. A teacher who explains professional vocabulary in accessible language can lower barriers to learning and help students enter the discourse of a subject field.

At the same time, the study identifies what may be called a participation paradox. Students generally felt they had space to express themselves. Yet, almost all respondents reported that teachers spoke for most of the lesson, and most described teacher questions as mainly closed-ended. This combination suggests that students may interpret limited opportunities to answer, comment, or ask a question as sufficient space, even when the overall structure of talk remains teacher-controlled. In dialogic teaching terms, the issue is not only whether students are allowed to speak, but whether their contributions shape the direction of classroom thinking (Alexander, 2020; Mercer & Dawes, 2014).

The dominance of closed questions is not surprising in classrooms where teachers need to check knowledge and cover curriculum content. Closed questions can efficiently verify factual understanding. However, when they become the default, they may limit students' opportunities to explain their reasoning, compare interpretations, or apply professional concepts to realistic situations. In vocational subjects, this matters because students need to learn how to talk and think like novice members of a field. Open questions such as 'Why would this solution be appropriate in this business situation?' or 'How would you explain this procedure to a client?' would allow students to use professional language more actively.

The findings on checking for understanding also deserve attention. Approximately two-thirds of students reported that teachers asked whether they understood the material. This is encouraging, but the questionnaire wording captures only whether teachers ask, not whether they gather reliable evidence of understanding. Formative assessment research suggests that effective checks require eliciting responses that reveal student thinking, interpreting those responses, and adapting instruction accordingly (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Wiliam, 2011). Future teacher development should therefore move from simple confirmation questions toward diagnostic prompts, exit tickets, short explanations in students' own words, and peer discussion before whole-class feedback.

The prosody results show another professional development need. Students reported frequent use of volume variation, word stress, and strategic pauses, but limited tempo variation. Pace is especially important when teachers present new terminology or complex procedural explanations.

A rapid or uniform tempo may prevent students from processing key ideas, while purposeful slowing can mark conceptual difficulty and support note-taking. Voice training should not be understood as cosmetic performance training. It can be connected to intelligibility, classroom management, occupational voice health, and the linguistic accessibility of teaching.

The result of verbal habits is nuanced. Nearly half of the students found such habits distracting, while a similar proportion noticed them without reporting distraction. This indicates that teachers' habitual expressions, fillers, or gestures can become salient in students' listening experience. The issue is not that teachers must eliminate all personal speech patterns. Rather, teachers may benefit from awareness of repeated fillers, overused phrases, or non-verbal routines that compete with lesson content. Video-based reflection or peer observation can help teachers notice patterns they may not perceive during teaching.

Across the two schools, the pattern suggests that teacher verbal communication is competent but still largely traditional. Clarity and teacher control are strengths when the goal is efficient explanation, but they can become constraints when the goal is student reasoning and professional language use. A practical implication is that professional development should not ask teachers to speak less. Instead, it should help them redesign classroom talk: shorter explanations followed by structured student rehearsal, open questions with wait time, uptake of student responses, and explicit checks for understanding. Such practices would align teacher verbal communication with the broader goals of vocational education: not only knowing about a field, but being able to use its language in purposeful interaction.

For the field of youth and language, the study contributes evidence from a less frequently represented context: Slovak vocational secondary education. Much classroom discourse research focuses on primary classrooms, general academic subjects, or foreign-language learning. This study shows that the same language-related issues appear in content and vocational classrooms. Students' access to the curriculum depends on how teachers speak, ask questions, pause, emphasise, and respond. Teacher verbal communication is, therefore, a matter of linguistic participation, not merely a technical skill of delivery.

At the institutional level, this emphasis on communicative participation connects with the idea of university social responsibility. Vartiak (2025) presents university social responsibility as a means for higher education institutions to contribute to society beyond the transmission of knowledge, including through stakeholder-oriented, socially beneficial practices. Although the present research concerns secondary vocational classrooms, the principle is transferable: educational communication is socially responsible when it creates conditions for participation, inclusion, and meaningful access to learning.

6. Conclusion

This article examined students' perceptions of teachers' verbal classroom communication in two Slovak vocational secondary schools. The findings indicate that students generally perceived teachers as clear and understandable, and most believed they had sufficient space to express their views. However, the lessons were also perceived as strongly teacher-dominant, with closed questions prevailing over open ones. Prosodic features such as volume variation, word stress, and pausing were reported more positively than tempo variation. Most students believed that teachers should practise their voice and speech, while fewer than half reported that teachers' verbal habits distracted them.

The study has several implications. Teacher education and in-service professional development should treat verbal classroom communication as a core professional competence. Training should include dialogic questioning, wait time, uptake of student responses, formative checks for understanding, and conscious use of prosody. In vocational subjects, such training should be connected to the

development of students' professional language: students need opportunities to use specialised concepts in explanations, examples, and problem-solving talk.

The study also has limitations. It used a descriptive survey in only two schools, relied on student perceptions, and did not include audio/video analysis of classroom interaction. The original dataset was not available for inferential testing, and the thesis did not report detailed demographic information such as age, language background, or achievement. Future research should combine student surveys with classroom recordings, teacher interviews, and analysis of actual question sequences. A larger sample across different types of vocational and academic secondary schools would also allow for a stronger comparison.

Despite these limitations, the study highlights an important tension in secondary education. Teachers may be clear and supportive while classroom discourse remains dominated by teacher talk and closed questioning. Improving classroom communication, therefore, requires more than better explanations. It requires designing talk so that students can participate in the language of learning, test their understanding, and practise the professional discourse that vocational education is meant to develop.

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Appendix. Questionnaire Items Summarised in English

1. Teachers speak to me clearly and understandably, and I understand all the expressions they use.
2. In the verbal part of the lesson, teachers give me enough space to express my view on the topic.
3. Teachers ask whether I understood the material.
4. During new material, who speaks for most of the lesson: teacher, students, or both equally?
5. Are teachers' questions mostly open or closed?
6. Do teachers use volume variation, word stress, tempo variation, and pauses?
7. Should teachers practise their voice and speech, similarly to presenters or announcers?
8. Do you associate any teacher with a verbal or behavioural habit, and