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Research Paper

Discourse Patterns of Teacher/Students and Students/Students in EFL Classroom Interactions

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Abstract
The present study investigated the patterns of classroom discourse between teachers and students' interactions used in language classrooms in Iran. 91 pre-intermediate EFL students including, 48 females and 43 males, were selected. The data used in this study included classroom talks which were gathered through triangulation: classroom observation and voice record, and then they were classified according to Tsui's model (1994). As the results indicate, the overall examination of the classroom discourse provided in this study makes it clear that the observed class talk did exist within four categories of the selected model, namely, initiating, responding, follow-up1, and follow-up 2. In addition to these classroom talk categories, the results also show that most of the class talk is done by teachers, and code-switching also occurred during class time. The findings of this study are expected to be beneficial to language teachers in general and also to those who are interested in the fields of sociolinguistics, sociology of language, and English language teaching.

Keywords: *Discourse Analysis, Classroom Interaction, Teacher Talk, Student Talk, Code-Switching*

Introduction

The purpose of language learning is to enable the learner to use language in its spoken or written forms of communication. The classroom is the first place for the students to attempt to practice the related language. Interactions of all modes in the classroom are, therefore, the key to

reach the educational goals. Interaction is generally "the joint exchange of thoughts, feelings or ideas between two or more people, which leads to a mutual effect on each other"(Tuan & Nhu, 2010, p.29). The latest models of communicative competence have also emphasized the significance of interaction (Littlewood, William, & Swan, 1981). Doughty and Long (2003) have cited that Long's (1996) negotiation for meaning triggers interactional adjustment, which in turn facilitates language acquisition because it connects input, internal learner capacities, and output. According to Long (1996), for language acquisition to occur students should be afforded ample opportunities to negotiate meaning to prevent a communicative breakdown. An ideal learning environment should provide students with opportunities to interact with a community where related issues and problem-solving situations may happen. Moreover, Smart and Marshall (2013) stated that interactions between students and teachers have the potential of shaping the course of students to learn. Analyzing the patterns through which such interactions between second/ foreign language students and their teachers occur, has long been a research interest leading to a major direction in applied linguistics and educational research known as Discourse Analysis (DA). In fact, discourse analysis aims to analyze the total picture of natural communication, examining the structural features in the unit of discourse (Haradasht & Aidinlou, 2016).

Another common classroom practice is that of code-switching. According to Berthold, Mangubhai and Batorowicz (1997), code-switching happens where speakers change from one language to another in the midst of their conversations. Code-switching occurs when an individual who is bilingual alternates between two languages during his/her speech with another bilingual person (Crystal, 1987). Code-switching is utilized for different social and educational purposes. Domalewska (2015) classifies these purposes into the following categories: Linguistic insecurity, topic switch (i.e., language choice is done according to the topic that is discussed, e.g., grammar explanation or giving instructions), and repetitive function (i.e., monitoring or helping the students and giving explanation). Other reasons for language alternations are effective function (i.e., expressing emotions) and socializing function (i.e. using L1 to mark solidarity and friendship with the students).

In fact, meaningful application of the first language (L1) in the classroom settings may improve rather than block second language (L2) acquisition, since it emphasizes similarities and differences between L1 and L2, enhancement of linguistic awareness, and assimilation of new concepts (Cook, 2007). Some researchers claim that not only the two languages are not separate, but regarding vocabulary, syntax, phonology, and pragmatics they are also linked in the mind of students (Cook, 2007; Sánchez-Casas & García-Albea, 2005). While it is the target language which should dominate in the classroom, switching from L2 to L1 could sometimes be of great help for both teachers and students in augmenting their learning and reducing the amount of time taken from actual learning.

The reason for the L2 students to fall back on their mother tongue sometimes is that they look for clear and unambiguous explanations for the new concepts. In fact, they want to ascertain that they have correctly understood the new material. Therefore, L1 serves as the only resource they can rely on. Moreover, in order to facilitate the learning process, students apply the knowledge they have already acquired in their L1 since learning is a process of assimilating new information into the pre-existing cognitive schemas. L1 is a basis for L2 students on which they naturally and unconsciously build an L2 system; their L1 competence is the instrument they can use to ease understanding. Finally, L2 competence can be obtained through L1 by assimilating new L2 rules into the existing L1 competence (Domalewska, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

If EFL/ESL students get the chance of being exposed to rich input in English, then it should not be difficult for them to communicate in English. But, successful second language learning in a context where the intended language is not spoken depends on classroom communication, i.e., interactions which engage students with their teacher and other students. The discourse and nature of interactions among students and the teacher and among students themselves is central for foreign language learning as it contextualizes learning experiences while active participation in classroom discourse engages students in the learning process.

A major characteristic feature of traditional classroom discourse is the teacher's control over the interaction. A large body of research confirms the unequal roles of participants in classroom communications and interactions with the teacher managing the conversation and turn-taking (Walsh, 2011). The teachers' over control of the classroom discourse results in limited learning as there is no place for meaningful, spontaneous, and natural interaction. In fact, the students can only acquire the language through involvement in interactions and relationships formed when they take part in communication. Language, thus activated and internalized, becomes part of the students' cognitive resources (Thoms, 2012).

It seems that students in the field of EFL might have to face serious hurdles and obscurities in their learning process. In fact, most teachers tend to limit speaking opportunities for their students by asking questions that fulfill educational goals but prevent interlocutors from developing conversation and also violate pragmatic conventions of conversation and interaction. Classroom interaction, in most cases, is limited to teacher-initiated questions, which are to a great extent display questions that are difficult to answer due to a short time allowed for response, and the third turn is merely simple feedback (Jones & Myhill, 2007; Smith, Hardman, Wall, & Mroz, 2004). The present study, therefore, aimed to provide a detailed description of the patterns of teachers/student's interaction in EFL classrooms in Iran.

Research Questions

The study answers the following research questions:

Q_1. What are the discourse patterns of teacher/learner and learner/learner interactions in EFL classrooms?

Q_2. To what extent does code-switching take place in teacher/learner and learner/learner interactions in EFL classrooms?

Review of Literature

Some research has been carried out about the discourse of classroom interaction (Edwards & Westgate, 2005; Nakatani, 2010; Seedhouse, 1996). Classroom interaction includes any type of classroom participation occurring in the classroom, such as teacher-student, student-student, group discussions, and any other type of classroom participation. Walsh (2013) defined interaction as a type of communication that needs collective competence by all parties. With classroom interaction, teachers allow students to interact and express themselves (Walsh, 2013). Classroom interactions include the actions of both teachers and students inside the classroom. Classroom interaction is organized in different ways according to teachers' objectives and students' needs. Its organization depends on the participants who communicate together (Walsh, 2013), but generally speaking, interaction can be classified into two main types: *Teacher – Learner Interaction* and *Learner – Learner Interaction*

Teacher – Learner interaction takes place in the classroom between the teacher and students. It can be teacher-student or teacher- students' interaction. This form of interaction

usually occurs when the teacher asks questions, and one student answers the question. It also occurs when the teacher asks questions from small groups of students or the whole class and they respond to the question or questions. This type of interaction is usually controlled by the teacher, who is the dominant figure in the classroom. The students' role is limited to providing answers and receiving commands. In this case, the class teacher is the sender, and the students are receivers. The primary function of this type of interaction is to practice the language in a controlled pattern. In most cases, the teacher's role in this type of interaction pattern is transmitting knowledge to students because most of the patterns are in the forms of modeling and drilling (Dagarin, 2004). The improvement of sociolinguistics and ethnography highlighted the social character of interaction, and a number of research studies have been allocated to classroom interaction.

An investigation conducted by Kovalainen and Kumpulainen (2005) investigated the discursive practice of participation in an elementary classroom community in Finland. The study aimed at examining collective meaning-making and joint creation of knowledge. By analyzing the communicative practices and discursive roles of the students and the teacher, the amount of participation and responsibilities of classroom member was specified, and it was demonstrated how these interactions shape the construction of knowledge in class. Examinations were completed on video accounts of classroom communications. Meticulous, multi-level analyses were conducted on transcribed video recordings of classroom interactions. The results demonstrate that the cultural rule in this classroom provided the students with a space to take authority in cognitive work, whereas the teacher's responsibility was more directed to the management of interactional practices. The nature of knowledge exchanged throughout the lessons was based upon view sharing and defining. The study also shows that the communicative roles and responsibilities of the classroom members differed across the learning situations.

Maftoon and Rezaie (2013) investigated classroom discourse in a communicative EFL context in Iran. The study was conducted in a class with 12 adult male elementary language learners with an age range of 20 to 40. Using a descriptive and analytic methods, they collected and interpreted their findings. The findings reveal that most of the moves employed by the teacher assumed an evaluative function rather than a conversational function, suggesting that the teacher was more inclined to check whether students understood the input or whether their utterances were accurate. Furthermore, the results indicate that corrective feedback strategies are different in their promotion of learner engagement and learner-generated uptake. Recasts and explicit correction were very common but failed to promote higher rates of uptake, which is seen as an indication of learner engagement in the learning process.

Significance of the Study

The analysis of classroom discourse could hopefully show if one-way communication prevails in the lessons and if the teachers are mostly leading teacher-fronted discussions. Examination of the teachers' and students' verbal behaviors could also reveal if frequent code-switching practices occur in their interactions. By recording, transcribing, and analyzing students' discourse, teachers can gain insight into the effect of specific tasks on students' language production and, over time, on their language development. The results may also make teachers aware of the students' needs for more classroom participation. In fact, research shows that the teachers who aim at involving the students in meaningful collaboration support to develop constructive social bonds among them, which, in turn, supports the students' cognitive development (Beyazkurk & Kesner, 2005). As a result, teachers need to understand that in order to prevent teacher-fronted activities dominate their classrooms, they should support learning by

proper form and use of classroom interactions. Knowing the impact which classroom interaction and code-switching may have on the learning process, teachers could design tasks and activities which most successfully would help students augment their learning. Next chapter will elaborate on methods and procedures which have been used in this study to collect the needed data for the present study.

Methodology

The main objective of this chapter is to introduce the participants, instruments, and materials used for the process of data collection and data analysis. Also, it is trying to clarify the study design of the study.

Participants

Participants of this study were selected from a private language institute in Basht City of Kohgiloyeh and Boyer-ahmad Province. After discussing my proposal with the director of Sokhane Nou Institute and securing her permission to proceed with the study, I attended a meeting of the Sokhane Nou Institute staff to present a very general idea of my research plan. In order to prevent intervening influence, details on the topic of the study were never revealed to the teachers until the observation period was over, Informed consent forms were distributed to the teachers, and they were given an opportunity to ask questions. All the teachers consented to take part in the study. I also visited classes to obtain signed consent from every student, and had to attend seven sessions to talk with all the students who would be in my four sample groups. I spoke briefly to the students about my project, passed out the consent forms, and gave the students a chance to ask questions.

Finally, 91 Pre-intermediate EFL students, including 48 females and 43 males, participated in the study. They were chosen from four classes as convenient samples for the study; four teachers (of both sexes), each with enough teaching experience, also participated in this study.

Instruments and Corpus

To reach the goals of this study, after seven sessions of observation corpus, which included classroom talk, was selected. On a list of students attending during each observation, the number of times each student initiated a contact with the teacher by making a comment or asking a question was tallied. These were totaled at the end of each observation and recorded as "student comments." At the end of each class, I wrote additional field notes while the ideas were fresh. The interaction data from the coding forms were analyzed at the end of each day. Besides, all observed sessions were recorded as well.

To classify the classroom discourse for teachers' and students' talks, the present investigation utilized Tsui's (1995) framework for the accompanying reasons, which is a three-part framework, namely initiation, response, and follow-up for discourse acts. Utilizing authentic and normally happening data as a hotspot, for example, Tsui (1995) suggests refinements and expansions to well-developed frameworks proposed by researchers such as Sinclair, Sinclair, and Coulthard (1975) for the investigation of conversation and sets up in the process new experiences into the sequencing of examples of conversation. Tsui (1995) takes three distinct but related part trade as order and organization unit of a conversation. She contends that the fundamental authoritative unit of discussion is a conceivably three-part trade including an initiation, a response, and a follow-up, with an optional fourth or fifth part, that is a follow-up

being alternatively recursive (Tsui, 1995). Within each of these three classes, he additionally distinguishes subclasses. In general, Tsui's structure can be abridged in Table 1.

Table 1
Taxonomy of Discourse Acts (Adapted from Tsui, 1994: 61)

Elements of Structure	I	R	F1	F2
Move	Initiating	Responding	Follow-up (1)	Follow-up (2)
Head act:	Initiating primary class	Responding (initiation)	Follow-up (1) (response)	Follow-up (2)
Head act: Subclass	Elicitation Requestive Directive Informative	Positive Negative Temporization	Endorsement Concession Acknowledgement	Turn-passing

Procedures for data collection and classroom talk transcription

Using the taxonomy set forward by Tsui (1995), the researcher attended the four classes in order to observe the classroom practice without intervening in the natural classroom teaching and learning processes. Each class lasted about one hour and thirty minutes. There was also an attempt to see whether the discourse acts proposed by Tsui (1995) are present in Iranian Teacher-Student Talk, Student-Teacher Talk, and Student-Student Talk. Observations were entered on an observation schedule that involved predetermined classifications. Class interaction was categorized into the following categories: teacher and student talk time, language used in the lesson, the moments when Persian and English (code-switching) was used (repeating, giving instructions, explanation, translation, praise, and response). Transcriptions were made after the completion of data collection, which lasts for seven sessions for each class comprising almost 28 hours of classroom interaction (seven sessions of observation for each class). To gain a corpus of authentic conversations in which classroom discourse were uttered, the researchers recorded and observed the way language is used in class between teacher and students. This was done during seven sessions and about 2 months' time span in 2018

Observation of the class communication were audio-recorded and then transcribed for analysis. The audio-recorded data has several advantages such as the recoverability of certain features, playing and replaying, the possibility of checking, etc. All of which facilitate transcription. Through triangulation-classroom observation, class audio recordings, and transcription analysis- it could be seen first whether the lessons are teacher-centered or student-centered; second, it was possible to determine if the class interactions follow the Tsui's (1995) taxonomy; third, it was possible to see which of the parties usually speak more than the other (teacher talk time versus student talk time). Finally, code-switching was catered for to see whether the conversations are more common in the students' mother tongue (Persian) or the L2 (English). All talks that went on in the observed classrooms were classified into three groups: Teacher-Student Talk, Student-Teacher Talk, and Student-Student Talk. The frequency and percentage of the address forms were calculated and tabulated.

Results

Research question one

The first research question sought to investigate the different classifications of classroom discourse used in the Iranian English language classes. The observed class talk was classified in four categories: initiating, responding, follow-up1, and follow-up 2.

Table 2

Patterns of Teacher-Students Talk

Head acts	Subclasses	
Initiating acts	1.Requests	1.Request for action
		2. offer
	2. directive	1. Advice (advice & warning)
		2. mandative (instructions)
	3. elicitation	1. Inform (Reasoning, Explanation, Opinion, Information)
		2. Confirm
		3. Agree
		4. Repeat
		5. Clarify
	4. Informative	1. Report
		2. Expressive
		3. Assessment
Responding acts	Positive response	
	2. Negative Response	
	3. Temporization	
Follow-up acts (1)	Concession	
	2. Acknowledgment	
Follow-up acts (2)	Turn-passing	

As shown in Table 2, most discourse acts exist in teacher to students talks. This kind of talk was more prominent than the others, and most of the class time was allocated to this type of interaction. Within initiating category, requests for actions and in the form of offers are present in this talk which were used to address students to perform tasks and classroom activities; directive forms were used to give advice, warning, and instruction for the tasks they were supposed to do. In the elicitation category, which was used the most in classroom discourse, teachers give the students a sample of what is expected to be done in the task. Therefore, they used reasoning, explanation, opinion, and information to help students in doing them; confirming the answers to the questions or agreeing with them, along with repeating and clarifying, were used within this category. Besides these categories, informative forms were present in teacher to students' conversations, and they were used to present reports, express something or assess their performance during the class. Within responding acts, positive and negative answers along with temporization were used by the teacher, and in their first follow-up, concession and acknowledgement and in their second follow-up turn-passing were used.

Table 3
Patterns of Students-Teacher Talk

Head acts	Subclasses	
Initiating acts	1.Requests	1.Request for permission
		2. Request for action
	2. elicitation	1. Inform (Reasoning, Explanation, Opinion, Information)
		2. Confirm
		3. Agree
		4. Repeat
		5. Clarify
	4. Informative	1. Report
		2. Expressive
Responding acts	Positive response	
	2. Negative response	
	3. silence	
	Self-repair	
Follow-up acts (1)	Endorsement (thanking)	
	2. Acknowledgment	
	3.Accept (repair)	
Follow-up acts (2)	(none)	

Table 3 shows the patterns of students to teacher talk in classroom discourse. It indicates that within initiating acts, request for permission and requests for action are used by students. Also, in this category for initiating the talk, students used elicitation mainly for reasoning, explanations, and opinions, which are mostly needed in answering questions asked by teachers or when they want to perform a task. Students to teacher talk include no directive acts. In the responding acts of students to teacher talk, they used positive and negative responses, a silence which was for thinking or even showing that they can answer or converse, and also self-repair in situations, which they found their own mistakes. The follow-up acts were mostly used for thanking, acknowledging, and accepting repairs which were given to students to correct their talk.

Table 4
Patterns of Students-Students Talk

Head acts	Subclasses	
Initiating acts	1. Requests	1.Request for action
		2. offer
	2. directive	1. Advice (advice & warning)
		2. mandative (instructions)
	3. elicitation	1. Inform (Opinion, Information)
		2. Confirm
		3. Agree

		4. Clarify
	4. Informative	1. Expressive
		2. Assessment
Responding acts	Positive response	
	2. Negative Response	
	3. Silence	
	4. self-repair	
	5. Peer-repair	
Follow-up acts (1)	Concession	
	2. Acknowledgment	
Follow-up acts (2)	Turn-passing	

Table 4 shows the students to students talk in classroom discourse. There was no request for permission in this talk and in initiating acts, for requests they just used requests for actions and offer. For directive speech acts advice, warning, and instruction were used; they were mostly repeating what the teacher said or paraphrasing it for their classmates. In eliciting, they expressed opinions, gave information, confirm each other that it was sometimes agreeing, and clarify what they talked about. In informative speech acts, they used expressive and assessment acts by which they provided feedback to their classmates. Their responding acts consisted of positive and negative answers and silence, which was mostly for focusing or thinking over their answers, self-repair which occurred more than other acts to correct themselves, and peer repair, which was students' correction of other classmates. In their first follow-up acts, they used concession and acknowledgment. And the second follow-up acts include turn-passing in their conversations.

Research question two

The second research question dealt with code-switching in Iranian EFL classrooms. To find answer to this question, the frequency of code-switching by teacher and students was calculated. Table 5 shows the summary of the number each move was uttered.

Table 5

Number of Code-Switching in Classroom Discourse

Teachers' code-switching		Students' code-switching	
Frequency	Time	Frequency	Time
52	260	79	80

Code-switching was used more by teachers and mostly for grammar teaching and translation purposes. Sometimes Farsi is used to answer Farsi question of students or to give the instruction of a task in a class, or even clarify its process. The number of times Farsi was used by teachers was more than that of students' and this is due to the fact that in these classes, most of the time the teacher talks. Besides, even at the time there were some efforts to engage students in class or even have students talk together, the teachers dominated the classes. Even for code-switching, some efforts were made to use English to make the learning as close as to authentic language use. However, most of the time spent on grammar teaching Farsi was the dominant language in the classroom.

Discussion

The major intention in conducting the present work was to draw the overall scheme of discourse patterns that Iranian teachers and students might use to communicate during class and lesson presentations. As it was seen above, teacher to student talk was more prominent in the findings of the study, meaning that most of the class time has been taken by the teacher0.

By analyzing the teacher-to-student talk to find the discourse pattern, it was revealed that request, directive act, elicitation, and informative acts all exist in their talk and this finding is in line with Rashidi and Rafieerad's (2010) finding whose research on classroom discourse applied the same framework of Tsue’s discourse pattern. Request for action and offer were the only kinds of request found in teacher-students talk in the present study. In directive acts, this study is in line with Rashidi and Afieerad and both advice and warning were used in teacher talk for advisive utterances. Within elicitation, reasoning, explanation, opinion, and information were used in teacher talk. Rashidi and Afieerad did not mention the existence of such elicitation acts in teacher talk, but in other aspects of elicitation, the findings of this study are in line with their study, and both agreed upon the existence of confirmation, agreement, repetition, and clarification. Within informative acts in the present study report and expressive were used, and both of them exist in the same category by Rashidi and Afieerad, but they have also mentioned assessing in the informative talk while in present study there were no assessing in the initiating act of teacher to students talk.

In the responding act of teacher talk, the collected data revealed that positive and negative responses along with temporization were used. This is also in line with Rashidi and Afieerad who found both positive and negative responses in teachers’ talk, they also mentioned that temporization exist in teacher responding act; this put both studies exactly in the same line for responding acts of teacher in classroom discourse.

In students to teacher talk, the pattern has been drawn according to the collected data. In initiating acts, they used to request for permission and request for action, and this is in line with Rashidi and Afieerad’s finding for students to the teacher talk. The present study showed that for directive acts, there were no utterance recorded. For eliciting, the present study recorded information, confirmation, agreement, repetition, and clarification. Within informative acts, report and expressive acts were in the pattern which was provided in this study.

In the responding act of students to teacher talk, positive and negative response, silence, and repair were used, but in Rashidi and Afieerad’s report, positive and negative responses were recorded, and surprisingly the silence and self-repair were not mentioned.

Follow-up acts of students to teacher talk, were mostly endorsement by thanking, acknowledging, and accepting the repair. Rashidi and Afieerad just recorded endorsement and acknowledgment, and accepting repair is not mentioned. And this would not be far fetch as there was no repair mentioned in the responding acts in both teacher-students and students-teacher talk. For the second follow-up, nothing was found in this study.

In students-students talk, the request for action and offer are the two requests which have been mention for initiating acts in this study. In elicitation, the present study showed that students-students talk had inform, confirm, agree, and clarify act. Within informative acts, expressive acts and assessment of each other were recorded.

In responding acts, the present study revealed that positive and negative responses and silence along with both self-repair and peer-repair exist in students-students talk. The existence of self-repair and peer-repair is a sign of collaboration and scaffolding techniques in the class, and the role of the teacher is highlighted as a supporter in the process of learning, and this is in line with Kovalainen and Kumpulainen (2005), whose study revealed the facilitating role of a teacher. The prominent role of the teacher in the present study is revealed by the time which has been spent on his talk, and this is also in line with Kovalainen and Kumpulainen (2005), who have the same general view towards initiating and informative aspects of classroom discourse.

One of the results in the presents study was the existence of assessment in teacher to students talk. In a study by Maftoon and Rezaie (2013), assessment of teacher has been highlighted with a mark of emphasis; it is mentioned that follow-up moves of teacher talk is more evaluative than discoursal function.

Another finding of the present study is that both teacher and students used Persian talk as the native language of Iranian EFL learners, beside translation which is used by both teachers and students for clarification of what is presented in the class or even to ask for how to express something in English, Persian was also used by students and some grammatical points were explained in Persian. Another research by Domalewska (2015) in Thai language classes also showed the same result, meaning that they also used Thai, which is their native language, and in this report the amount of time which is given to native language is even more than what is observed in the present study. But it is still English which is the dominant language in class.

Code-switching and its use are also in accord with a study in the Chinese context by Littlewood and Yu (2011), who transcribes data show code-switching. Another finding of the present study which is in line with the Yu’s study is the domination of teacher in the classroom discourse.

Conclusion

From both practical and theoretical points of view, the findings of the present study will be valuable to language teachers by showing what really is going on in a typical language class, and encourage them to move far from a teacher centered method of instructing by receiving a more student or learner centered method of instruction. To this end, teachers should fuse exercises such as 'critical thinking', 'information-gap task' and so forth in their interaction. Besides, the finding may be useful for curriculum and material developer along with course book designers by giving them valuable data to be utilized as a part of the way toward building up a sound book. They should endeavor to fuse exercises and assignments in the books which would incite more 'authentic correspondence' amongst students and teachers.

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