



An Analysis of Iraqi EFL Fifth Preparatory Pupils Feedback Discourse Interaction

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Abstract

Student-teacher language interaction is given a great environment through classrooms. Previously students had no role in the teaching-learning process, while teachers were the corner stone of the class. Nowadays studies show that students control classes verbally where they lead the talk more than teachers. Student-teacher interaction is expected to be encouraged by teachers, providing not only student-teacher interaction but also student-student interaction in the form of groups or pairs or through assignments or presentations. There has been a great shift in the concept of the process of classroom and interaction. More emphasis is given to language learning as a result of classroom interaction. Changing from silent recipients to active participants in the learning process, learners play an active role in the whole classroom process and subsidize greatly to the language learning process. The study aims at interpreting the learners' interact. This study is limited to the analysis of Iraqi EFL fifth preparatory students when interacting inside their classes. The data chosen to analyze is the transcribed interaction inside the class. It is concluded that pronouns are used by the participants for the purpose of defining roles and providing overt directions. This is made more specific through the use of modals of necessity. Direct imperatives are also used by all the participants but in different degrees.

Key words: Interaction, discourse, content analysis



1. Introduction

According to Tsui (2001:120), the expression 'classroom interaction' is about the interaction between the teacher and the students, in addition to interactions among the students themselves. It is important to mention at the outset that different researchers adopt differing views of classroom interaction.

"Iraqi students have to take English lessons from the beginning of school till they graduate". Shuker, Abbas, and Obaid (2018:1579). This study shows that the teacher-student interaction develops week after week creating a strong bond that allows and improves interaction.

Alkhateeb(2010 :4) states that "Classroom interaction is defined as the communication between the teacher and the pupils"

This study answers the following question: what are the types of the strategies used by the sample? What are the types of errors made? And what are the suggested techniques for improving interaction.

The study aims at interpreting the learners' interact, improving classroom interaction and discovering the practical problems that are embedded in their learning.

It is hypothesized that the Iraqi learners of English are not well qualified to interact effectively as far as spoken discourses is concerned.

This study is limited to the analysis of Iraqi EFL fifth preparatory pupils when interacting inside their classes. The data chosen to analyze is the transcribed interaction inside the class. The researcher has analysed the chosen data to improve the study hypothesis.

Three core sub-categories of teachers' classroom discourse are studied qualitatively, through textual analysis and quantitatively through calculation of frequency of use for analyzing the chosen data. The testees (three boy classes and three girl classes each with fifty pupils) are the sample population of this study. These students are intentionally observed how to interact inside their classrooms with teachers.

McDonough and McDonough (1997:102-103) also illuminate that three key parameters of classroom observation need to be clarified. These are recognized as the role of the observer within a continuum of subjectivity/ objectivity, the goals of



the observation which can increase knowledge, understanding a phenomenon or creating new knowledge and finally the procedures for observation.

It is wished that the current study will be of some value to those who are interested in language teaching and learning.

2. Language Classroom Interaction

Seliger and Long (1983:246) regard the language classroom as a 'complex drama for social interaction'. As far as facilitating language acquisition is concerned, language classroom bids learners a benefit over real-life setting. The ultimate aim of any classroom learning process is language learning, including teachers' input, students' participation, interaction and communication among learners themselves and the teacher. Lier (1998:90) states that the two essential ways of observing what is produced by learners in the classrooms is by concentrating on 'what is said' and 'what is done'. He mentions that the aim of observing "what is said" helps to learn the exact linguistic features of the learners' interlanguage and their progress over time. In contrast, the aim of concentrating on 'what is done' helps to comprehend the ways wherein language is practiced inside classrooms. It provides a better viewpoint of the process of language learning.

According to Mercer and Littleton (2007:4-8), "classroom communication adds to learners intellectual development and their educational attainment". the overall language oral and aural skills are improved within the classroom communication by learners. Hale and City (2006:3) highlight the importance of student engagement in classroom talk, affirming that, student-centered talks stimulate students to improve intellectually as well as culturally. They declare that it is absolute to encourage student-centered talks in the classroom because the purpose of these talks are " (1) for students to deepen their understanding of ideas in a text, as well as their own ideas and the ideas of others, and (2) to develop students' ability to engage in a civil, intellectually challenging discussion of ideas" (ibid).

Efficient learning stimulates students and forms an environment through learning in groups. Students are able to negotiate meaning by interacting in groups "to express themselves in the language of the subject". It improves students' four skills, the productive and the recognition skills, and builds the qualities of teamwork (Jaques and Salmon, 2007:1).



2.1. Feedback Strategies

Feedback has been defined by Ramaprasad (1983:4) as "information about the gap between the actual level and the reference level of a system parameter which is used to alter the gap in some way". Carlson (1979:4) also argues that feedback is "authoritative information students receive that will reinforce or modify responses to instruction and guide them more efficiently in attaining the goals of the course.

One of the primary aims of feedback is related to the overall objective of enabling students to improve. For students to improve, they should have a notion of the desired standard in order to make a comparison between actual performance and desired performance. Therefore, feedback functions as a bridge between actual and desired performance. In addition, teacher's feedback is important to learners as they use it "to monitor the strengths and weaknesses of their performances" with the aim of recognizing and reinforcing positive learning and to modify or improve unsatisfactory aspects (Sadler, 1989:120).

Chaudron (1988:132) argues that error correction is implicit in the notion of feedback, particularly as a primary role of language teachers which is often considered to be "the provision of both error correction as a form of negative feedback and positive approval of learner's production". A unique aspect of classroom feedback relates to the position of the teacher. He states that "the special circumstances of the teacher having superior knowledge and status results in an imbalance in expectations as to who provides feedback and when it is provided" and "teachers are expected to execute their vested instructional authority to evaluate any and all student behaviour, nonverbal and verbal". He concludes that the role of feedback is vital and an 'inevitable constituent of classroom interaction, for no matter what the teacher does, learners' derive information about their behaviour from the teacher's reaction or lack of one, to their behaviour'. It has been argued that error correction is ineffective and damaging to students' development, however, through his study Chaudron (ibid) argues that error correction by the teacher was one of the most highly valued and desired classroom activities.

Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) identify the 'F-move' which refers to the 'Follow-up' or 'Feedback' move in their analysis of classroom discourse. In addition to providing general content instruction, a vital role of language teachers has been considered to be a provision of error correction. The feedback component of classroom discourse is what distinguishes classroom talk most obviously from speech events which take place outside of the classroom. Chaudron (1988:40)

explains that the teacher's 'differential right to the floor' represents the " final step of the classic exchange cycle of teacher initiation/ solicitation- student response- teacher feedback/evaluation, where the evaluation step is the most unusual in comparison with natural conversation".

Allwright and Bailey (1991:107-108) list the following feedback strategies:

- Fact of error indicated
- Blame indicated
- Location indicated
- Model provided
- Error type indicated
- Remedy indicated
- Improvement indicated
- Praise indicated
- Opportunity for new attempt given.

Thus, some of the strategies identified by Allwright and Bailey (ibid) may not always be appropriate. Instead, the teacher's strategies in providing feedback should enable the creation of a supportive emotional climate. Choosing error correction strategies which make students comfortable enough to take risk are of great importance. For example, Virgil and Oller (1976:282) stress that teachers must provide learners with appropriate cognitive and affective feedback.

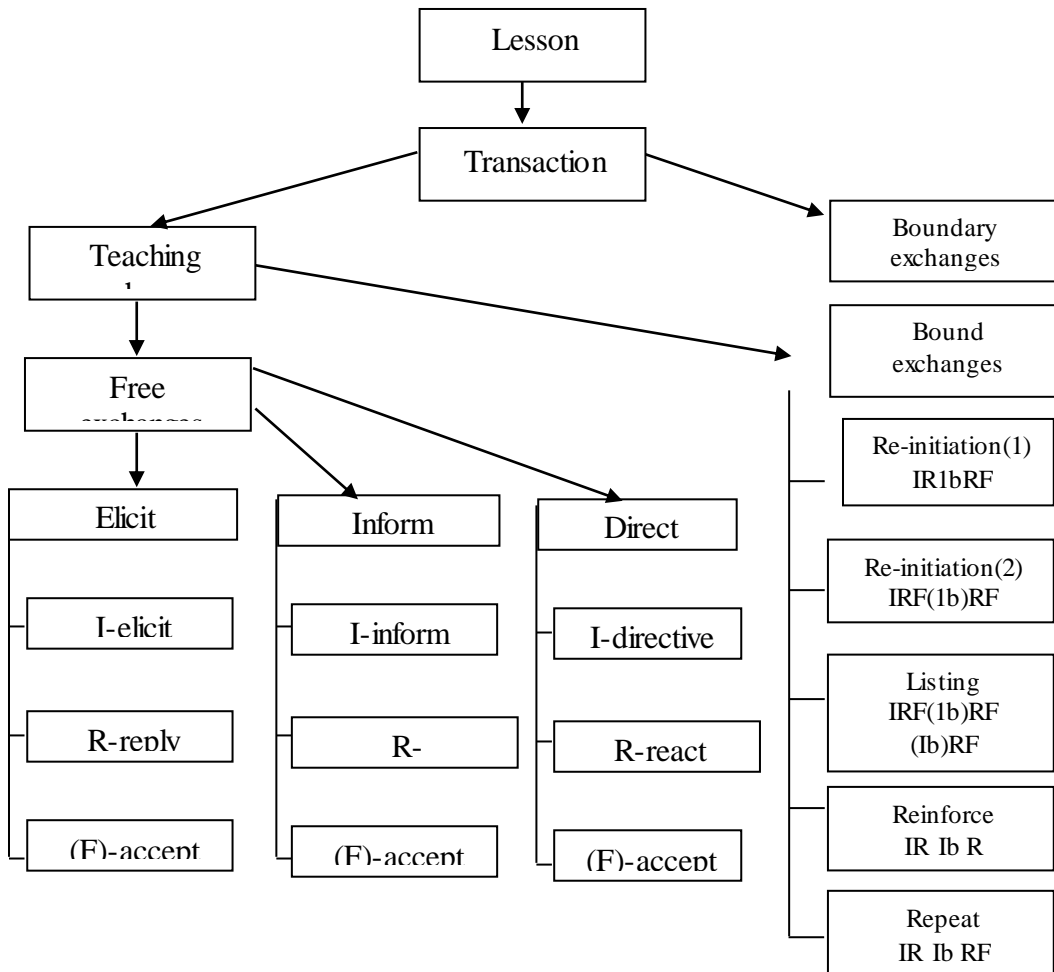
Lyster and Ranta (1997:55) identify the following different types of feedback utilized by the teachers in their study:

- a) Explicit Correction Refers to the explicit provision of the correct form, with the teacher clearly indicating what the student had said was incorrect.
- b) Recasts involves the teacher's reformulation of all or part of the student's utterance, without the error. These generally tend to be implicit although some are salient than others.
- c) Clarification Requests: These indicate to the students that the teacher has misunderstood their utterance or that the utterance is ill formed in some way and that a repetition or a reformulation is required. This feedback strategy can refer to either problems in comprehensibility or accuracy or both.
- d) Metalinguistic Feedback: Contains either comments, information, or questions related to the well-formedness of the student's utterance without explicitly providing the correct form.
- e) Elicitation: These can be of three types: first, teachers elicit completion of their own utterance by strategically pausing to allow student to 'fill in the blank'. Second, teachers use questions to elicit the correct form and third, teachers occasionally ask students to reformulate their utterance.

- f) Repetitions: These refer to the teacher's repetition, in isolation of the student's erroneous utterance, usually signified by an adjustment in the teacher's intonation.

In providing feedback, teachers evaluate student responses through both implicit and explicit strategies. As the powerful members, teachers can choose to provide feedback to the students through politeness strategies as the attention paid to the addressee's face is affected by the relative power of the speaker over the addressee.

Table 2. Sinclair & Coulthard's IRF Model



The model shows two types of exchanges- 'Boundary' and 'Teaching'. Boundary exchanges mark either the end or beginning of a stage in the lesson, which can be implemented by either framing or focusing moves. Words such as (Ok, Allright) perform the function of indicating boundaries – 'the end of one stage and the beginning of the next' (Coulthard, 1992: 3). In addition to the set of words mentioned earlier, teachers can also indicate ends and beginnings of stages in the lesson through extended pauses and or comments.

Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) and Coulthard (1992:25) identify eleven subcategories of teaching exchanges. The four main functions of the exchanges are those of 'informing, directing, eliciting and checking'.

The 'inform' function is when the teacher provides students with new information, either through facts or personal opinions. In this exchange, the students may not make a response to the teacher, thus the exchange is I(R) with no feedback. The second function is that of 'teacher direct', which covers all exchanges which are designed to get the students to do something but not necessarily to say something. The nature of the classroom determines that 'Response' is a compulsory element, although 'Feedback' is not essential. Here the structure is that of IR (F). When the teacher 'elicits', the intention of the teacher is to obtain verbal responses from the students. Due to the questioning nature of this move, where the teacher is supported to have the answers to the questions, feedback is an essential element of this structure. This is because once a student has provided a response, the teacher is expanded to respond to the contribution (ibid).

The fifth function identified is that of 'pupil inform' where the student might provide some additional information of their own volition and the teacher provides feedback. However in this exchange, there is no response, thus the structure is that of I (F) not I (R) which is the structure when the teacher informs (ibid).

The five types of bound exchange consist of four which are 'teacher elicit' while the last is a 'teacher direct'. The first of these is 'Re-initiation (i)', where the teacher re-initiates the question, either through repetition, rephrasing, prompts or clues when there has been no response to an elicitation. The second type of 'Re-Initiation (ii)' is when the teacher gets a wrong answer. The teacher can either redirect the question to another member of the class or continue questioning the initial respondent, but



provide some form of guidance to enable the student to derive the answer. In this case, unlike the previous re-initiation, there is feedback from the teacher. The third type of bound exchange occurs when the teacher withholds evaluation until more answers are given by different class members. In the fourth bound exchange, 'reinforce', the teacher directs a student who might have either misunderstood or not fully understand a directive. The last bound exchange is that of 'repeat', where the teacher repeats because a student/students have not heard the teacher.

3. Data Analysis

The willingness of the participants to be video-recorded proved to be advantageous for a number of reasons. Firstly, video-recording as a method of data-collection is in keeping with language and communication research which recommends access to as much contextual information as possible in order to understand and interpret a communicative event (Cameron, 1994:85).

In terms of learners uptake, recasts were the least likely to lead to uptake while elicitation led to 100% uptake. Lyster and Ranta (ibid) also concluded that the feedback types that allow for negotiation of form are elicitation, metalinguistic feedback, clarification requests and repetition.

4. Conclusions

It is concluded that the above six types of feedback strategies were most often used by the teachers in their study, with recasts being the most dominant. Most of the feedback strategies are actually diversely used. The teacher's strategies in providing feedback should enable the creation of a supportive emotional climate. Choosing error correction strategies which make students comfortable enough to take risk are of great importance.

It is concluded that pronouns are used by the participants for the purpose of defining roles and providing overt directions. This is made more specific through the use of modals of necessity. Direct imperatives are also used by all the participants but in different degrees.

Using modals of obligation is observed. Both of these patterns are used by the participants but with different frequencies, with some clearly favouring one pattern over the other.



The linguistic construction identifies the role of the teacher as the 'task-giver' and that of the students as the 'task-doer'. This construction is also a clear illustration of asymmetrical discourse, which allows for males and females to adopt dominant speech styles.

Another sub-category of analysis is the use of the second person plural with modals of necessity. The findings indicate that the use of this authoritative language of instruction is common to all the participants.

The use mode and modality is to a large extent defined by the perception of authority that the speaker has over the listener. There is a clear indication of the obligation the student has to complete the task as set by the teacher.

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