

From Knowledge to Practice: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Teacher-Student Classroom Discourse

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Abstract

Classroom discourse is not just a neutral communication channel but a dynamic space where knowledge, power, and identities are constantly negotiated. This study employs Ruth Wodak’s Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) to analyze how language in classroom interactions connects theoretical knowledge with practical application. Data were gathered through classroom observations, audio-visual recordings, and semi-structured questionnaires with three secondary school teachers, teaching English, science, and social studies and thirty students in Nawalparasi, Nepal. The analysis uncovers how teachers’ linguistic strategies, such as questioning, turn-taking, nomination, and evaluation, both reinforce and challenge institutional hierarchies while shaping student engagement. Students are not passive; they actively influence meaning-making through negotiation, resistance, and co-construction. The study also takes a cognitive perspective by exploring how schemas, scripts, and frames influence discourse, illustrating how mental models guide interaction and interpretation. The results show that classroom communication both supports and questions existing beliefs and power structures, reflecting broader sociopolitical and historical processes. By integrating linguistic, cognitive, and socio-historical perspectives, this research provides a deeper understanding of classroom communication as a social practice. The study further suggests that raising discourse awareness among educators can promote participatory, inclusive and equitable teaching practices, ultimately linking theoretical insights to practical classroom experiences.

Keywords: Kiscouusc nnnl;sis, íhcoucícicnl knowlcKgc, clnssuoom uuncícic, DiscouuscLHisíouicnl “uuuonch (DH”)

Introduction

Despite the sharing of information, classroom language includes the interaction students. It operates as a social practice that reflects and reinforces broader societal ideologies, power structures, and hierarchies. Analyzing classroom discourse, therefore, provides valuable insights into how authority, knowledge, and identities are negotiated within educational environments. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers a powerful framework for uncovering these patterns of interaction (Laia et al., 2025; Syahrani et al., 2024). Yet, despite its relevance, the application of CDA in classroom contexts remains limited and often underestimated. This gap highlights the need to examine how CDA can elucidate the complex relationships between classroom dialogue, knowledge, and power, while also demonstrating its capacity to connect theoretical frameworks with practical classroom realities.

Classroom discourse is not merely a medium for transmitting knowledge but a space for active meaning-making, negotiation, and social construction (Rahmah Irmayani, 2025). Language functions as the primary medium of communication across societies, shaping cultural interpretations and reflecting social norms and beliefs (Sirbu, 2015; Alsoraihi, 2019). As Philomina (2015) emphasizes, language is central to effective communication, while Chambers (2007) highlights how communicative approaches in language education have developed to examine real-world conversations in both written and spoken forms. These perspectives

underscore the centrality of language in shaping both learning processes and broader social interactions.

In educational settings, classroom discourse serves as the foundation for negotiating and constructing identities, authority, and knowledge (Rowe, 2004). To analyze these processes effectively, it is essential to employ an approach that connects language practices to broader social, historical, and cognitive contexts. This study applies the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), developed by Ruth Wodak, which integrates cognitive perspectives into CDA to explore how individual mental frameworks—such as scripts, frames, and schemas—shape the relationship between social structures and language use (Jahedi et al., 2014; Wodak, 2016). DHA's strength lies in its emphasis on analyzing discourse within its socio-political and historical settings as well as its immediate interactional environment, making it particularly suited for classroom research.

The language choices of teachers, their questioning techniques, feedback strategies, and interactional patterns significantly shape the classroom environment. These communicative practices, together with students' responses and implicit assumptions, influence how knowledge is understood, internalized, and applied (Bhatti h Alzahrani, 2024). While discourse can support the development of practical skills, it can also hinder learning when power relations or ideological biases restrict participation. By employing CDA, this study moves beyond surface-level descriptions of classroom talk

to examine the deeper social, political, and ideological dimensions of interaction. Such a critical perspective allows for an exploration of equity, access, and power within educational practices.

Through this lens, classroom discourse is understood as both reflecting and reproducing cultural norms, social hierarchies, and processes of knowledge construction. Communicative exchanges shape student engagement, teacher–student relationships, and overall learning experiences, bridging theoretical understandings of discourse with its practical application in classrooms. The cognitive component of DHA further clarifies how participants’ internal knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs shape their interpretations and contributions to classroom interaction (Wodak, 2011). This dual approach highlights the importance of discourse not only as a communicative practice but also as a pedagogical resource for fostering inclusive and empowering learning environments.

The interaction between theoretical knowledge and practical application remains a central challenge in education (Qadhi, 2023; Zhou, 2025). While educational theories emphasize contextual relevance, critical thinking, and collaborative learning, classroom practices often remain rooted in traditional teacher-centered approaches (Mpho, 2018). This disjuncture can hinder student participation and limit the development of higher-order cognitive skills (Phillips & Condy, 2023). By applying CDA to classroom discourse, this study seeks to uncover the ideological underpinnings, linguistic

strategies, and power relations that shape classroom interactions and, consequently, influence student learning outcomes.

Classroom discourse thus emerges as a powerful medium for transmitting information, shaping identities, and negotiating social roles. At the same time, it is a site where power structures can be either reproduced or contested (Tajeddin & Yazan, 2024). Despite the growing body of literature on CDA in education, little is known about how classroom discourse specifically mediates the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Addressing this gap, the present study analyzes how teachers and students co-construct meaning and explores how CDA, particularly through DHA, can serve as both an analytical framework and a pedagogical tool to bridge theory and practice in classroom contexts. By addressing the following research questions and objectives, the present study positions itself at the intersection of discourse analysis and classroom pedagogy, aiming to demonstrate the critical role of language in shaping not only educational outcomes but also broader social processes. This research seeks to answer these questions: How are knowledge and power relations constructed and negotiated by instructors and students through language use in classroom discourse? and What aspects of meaning-making in classroom interactions are influenced by cognitive frameworks like schemas, scripts, and frames? similarly, it aims to analyze how classroom discourse both reflects and shapes social power dynamics and knowledge formation. To explore how

language use and interaction in classroom settings are influenced by cognitive thinking frames.

Literature Review

Scholars have long been interested in classroom discourse since students and teachers primarily negotiate power, knowledge, and identities in the classroom. Classroom language is influenced by larger social, cultural, and ideological systems, rather than being an objective means of communication (Fairclough, 1992; Mercer, 2000). Teachers' questioning, grading, and participation management strategies have a major impact on classroom dynamics and power dynamics (Cazden, 2001). Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) examines how speech reflects and constructs institutional hierarchies and ideological assumptions (van Dijk, 2008; Rogers, 2011). However, there has been limited research into the potential of CDA in micro-level classroom discourse, despite its widespread application in curriculum, policy documents, and instructional materials. Furthermore, little is understood about the role of cognitive perspectives such as schemas, scripts, and frames in explaining how students understand and use language in the classroom. This review lays out the theoretical and methodological foundations for investigating these overlapping topics in the present study.

Classroom Discourse as a Social Practice and CDA in Education

Classroom language serves not only as a means of conveying subject matter but also as a social practice in which

knowledge, authority, and identity are continually negotiated. Studies on classroom discourse have consistently highlighted how teacher-student interactions characterize larger educational and societal dynamics (Mercer, 2000; Walsh, 2011). The classroom environment unites individuals with a variety of authority, knowledge, and institutional power, indicating that communication is inherently biased and ideologically charged (Fairclough, 1995). Studying classroom discourse provides a critical framework for analyzing the role of language in mediating the connections among pedagogy, power, and social reproduction.

A consistent finding in discourse studies is the common occurrence of routinized interactional patterns, exemplified by the Initiation–Response–Evaluation (IRE) structure (Hu, 2025; Mehan, 1979). These routines establish order and predictability, simultaneously emphasizing the hierarchical structure of discourse, wherein the teacher maintains authority over turn-taking and the assessment of knowledge (Hellman, 2019). Recent studies suggest that these patterns may hinder genuine student participation, thereby reinforcing institutional authority (Hinostroza-Paredes, 2020; Cazden, 2001; Lemke, 1990). This makes classroom discourse a productive site for critical investigation.

The theoretical and methodological framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers a way to identify how language usage in classrooms both reflects and perpetuates social inequality. With an emphasis on the interaction between text, social environment,

and interaction, Fairclough (1992, 1995) defined CDA as the study of discourse as social practice. The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) developed by Wodak (2001) is particularly relevant since it places classroom conversation in a broader historical, political, and cultural framework. DHA allows academics to track the flow of power and ideology in regular classroom interactions by looking at discursive techniques, including nomination, prediction, and argumentation. For example, research has shown that although student communication is positioned as supplemental or subordinate, teacher speech often normalizes institutional hierarchies by focusing on control, discipline, and accuracy (van Dijk, 2008).

However, the use of CDA in classroom research is still underappreciated despite its potential. Although several studies have shown how CDA may be used to examine policy discourse, textbooks, and curricula (Apple, 2019), fewer scholars have used it to investigate the minute details of routine classroom conversation. Though the technique is still not often included in mainstream classroom discourse analysis, recent publications (Laia et al., 2025; Syahriani et al., 2024) indicate that CDA may provide insightful information about how power relations and ideologies are performed in real-time classroom interactions.

Language, Power, and Ideology in Classroom Settings

Since power in the classroom is often used discursively rather than physically, language is an essential means for negotiation and control. Classroom hierarchies are shaped by teachers' questioning strategies, evaluation

remarks, and control over turn-taking (Hu h Chen, 2022; Sinclair h Coulthard, 1975). Furthermore, the ideas embedded in classroom discourse often reflect cultural presumptions on identity, authority, and knowledge. For instance, by elevating dominant languages and stifling minority voices, monolingual classroom practices may perpetuate linguistic inequalities (Hornberger, 2002).

CDA academics argue that these kinds of actions actively reproduce existing disparities rather than only reflecting them (Fairclough, 2010; van Dijk, 2009). However, discourse also offers chances for negotiation and opposition, so it is not a one-way process of dominance. Power in speech is relational and dynamic, as shown by how students can challenge instructor authority with humor, silence, or alternate framings of classroom events (Foucault, 1980). Understanding these complex dynamics requires analytical tools that capture both the structural and interpretive dimensions of classroom interaction.

This study connects micro-level linguistic interactions with broader social, cultural, and historical dynamics by employing Wodak's DHA to analyze classroom speech (Wodak, 2004, 2015). This approach enables a comprehensive review of how educators and learners use language collaboratively to shape identities, social roles, knowledge, and power relationships (Wodak, 2006). Moreover, it also connects theory and practice by providing insights into how speech affects classroom participation, agency, and power by demonstrating how abstract language

and cognitive theories translate to actual educational contexts (Wang, 2019). It promotes the creation of more equitable and successful teaching methods by increasing discourse awareness and intercultural knowledge (Pham, 2024). Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) provides a comprehensive framework within Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by integrating linguistic, cognitive, social, historical, and political dimensions. It emphasizes that classroom discourse should be understood as a socially embedded, historically situated, and cognitively mediated practice, where language use is inseparable from its broader sociopolitical and cultural contexts.

Cognitive Aspects: Scripts, Frames, and Schemas

CDA has been critiqued for undervaluing the cognitive processes that influence participants' interpretations and enactments of discourse, despite the fact that it has offered insightful information on the ideological aspects of classroom discourse (Chilton, 2004). Cognitive ideas like schemas, scripts, and frames provide helpful alternative viewpoints to overcome this limitation.

Schemas are mental models that arrange expectations and past information (Saucier h Dobmeier, 2025; Bartlett, 1932). Teachers may use schemas about "ideal students" or "effective participation" in the classroom (Wei, 2021), while students may use schemas about what makes for a "good answer." These schemas have an impact on the creation and interpretation of classroom discourse, frequently reinforcing social

presumptions and prejudices.

Schemas that describe regularized occurrences are called scripts (Schank h Abelson, 1977). By organizing interactions around the instructor's initiation and assessment, the IRE sequence serves as an example of a classroom script that institutionalizes teacher power. By identifying these scripts, researchers can demonstrate how power is ingrained in classroom discourse practices.

Goffman (1974) mentioned that frames influence how participants understand the goal and significance of an encounter. For instance, presenting a class discussion as a test can cause students to provide cautious, limited responses, whereas framing it as a collaborative inquiry might inspire risk-taking and creativity. Therefore, frames show how discourse practices represent and perpetuate more general educational beliefs. Thus, researchers may examine the cognitive processes that support or undermine power structures in addition to the discursive tactics that create them by including schemas, scripts, and frames into CDA. This dual perspective aids in bridging the gap between real classroom practice and discourse analysis.

The reviewed literature underscores two key insights. First, classroom discourse is a central site for examining how language, power, and ideology are enacted and negotiated. Second, CDA provides a powerful framework for uncovering these dynamics but has not been fully applied to the micro-level analysis of classroom interactions, particularly in the context of Nepali secondary schools.

Moreover, the incorporation of cognitive tools such as schemas, scripts, and frames remains limited in classroom discourse research, despite their potential to illuminate the interpretive dimensions of interaction.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative design using Ruth Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA). DHA enables a multidimensional investigation of classroom discourse by integrating linguistic, cognitive, social, and historical perspectives.

Purposive sampling was applied to select three secondary school teachers (English, Social Studies, and Science) and thirty students (aged 15–17) from a semi-urban public school in Nawalparasi. Data were gathered through classroom observations, audio–video recordings, semi-structured questionnaires, and supplementary materials such as lesson plans and policy documents.

Analytical Framework

Analysis followed DHA principles: (1) Contextualization of discourse at immediate, institutional, and socio-historical levels, and (2) Cognitive analysis of schemas, scripts, and frames shaping communication. Triangulation of linguistic, social, and historical data ensured validity.

Discursive Strategies

The study examined rhetorical and linguistic devices (e.g., nominations, arguments, intensifiers, mitigations) to reveal how teachers and students construct knowledge, negotiate authority, and reproduce

or challenge ideologies.

Data Analysis Procedure

Classroom discussion was transcribed and coded under three categories: rhetorical devices (persuasive/mitigating language), cognitive frameworks (schemas, scripts, frames), and discourse topics (instructional or social themes). Iterative coding situated findings within broader socio-historical and educational contexts.

Findings and Discussions

This study applies Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach to classroom interactions, revealing how teachers and students negotiate knowledge and power through language. It shows how cognitive frameworks: frames, scripts, and schemas mediate meaning-making, highlighting the interplay of linguistic practices, sociopolitical contexts, and mental models in shaping classroom communication and interaction.

Power Dynamics in Teacher-Student Interactions

Institutional authority in classrooms is reflected in the unequal power dynamics where teachers govern discussion topics, turn-taking, and evaluation. Teacher authority is maintained through the use of directive language and questioning techniques. Here is an example

Teacher: What do you think is the meaning of "All the world's a stage?"

Student A: I think it's about the stage to perform.

Teacher: Great point! Can you give further examples?

In this dialogue, the instructor has institutional power and governs its flow. The teacher still has the final say about correctness, even though the open-ended question "What do you think is the meaning of 'All the world's a stage'?" encourages interpretation. "I think it's about the stage to perform" is Student A's response, which is comparatively literal and constrained. The teacher's "Great point!" reaction serves as positive reinforcement, confirming the student's perspective and promoting involvement.

This teacher-student interaction can be viewed as a socially and historically placed discourse event that negotiates institutional authority and learner engagement (Thornborrow, 2014). As the macro-context, the classroom naturally places the teacher in the role of knowledge gatekeeper, prescribing evaluation, topic selection, and turn-taking. Here, the instructor uses a position of encouragement to keep the student interested rather than a position of correction, and uses positive prediction ("Great point!") to validate the student's participation. The teacher uses supportive language to mitigate the power asymmetry while increasing cognitive effort by asking for "further examples" (Hellman, 2019). In line with DHA's emphasis on how discourse both reproduces and softens institutional hierarchies, this deliberate blending of nomination, evaluation, and directive functions reflects a cooperative power dynamic in which the teacher maintains their authoritative role while using it to scaffold the

students' understanding.

Teacher: Who can explain the functions of the Constitution to me?

Student A: It...uh... makes rules?

Teacher: Yes,↓ it defends citizens' rights and establishes↑ the norms for the government.

This excerpt demonstrates unequal power dynamics in classroom discourse once more. As the gatekeeper of knowledge, the instructor frames the discussion with an open-ended inquiry ("Who can explain..."). Student A's tentative response, "It...uh... makes rules?" conveys a lack of confidence and doubt. Following the teacher's instant affirmation ("Yes↓"), which employs a downward intonation to assert correctness and authority, the student's partial response is expanded upon by the teacher's elaboration ("it defends citizens' rights and establishes↑ the norms for the government"). By combining authoritative correction with supportive scaffolding, a defining characteristic of successful teacher-student interaction, the upward intonation on "establishes" explains a captivating and inclusive tone. Here is another example from science class.

Teacher: What is the primary energy source for life on Earth?

Student B: The Sun, really?

Teacher: True ↓ Plants use↑ the heat and light from the sun to perform photosynthesis.

Student C: We wouldn't have oxygen without plants.

Teacher: Exactly↓ . That's a link

The teacher controls the information flow by starting with a display question with only one right answer. The instructor decides who gets to speak and when, evaluating and expanding on each response. Students' responses are presented as factual, and the intended scientific principles are reinforced by the teacher's affirmations, "Correct↓" and "Exactly↓." By adding to the conversation, Student C demonstrates active engagement as opposed to passive receipt. Even within the teacher-led system, this illustrates the negotiation of perspectives and a partial rebalancing of the power dynamic.

The analysis illustrates the effective use of various linguistic and interactional strategies to establish and maintain knowledge and power relations in classroom discourse. Teachers frequently use subject control, turn-taking management, and the framing of what information is acceptable to create influence (Tao et al. 2025). The result can be seen in their evaluations that present particular answers as factual information, their use of directing language, and their questioning strategies (particularly display questions that demand particular replies). But students are more than just beneficiaries. By opposing, supporting, or expanding on the teacher's discourse, they actively use language to negotiate their viewpoints (Crew, 2024). Some students portray themselves as knowledgeable participants in the classroom, while others may adopt a more submissive demeanor, reflecting social hierarchies and power disparities.

Teacher: "Everyone has the right to vote in

a democracy. But some people choose not to vote, which is a problem in our society. Student: "But some people still don't know how to vote.

Teacher: "Yes, there are difficulties, but if they are taught, they know well how to vote.

The way participants are described in this interaction reveals nominations: "everyone" portrays all members of society as equal agents in the democratic process, whereas "some people" implicitly frames non-voters as a distinct, less accountable category. The characteristics ascribed reveal predictions: voting is described as right, whereas non-participation is connected to social "difficulties," thereby establishing a normative position on civic responsibility. Argumentation patterns adhere to the topos of efficacy (democracy functions best when people participate) and responsibility (if citizens have the right to vote, they should exercise that right). By supporting the prevailing democratic worldview, the teacher's discourse may minimize the structural obstacles for the student.

This micro-interaction is the cyclical reproduction of knowledge and power, with the instructor serving as the institutional authority who frames and endorses particular interpretations while tactfully avoiding more in-depth criticisms. This reflects larger sociopolitical processes in which official narratives are maintained in public discourse, but classroom discourse's dialogic style also provides limited opportunity for challenging and renegotiating these narratives.

These power relations and knowledge claims are encoded and reproduced through language choices like nominations (the way participants are labeled), predication (attributes assigned), and argumentation patterns (Aiston, 2024). For instance, teachers' rhetoric frequently reinforces prevailing educational ideologies by legitimizing institutional knowledge while downplaying competing viewpoints or student experiences. This cyclical discourse-based production of power and knowledge is consistent with larger sociopolitical processes, as classroom interactions both duplicate and offer a platform for contesting and renegotiating social power imbalances. Because classroom communication is dialogic, power is dynamic, and discourse serves as a tool for both defending and challenging authority.

Cognitive Mediation to Negotiate Power and Meaning

Schemas, scripts, and frames are examples of cognitive frameworks that are crucial in how participants in classroom discourse build meaning. To understand and produce language in context, educators and learners rely on both shared and individual schemas; mental models of knowledge and experience. Participants can anticipate and react appropriately during lessons by using scripts that outline expectations for interaction sequences, such as instructional routines and classroom roles.

Science Teacher: Can you describe a time in class when you were a part of the discussion?"

Student: "I remember when we were talking

about the practical project. The teacher told us it was interesting and asked other students to share their thoughts on the practical class. I felt that I was good at talking."

English Teacher: Explain what metaphors mean during a poetry discussion? What do you think the author means when he says, "The Gift of Wartime"?

Student: The gift of wartime means death. I think, what else?

Teacher: Oh, good! Do you think so?

Social Teacher: What is our responsibility to the people in our society?

Student: (Milera basne hola ni sir) We should live in harmony, sir.

In these situations, teachers help students understand abstract ideas by inviting them to use cultural scripts and known schemas. In the case of the group project, the teacher agrees with a student's idea ("that's interesting") and asks other students to add to the conversation. In this way, the classroom changes from a top-down model of teaching to a joint model, where students' ideas are given more weight. By making the student a co-creator of knowledge instead of just a passive user, the validation changes the symbolic power balance. The teacher still has power through framing and turn-taking control.

The metaphor "The Gift of Wartime" shows students' interpretive schemas during the poetry talk. One student uses the word "death" to frame the metaphor, drawing on a cultural script that links war to destruction

and loss. "Oh, good!" was the teacher's positive reaction. "Do you think so?" uses both mitigation and contextualization techniques. The teacher acknowledges the contribution and then opens the door for more thought, which is a subtle way of balancing authority with student choice. Furthermore, the student uses a cultural model of living with others in the social studies question about duty ("We should live in harmony, sir"). This shows how frames of social solidarity are used to make sense of things (Farrelly, 2020). For example, the student negotiates power by putting a local phrase ("milera basne") into the academic setting of civic duty.

Schemas, scripts, and frames serve as cognitive tools that help students interpret and negotiate meaning in classroom interactions. Teachers guide discourse through questioning, validation, and framing, shaping both understanding and engagement. Frames, such as "teacher as authority" and "student as learner," influence how directions and responses are perceived (Shonubi, 2024). Misaligned schemas or unfamiliar frames may hinder comprehension and participation (Wood et al., 2018). Cognitive mediation enables learners to adjust mental frameworks in response to new information and power dynamics, highlighting how classroom discourse integrates language, cognition, and social interaction, shaping knowledge co-construction and learning outcomes.

Overall, the study demonstrates that classroom discourse is shaped by the dynamic interplay of linguistic practices, cognitive frameworks, and sociopolitical contexts. By

adopting a holistic perspective, it becomes possible to understand how knowledge and power are co-constructed. These insights inform teaching strategies that foster equity, active participation, and critical thinking among students.

Classroom discourse, social power dynamics, and knowledge formation

Classroom discussion is an active, dynamic process in which language mediates the negotiation of social power and knowledge construction. Teachers establish the learning framework by assigning tasks, posing questions, and evaluating responses, while students contribute their experiences, perspectives, and cognitive models. Thus, classroom discourse becomes a site where power, engagement, and meaning-making intersect, shaping both authority and knowledge development. The following examples illustrate how specific discourse practices influence power relations and knowledge construction across different subjects, as reflected in teacher and student interactions.

English teacher: "I tell my students to use their own experiences to respond to literature. That leads to more real conversations."

A student in social studies: "I feel more comfortable speaking up when we talk about social issues. It's not just facts; there are also views".

Science teacher: "Hands-on activities change how students interact; it makes them ask more questions when they are trying new things."

English Class student: "I like talking with other people in groups. They help me see things from different points of view."

English Class Student: "I like it when the teacher lets us talk about what a story is about. Hearing different points of view makes it easier to understand books."

Student B English Class: "Talking about poems with a group helps me see how they can mean different things. I used to think there was only one right answer, but now I see that everyone can understand books in their own way."

The English teacher's focus on making connections between books and personal experience shows a way of teaching called dialogic learning, in which students' lived schemas are used to help them understand more deeply. This changes the balance of power by recognizing that students' experiences can also be sources of knowledge, not just the teachers. A similar shift in power can be seen in social studies, where a student points out that talking about social problems can include both "facts" and "views" (Van Dijk, 2015). This shows that making sense of things isn't just remembering facts; it's negotiating meaning through different points of view, which challenges the hierarchical patterns of teacher-led speech.

In science, the teacher says that hands-on tasks make students more likely to ask questions. This shows how cognitive scripts of inquiry and experimentation change how people interact in the classroom. In this setting, power is not directly transferred, but rather directed facilitation, which lets students

be involved in building knowledge (Zhong, 2021). English students also agree with this focus on working together; they see group discussions as places where different points of view can help them understand books in new ways and break down the idea that there is only one "right answer." Pair work is another tool that can help calm people down and give everyone a chance to participate, especially those who aren't sure of their English.

These examples show how schemas, scripts, and frames can be used to negotiate meaning, and how discourse tactics can change the symbolic power between teachers and students. Teachers set interpretive limits as a way to help students learn, but students also build their knowledge by discussing different points of view, asking questions, and rethinking ideas. This creates a dynamic interaction where classroom talk both shows and changes social power dynamics, turning learning into a group process of making sense of things.

The results clearly state that classroom talk is a microcosm of social power dynamics and information hierarchies. Power is mostly demonstrated through language, which includes dictating the topics of discussion, speaking authoritatively, and evaluating what is said. It is also a place where students can take action. Positioning and identity are inextricably linked to how we talk about and build knowledge, and acceptable "knowledge" is often linked to institutional authority.

This reflection focuses on explaining classroom discussions, examining how language may either support or challenge

societal inequity. Discourse analysis, therefore, serves as an effective tool for understanding the hidden dynamics of power. Here is an additional response from three distinct classes.

Student from English Class: "Sometimes I'm frightened to talk in English, but I feel better when we work together, so sometimes I use Nepali too. It isn't quite as frightening as talking in front of the whole class."

Student from social studies: "The teacher asks questions that can have more than one response. That makes me think more before I answer."

Student from Science: "I like doing practical work. I ask more questions when we perform experiments because I want to know why things happen."

These excerpts illustrate the interplay between cognitive mediation and classroom language in transforming student engagement and power dynamics. In the initial scenario, the student experiencing anxiety regarding English communication perceives themselves as vulnerable in whole-class environments yet empowered in couple or group activities. The collaborative interactional framework alleviates apprehension and reallocates symbolic authority by empowering less confident to express themselves. This illustrates how classroom frameworks (pair work scripts) facilitate power dynamics and diminish hierarchy, enabling a more equitable co-construction of knowledge.

In the social studies example, the educator intentionally constructs questions with various potential answers, promoting

perspectivization above just factual memory. This technique engages cognitive frameworks of critical thinking and discourse, redistributing authority from a fixed "teacher-as-answer key" function to a collaborative interpretive process (Hagge, 1973, p. 13). Students enhance their agency in classroom discourse by negotiating meaning through the evaluation of alternatives.

In the scientific environment, student associates practical activities with enhanced engagement: conducting experiments initiates a process of inquiry and discovery, leading them to pose "why" inquiries. The instructor helps rather than commands, employing hands-on tasks to balance the authority and students' autonomy. Power is established by inquiry and investigation, with the teacher offering support while the student actively constructs understanding. Collectively, these instances demonstrate that classroom discourse transcends mere content delivery; it involves establishing settings where cognitive frameworks (collaboration, inquiry, debate) influence both learning and power dynamics. These tactics diminish hierarchical authority and facilitate the co-construction of knowledge.

Conclusions

The study shows that classroom discourse is a complex social practice where language functions both to construct and negotiate knowledge and power. Teachers generally guide interactions by managing turn-taking, framing topics, and evaluating responses, reflecting the institutional authority inherent in classroom settings.

However, students are active participants, negotiating their roles, contributing ideas, and occasionally challenging prevailing interpretations. This dynamic illustrates that power in the classroom is not fixed but continuously negotiated through interaction.

Cognitive frameworks, including schemas, scripts, and frames, play a central role in how both teachers and students make sense of and respond to classroom interactions. Scripts establish expected sequences for classroom activities, frames shape how participants interpret roles and situations, and schemas provide the mental structures for organizing knowledge. These cognitive tools enable students to anticipate, interpret, and engage meaningfully, while teachers can scaffold learning, validate contributions, and guide understanding. Misalignments in these mental frameworks may lead to misunderstanding, reduced participation, or marginalization, highlighting the importance of cognitive awareness in instructional design.

Classroom discourse is not solely about transmitting content; it is a continuous negotiation of understanding and authority. Through questioning, prompting, and reinforcement, teachers maintain their authority while fostering student engagement and participation. At the same time, students shape the learning process by offering perspectives, connecting personal experiences, and co-constructing knowledge. Collaborative activities and interactive discussions provide spaces for redistributing authority, enabling students to assume greater responsibility for learning.

Overall, this study concludes that classroom interactions are dynamic processes in which linguistic strategies, cognitive frameworks, and social structures intersect. Knowledge and power are co-constructed through ongoing dialogue, and effective teaching depends on the ability to balance authority with participation. By integrating cognitive awareness into pedagogical practice, educators can create inclusive, reflective, and participatory learning environments that empower students as active contributors to knowledge rather than passive recipients. Classroom discourse thus functions as both a mirror of institutional hierarchies and a site for fostering engagement, critical thinking, and equitable learning opportunities.

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