

## A study of Discourse in Teaching English in English classroom

Ganesh Prasad Dulal, Asst. Lecturer, Department of English Education, MMAMC, Biratnagar

Email : ganeshdulal02@gmail.com

### Abstract

This study was aimed to explore a classroom discourse and uses for the teaching of English as a FL/SL. To achieve the purpose, the researcher made a classroom observation as a tool of data collection. The class was randomly selected from B.Ed first year in the academic session 2081 B. S. of Mahendra Morang Adarsha Multiple Campus, Biratnagar. After having simply the record, transcription was made. Based on the transcription, among the model of classroom discourse, the Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) model was selected as a sign post of this classroom based discourse analysis. Comparing the model with the actual classroom transcription, the discourse analysis was made and the interpretation and recommendation were finally put in the study. Based on the analysis it was confirmed that the classroom from which the data in the paper was taken didn't promote equal roles for teacher and students. Teacher was dominating the class and students were not fully participating in the classroom. Additionally, there was unequal amount of moves and exchanges between teacher and students. All the moves, acts and exchanges between them were unequal amount of moves and exchanges between teacher and students. All the moves, acts and exchanges between them were unequal. The class was teacher dominated. The initiation was from the teacher. There was no room for students to begin or initiate the conversation. When we see the lines from the transcription, teachers talk is about 10 lines more than that of students talk. Finally, it was recommended that teachers should give sufficient time for their students to make them practice the language and students are also needed to fully participate in the classroom in English lessons.

*Key words:* discourse, analysis, recommendation, transcription and interpretation

Article's information : Manuscript received : 2024/12/02, Date of review : 2025/01/15, Date of manuscript acceptance 2025/03/25 Publisher : Mahendra Moranga Adarsh Multiple Campus, Biratnagar  
DOI : <https://doi.org/10.3126/medha.v7i2.77241>  
Homepage : <https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/medha/index/> Copy right (c) 2024 Medha Journal  
This work is licensed under the Creative Commons CC BY-NC License. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

### Introduction

At the beginning, the word "discourse" is originated from the Latin "discursus" which means "to run to and fro" that is discourse which moves back and forth between reflecting and constructing the social world (Wodak and Meyer, 2009). Within a CDA tradition, discourse has been defined as language in social practice. Discourse means "verbal communication, talk, formal speech or writing on a subject and unit of text used by the linguist for the analysis of linguistic phenomena that range over more than one sentence." There are various discourses in everyday life. Among the discourses we are surrounded by the classroom discourse is the one the researcher focus on. Classroom discourse is a discourse that based on the conversation between teacher and students. Regarding classroom discourse, there are different models to help the discourse taking place in classroom between teacher and students. Out of those models,

the one of the best model is Synclair and Coulthard (1975) model which is being consulted in this study. This model was developed to describe teacher-pupil talk in such based on a hierarchy of discourse units. It assumes that classroom discourse: 'Follows a fairly typical and predictable structure, comprising three parts: a teacher initiation, a student response and the teacher feedback, commonly known as IRF or IRE i.e. Initiation, Response and Feedback/ Evaluation. IRE is preferred by some writers and practitioners to reflect the fact that most of the time; teachers' feedback is an evaluation of a students' contribution. Teachers are constantly assessing the correctness of an utterance and giving feedback to learners.

Basically, this intended model is based on the fact that each exchange between teacher and pupil in classroom is made up of three moves: a question, a response and follow-up. However, it is difficult to make a sound interpretation to assess the effectiveness of the talk in exchanging learning. It is teacher centered and guided. It sounds mechanical too.

### **Classroom Discourse**

The use of discourse language varies depending on the field of study. A teacher's discourse is the way in which they use language to get things done (sinclair and Brazil,1982). Classroom discourse is unique in its setting due to the unequal power relationship between teacher and student. Teachers tend to control the lesson, dominate in interactions and initiate exchanges. Typical discourse includes the teacher asking a question, one or more pupils responding and the teacher evaluating that response (Nunan, 1999). Aspects of natural discourse, such as turn-taking, intonation and natural discourse, such as turn-taking, intonation and exchanges are altered in a classroom setting (McCarthy, 1991). Turn-taking is predetermined and primarily teacher-controlled within the classroom (Brazil,1995). Teachers in their dominating role also tend to use more tonal units with prominent syllables more frequently to highlight important information. This is unnatural when compared to real communication intonation.

### **Models of Classroom Discourse**

In the study of classroom discourse, there are several models that describe the discourse of classroom in teaching and learning and see the power relationship that take place within that class. To see the power relationship and the observed classroom discourse analysis, the researcher chose the model of Sinclair and Coulthard(1975) as the instruction of doing this study insisted to choose one model and analyze discourse of classroom in views of that model.

### **Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) Model**

These two renowned figures developed a model for the description of teacher-pupil talk, based on hierarchy of discourse units. This model assumes that classroom discourse 'follows a fairly typical and predictable structure, comprising three parts: a teacher initiation, a student Response and a teacher Feedback, commonly known as IRF or IRE: Initiation, Response and feedback/ Evaluation. IRE is preferred by some writers and practitioners to reflect the fact that, most of the time teachers' feedback is an evaluation of a student's contribution. Teachers are constantly assessing the correctness of an utterance and giving feedback to the learners. 'RF is also known as a recitation scripter triadic structure. ( Triadic simply refers to the fact that each exchange is made up of three moves: typically a question, a response and then follow-up.) However, it is difficult to make a sound interpretation to assess effectiveness of the talk in enhancing learning. It is teacher centered and guided. It looks also mechanical. That means there is no learning but

teaching in the classroom (Hailom B, 2016, Lecture Note). As pitfalls this model assumes the teaching of English in English context which could be difficult for learners of English as a FL/SL. Context is defined as the mentally represented structure of those properties of the social situation that are relevant for the production or comprehension of discourse (Duranti and Goodwin, 1992; Van Dijk, 1998b). If context is defined in terms of mentally represented structure, foreign or second language learners of English like Ethiopia cannot fully understand the context as they have no mental representation of the structure in English properties. On the other hand, the model sees teaching as a teacher centered and guided. Such kind of teaching cannot promote learning because learners wait the guidance from the teachers. They cannot act realize their learning by themselves. Similarly, there have been several criticisms of language classrooms whose discourse fits too neatly into the S&C three stage- model, De Boer (2009) cites Chaudron (1988), Long & Sato (1983), Ohta (2001), and Wells (1999) to argue that such discourse is heavy on teacher display questions, where the teacher knows the answer, but merely wants to know whether the student can correctly answer. This is counterproductive as their overuse deprives students of the opportunity for meaningful communication (Thornbury, 2000, cited in De Boer, 2009). The reason the researcher chose this model for the analysis of this classroom observation is that the class B.Ed first year was observed was more or less related to this model of classroom discourse analysis. The following are some elements from the definition and practices of Sinclair and Coulthard model.

### **The Rank Scale**

The S&C model employs a hierarchical system modeled on Halliday (1961). The highest rank is lesson, which is made up of ‘an unordered series of transactions’ (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975, p. 25). Due to the lack of restriction on the order of transaction in a lesson, analysis of this rank is moot. It would be impossible to arrive at a structural statement from such pursuit as ‘ordering varies from teacher to teacher’ (ibid, p. 60).

### **Exchanges and Moves**

Sinclair and Coulthard identify two types of exchange in classroom discourse; boundary exchanges and teaching exchanges. Boundary exchanges signal the transition from one section of the lesson to the next and are initiated by the teacher, whereas teaching exchanges are where questions are asked and answered and feedback given on answers.

### **Moves and Acts**

Moves are made up of acts, which are ‘the lowest rank of discourse’ (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975, p. 27) and are similar to morphemes (...) in grammar (ibid, P. 23) in that they cannot be divided into smaller elements.

### **The Need for Classroom Discourse Analysis**

Knowledge of classroom discourse is very important for language teachers. Language teachers are not only expected to impart mere information to their students but also help them learn by themselves in order not to make them passive listeners by showing the students how to practice the language skills. To

do this, according to Soleman Awad and Afzal Khan (2019), teachers need to confront the problem such as keeping in view the social and individual differences of the students, their educational background and classroom discipline and time factor. Considering the above mentioned challenges and doing researches on classroom discourse frequently, teachers can easily improve their teaching approach and help their students learn actively.

### **Research Questions**

This study attempted to answer the following questions:

- a. What is the classroom discourse in English at B.Ed first year, MMAMC, Biratnagar looks like?
- b. How does the classroom discourse use for teaching and learning English as a FL/SL?

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study was generally aimed to investigate a classroom discourse in English classes at B.Ed first year, MMAMC Biratnagar and find out its uses in teaching and learning English as a FL/SL. More specifically, the focused to:

- i. Investigate a classroom discourse in English classes at B.Ed first year , MMAMC Biratnagar and
- ii. Find out the uses of classroom discourse for teaching and learning English as a FL/SL.

### **Research Methods**

The researcher confined qualitative survey design for this study. Classroom observation was conducted for the research tool. The total population was 132 students studying in B.Ed first year in the academic session 2081 B.S. Out of the total population the sample size was selected 20 students representing from different communities randomly. After having simply the recorded transcription among the models of classroom discourse, the Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) model was selected as a sign post of this classroom based discourse analysis.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

Mainly the analysis and discussion were carried out initiating with the targeted variables taken place in the classroom discourse in foreign or second language as discussed below.

### **Teachers and Students Role**

Kumaravadivelu (1993) promotes a classroom dynamic where the teacher and students take on more equal roles as participants in the lesson. In this spirit, the classroom from which the data in the paper was taken didn't promote equal roles for teacher and students. Teaching was dominating the class and students were not fully participating in that classroom. To see the structure of a talk, level of exchange , moves and acts, there should be role- changing between teacher and students. However, the classroom which observed for this research was applied to Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) model which is a teacher

dominated one ; that argued as this stated model was found the classroom was not promoting students learning. Therefore, in the observed classroom, teachers were looking the all-knower and students considered as passive listeners. They simply taught by their teacher knowledge level. They never realized their learning. The teaching and learning of English language currently would allow for a system of analysis flexible enough to describe more student-centered EFL classrooms. Classroom that do not require this adaptation could be said to be more teacher-lead. It was because, may be the lack of intimate classroom as a more intimate classroom setting with fewer students was chosen for the possibly of finding more two-person interactions. The classroom that was observed approximately contained more than 50 students which is difficult to make a direct conversation with individual learners.

### **Moves, Acts and Exchanges**

There unequal amount of moves and exchanges between teacher and students. All the moves, acts and exchanges between them were unequal. The class was teacher dominated. The initiation was from the teacher. There was no room for students to begin or initiate the conversation. When we see the lines from the transcription, teachers talk is about 10 lines more than that of students talk.

T: In last year you remember that we have learnt ‘but...for’. Even if we learnt remember what is but...for. Now be in a group and discuss what is the use of ‘but...for’, how we used but...for especially, in a conditional type 2 and 3. I am telling you as a general truth that but...for is used in place of ‘in’. Remember you can contrast if clause and main clause using but...for. But...for, is especially used in conditional type 2 and 3. Because, condition type 2 and 3 are more related to but...for. Condition type 2 is a probable condition whereas condition type 3 is unreal condition. Therefore, make a group and discuss the questions that the researcher wrote on the board. After that you reflect your ideas for the class. Focus on your group discussion. I give you only five minutes.

Ss: start discussion

Therefore, when we look at the above teacher-pupil exchange, it is 10 lines teacher talk and no students’ direct talk with the teacher. This exchange reflects teacher dominance. Where there is teacher dominance, learning will not be realized as learning is based on students’ contribution not teachers.

In addition to this, it was very less direct conversation between the teacher and students. The teacher talks over and over without students’ exchange.

T: please, stop discussion...Sit down.

T: Who can give me an example for this lesson?

This particular example shows that in the observed class, it was difficult to relate it with the model of Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), because others of exchange needed to be: initiation, response and feedback or evaluation. But here is not this order we can see.

The other thing we can see from the observed class was the existence of the V-task exchange. There was a group discussion where students were interacting together, exchanging ideas on the issue of the uses of but...for in conditional type 2 and 3 as directed by the teacher.

Therefore, The class I observed from B.Ed first year MMAMC Biratnagar In English classroom was applied to Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) model of classroom discourse analysis which has the aforementioned limitations in promoting learners' communicative competence.

### Conclusion

The classroom that was observed on the basis of Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) model of discourse between teacher and students in the designated classroom. After assigning the ethics of research procedure came to the following conclusions.

- The class was found teacher dominated.
- It looked like the teacher was all knower and students expect everything from the teacher.
- The classroom also inculcated the V-task exchange model in that students tried to work collaboratively.

Generally this classroom discourse was analyzed based on Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) model. From this discourse analysis it can be concluded that such way where teacher talks more and students wait everything from the teacher couldn't bring an impact factor on students learning of English conversation/discourse as a foreign language speakers.

- Teachers need be prepared themselves very well for each lesson accordingly.
- Teachers should give sufficient time for their students to make them language practice
- Students are needed to fully participate in the classroom in English lessons.
- The campus administration should create smooth classroom environment that promotes collaborative language learning.
- There should be learner-centered approach in English classrooms to realize learners' competency.

### References

- Brazil, D. (1995). *Classroom and spoken discourse*. Birmingham: The Centre for English Language studies
- Duranti, A and Goodwin, C. (1992). *Rethinking Context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fairclough, N. (1999). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. United Kingdom: Longman.
- Haliday, M. A. K. (1961). *Categories of the theory of grammar*. Word 17, 241-292.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (1993). *Maximizing Learning Potential in the Communicative Classroom*. ELT Journal 47, 5, 12-21.
- McCarthy, M. (1991). *Discourse analysis for language teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sinclair, J., and Brazil, D. (1982) *Teacher talk*. Oxford University Press.
- Sinclair, J, & Coulthard, R. M. (1975). *Toward an analysis of Discourse*. Oxford University Press.
- Van Dijk, A.T. (1997). *Discourse as structure and process of discourse studies: A multidisciplinary introduction*, Volume I, SAGE publications, London.
- Wodak, R. & Meyer, M. (2009). *Methods for critical discourse analysis*. Sage.