

Classroom Discourse Analysis

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Abstract : This paper was aimed to investigate a classroom discourse and find out its 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 Kokebe Tsibah Secondary and Preparatory School, Grade 11. After having simply the record, transcription was made. Based on the 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. 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 that classroom. Additionally, there 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: classroom-discourse, models of classroom discourse, teaching and learning English

1. Introduction

Originally, the word "discourse" comes 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 & 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. 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. One of these models is Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) model. 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 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 learners.

Basically, the 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 then follow-up. However, it is difficult to make a sound interpretation to assess the effectiveness of the talk in

enhancing learning. It is teacher centered and guided. It looks also mechanical.

1.1. Research Questions

This study tried to answer the following basic research questions:

1. What is the classroom discourse in English at Kokebe Tsibah Secondary School looks like?
2. How the classroom discourse uses for the teaching and learning of English as a FL/SL?

1.2. Objectives of the study

The study was generally aimed to investigate a classroom discourse in English classes at Kokebe Tsibah Secondary School and find out its uses in teaching and learning English as a FL/SL. More specifically, the study tried to:

- Investigate a classroom discourse in English classes at Kokebe Tsibah Secondary School and
- Find out the uses of classroom discourse for the teaching and learning English as a FL/SL.

2. Literature Review

Under this sub-topic, the following points were reviewed: critical discourse analysis, classroom discourse analysis and models of classroom discourse analysis.

2.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

Many scholars defined critical discourse analysis in various different ways. For my purpose, I only used here the definitions given by Van Dijk (1997) and Norman Fairclough (1999). According to Van D. (1997), critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality. Similarly, Norman Fairclough (1999) defines CDA as description and interpretation of discourses in social context as well as explanation of why and how discourses

work. It is critical because it argues against a realist, neutral and rationalist view of the world. Instead the role is to uncloak the hidden power relations, largely constructed through language, and to demonstrate and challenge social inequities reinforced and reproduced. It is exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory of social practice and change. Power and ideology play central roles in the production and consumption of discourses. It is both multi and trans-disciplinary in methodology to explaining social practice. It is, thus, an approach, methodology and tool as well.

2.2. Classroom Discourse

Discourse, language in use, 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 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.

2.3. Models of classroom discourse

For classroom discourse analysis there are different 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 student researcher chose the model of Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) as the instruction of doing this project insisted to choose one model and analyze discourse of classroom in views of that model.

2.4. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) Model

They developed a model for the description of teacher-pupil talk, based on a 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 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 a 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 of 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 and 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 I choose this model for the analysis of this classroom observation is that the class I 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.

2.4.1. 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 & Coulthard, 1975, p. 25). Due to the lack of restriction on the order of transactions 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).

2.4.2. 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.

2.4.3. 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.

2.5. 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 problems 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 challenges and doing researches on classroom discourse frequently, teachers can easily improve their teaching approach and help their students learn actively.

3. Research Methods

The main purpose of this study is to investigate a classroom discourse and find out its 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 Kokebe Tsibah Secondary and Preparatory School Grade 11. After having simply the record, transcription was made. Based on the 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. Comparing the model with the actual classroom transcription, the discourse analysis was made and the interpretation and recommendation were finally put in the study.

4. Analysis and Discussions

4.1. Teachers and Students Roles

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. Teacher 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 I observed was applied to Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) model which is a teacher dominated one; I argue it as this model and my classroom were 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. Classrooms 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 possibility of finding more two-person interactions. The classroom I observed was approximately contained more than 50 students which is difficult to make a direct conversation with individual learners.

4.2. Moves, Acts and Exchanges

There 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.

For example,

T: In last semester 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 construct 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 I wrote on the black 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 that 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.

Example; 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 the orders 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 Kokebe Tsibah secondary and preparatory school English classroom was applied to Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) model of classroom discourse analysis which has the aforementioned limitations in promoting learners' communicative competence.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the above analysis and the observed classroom discourse the following conclusion and recommendations made.

5.1. Conclusion

The classroom discourse I observed was applied to Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) because of the following reasons:

- The class was teacher dominated.
- The learning and teaching process in the class was tried to follow the IRF of Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) model.

- It looked like the teacher was all knower and students expect everything from the teacher.
- In another hand, 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 that teacher couldn't bring an impact factor on students learning of English as a foreign language.

5.2. Recommendations

Based on the observed classroom and results, the following recommendation made for the concerned bodies.

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

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Appendix A

Transcription of classroom observation

T: In last semester 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 construct 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 I wrote on the black board. After that you reflect your ideas for the class. Focus on your group discussion. I give you only five minutes.

Ss: Students started discussion, but what is heard is shouting after shouting in which particularly some groups were talking private issues and some other were sitting idle, and there were two students sitting separately were sleeping. The teacher tried to check some groups' discussion while students were discussing. But, however, students cannot stop discussing some private issues, shouting, moving here and there, and even concentrate on the discussion. Then, before the given time ended she ordered students to stop the discussion.

T: okay, I think you have finished your discussion.

S: shouting

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

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

S1: if I would study hard, I would pass the exam. (Conditional type 2)

T: writes the response from S1 on board.

T: go to students and asked: say something?

S2: tried to answer, but the teacher jumped over her.

T: okay, this group?

S3: we can use but...for in both conditional 2 and 3.

T: okay, good.

T: anyone else?

S4: student 4 tried to talk the use of but...for lot (but I couldn't transcribe it for it is difficult to hear)

T: thank you very much.

T: summarized it in lecture form and go back to writing note on board.

Ss: started taking the note

T: wrote the note and left the class saying see you tomorrow.

Appendix B

Classroom Analysis

Initiation	Response	Feedback
Opening move (elicit) Making students to remember the previous class. Ex: what is the use of "but... For"?	Discussion with groups	Follow-up: teacher was moving here and there to check the discussion Ex: I think you have finished?
Opening move (elicit) Ex: who can give me an example?	Answering (with conditional type 2 and 3)	Teacher gave a feedback by writing the answers on board
Opening move (elicit) Okay, this group?	Answering (with conditional type 2 and 3)	Teacher gave positive feedback. Ex: okay, good.
Focusing move Ex: anyone else?	Answering (with conditional type 2 and 3)	Teacher gave positive feedback. Ex: thank you very much.

Author Profile



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Nowadays, the author is conducting various publishable paper works on different themes such as education, English language teaching, linguistics, discourse analysis, teachers' continuous development and etc. and so far the researcher and author has published three articles and three more articles are under the publication process.