

Classroom Discourse Failure among Algerian Secondary School Learners

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Abstract

Teaching English to non-native speakers today necessitates conducting conversations where learners interpret and decipher linguistic and nonverbal aspects of interaction, in other words, preparing learners to use English to participate in conversations inside and outside the classroom. However, this is not the case in Algerian Secondary school English classes. Regular observation indicated almost no continuous teacher-learner conversation while lessons. This paper intends to observe language use between the teachers and students; what instruction is used and how is it dealt with by learners. The results would aim at revealing the shortage learners show in the speaking skill and confirm the effectiveness of observation for classroom evaluation. Adopting a systematic observation, six classes at secondary school level in two different cities in Algeria were observed and audio-taped through a quantitative and qualitative method. Data is analysed from the amount of *teacher's talk*, *types of classroom discourse structure* and *questioning*. Based on data analysis, the findings showed that most of the talk is approximately initiated by the teacher; learners act only when asked display questions and keep silent when are challenged by influential questions. It also showed display questions dominate the classroom for they maximize learners' participation. Yet, this learner' short output would limit the learners' critical reflection and lessen the classroom interaction among participants. Therefore, this paper urges teachers to adopt a student-centred approach to FL learning that enables students' to talk more and participate in conversations negotiating meaning with their teacher and peers. For further research, the author puts forward some guidelines to build on new research.

Keywords: classroom discourse analysis, discourse structure, input and output, interaction, observation, questioning

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1- Introduction

Nunan (1993) defines classroom discourse as one among different types of discourse. It is language used between the teacher and learners or learners and learners. Researchers in second language acquisition (SLA) agree that successful language learning depends on classroom interaction in which learners are engaged with their teacher and other learners in an exchange where they negotiate meaning for the sake of achieving both comprehension and communication. The discourse carried out among the classroom participants during the whole session is different from other types of discourse that occurs in other situations for it consists of explanations, instructions, arguments, etc. It is central for foreign language learning in that it gets learners involved in a social environment that they experience outside the classroom and accordingly, they contextualize their own experiences using the target language.

Having been exposed to five or six years of learning English as a foreign language, high school Algerian learners in their last year should have developed, at least a considerable average in communicating their input using English, especially that communication is the central objective to learning English in the Algerian curriculum. However, it is still observed that a great number of them cannot communicate or produce acceptable English. Teachers claim that there is a gap between student's levels and the previous six years of language instruction. Natural and spontaneous use of the foreign language is absent in addition to a low level in fluency and accuracy acquired at this level. The problem is that learners do not even communicate what they learn in the classroom, while language learning should be associated with classroom practice so that it is remedied and evaluated for production. Instead, learners are observed using English of movies, songs, social networking, and texting in speaking and writing.

Now, linguists (Allwright, D. and Bailey, K.M. 1991) as well as foreign language teachers agree on the fact that learners learn to speak in the target language by interacting. Communicative language teaching (CLT) and collaborative learning work well for this aim. CLT is based on real-life situation that requires communication that enables learners to interact with each other in the target language. That is why teachers should create a classroom environment to get learners involved in real-life communication, genuine activities and meaningful task that support the oral skill through pair and team work. Activities whose objective is to communicate feelings, exchange personal ideas, and negotiate meanings orally in the target language do not only make learners more active but also make their learning meaningful and exciting to them.

As language outside is examined, analysed, and interpreted by stenographers, ethnographers and speakers as well, classroom language is a pedagogical discourse that should be observed, analysed, then 'repaired' for learners by practitioners in the field of education. This paper aims at observing what is happening in the classroom in terms of input and output among Algerian English secondary school teachers and learners in order to identify the causes of the poor performance in the oral skill of learners in their last year. This will be explored and investigated from *the amount of teacher's talk, types of classroom discourse structure and questioning*.

2- Why Classroom Discourse Analysis?

Methods and approaches related to the traditional classroom could not last long for some of their principles that did not cope with learners needs to learn an FL. In a traditional classroom, the teacher plays a central role in the classroom by controlling the classroom activities, topics, questions and talk too while the learner is a passive participant who only receives and learns to read and write (Skidmore, 2000 as cited in Rezaie, 2015). However, today's FL classroom calls for learner oral use of language and the central role of the teacher is to guide students and give them more opportunities to take part in the classroom participation. It focuses more on content (discourse delivered in interaction) than on form (language structures).

The term classroom discourse, in this study, refers to the language that teachers and students use to communicate classroom topics with each other. The teacher's role is crucial in shaping learners' understanding of L2, however, it should not be dominant where s/he transmits knowledge, corrects students' mistakes and expects students to learn alone. Rather, an EFL teacher has a central role in arranging the oral and written discourse in ways that contribute to students' understanding of the foreign language. The teacher asks questions and gives tasks that evoke, engage and more, challenge the students' thought. In other words, a teacher is a discourse analyst who feeds his learners with comprehensible input and looks after their output to feed them again. Learners, on the other hand, assisted by their teacher, are also concerned with analyzing their own learning, so that the learning/teaching process is effectively accomplished. How such events can be determined and developed towards a successful classroom communication ~~but~~ is through regular classroom observation that comprehends both linguistic and social behaviour within the different classrooms.

According to Arthur (2008), the earliest systemic study of classroom discourse was reported in 1910 and stenographers were used to make a continuous record of teachers' and student's talk in high school classrooms. The first use of audiotape recorders in classrooms was reported in the 1930s and during the 1960s, where there was a rapid growth in the number of studies based on analysis of classroom discourse transcripts. Consequently, it was observed that the verbal interaction between teachers and students had an underlying structure that was much the same in all classrooms, at all grade levels. Classroom discourse, which includes the interactions between language learners and their teacher or other learners, is a raw material that, if well considered, may uncover many issues in language learning as it may well strengthen the teaching process. Language classroom is different in form and function from language used in other situations because of particular social roles which learners and teachers have in the classroom and the kind of activities they usually carry out there, that is why it requires a special assistance by educators in order to deal with it.

The concept of classroom discourse has undergone various interpretations by different scholars in the field of language study. Each of them interprets the concept according to her/his perspective and the requirements of their subject matter. However, most of them agree on the importance of language used by classroom members in interaction. Kramsch (1985) for instance, valuing the role of learners' backgrounds as a factor in language acquisition, considers classroom discourse as

composed of a continuous bridge that links pedagogic discourse to natural discourse poles. Pedagogic discourse is accomplished when learners achieve their institutional roles; everything has to do with teacher's instructions, information, and knowledge while natural discourse occurs when interaction is conducted, in other words, when interpretation, negotiation of meaning and discussion are enhanced by classroom participants. Therefore, the contact that occurs among classroom participants is an exchange between the two different poles of this continuum in which instructional roles take place.

Interestingly, Nunan (1993) views classroom discourse as the distinctive type of discourse that occurs in classroom. In his opinion, special features of discourse include unequal relationships, which are marked by unequal opportunities for teachers and pupils to suggest topics, turn sequencing, etc. This can possibly enable the teacher to observe the probable lacunas that need to be fixed. In this respect, Edmondson (1985) differentiates between two learning objectives that classroom interaction is supposed to focus on. He believes that classroom discourse provides "co-existing discourse words" depending on whether the participants are engaged in the act of trying to learn or trying to communicate. In other words, explaining the structure of an activity is also a type of classroom discourse. Yet, it does not necessarily require learners' interaction as when classroom members interact at the same time. Instead, it requires learners' comprehension of the instruction to be analysed by the teacher.

Although the interpretations above show a difference in opinions, most scholars agree on the fact that classroom discourse is a matter of two parties with different roles. In this respect, it is the role of the teacher to manage the classroom talk who, when and how much. The learning of a foreign language in or outside the classroom itself depends on particular characteristics of the L2 learning settings. The awareness of the role of input and output in FLA acquisition by teachers enables teachers and educators to observe their teaching in the first place then their learners' input in order to determine the objectives of a successful EFL classroom. The teacher, when analysing all that, creates techniques and procedures to conduct an effective classroom interaction through the negotiation of meaning, types of questions and the efficient distribution of classroom participants' roles.

3- Aspects of Classroom Discourse

3.1. Teacher's Talk

Scholars in the field of language learning have considered different functions for the influencing role of the teacher's talk. It is usually viewed as one of the influential factors of success or failure in classroom teaching (Xu, 2010). It can determine whether teaching in a specific classroom has been successful or not. The teacher can realize his objectives concerning his method through learners' achievements and feedback. It has also been proven beneficial for learners in that it provides them with a specific opportunity to have more learning, questions and answers, and other activities that learners are not aware of. Through teacher talk, teachers use different types of questions based on different factors some of which are the level of students, the type of materials they teach and their purpose of asking questions (Huang & Zheng, 2009). However, much time given to teacher's talk may result in decreasing

learners' outcomes of language use in and outside the classroom for it is not the only role in a classroom interaction; it is the exchange of ideas, opinions and turn talking that shape a successful classroom interaction. Thus, the amount of teacher's talk should be appropriate, so that students could get a chance to produce their output. The classroom is composed of several daily pedagogical aspects such as teachers' and students' talk, question-answer exchange, teacher and students' feedbacks, etc. that contribute to classroom achievements since they give opportunity to both the teacher and learners the chance to interact, therefore, the role of teacher's talk should be turned up accordingly.

Harmer (1998) found out that teacher's talk occupied much more time than students' talk. That is why the balance of teacher's talk and students' talk is important in the EFL classroom, so that students can get more opportunities not only to internalize English knowledge and improve their language competence but also to using it. Classroom interaction is an important aspect of the learning process. It is built through both the teacher and learners' contributions to the classroom improvement as it should not focus only on the teacher's language. A good teacher maximises students' talking time (STT) and minimises teachers' talking time (TTT) (Harmer, 2008).

Talk exchange between the teacher and learners, then, gives opportunity for teachers and learners to negotiate ideas, correct errors, and talk more. As turn-taking is a mechanical transfer, a process that happens unintentionally for the sake of building social relationship among members of communities, it is a social process that creates active learners aiming at building an effective teacher-students' interaction to improve an EFL classroom discourse.

3.2. Types of Classroom Discourse Structure

Generally speaking, teachers use questions to fulfil various classroom tasks among them warming up students about the previous lesson. The teacher may also ask questions to elicit students' knowledge about the new (current) topic, all that to manage and conduct a classroom interaction. In some classrooms, over half of the class time is taken up by question-and-answer exchanges. Teachers' questions have been the focus of research attention for many years. Considerable research exists indicating that questions can assist learners in improving their linguistic ability. (Mehan 1979, as cited in Behnam & Pouriran 2009) offered three structural components of a pedagogic discourse:

- An opening phase where the participants inform each other that they are in fact going to conduct a lesson as opposed to some other activity.
- An instructional phase where information is exchanged between the teacher and students.
- A closing phase where participants are reminded of what went on in the core of a lesson.

When the teacher asks a question, the student answers and the teacher evaluates. The teacher continues to ask another question and so the sequence continues. This structure of classroom discourse encourages teacher-learners interaction and insures the balance of talk among them. This was also

Classroom interaction between classroom participants is composed of different language patterns depending on the nature of the topic being studied. Among such patterns Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) model of classroom discourse *Initiation, Response, and Feedback*, known as (IRF). It is a structure, where the teacher initiates a question, in order to check students' knowledge and responses. This one is evaluated with feedback from the teacher (Richards et al., 1992). This paves the way for more participation in the classroom topic on the part of students, as it enables the teacher to analyse, evaluate, and then plan an appropriate lesson.

T: What's the capital of France? (Initiation)

S: Paris. (Response)

T: Yes, Paris. That's right. (Feedback)

As a matter of fact, the IRF structure initiates a give-and-take conversation between the teacher and students (Chang 2002). It introduces the idea that in the teacher-students interaction, the answer part is always followed by the teacher's evaluation and comments addressing the student. This feedback is what permits the teacher to control language comprehension and use merely because it is the part that decides on what is relevant in certain discourse and what is not.

Behavioral psychologists were the first to recognize the power of feedback as a motivating influence. Feedback refers to the informative responses to what learners say or do, for example, a nod, smile, puzzled frown, or clarifying question are all useful feedback to learners. (XU 2010 p: 46)

For long, the IRF has been broadly used by researchers as a practical type of classroom sequencing to examine educational discourse. Following Ellis (1994), teachers control the classroom discourse and occupy the first part of the three-phase IRF exchange by asking many questions. However, the third part of the three phases is also taken by the teacher and even if it is for students' feedback, it may occupy the whole classroom time as the teacher has other different talks. Also, such kinds of discourse structures seem ideal in the Algerian secondary school context, at least from the part of the student. When the teacher receives no complete answer, he finds himself completing the answer and appending to it a feedback to students who do not participate in delivering it. Such structures do not prove beneficial unless, in purpose, the teacher prepares particular types of questions, where he either tests students' memory or challenges it.

3.3. Teacher's questioning

Among the many aspects that help create classroom interactions is the types of the questions which are asked by teachers. In this respect, Ellis (1994) mentioned two types of questions *Display* questions and *Referential* Questions. The former require the respondents to provide knowledge or information already known by the questioner, for example "What's the synonym of 'right' in English?" The latter, on the other hand, request information not known by the questioner, hence requiring more details. To some extent, Referential questions are authentically thought of being challenging, while Display questions 'test' the learners by eliciting already known information. These types of questions may address students' memory not their comprehension. This is what would drive students to compete over who would answer first in the

case of *extrovert* learners (type of students who show more interest in verbal communication and take risks (Dawaele & Furnham 2005 p: 6). However, Referential questions are concerned with eliciting longer, more authentic responses than displaying questions by stressing more learners' comprehension than memory; this type of questioning works well with introverts (who are reflective but reserved); they are more concerned with the inner world of ideas than extroverts but are more likely to be involved with solitary activities (Zafar & Meenakshi 2012 p: 243) The primary objective of Referential questions is to encourage various and long responses from students, that is, to present a better chance for them to talk by engaging them in higher-level thinking. Consequently, they would provide their own information and ideas instead of recollecting the previously presented information. This manoeuvre will further push them to forget about their personal problems and consider themselves as part of a group.

Also, Ellis typology of questions can be used in the three phases of a session depending on the learners' output; as a warm up, as an oral activity, and as an assessment to examine students' understanding to pass to the activities phase (Mehan 1979 as cited in Behnam & Pouriran 2009). Based on many studies, *Referential* questions call for more interaction and meaningful negotiation and investment of language.

Indeed, real language interaction does not consist only of questions from one party and answers from another. It also swivels around world knowledge and meaning negotiation in order to communicate not only ideas but also understandings, intentions, and a successful pedagogical relationship between the teacher and learners. Accordingly, questions in the language classroom should be Referential or meaning-based, not focusing on form solely. By doing so, the teacher addresses the learners' capacity to talk, answer questions but again to speak out his ideas and mindset using the target language in and outside the classroom.

4. Classroom Observation

Talking about observation, one should differentiate between observation as a daily routine, and observation as a research tool. In this paper, observation is the purposeful examination of both processes teaching and learning in their pedagogical context. Observation in this respect is one of the methods through which we can explore the classroom needs taking into consideration its different aspects. Through observation, a teacher assesses the quality of teaching and learns what input is appropriate, when and how much time it should be given with regard to learners' output. Observation is an instrument that enables the improvement of language classroom in terms of pedagogy and communication.

According to Johnson and Johnson (1998), Classroom Observation has been used as a technique in the study of many aspects of language teaching activities. Although there are several types of observational procedures or techniques that have been used to examine effective teaching (for example, charts, rating scales, checklists, and narrative descriptions), the most widely used procedure or research method has been systematic classroom observation based on interactive coding systems. These interactive coding systems allow the observer to record nearly everything that students and teachers do during a given time period. These interaction systems

are very objective and typically do not require the observer to make any high inferences or judgments about the behaviours they observe in the classroom except some embarrassments that some teacher and even students feel whenever they view the observer enters the classroom.

In this study, the author represents both a researcher who examines problems related to the field of FL teaching then suggests solutions for either teachers or other researchers in this domain, and a teacher who investigates her way of seeing pedagogy through her classes in order to improve the current teaching methods. Through the classroom observation, the study tries to find out the features of secondary schools classroom discourse through the following objectives:

- To observe, record and analyze the strategies and techniques secondary school teachers use to teach teenagers English as a foreign language
- To help raise teachers' awareness of language teaching/learning weakness and remedy.
- To create a resource bank of language teaching strategies, ideas and techniques for teachers to use when facing pedagogical obstacles within classroom communication.
- To serve such research as a support for other researchers attempting to investigate in such field.

Participants

In this research, six classes were chosen (two FL classes, two Literary classes, and two Scientific classes) from third year level (BAC classes) taught by three teachers (each of them with two classes) from two different high schools with the same different streams and different regions (town: Oued Fodda, and the city: Chlef) served as suitable samples for the study. The EFL learners are of different ages, namely between 16 and 20, females and males having studied English for six years. The number of learners in each class is between 30 and 48. The three teachers are from both sexes as they had almost the same education and teaching background with 3 to 5 years' of English studies and from five to 29 years of teaching experience with sufficient preparation for their work. The teachers and students share the same L1 background, that is, they are all Algerians.

Data Collection and Procedure

The data collection followed both a qualitative and a quantitative method of data collection. The quantitative data will be shown below in tables, analysed and then interpreted in the *Research Result and Discussion* section whereas the qualitative data will be revealed through a variety of points directly after the *Summary of the Findings*. To obtain authentic data collection for all the observed classes, the researcher did not inform the teachers about recording of their classes. They were only informed that their classes will be observed. There was no instruction to the teachers on using particular method or even particular types of questions in order to obtain authentic data record. Then, the audio-recorded data was listened to by the researcher several times. After the regular observation, all the discourses of the teachers and their students were transcribed and calculated from the three aspects: the amount of *teacher talk*, the types of *discourse structure*, and the uses of *teachers' questions*. Next, all the items (of audio-recording of each class) concerning

the above three aspects were counted to get the means and average percentages of the items for each class. The means and average percentages of the items of the six classes were finally calculated and analyzed. The final stage was analyzing the data of both research tools in order to find a reasonable answer to the research question.

Research Results and Discussion

Data Analysis of Classroom Observation

The teacher and learner talk is the first element to be tackled in the following section, for the researcher found that in all the classrooms observed, talk is an important element that draws on the other classroom aspects. Besides, teacher talk is dominant in all classroom aspects if not maintained. In this section, after teacher and learner talk, results of types of classroom discourse structure (IRF) will be cited. Then, the types of questions will be revealed. In these six classes, the average time measured is 30 minutes for the other portion of the class time is always distributed between administrative procedures such as calling students' names, writing on copybooks/board, etc.

Result of the Amount of Teacher's Talk

Table1. *Amount of Teacher's Talk*

Regions	Classes	T/ Talk Time/min	T/ Talk Time Percentage (%)	S/ Talk Time/min	S/ Talk Time Percentage (%)
Chlef	E.S <i>lass</i>	18	60	12	40
	FL <i>lass</i>	22	60	8	40
	L. <i>class</i>	25	85	5	15
O. Fodda	E.S <i>class</i>	20	60	10	40
	FL <i>class</i>	18	60	12	40
	L. <i>class</i>	25	70	5	30
Results	Classes	21.33	65.83	8.66	34.16

Table 1 shows that the amount of teacher's talk time exceeds that of students in all the classes. The amount of teacher and students' talk is identified in terms of streams and regions. In Chlef city for instance, students' talk exceeds that of students in Oued Fodda town in E.S. (Experimental Sciences) and L. (Literary) streams except in the (Foreign Language) FL classes (which is not always the case). Similarly, the teacher's amount of talk in the six classes is different across streams and regions and this is all clearly mentioned in the table above. Although these results differ across streams depending on the students' amount of talk, the dominance of the teacher's talk is apparent.

Result of Types of Classroom Discourse StructureTable2: *Types of Classroom Discourse Structure*

Classes	IRF Structure		Other Structures	
	Number/ 30min	Percentage (%)	Number/ 30min	Percentage (%)
E.S Classes	15	50	8	10
FL Classes	20	80	5	15
L. Classes	25	95	2	20
Results	20	75	5	15

As stated by Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975), the teacher applies the maximum amount of control over classroom discourse. Table 2 shows similar characteristics with Sinclair and Coulthard's findings. In this research, IRF structure is observed to take a large section in the six classes with regards to the different streams and regions. The following is a typical example of IRF structure found in one of the six classrooms.

T: From which period? (Initiation)

S: "The Ottoman". (Response)

T: Yes, it is the Ottoman period", thank you. (Feedback)

In this exchange, the teacher initiated a question, the student responded to it, and the teacher provided a feedback with confirmation. Table 2 reflects that IRF structure is dominant in High school EFL classrooms in Chlef city and Oued Fodda town. In IRF structure, the teacher has two turns, while the student has only one. It demonstrates the insufficiency of students' opportunities to practise English.

Results of Teachers' Questioning

To answer the research question, the researcher implemented the (R-V-T-A) method in order to observe the frequency use of two types of questions (Display and Referential) which were used by the teachers. After collecting the data, a transcribing technique was employed. After that, the observed patterns were analyzed with reference to earlier studies. This is done first, to find and reveal noticeable generalizations and patterns in teachers' questioning behaviour and EFL classroom interaction. Second, to mainly check the validity of our hypothesis. The frequencies of the two types of teachers' questions (Display question and Referential question) are listed in Table 3.

Table 3: *Frequency of Display Questions and Referential Questions*

Regions	Classes	Frequency of Display Questions		Frequency of Referential Questions	
		Number/30mn	Percentage (%)	Number/30mn n	Percentage (%)
Chlef	E.S Classes	8	45	10	55
	FL Classes	15	60	5	40
	L. Classes	15	60	6	40
Oued Fodda	E.S Classes	8	50	8	50
	FL Classes	10	50	10	50
	L. Classes	20	75	2	25
Results		12.66	56.66	6.83	43.33

The data in *Table 3* indicates that the use of Display questions and Referential questions is different in the six classes. They differ in term of streams and learners motivation with regards to their subject matter. Display questions exceed Referential ones in streams like FL and Literary classes where as they reduce in E.S classes.

Sample of Referential/Display Questions from the study data

a) *Display Questions*

T: "Have a look at the pictures, what do you call this?"

S: "Touristic guide"

T: How do you call this?

S: "Ruins"

S "buildings"

T: "Has any one of you already visited these places?"

S: No!

b) *Referential Questions*

T: What are the different heritage places in Algeria?

S: They are 7; Djamila, Timgad..

T: Can you classify them?

S: Sumerian, Egyptian, Chinese...

T: What is the meaning of inherit?

S: Someone takes money of his father for example.

Referential questions such as "What are the different heritage places in Algeria?" may lead to more participation among learners since they require longer structures of speech than display questions as in "what is the meaning of inherit?" for instance. Whereas Display questions are usually asked for "*comprehension, confirmation checks or clarification requests* (Long & Sato, 1983; Brock, 1986, as cited in Johnson & Johnson, 1998), Referential questions are usually used

for *information gaps*”. Therefore, motivation and interest cause the interaction to be more lifelike. However, some Referential questions can reduce learners’ participation and speech for the lack of vocabulary for example or grammatical errors. In this case learners may get enough of providing short answers rather, hence reduces participation. In contrast, Display questions can increase learners’ speech and participation since they are direct and require, generally, *comprehension checks*, *confirmation checks* or *clarification* requests which don’t require learners more efforts in formulating correct sentences. Instead they just check their copybooks or each others’ information. In short, in either Referential or Display questions the teacher uses to incite learners’ interaction, there are a number of elements that should be considered by teachers such as the learners’ socio-cultural background, academic streams they belong to, and more importantly the world current changes and its impact on teenagers. Furthermore, it is the classroom daily context that decides which type of questioning to use at what particular time and for what objectives each of them fits the EFL classroom discourse.

Summary of the Findings

In this study, through observation, it was found that teachers talk much in the classroom in order to explain language points, translate passages, give direction, explain activities, and check students’ understanding while students are always in a passive position; either listening. Analysis of the patterns of interaction characteristic of most classrooms has shown that teachers talk for more than half of the time, a few students contribute most to the answers. For example, in one of the two FL classes (of the city), boys talk more than girls whereas the little amount of talk which contributes to the discussion is from those sitting at the front and centre of the class than those sitting at the back and sides. In Scientific classes (in both high schools), both boys and girls contribute to the interaction, although with grammar and spelling mistakes. Interaction cannot be analyzed for the reason that it almost doesn’t exist in both literary-stream classes; learners in these classes do only write, talk to each other, or adopt nonsensical behaviours.

Interaction between input and output gives rise to second language development (Lev Vygotsky 1962) and referential questions in this case, enrich more classroom interaction. Conversely, in this study, the classroom observation showed that *teachers’ questions* tend to favour the display questions; the number of display questions exceeds the number of referential ones. It was observed that learners, especially in literary streams react more to display questions for they are information-oriented. Teachers, in such classes, in order to maximize participation to enrich the lesson, s/he focuses on display question over referential. Generally, learners in all the classes, find it easy to deal with such questions; they do not create information, rather, they re-formulate or re-use the text’s or the teacher’s ones.

With regard to interaction, observation revealed that in almost all classes, it is the teacher who always takes the initiative while learners only listen. As such, a teacher-learner interaction is supposed to show certain continuity between display and referential questions while the role of teacher’s questions is crucial. Question asking must be done purposefully, so teachers should smoothly through a negotiation of meaning change from closed discourse to more open discourse in order to create an autonomous learner discourse in the classrooms. Moreover,

teachers can increase the amount of interaction in their classes by applying a variety of techniques and methods like using humour and addressing learners' everyday life. When the teacher uses a piece of humour into the classroom, learners feel motivated to participate more than when the teacher is the centre. Also, a learner will feel important when the teacher is interested in his/her everyday matters and cares about his/her answers. However, it seems that the use of Display questions can encourage more language learners, especially beginners, than high-level learners to get interested. It may also be helpful for teachers to provide comprehensible input for learners.

To claim that Referential questions are more useful for language learning than Display questions is debatable. In this study, it is found that the classroom is an unrelated series of daily social and pedagogical events that cannot be framed within a particular teaching methodology or a discourse structure in each lesson. Moreover, different classroom contexts require different methodology of dealing with the classroom subject matter. Each context requires an appropriate strategy by itself.

As the classroom is a complex variety of activities that happen differently every session, the researcher could not prevent the observation of a number of patterns of classroom interaction and questioning that occurred during the designed observation. The following related points are accounted for the qualitative data.

- It is said that Display questions require very short answers (Brock, 1986, cited in Nunan, 1989). However, it was observed that some display questions required learners to speak for one or two minutes. Sometimes there was even an interaction among learners, and although they use a mixture of L1 and L2, learners tended to speak more, especially when the topic was interesting.
- In some classes, especially the scientific ones, questions were not always undertaken by the teacher, learners tried a lot to initiate a rich interaction among them and sometimes with the teacher discussing interesting topics though they code switch using L1.
- In many exercises, almost all the questions asked by the teacher were display. This was possibly due to the grammatical/syntactical nature of certain activities which require understanding confirmation through short answers and already-existing information.
- Not all answers given by the learners for referential questions were long and complex. In contrast, it was observed that lots of grammatical mistakes were made by the learners who provided simple answers.
- Interaction was not always created by the teacher and motivated learners. Less motivated/slow learners also participate in the interaction whenever asked or encouraged by the teacher.
- It was observed that learners were much influenced by the subject matter they are concerned with in terms of streams; FL learners, for instance, were more interested in English as a subject where they came with lesson preparation, participated and even asked questions to enrich their knowledge of the current topic. Scientific ones gave importance to English for they equally consider all subjects they have at school in order to have very good averages; they took most of the class time in answering the two types of the questions.

- Learners do not hesitate to use vocabulary from their L1 and French language to fill the gap in their discussion.
- Last year learners see that talk or participation is not important and their interest in revising for their BAC exam.

Classroom discourse is a very spontaneously evolving, dynamic, and complicated phenomenon. Pedagogic discourse is characterized by transmission, reception and practice of teaching/ learning points where the focus is on knowledge as a product and on accuracy. Evidently, the variation in using methods and techniques to enrich the classroom interaction together with considering factors related to learners' social and pedagogical background would improve English learning.

Based on the data collected through teacher talk, types of questions, and the type of discourse structure used by the teachers from six classes using an audio-taping system in addition to the teachers' questionnaire, during the observation, it was assured that it was the teacher's decision to select which discourse structure and which questions are suitable for the current session. On the other hand, even through different classroom aspects, discourse competence cannot fully be reached; learners prefer providing short answers or keeping silent. This happens even with brilliant learners who use their knowledge in official exams only. Being a secondary school teacher, the researcher suggests possible reasons behind this limited EFL classroom language production:

- Learners prefer keeping silent to avoid committing mistakes
- The English lesson in Algerian secondary schools is limited to 60mn including all the pedagogical procedures (call for students names, classroom organization and student behaviour, preparing pedagogical documents, etc.)
- Large classes
- English subject is seen as secondary for the scientific streams. However, the literary and foreign language streams prefer not to talk for them revision for the BAC exam is the most important.
- Different socio-cultural backgrounds among learners.

Actually, the reasons may vary according to different learning contexts and teachers' academic and social specificities, too. It is perhaps safe to claim that learning a FL for the current generation requires a whole methodology reformation taking into consideration learners as social members who interact more outside (within their social environment; the family, relatives and the social network) than inside the classroom. The learner's social background also may have a great impact on their success or failure in learning a foreign language; learners living in the town do not have the same attitude towards learning a foreign language as those of the city. The former seem more motivated and open to learning a foreign language than the latter. Thus, it is the teachers' task to create the right learning environment and engage talk and performance using the target language by selecting particular activities that requires their output delivery.

Suggested Recommendations on How to Improve the EFL Classroom Communication

In light of the findings achieved from the classroom observation, some guidelines on how to encourage learners to take part in classroom conversations using English are suggested here so as to overcome secondary school students' weaknesses and, thus, improve communication.

- The teacher has to be aware of the learners' learning styles so as to be able to plan and prepare appropriate teaching materials according to the learners' level.
- The use of the teaching materials should be up-to-date by varying methods and strategies in using them; the use of ICTs in delivering a lesson is very beneficial in that it changes the learning atmosphere.
- In order to motivate learners to get involved in the new lesson, teachers should warm up students with interesting and clear topics that suits them and copes with their level of English proficiency.
- Teachers should develop knowledge regularly by building on the previously pre-taught lesson and its related vocabulary, grammar points, and other topics in order to push the students to a double comprehension. It maximizes their participation too.
- Students should be involved to use their previous experiences and structures (even from their L1) to learn new knowledge.
- As students do not hesitate to use their L1 (Arabic) and French language in the classroom, the teacher can get benefit from this situation; including translation tasks from and into English using Arabic and English would increase participation as it decreases anxiety and hesitation among learners.
- Teachers do not hesitate to help learners in need of their promotion but do not exaggerate when unnecessary for that teaches dependency.
- Secondary school textbooks include a variety of topics (social, linguistic, commercial, and educational, etc.) that enables the teacher to conduct a conversation with students where they negotiate, exchange and learn ideas and new vocabulary.
- In order to balance participation among learners, the teacher should consider several factors chiefly students' level of proficiency, the class size and the time programmed for these activities.
- Group work is very welcome by students for they give them opportunity to talk to each other. It is the right moment to set them tasks to encourage exchanging ideas then comparing them using the target language.
- Teachers should attend and participate in pedagogical and study days concerning new methods and reforms in the field of teaching.

Conclusion

Failure in communication using a foreign language can be associated to a lack of practice of this language. That is why language teachers need to observe not only learners but also their own teaching methodology. Through observing teaching methodologies as well as learners' linguistic behaviour; we are basically analyzing classroom discourse. By doing so, we as teachers, are able to interpret our assumptions and beliefs about teaching from the activities chosen, the amount of talk of teachers and learners, and the types of discourse structures in each session. In this respect, it is

advisable for teachers to strengthen not the quantity but the quality of input they deliver in each session, as they should not ignore learners' output as the building block of a whole pedagogical methodology. This paper is a case study that addresses a particular learning context in particular region in Algeria that cannot be generalized for all other learning contexts. However, the related interpretations would, to a large extent, provide teachers and researchers as well with necessary tools as well as a variety of learning/teaching situations to face possible teaching obstacles.

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