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CLASSROOM DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Introduction

Extended participation in sociocultural events and activities accounts for most of an individual's major cognitive, linguistic and social learning (Hall 2002, 186). Since schooling represents one of the most formalized and prolonged sociocultural events for a number of individuals, studying what goes on in the classroom becomes relevant not only for the ones involved, both teachers and students, but for anybody interested in socialization processes. Analyzing classroom interaction can shed light on the processes undertaken for the learner's language as well as teachers', social, and cognitive development. Of special interest for education are the discursive practices, teacher-students, students-students- that promote a powerful learning environment and can reflect and/or influence other socio cultural events or practices.

In this respect, the present study will try to answer the following questions: What is active learning? What type of classroom interaction can promote active learning? How can discourse analysis help identify classroom interaction that promotes or hinders active learning? For that purpose, I will introduce some general concepts about discourse analysis (DA), classroom interaction, and active learning on the one hand. On the other, I will analyze a section of an English graduate class as a way of exemplifying some different foci of discourse analysis (teacher talk, student participation, and IRE/IRF) that can promote teachers' awareness of his/her discursive practices as well as teachers' professional development.

Discourse analysis

At the college level some teachers tend to focus more on the content of the subject they teach than on how they deliver it. The content of the English course is the language itself, how it is produced or appreciated, criticized or used. English teachers need to consider that they teach the language, about the language, and through the language. For that reason, becoming aware of the multiple dimensions of language use in the classroom is a must.

Van Lier (1984: 122) considers three general functions of language in education:

a. Language as goal: First or second language acquisition, literacy acquisition, forms of expression such as oratory, debate, and composition, and the like, as well as forms of comprehension and appreciation.
b. Language as mediator: Transmission of knowledge, information, social and cultural values, and skills.
c. Language as regulator: Organization, structure and regulation of patterns of interaction between participants in educational settings

For the purpose of analyzing what work the language does in the classroom van Lier proposes discourse analysis (DA). Lazaraton (2002:35) perceives DA as an increasingly important tool for language teaching, for second language acquisition and for language test development and validation. It can also become an empowering tool for teacher professional development (Allwright & Bailey 1991). Discourse analysis is considered a research methodology (Titscher et al. 2000, Johnstone 2000), according to Johnson & Johnson (1998:99)

Discourse analysis is the study of how stretches of language used in communication assume meaning, purpose, and unity for their uses: the quality of coherence ... coherence derives from an interaction of text with given participants, and is thus not an absolute property, but relative to context. Context includes participant's knowledge and perception of paralanguage, other texts, the situation, the culture, the world in general and the role, intentions, and relationships of participants.

Johnstone (2000:123) and Lazaraton refer to both quantitative and qualitative approaches to discourse analysis. For the latter researcher, "quantitative discourse analysis seek to determine *how often* sometimes happens, while *why* and *how* things happen are the focus of qualitative discourse analyses." (2002:33). In a review of research done in the last five years, Lazaraton found that there are very few studies using empirical methods.

This author divides the DA qualitative research methodologies into the ones that employ conversation analysis and the ones that use the ethnography of communication approach. On the other hand, the ethnography of communication approach "aims at describing the forms and functions of verbal and non-verbal communicative behavior in particular cultural or social settings (Johnson & Johnson 1998:118).

Since the larger social context is an important determinant of social behavior within a classroom, it can be considered that the practices of the classroom interaction that take place there can both reflect and/or shape that larger context, especially in a classroom where the (graduate) students are actually teachers themselves. It is through similar experiences of classroom interaction that most teachers have 'learned' how to behave as teachers. Therefore, analysis of classroom interaction –teacher/student, student/student- and discourse analysis can help teachers become aware of the gap between teaching and learning, between educational research and practice, but especially the one that exists between how faculty actually teach and the way they know they should teach (Bonwell & Elison 1991:21).

For that purpose an area of DA developed more than thirty years ago. Classroom discourse analysis history is well summarized in Lindsay (1990:108). The author refers to Bellack's pedagogical moves: (a) structuring –focusing attention in subject matter; (b) soliciting –eliciting verbal response; (c) responding; and (d) acting. Flanders used ten categories. Both Flanders and Bellack are considered procces-product oriented approaches instead of sociolinguistics. Sinclair and Coulthard designed the first sociolinguistic study of discourse in the classroom.

Lessons	**Moves**
	Framing
Transactions	Focusing
Exchanges	Opening
(Elicit-Reply-Follow-up)	
Moves	Answering
Acts	Follow-up

Table 1. Sinclair and Coulthard's Rank Scale Analysis

They elaborated a rank scale analysis system for coding classroom discourse data. Sinclair and Coulthard chose Hallidayan grammar because "Halliday's descriptive principles are well suited to the problem of handling new data –for instance many grammatical descriptions assign particular importance to sentence as a unit of analysis; in a Hallidayan description all units are of equal importance and this was a significant point as we had no idea even of how many units there might be." (Coulthard, Montgomery & Brazil 1981:7)

Finally, Lindsay mentions Mehan's sequential organization of the session consisting of an opening, an instructional, and a closing phase, which also incorporates elements of Sinclair & Coulthard such as initiation-reply-evaluation.

Coulthard & Montgomery (1981), and Hall (2002) agree in the importance for learning of the exchange sequence, particularly in the last constituent: the follow up. Berry (1981), elaborating from Halliday's functional grammar, contributed to the coding of the sequence introducing the concept 'knower' of information for the interpersonal layer, the proposition as the measure for the ideational layer, and turn-taking as the unit for the textual layer.

Depending on the context and function, this follow-up can be of three classes of acts: accepting, evaluating, or commenting (Lindsay 1990:109). Bonwell & Ellison (1991) as well as Nunn (1996), among other scholars, agree in the fact that the class of act of the follow up of teachers was crucial to promote active learning. For children "going beyond to elaborate, to volunteer contributions and ideas, and to ask questions" (Dillon 1990 quoted in Nunn 1996:246), depended on the type of follow up given by the teacher. If it consisted of praise, or was performed as an acceptance or rejection of the students answer, students felt no need to participate more, since they felt that their task was done. On the other hand, when teachers remained silent, nodded as if expecting some more information, or just repeated the students contribution as expecting some more information, when given the time students participated more.

Another approach for analyzing discourse is the systemic functional functional model. The main theoretical claims of this approach establish 'that language use is functional; that its function is to make meanings; that these meanings are influenced by the social and cultural context in which they are exchanged; and that the process of using language is a semiotic process, a process of making meanings by choosing." (Eggins 1995:2). This approach, was applied to classroom discourse by Nassaji and Wells (2000) in a study that revised the type of follow up given by teachers in order to

explore the way this follow up enabled students to take "a more active role in negotiating the curricular topics to be studied and the means used in investigating them." (381)

For the purposes of this study I will analyze classroom discourse using Sinclair and Coulthard's moves, Berry's concept of knower of information and Nassaji & Wells systemic approach.

Classroom interaction and active learning

Classroom interaction is how students and teachers build a body of knowledge. Through their interaction they construe their roles and relationship, and the patterns, norms, and opportunities for active involvement and learning. " Students draw upon these patterns and norms to participate in subsequent classroom activities and thus they are consequential in terms of not only what students ultimately learn, but also, and more broadly, their participation in future educational events and the roles and group memeberships that they hold within these events.' (Hall 2002:188). In these 'future educational events' I would include teachers as well, since students can become, teacher in the future, or actual teachers were students before being teachers. Therefore the socialization through educational events can be perpetuating of a status quo or transforming if meaningful and purposeful.

An educational event can become meaningful and purposeful when students become involved. Students' involvement means students' engagement with the material being learned. And active learning is closely linked to students' involvement, since active learning "involves students in doing things and thinking about things they are doing" (Bonwell & Ellison 1991:19). These researchers present the learning process as a continuum, from passive to active with the corresponding typified attitudes of students. Students wander from one end to the other depending on the degree of involvement in the class and the type of classroom interaction developed by both students and teachers.

Nunn (1996), Bonwell & Ellison (1991), and Smith (1977) refer to the fact that teacher talk dominates the class. And the ratio of time they mention goes from 80% to 86% teacher talk. According to Bellack, quoted in Smith, these figures were observed in classes described either as lecture or discussion. Nevertheless, the lecture format has been the one under revision, since it is inferred, not accurately, as the format that does not necessarily promote active learning. For that reason some research has been done and the following alternatives to the lecture format have been suggested.

Among others, Bonwell & Ellison (1991) mention: the feedback lecture, consisting of two minilectures separated by a small group study session built

around a study guide; the guided lecture, in which students listen to a 20 to 30 minute presentation without taking notes, followed by their writing for five minutes what they remember and spending the remainder of the class period in small groups clarifying and elaborating the material. Discussion in class also promotes long term retention of information and motivates students toward further learning especially when a supportive intellectual and emotional environment that encourages students to take risks has been created. Other instructional strategies that promote active learning mentioned by these researchers are the case study and the Guided design. Finally, cooperative learning, debates, drama, role playing, simulation, and peer teaching are also considered active learning instructional skills.
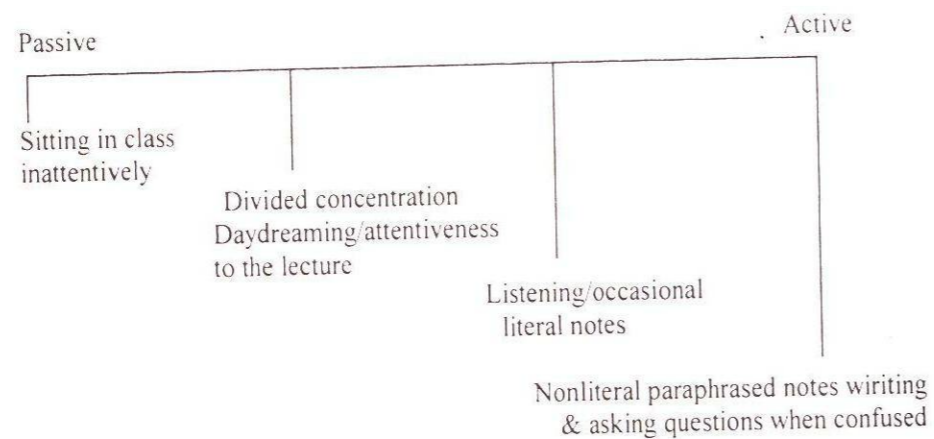
The Learning Process

Table 2. Bonwell & Ellinson's characterization of the learning process (1991)

So far, according to the works cited above, I can state, first, that active learning is the one that engages students in actually "doing" something with the new knowledge and reflecting on what they are doing (Bonwell & Ellison). Second, that the most important class of act, in the exchange sequence, is the follow-up. In this respect, teachers might promote more participation of students, especially giving them opportunity to participate more elaborating their responses. What follows is the report of the study and results from classroom observation applying discourse analysis.

Background of the study and Analysis of Data

The source of the data for this study was an English graduate class ('Composition Theories') in a US university. The classroom observation was

made during one session in the summer of 2002. The class was taped in a standard recorder with no external microphone. Since the equipment was not high tech and the class was numerous (15) and highly participative (loquacious) there are some gaps in the transcription (Appendix A). The code used for the transcription is in Appendix B. The students were all English teachers from different areas: composition, literature, English as a second or foreign language. There were twelve Americans, one Asian, one Middle Eastern and one Latin American. The teacher of the course was American.

The observer asked consent to the class previous to the recording. The teacher and fourteen of the students did not object. One student asked not to be recorded and for that reason only the part of the recording where she did not participate was transcribed. Only the name of the student on the board was kept. In this class the students were negotiating the final assignment: the content of an introduction book for the composition theories class. Each student was responsible for developing a chapter of that book, as his/her final paper.

The purpose of the study was to apply part of what was learned in our Language and Social Context course and fulfill the final paper requirement. The analysis of the transcription was focused on the typical Initiation-Response sequence of the class, which may also contain Follow-up moves. The later were divided in Follow-up give, and Follow-up demand moves, depending on the function performed by the language. From the analysis it can be observed that in the sequence the students frequently performed the Initiation and Follow up moves, traditionally performed by the teacher. And that the teacher sometimes completed the Response move regularly made by students.

	Status as knower	Move	Function
1. S 1: Letms talk about how many pages.	K2	Init	Question
2. S 2: That depends.	K2	Init	Comment Opinion
3. T: Imll be teacherly, minimum-maximum, something around 20 to 25 pages.	K1	Resp	Bid

5. S 3: MLA documentation.	K2	Init	Question
6. S 1: APA.	K2	Init	Question
7. T: You decide. I never have written APA, for any journal.	K1	Resp	Personal Experience

Table 3. Initiation moves by students and response move by teacher.

The observer coded under function the 'presumed intention' (Nassaji & Wells 2000) of the participants, perfectly aware that they might be interpreted differently since there is no notation of the intonation. In order to have a complete vision of the sequence you can turn to Appendix A. The role of the knower of the information was closer to the norm than that previously discussed of the function. Most frequently the teacher knows the answers, especially for the questions asked by him.

From the classroom discourse analysis is easy to infer that this was not a typical teacher centered class. In reference to the teacher talk ratio mentioned in Smith (1977), in fact the teacher dominates the class, though much less than the 80% mentioned in the literature. The ratio was 69% teacher-talk, 31% student-talk. Another fact that supports the idea of a less teacher-controlled class is the rotation of the traditional moves of students and teacher. Students initiate and teachers responds, not exactly what happens in the traditional classroom. Though you have to take into consideration the nature of the task. Negotiating final papers naturally promoted that attitude. Students wanted to know what was expected from them. They needed the answers.

The last feature to be analyzed is the type of learning promoted by teacher-student interaction. Did it promote active learning? According to Bonwell & Ellinson's characterization of the learning process (1991), active learning is best observed through the participation of students asking questions when confused. And that is what can be observed in the transcription: Students asking questions about the characteristics of the final task.

Moves/ functions	5 Init - Question	6 FUG (confirmation, praise, evaluation, accept, comment)	2 Statements topic and comment

	4 Resp- Answer	2 FUD Confirm	2 Response bid
		2 Negotiating-suggestion	

Table 4. Analysis of the exchange sequence and the different functions of the follow-up moves from the teacher.

From the figures in the table, nevertheless, it can be observed that the follow-up give movements indicating evaluation, praise were abundant compared with the other function. These were precisely the type of moves that the researchers signaled as less effective to promote students extended participation, and in consequence learning.

Conclusions

From the study we can conclude that classroom discourse analysis is an effective way of analyzing teacher practice. The class observed, by the nature of its topic promoted active student participation. Teacher-talk ratio was lower than the norm indicating a less teacher-centered class. Nevertheless, the analysis of the type and function of follow-up moves revealed an area of opportunity for the teacher. Classroom interaction in this session was intense, though the role of the teacher, in a way, reproduced traditional teacher attitudes of evaluation and praise. Instead, the literature recommends an attitude that promotes longer participation of students where they can elaborate and build their knowledge during the interaction (Bonwell & Ellison 1991; Nunn 1996). The recommendation of the experts is for the teacher to remain silent, nod as expecting some more information, or just repeat the students' contribution as expecting some information. This gives students opportunity to participate, and learn, more.

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Appendix A

Key: K1 = Primary knower; K2 = Secondary knower
      Init = Initiate; Resp = Response; FUG = Follow up give; FUD = Follow up Demand

dix B

| Total of students' words | 124 | 31% |
| Total of teacher's words | 278 | 69% |

	Status as knower	Move	Function
1. S 1: Let's talk about how many pages.	K2	Init	Question
2. S 2: That depends.	K2	Init	Comment Opinion
3. T: I'll be teacherly, minimum-maximum, something around 20 to 25 pages.	K1	Resp	Bid
4. S 1: Under or over a little bit could be OK	K2	FUD	Clarification
5. S 3: MLA documentation.	K2	Init	Question
6. S 1: APA.	K2	Init	Question
7. T: You decide. I never have written APA, for any journal.	K1	Resp	Personal Experience
8. S 4: I can do both	K2	FUG	Comment
9. S 2: Go back to the purple	K2	FUG	Comment
10. S 4: Now there's one black	K2	FUG	Clarification
11. T: Almost 100% you'll be asked MLA Think about CCC, Who's APA?	K1	Init	Question
12. Ss: [discuss]	K2		
13. T: For the sake of argument we will use MLA. If this turns to be a problem we'll reconsider it.	K1	Resp	Answer
14. (Referring to Culler's 'Literary Theory') One of the reasons I picked this book was that he doesn't have schools.		Statem	Topic
15 Right?		FUD	Conf
16. He has. . . um. . . issues. "What is Theory?" "What is Literature?" (talk) Yeah.		Statem	Comment
17. I think we should try and (muffled) compare the new with the old and see where we are, and then maybe we can even start to sign up that point.		Statem	Comment
		Negot	Conj
18. Maybe by the time you leave here you'll		Init	Quest

actually know what you're doing.			
19. Wouldn't that be nice?			
20. S 3: That would be very nice.	K2	Resp	Answer
21. T: Let's do that.	K1	Action	Intend
22. ..All right?		FUD	Conf
23. You want to get into small groups for brainstorming or you all work...? (talk)		Init	Question
24. All right, let's do the whole class . . .		Negot	Sugg
25. Who wants to be the board person?		Init	Question
26. Ss: Tina	K1	Resp	Answer
27. (Several Ss agree)	K1		
128. Tina: That's all right. . . I know how we all live. . .(?)	K1	FUG	Evaluation Acc
29. (Laughter)			Acknowl
30. T: Thank you so much.	K1	FUG	Praise
31. All right. . .Let's . . .Now, this is what you need to do. You need to clear your minds.		Negot	Sugg
32. Forget the minutes. Put those minutes away! Don't you look at those! Cheaters! Cheaters . . .		Action	Bid
33. I want you to think about what we have been reading;.. That's where we're going to find our issues.		Negot	Sugg
34. What are our issues? All right –issues.		Init	Question
35. Ss: Yes, that's right. That's exactly right. Issues.	K2	Resp	Answer
36. S 5: Because that should be listed in the introduction.	K1	FUG	Comment Ampl
37. T: Yeah	K1	FUG	Evaluation Accept
38. S 6: What about author and authority?	K2	Init	Question
39. T: Author and authority! That's a key issue!	K1	Resp FUG	Answer Evaluation Acc
40. S 6: Contingency . . . (muffled) the Self.	K2	Init	Question
41. T: Contingency and generalizability	K1	Resp	Answer

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42. S 6: Is this global and . . .	K2	Init	Question
43. T: local?	K1	Resp	Answer
44. S 6: local, yeah.	K2	FUG	Evaluation Praise
45. T: Global and Local!	K1	FUG	Evaluation Praise
46. S 6: Yes	K1	FUG	Evaluation Praise
47. T: This is good! We're good!	K1	FUG	Comment Opinion
48. S 3: You're a good cheerleader.	K1	FUG	Evaluation Praise
49. T: (laughs) Yeah, I do that well. That's right . . . one of my better qualities	K1	AKI	Fact
50. Tina: Contingency and reliability?	K1	Init	Question
51. S 1: (overlaps) Not "versus," though. Because that says (muffled)	K2	Resp	Answer Reject
52. Several Ss: "generalizability."	K2	FUG	Comment Ampl
53. Tina: I couldn't remember what the word was.	K2	Statem	Acknowledge
54. S 5: Yeah, generalizability.	K1	FUG	Comment Acc
55. T: Is that even a word, generalizability?	K1	Init	Question
56. (Laughter)		AKI	
57. S 3: You haven't taken Don's class.	K2	Resp	Answer
58. (Laughter)		AKI	Agree
59. T: Oh, I try to stay away from Don when he starts talking like that.	K1	FUG	Comment Connection
60. (Laughter)	K1	AKI	Agree

Appendix B

MOVES

<u>Initiating</u>	Init
Statement	Statem
Question	Quest

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Responding   Resp
    Answer   Ans
    Acknowledge Ack

Follow up: Give   FUG

(a)   Evaluation
Acc   Accept   Rej   Reject
Ref   Reformulate Praise   Praise

(b)   Comment
Exem Exemplification   Ampl Amplification
Conn   Connection   Sum   Summarize

Follow up: Demand FUD

(a)   Comment
Exem Exemplification   Ampl Amplification
Conn   Connection   Opin Opinion
Just   Justification   Sum   Summarize

(b)   Clarification
Rep   Repetition   Ident Identification
Conf   Confirmation

Adapted from Nassaji & Wells 2000:401

Appendix C

3. T: I'll be teacherly, minimum-maximum, something around 20 to 25 pages.	K1	Resp	Bid
7. T: You decide. I never have written APA, for any journal.	K1	Resp	Personal Experience

11. T: Almost 100% you'll be asked MLA Think about CCC. Who's APA?	K1	Init	Question
13. T: For the sake of argument we will use MLA. If this turns to be a problem we'll reconsider it.	K1	Resp	Answer
14. (Referring to Culler's 'Literary Theory') One of the reasons I picked this book was that he doesn't have schools.		Statem FUD	Topic Conf
15 Right?		Statem	Comment
16. He has. . . um. . . issues. "What is Theory?" "What is Literature?" (talk) Yeah.		Statem	Comment
17. I think we should try and (muffled) compare the new with the old and see where we are, and then maybe we can even start to sign up that point.		Negot Init	Conj Quest
18. Maybe by the time you leave here you'll actually know what you're doing.			
19. Wouldn't that be nice?			
21. T: Let's do that.	K1	Action	Intend
22. All right?		FUD	Conf
23. You want to get into small groups for brainstorming or you all work . . .? (talk)		Init	Question
24. All right, let's do the whole class . . .		Negot	Sugg
25. Who wants to be the board person?		Init	Question
30. T: Thank you so much.	K1	FUG	Praise
31. All right. . .Let's . . .Now, this is what you need to do. You need to clear your minds.		Negot	Sugg
32. Forget the minutes. Put those minutes away! Don't you look at those! Cheaters! Cheaters . . .		Action	Bid
33. I want you to think about what we have been reading;.. That's where we're		Negot	Sugg

going to find our issues. 34. What are our issues? All right – <u>issues</u>.		Init	Question
37. T: Yeah	K1	FUG	Evaluation Accept
39. T: Author and authority! That's a key issue!	K1	Resp FUG	Answer Evaluation Acc
41. T: Contingency and generalizability	K1	Resp	Answer
43. T: local?	K1	Resp	Answer
45. T: Global and Local!	K1	FUG	Evaluation Praise
47. T: This is good! We're good!	K1	FUG	Comment Opinion
49. T: (laughs) Yeah, I do that well. That's right . . . one of my better qualities	K1	AKI	Fact
55. T: Is that even a word, generalizability?	K1	Init	Question
59. T: Oh, I try to stay away from Don when he starts talking like that.	K1	FUG	Comment Connection

CLASSROOM INTERACTION & INSTRUMENTAL TEXTS

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Introduction

The aim of this paper is to explore from a discourse point of view, the structure of some written instructions of some exercises that were utilized in the course *Linguistics and the English Teacher*. Instructions become "instrumental texts" according to Dendrinos (1992: 43) since they are "texts whose function is to provide the learner with information concerning the teaching and learning matter and with instructions regarding what to do with". Also, this paper is intended to be an exercise of reflection about the nature of the written instructions used in class which we use every day in class

We, as teachers, are familiarized enough with instructions. They appear everywhere from textbooks to daily classroom activities. They are characteristic of the pedagogical discourse. It would be difficult not to relate teaching with these instrumental texts. For example, in Flanders' Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC) describes communication that is carried out in the classroom (see Malamah – Thomas 1991). Within the categories mentioned by Flanders that comprise such classroom observation instruments, category number six, there is reference to the following teacher talk "Giving directions: Directions, commands, or