ПСИХОЛОГІЯ І ПЕДАГОГІКА
PSYCHOLOGY AND PEDAGOGY

Дискурс та питання повноважень у класній кімнаті: дослідження повноважень студентів у класі вивчення другої іноземної мови

Гаомін Жанг

Пенсильванський університет 4244
вул.Spruce Street, кв. 2R, Філадельфія, Пенсильванія, 19104;
E-mail: haominzh@alumni.upenn.edu

Інструмент для аналізу дискурсу – це метод, який використовується для дослідження комунікації в певному контексті, в офіційній або неофіційній обстановці. Класна кімната, в якій вивчається друга іноземна мова, – це сценарій викладання/навчання, який створює у класі певну дискурсну спільноту між викладачем та студентами. Автор статті має намір дослідити дискурс та питання повноважень у стосунках між викладачем та студентами в класі вивчення другої іноземної мови. З цієї точки зору, автор висвітлює питання повноважень студентів у такій класній кімнаті.

Дані для дослідження були зібрані в класі вивчення другої іноземної мови церковної школи містечка Чайнатаун, що у Філадельфії, США. Для детальнішого аналізу, з метою роз'яснення деяких сегментів обговорення та спілкування в класній кімнаті, автор використовував метод збереження аналізу.

За допомогою аналітичного засобу метода збереження аналізу обговорюють очевидні проблеми у конкретному класі вивчення другої іноземної мови. По-перше, домінантність повноважень викладача перешкоджає розширенню прав студентів. Відносини між викладачем та студентами схожі на відносини між тим, хто ставить питання, і тими, хто відповідає на них. Студенти не мають можливості вільно висловлювати свою думку в класі. Окрім того, стовідсоткове використання другої іноземної мови негативно позначається на активній участі студентів у класній роботі та обговореннях. За таких умов спілкування між викладачем та студентами перешкоджає подальшому мисленню та процесу мозкового штурму в студентів.

У висновку йдеться про важливість розширення прав і можливостей студентів у класі вивчення другої іноземної мови. Окрім того, автор доходить висновку, що аналіз дискурсу в класі сприяє вдосконаленню педагогічної практики і забезпечує глибше розуміння процесу викладання/навчання.

Переклад виконано в Агенції перекладів "PIO"
www.pereklad.lviv.ua

Classroom Discourse and Power: Insights into Learner Empowerment in L2 Classroom

Haomin Zhang

University of Pennsylvania
4244 Spruce Street, APT 2R, Philadelphia, PA, 19104
Email: haominzh@alumni.upenn.edu

Powerandrelationship in discourse community is an intriguing topic to study on. And classroom discourse community is a place where institutional talk takes place, which is different from some contexts creating informal communication. In this paper, author aims to explore the discourse and power relationship in L2 classroom so that insights into the issue of learner empowerment can be analyzed. The author draws upon conversation analytical tool to look into communication in a specific L2 classroom. Two predominant problems are found. (1) Effects of teachers' dominance in teaching/learning, and (2) impediment of L2-only instruction seem to be salient. Finally, a succinct conclusion is made about the importance of learner empowerment and necessity to do classroom discourse analysis.

Keywords – Classroom discourse, conversation analysis, discourse and power, teacher dominance, learner autonomy, L2-only instruction

I. Introduction

Singleton & Newman (2009) mention that a typical classroom is always pictured with the teachers talking for a whole lesson while students write down the notes. Thus, the question would be "control". Who should be in control of the classroom? Empowering students or controlling students is an important issue for teachers to consider and explore in the L2 classroom.

Widdowson (2003) states that there is a dialectic relationship between learners' autonomy and teachers' authority. Natural learning should be fostered by teachers' control and contrivance while learners should not be deprived of the opportunities for initiative. For me, the balance of teachers' authority and students' autonomy seems relevant for L2 classroom. In what kind of situation, should teacher draw on the teachers' control to facilitate students' learning? In what kind of circumstance, should students be given more chances for initiatives in the classroom?

Nunan (1995) states, "it is the learner who must remain at the center of the process, for no matter how much energy and effort we expend, it is the learner who has to do the learning" (p.155). Language classroom is the place where

teachers and students work collaboratively to achieve the goals of learning and teaching. I noticed the expressions that Nunan (1995) used in his analysis. Students should be "encouraged", "be given space", "be given opportunities", "enabled". All these expressions illustrate that students in the language classroom should be empowered and teaching should be based on students' needs.

II. Conversation Analysis Tool

Perspectives from different literature furnish me with various attitudes toward learner empowerment in different contexts. It is vital to investigate these issues in the specific second language classroom. I would like to shift my point from initial understanding of the literature to an in-depth analysis in my ESL classroom by the tool of classroom discourse analysis.

Pomerantz & Fehr (1997) state thatconversation analysis can produce the substantial body of rigorous and informative analyses of human action and interaction. Conversation analysis is the basic tool for me to do the classroom discourse analysis. Moreover, Pomerantz & Fehr (1997) state that conversation analysis considers how the timing and taking of turns provide for certain understandings of the actions and the matters talked about and how the ways the actions were accomplished implicate certain identities, roles, or relationships for the interactants. Egbert (2004) also argues that conversation analysis helps to find out the specific linguistic, regional or ethnic feature that a certain person used in the talk-in-interaction. Therefore, in this paper, I would like to investigate the classroom power and relationship; effects of English-only in the ESL classroom by analytical tool of conversation analysis.

1. Power and relationship in my ESL classroom discourse

Rymes (2009) mentions that taking turns, asking and answering questions, providing feedback and encouraging more thinking are essential elements of classroom discourse. Traditional turn-taking patterns in the classroom discourse include IRE (initiation-response-evaluation) and IRF (initiation-response-feedback). Nicholls (1993) also puts forth that one of the traditional turn-taking patterns in the ESL classroom discourse is Q-A-C (Question-Answer-Comment). Through the transcriptions of my ESL classroom discourse, we can see these patterns. Examples show as follows.

Excerpt #1 (Feb. 6th, 2011)

1.	Sunny:	Number two?
2.	Teacher:	uhuh.
3.	Sunny:	Could Sa-sha finish his homework
4.		last night.
5.	Mandy:	No, he couldn't. He was too tired.
6.	Teacher:	OK. Great. Qi, Number eight. OK?
7.	Teacher:	Could Rita perform in school plays
8.		when she was young?
9.	Qi:	No, she couldn't. She was too shy.
10.	Sunny:	°No, she couldn't. She was too shy°.
11.	Teacher:	Correct.

Excerpt #2 (Jan. 30th, 2011)

1.	Teacher:	Number two, Sunny. I will be A. Was
2.		Charlie able to eat the food
3.		at the restaurant last night?
4.	Sunny:	No. He, he:: wasn't (0.5) able to. He
5.		was able to (())
6.	Teacher:	O.K. Good. (0.5). Number eight,
7.		Mandy, was Vicky able to wear his
8.		brother's tuxedo to the prom?

As usual, conforming to "initiation-response-feedback" (IRF) typical turn-taking pattern in the classroom discourse, teacher gave students feedback (like good, correct) about their answers. As it can be seen from the data I transcribed, line 6 (excerpt#1) and line 1-3(excerpt #2) are initiations from teachers. Then, the following are students' responses. After students' responses, teacher provided students with feedback like good, correct, great, O.K. (line 6, 11 in excerpt#1 and line 6 in excerpt#2).

Previously, the teachers' 100 percent control of the classroom was advocated by some practitioners. Muller (1988) upholds that teacher is the only one who knows, the students are the ones who do not know. McHoul (1978) says, "Only teachers can direct speakship in any creative way" (p.188). McHoul (1978) also mentions that only teachers have the right to comment on the answer students produced. However, Rymes (2009) argues that traditional turn-taking patterns in the classroom, for some people, impede rather than facilitate participating learning events. Traditional turn-taking patterns in the ESL classroom generate an unequal teacher-fronted discourse in the classroom.

Back to this classroom discourse, teacher provided the students with the evaluation "good", "great", or "right" after students' responses. However, immediately after the evaluation, the teacher initiated another task for students. The students have no opportunity to self-select because of teacher's immediate request for the next item. Therefore, the teacher was playing a dominant role and taking the lead in the interaction and conversation of the transcribed classroom discourse.

Moreover, by looking at the relationships in the classroom discourse community, the questioner-respondent relationships are salient in this discourse community. It can be demonstrated as follows:

Excerpt #3 (Jan. 9th, 2011)

1.	T:	I will invite two students to do that. (2)
2.		Michelle, number:: five. You'll be A,
3.		Huiying, you will be B.
4.		(3)
5.	Michelle:	I seen he is, he is a care, careless skier.
6.	Hui:	I agree. He ski, he skies very carelessly.
7.	T:	Yes. Right. Number:: eight. Qi and Lam.
8.		Qi, you will be A.

It seems that the interactions were multiparty conversations. Teacher, Michelle, and Hui participated in this conversation. Although it seemed that Michelle and Hui (in line 5 and line 6) were interacting with each other, this was not the case as can be seen from the overview of the whole interaction from line 1 to line 8. It is clear that the teacher was the questioner, while both Michelle and Hui were the respondents to the teacher's request for doing

exercise number five. Michelle and Hui interacted with each other not because of their self-selection; instead they were doing the fixed modeling printed on the book or the material. In the transcriptions shown in appendix, conversation/turn-taking pattern, as a whole, is similar to excerpt #3. We can treat the teacher as the questioner, and the other participants as the respondents in this discourse community.

Above all, the teacher in this ESL classroom is fully empowered and takes a dominant role at the most of the time. In my data, the only opportunity for students to communicate or speak up comes from answering teachers' questions. Learners were given few opportunities to be exposed to the student-student open interaction or discussion. Meanwhile, teacher acted as a dominant person to take the lead in the classroom and impose his own requirements on the students when asking students to do the substitution exercises.

2. Effects of English-only in my ESL classroom discourse

Using students' L1 in ESL/EFL classroom is always a controversial topic. Does L1 facilitate students' understanding or impede students' immersion in L2 leaning? Auerbach (1993) argues that "L1 will be a potential resource rather than an obstacle" (p.20). However, English-only instruction might make students feel overwhelmed. Students may also feel stressed when talking with the teacher or other students in L2. Examples can be found from the data of my classroom discourse.

Excerpt #4 (Jan. 16th, 2011)

11.	Teacher:	O.K. Qi, what about you?
12.	Qi:	(()). Nothing. ((laughing)) (()). Um.
13.		(1). To shopping.
14.	Teacher:	Um? I want to hear a complete
15.		sentence. So, you:: You should say, "
16.		I::"
17.	Qi:	I (1.5) I go, went to shopping.
18.		((laughing)). Everyday.
19.	Teacher:	Where did you go for shopping?
20.	Qi:	Um. (1). Mall.
21.	Teacher:	In Philly or in New York?
22.	Qi:	Um. (1) stay home and watch TV.
23.	Teacher:	Oh. You stayed home and watched
24.		TV. Right?
25.	Qi:	Yeah.

This is a warm-up activity before the class. Teacher initiated the topic about "what did you do during the holidays?" All the conversations among teacher and students were uttered in only English. In this transcribed segment, teacher initiated the invitation by asking Qi to talk about her experiences during the holidays. Qi took the floor but she was mumbling with several fragments of words. She did not know how to express her ideas in English fluently. However, teacher tried to impose further requirement on her (line 14,15) by saying that she should provide me with complete English sentence. She was stressed out and in a daze how to respond in English. In line 21, when teacher asked, "In Philly or in New York?" Her response digressed from the question (line 22). Qi spoke about her ideas unsuccessfully when communicating with the teacher in English.

The unsuccessful communication in English can also be found between another student and the teacher from the segment I transcribed.

Excerpt #5 (Jan. 16th, 2011)

26.	Teacher:	O.K. Mandy, what about you?
27.	Mandy:	I went to °New York city°. (3) at
28.		home clean house and um, um, watch
29.		TV.
30.	Teacher:	You cleaned house?
31.	Mandy:	Yes. Clean the house and watch TV.
32.	Teacher:	O.K. (0.5). So, how long have you
33.		been in New York city?
34.	Mandy:	((murmuring in Cantonese)).
35.	Teacher:	Hong long?
36.	Lam:	How long have you stayed there? (In
37.		Mandarin Chinese)
38.	Mandy:	Oh. ((murmuring in Mandarin)). (1).
39.		One day.
40.	Teacher:	Only one day?
41.	Mandy:	One day.
42.	Teacher:	O.K. All right.

There are several pauses among the talk of Mandy (line 27, 38). She was not confident when speaking about her ideas. Also, in line 32, when teacher asked a further question "how long have you been in New York city?" she did not give me the instant response because she did not catch the meaning of my question. Instead, she negotiated the meaning with another student (from line 36 to 38) by translating it into Cantonese and Mandarin.

Therefore, by looking at the data I transcribed in a warm-up activity. The English-only interaction can intimidate students when they are coming up with some thoughts. The interactions in the above-mentioned two examples are neither successful.

III. Implications and Conclusion

Several problems are identified in the foregoing part. Teacher takes the dominant role in the classroom and relationship in my ESL classroom looks like the questioner-respondent rather than interactants in the open discussion. Meanwhile, 100 percent L2 use in the classroom will probably impede students' understanding and further brainstorming.

Smith (2002) proposes that teachers give support to inarticulate students and give students more freedom and autonomy in the classroom by encouraging group participation, communication and independent decision making. Myrick & Tamlyn (2007) also argues that it is crucial to use strategies (e.g reflective teaching methods) to promote student autonomy and go forward the movement of developing students' critical thinking. Thus, it is critical to empower students in the classroom to let them take the lead in the classroom; switch the dominant role of teacher to the students.

Moreover, use of students' L1 can help empower students and value students' native language and culture (Auerbach, 1993). In addition, Hemmindinger (1987) mentions that the use of L1 is crucial in implementing an empowerment approach to incorporate students in the ESL classrooms.

All in all, it is indispensable to study on classroom discourse community, where institutional talk takes place. Also, reflection on discourse power and relationship in L2 classroom is conducive for teaching practitioners to improve their practice.

Appendix

Transcription

Jan 9th, 2011 (18:56-21.56)

1.   T: I will invite two students to do that. (2)
2.   Michelle, number:: five. You'll be A,
3.   Huiying, you will be B.
4.   (3)
5.   Michelle: I seen he is, he is a care, careless skier.
6.   Hui: I agree. He ski, he skies very carelessly.
7.   T: Yes. Right. Number:: eight. Qi and Lam.
8.   Qi, you will be A.
9.   Qi: I think he is (())
10. T: I chose number eight or number eleven?
11. Qi: Oh:
12. T: All right. That's OK.
13. Qi: I think he is, he is (()) (0.5) (())
14. T: But actually there are two people here.
15. Qi: Oh. I think they are (())
16. Lam: I agrees. They, they, they (0.5) paints
17.   very bad.
18. T: O.K. The pattern is I agrees? And they
19.   paints? It's plural form. So it should
20.   be they paint.

Jan 16ᵗʰ, 2011 (8:00-11:16)

1.   Teacher: First, I would like you to talk about
2.   your Christmas and New Year holidays.
3.   Lam: O.K.
4.   Teacher: O.K? What did you do during the
5.   holidays?
6.   Lam: Holiday?
7.   Teacher: Yeah.
8.   Lam: um. (0.5). meishenme tebie de. How
9.   can I say in English?
10. Teacher: No thing special?
11. Lam: nothing special. Yeah.
12. Teacher: What did you do? Um.
13. Lam: Stay home, watch TV.
14. Teacher: O.K. Qi, what about you?
15. Qi: (()). Nothing. ((laughing)) (()). Um.
16.   (1). To shopping.
17. Teacher: Um? I want to hear a complete
18.   sentence. So, you:: You should say, "
19.   I::"
20. Qi: I (1.5) I go, went to shopping.
21.   ((laughing)). Everyday.
22. Teacher: Where did you go for shopping?
23. Qi: Um. (1.). Mall.
24. Teacher: In Philly or in New York?
25. Qi: Um. (1) stay home and watch TV.
26. Teacher: Oh. You stayed home and watched
27.   TV. Right?
28. Qi: Yeah.

29. Teacher: O.K. Mandy, what about you?
30. Mandy: I went to °New York city°. (3) at
31.   home clean house and um, um, watch
32.   TV.
33. Teacher: You cleaned house?
34. Mandy: Yes. Clean the house and watch TV.
35. Teacher: O.K. (0.5). So, how long have you
36.   been in New York city?
37. Mandy: ((murmuring in Cantonese)).
38. Teacher: Hong long?
39. Lam: How long have you stayed there? (In
40.   Mandarin Chinese)
41. Mandy: Oh. ((murmuring in Mandarin)). (1).
42.   One day.
43. Teacher: Only one day?
44. Mandy: One day.
45. Teacher: O.K. All right.

Jan. 30ᵗʰ, 2011 (24:56-28:36)

1.   Teacher: Number two, Sunny. I will be A. Was
2.   Charlie able to eat the food
3.   at the restaurant last night?
4.   Sunny: No. He, he:: wasn't (0.5) able to. He
5.   was able to (())
6.   Teacher: O.K. Good. (0.5). Number eight,
7.   Mandy. Was Vicky able to wear his
8.   brother's tuxedo to the prom?
9.   Mandy: No, he wasn't able to. (1.0). He was
10.   (()) It was too small.
11. Teacher: O.K. O.K. Good. Number two, Lam.
12.   Were you able to solve the problem
13.   last night?
14. Lam: No. He wasn't able to. It was too, too
15.   difficult.
16. Teacher: Umm.(0.5) Umm. No? He wasn't?
17. Lam: No. He wasn't able to. It was.
18. Teacher: Look at my question, Lam. Were you
19.   able to.
20. Lam: Were you able to. Oh:: I.
21. Teacher: Yes. I wasn't able to. Uhuh. Yeah.
22.   O.K. All right. Qi. Were your parents
23.   able to swim in the ocean during their
24.   vocation?
25.   (2)
26. Qi: No. (()). He (()).
27. Lam: They.
28. Qi: ((murmuring in Cantonese)). (5). No.
29.   They (2) were

Feb. 6ᵗʰ, 2011 (13:16-16:20)

1.   Sunny: Number two?
2.   Teacher: uhuh.
3.   Sunny: Could Sa-sha finish his homework last
        night.
4.   Mandy: No, he couldn't. He was too tired.
5.   Teacher: OK. Great. Qi, Number eight. OK?
6.   Teacher: Could Rita perform in school plays
7.   when she was young?
8.   Qi: No, she couldn't. She was too shy.
9.   Sunny: °No, she couldn't. She was too shy°.
10. Teacher: OK.