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Investigating Two Aspects of Teachers' Contribution to Classroom Discourse across Proficiency Levels: Corrective Feedback and Use of L1

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Abstract

In EFL contexts where the language learners' input, output, and interactions are primarily provided within the four walls of the classroom, the success of learning depends to a large extent on the righteousness and adequacy of classroom discourse to which the teachers' contribution has a decisive role. Drawing upon this assumption, the present study aimed at investigating teachers' contribution to classroom discourse at two levels of proficiency, namely low intermediate and high intermediate levels, based on two of the five categories proposed by Ellis (2008). In so doing, the discourse of eight English classes at the aforementioned levels taught by four male and female teachers (two classes per teacher, one low intermediate and one high intermediate) was audio-recorded, transcribed, and then analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively to determine whether the teachers intentionally and professionally modified their contributions to classroom discourse according to the learners' proficiency levels. The analysis of the results revealed that there was no marked and intentional adjustment on the part of participating teachers to the classroom discourse when interacting with the learners at those levels. At the end, the implications of the present study for classroom teachers, teacher trainers, supervisors, and observers were discussed.

Keywords: classroom discourse, corrective feedback, use of L1

Introduction

In countries where English is taught and learned as a foreign language, classrooms are the main or even the only context in which learners are exposed to the foreign language, and teacher, as the primary source of input, provide the learners with an important part of what they need to receive to learn the respective foreign language. Therefore, we need to be seriously concerned about the righteousness of what actually happens between the teacher and the students or students and students in the EFL classrooms in the form of classroom discourse. This is so because classroom discourse, if managed properly and professionally, can facilitate and accelerate language learning in EFL contexts.

This study, inspired by Ellis's (2008) categorization of teacher's contribution to classroom discourse including teacher talk, teacher's questions, use of L1, use of metalanguage and corrective feedback, strived to investigatetwo of five aforementionedfeatures, namely corrective feedback and use of L1, used in the discourse of four Iranian EFL teachers as they taught low intermediate and high intermediate level adult classes.

Statement of the problem

According to Mingzhi (2005), in EFL contexts where language learning is confined to classrooms, teachers should try to make classroom communication similar to the real world communication. Therefore, it is expected that teachers care about learners' language proficiency levels when addressing them, as stated by Ellis (2008).Nevertheless, it is sometimes observed that the nature of the elements teachers usually use in interaction with less proficient learners is the same as those they use in their interactions with highly proficient learners. For example,as learners' proficiency levels increase, a

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reduction in the use of corrective feedback and L1, which prevent a real and fluent interaction to be formed, is expected. But many EFLteachers seem to use the same kind and amount of corrective feedbacksand the same amount of L1at different proficiency levels.

This study was designed to analyze and compare four Iranian EFL teachers' contribution to classroom discourse at two levels of proficiency, i.e., low and high intermediate levels, from the following aspects: 1) amount and types of teachers' corrective feedbacks, 2) amount and nature of teachers' use of L1.

Research questions

The present study sought answers to the following major research question and its two related minor questions:

1.Do Iranian EFL teachers vary their contributions to classroom discourse at high intermediate and low intermediate levels of proficiency?

1.1. Do Iranian EFL teachers varythe amount and nature of corrective feedbacks they use at low intermediate and high intermediate levels of proficiency?

1.2. Do Iranian EFL teachers varythe amount and nature of first language they use at low intermediate and high intermediate levels of proficiency?

Significance of the study

The outcome of this study can hopefully reveal whether or not the Iranian EFL teachers are aware of the type of contributions they are expected to make to classroom discourse at different levels of proficiency. The results can be very significant in that they provide teachers and teacher educators an opportunity to see the true image of teachers' contribution to classroom discourse in the mirror of teachers' actual performance.

Theoretical framework and related studies

Krashen's Input Theory

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, Stephen Krashen and others argued that "input (at the right level of difficulty) was all that was necessary for second language acquisition to take place", as Mitchel and Mylse (2004, p. 20) asserted.

Krashen (1985) hypothesized that teacher language data which were a bit above the current level of learner's understanding should promote learning. He called this type of input "i+1", where the "i" represents the current language level of the learners, and the "1"stands for the level that is one step beyond the learner's current level of linguistic competence.

Swain's Output Hypothesis

According to Swain (1985), comprehensible input alone does not lead to language acquisition, but it would be effective when input changes to intake.In other words, When the learner is "forced to produce output for the purpose of negotiation of meaning", he is encouraged to "develop the essential grammatical resources called 'pushed language use'", Xiao-yan (2006, p. 26) argued.

Swain (1985) believes that, although comprehensible input may be enough for acquiringsemantic competence in L2, comprehensible output is required to achieve grammatical competence.

There are three functions for output hypothesis in SLA, according to Swain (1985). The first one is noticingin which learners notice what they don't know due to the gaps between what they want to say and what they can say. Hypothesis testing is another function in which learners test their hypothesis and receive feedback from their teachers or peers. Also, metalinguisticfunction is the last one in which learners talk about the language they learn.

Long's Interaction Hypothesis

Long (1983) believed that comprehensible input is essential, but not sufficient, for language acquisition. He placed emphasis on face-to-face interactions in which interlocutors modify their speech in order to negotiate their meanings. In other words, as Consolo (2006) pointed out, Long's Interaction Hypothesis argues that negotiation of meaning in conversational interactions contributes to the production of comprehensible input. Longupdated his IH theory in 1996 and emphasized the role of negotiation on facilitating attention to form.

Sociocultural theory

According to Lantolf and Thorne (2006), SCT is related to the work of Vygotsky (1978), whose purpose was to prevail over what at the time (early in the 20th century) was portrayed as a ''crisis in psychology'' (p. 197). "At the core of sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) is the principle that learning is the product of mediated interactions between an individual and the tools, symbols, and people of a

particular culture" (McNeil, 2012, p. 398). In other words, the primary facets of language, as defined by the sociocultural theoretical view, "are tied to and are fundamentally shaped by the ways in which individuals interact with others in a variety of communicative contexts", Thoms (2012) explained (p. S9). From this view, interaction both is the wellspring of what students learn and the facilitator of learning, according to Thomas (2012).

Teacher's contribution to classroom discourse

Teacher's speech in language classrooms contains the major part of classroom discourse in EFL contexts.Ellis (2008) believes that teachers contribute to classroom discourse in different aspects. Based on Ellis's categorization, these aspects are: teacher talk, teacher's question, corrective feedback, use of L1, and use of metalanguage. It should be noted that only corrective feedback and use of L1 are included in the scope of this study.

Teacher's corrective feedback

According to van Lier (1988), language classroom is most characterized by teacher's questioning and correcting of errors. Furthermore, most of the learners show an interest to be corrected by the teacher, (Ellis, 2008; Cathcart and Olsen, 1976). But the amount and type of feedback and also the time and the way the teacher uses the feedback varies according to the "learners and instructional context" (Ellis, 2008, p. 806).

Lyster and Ranta (1997) provided an observational scheme which characterizes variouskinds of feedback teachers provide to errors. They, then, adjusted some categories to match their data, and they also developed added categories which culminated in six kinds of feedback:

Explicit correction:the teacher clearly and directly notifies the student that the form is incorrect and provides him with the correct form (Brown, 2007).

Recasts: in this type of CF the teacher reformulates or rephrases the learner's incorrect or incomplete utterance in an implicit way, Brown (2007) stated.

Clarification requests: when learner's utterance is inaccurate or that utterance has been misunderstood by the teacher, the teacher asks him to reformulate or repeat his utterance.(Brown, 2007; Lightbown and Spada, 2006).

Metalinguistic feedback:teacher gives "comments, information, or questions, related to the well-formedness of the student's utterance" (Brown, 2007, p. 277).

Elicitation:teachers apply three techniques to elicit the correct form from the students. "First, teachers ask students to complete their own utterance. Second,teachers use questions to elicit correct forms. Third, teachers ask students to reformulate their utterance" (Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 127).

Repetition: the teacher repeats the inaccurate part of the learner's utterance, "usually with a change in intonation", Brown (2007) defined.

In a study conducted by Ajideh and Fareed-Aghdamin 2012, the probable relationship among L2 teachers' spoken corrective feedback types, the learners' proficiency levels, and their types of errors were investigated. The transcripts of 120-hour recorded natural interactions of ten classes of five teachers (two classes per teacher, one intermediate and one advanced), totaling 1242 reactive focus on form episodes were analyzed. Results showed that recast was the most widely used corrective feedback type at both proficiency levels.

In a related study, Kennedy (2010) investigated how an ESL teacher provided corrective feedback to 15 child ESL learners that the teacher had divided into two groups based on proficiency level. Classroom data in transcripts from the CHILDES database were analyzed for type of learner errors, type of teacher feedback, and rate of learner uptake (attempts at correction) and repair (correction). Results showed differences in the types of errors produced by each proficiency group and in the type of feedback the teacher provided to each proficiency group, demonstrating provision of appropriate corrective feedback based on learners' individual differences.

Use of L1

Using the first language in the classrooms has always been a "complex and controversial issue" (Ellis, 2008, p. 803) for the researchers and the teachers. As Mahmoudi and Amirkhiz (2011) reasoned, "it is controversial because different theories of L2 acquisition afford different hypotheses about the value of L1 use in L2 classes" (p. 135). Likewise, it is complex, as Ellis (2008) argued, because "clearly the utility of using the L1 will depend on the instructional context" (p. 801). In similar lines, Cook (2001) stated that using the first language has been widelybanned in second language classes over the last century.

Overall, there are two views toward using L1 in EFL classrooms by both teacher and student. Some believes that learners especially in EFL environ-

ments need exposure to the target language as much as possible in order to learn better. More precisely, "one of the functions of teaching is to provide students with samples of the L2. Hence, the teacher can maximize the provision of useful L2 examples by avoiding the L1", Cook (2001, p. 408) argued. He then explained that, through using L1for classroom interaction, the teacher deprives students of the only opportunity of being exposed to L2.

While many EFL teachers believe that in an ideal classroom L2 is exclusively used and using L1 is completely banned,some recent studies are suggesting thatin an EFL learner-centered class exclusive use of L2 can be ineffective and out of step, Von Dietz and Von Dietz (2007) discussed. Along these lines, some researchers have argued against the complete prohibition of L1 in the classroom (e.g., Nation, 2003; Larsen-Freeman, 2000, as cited in Cook, 2001) and have restated that a proper use of L1 can lead to positive results (Cook, 2001).

In a study conducted by Mahmoudi and Amirkhiz (2011) to observe classroom dynamics in terms of the quantity of use of L1, two randomly-selected pre-university English classes in Ahvaz were observed and video-taped for 6 sessions and the teachers and four high-achieving/low-achieving students were interviewed. The findings showed that an excessive use of Persian could have a de-motivating effect on students. Hence, the interviewed students expressed dissatisfaction with the inappropriateand excessive use of L1 in L2 classes.

Methodology

Participants

This study was conducted with the participation of four Iranian EFL teachers, including two males and two females. Each teacher was teaching at both low intermediate and high intermediate levels. They were aged from 25 to32 with an adequate experience of teaching English as a foreign language. Two of them were MA holders in TEFL and the other two were MA and BA holders in English translation. Although they were not aware of the exact focus of the study, they were willing to participate after the researcher explained the general purpose of the research to them and assured them of the anonymity of the collected data. "There were no extremes in teaching style or method" (Brulhart, 1986, p. 33). The mean size of the classes was 12. The learners were all adults and all classes included both males and females.

Materials

Because the present research was exploratory and descriptive in nature, there were no experimental control or treatment groups. The materials used in the present research came from the transcription of the eight instances of the audio-recorded classroom discourse. The researcher first recorded eight classroom interactions of four teachers at two levels of proficiency and subsequently transformed them into transcribed data for further discourse analysis.

Instrumentation

The main instrument used in the present study was the audio-taping of the teacher-learner interactions in one session of per selected class. In order not to disturb the natural and normal flow of the class, the researcher did not attend the class sessions and limited the data collection procedure to voice recording.

A number of transcription codes, adapted from Jefferson (1983), comprised another instrument which was applied by the present researcher in order to transcribe the audio-recorded data.

Yet another instrument used by the researcher to analyze teachers' contributions to classroom discourse was a scheme designed by the present researcher based on the categorizations proposed by Ellis (2008). Each main category was classified into some subsidiary elements. Six sub-categories suggested by Lyster and Ranta (1997) were determined for teachers' corrective feedbacks. Likewise, in order to determine the subsidiary elements of use of L1, Cook's (2001) classification was followed.

Although all the categories included in the researcher-designed scheme were adopted and adapted from well-known sources, the totality of the newly-developed scheme needed to be approved by some ELT experts. To this end, the cooperation of ten ELT scholars (6 MA holders and 4 PhD holders) were sought byasking them to spend some time on the scheme and judge its suitability for the intended purpose in terms of representativeness, precision and overall relevance. All the ten ELT experts approved the adequacy of the scheme for the intended purpose.

Design

The design of this study was exploratory and descriptive. Part of this study was run quantitatively in which frequency counting constituted the core of analysis and part of it was conducted qualitatively in the sense that the nature of teachers' contribution

was examined and scrutinized. The methodology of this research is characterized by mixed methods.

Data collection procedure

As for the process of data collection, the following steps were followed:

First, four teachers teaching at both high intermediate and low intermediate levels were selected after it was made sure that they were willing to contribute to the study. Then, two sessions (an hour and a half, each) of each teacher's classroom discourse, including low and high intermediate ones, were recorded by means of a small voice-recorder which hardly attracted any attention. Once the discourse of all eight classrooms had been recorded, the recordings were reviewed patiently and precisely, and 30 minutes of each classroom-discourse which matched the purpose of the study were transcribed (The selected 30 minutes constituted the core of classroom discourse).At last, the gathered data were analyzed throughthe aforesaid analysis scheme.

Data analysis

To analyze the collected data, both quantitative and qualitative approaches were applied. In quantitative approach, an analysis scheme, which was introduced previously, was designed and validated by the present researcher. The frequency of all sub-categories was counted.

In the qualitative approach, however, the amount and nature of these categories were compared between high and low intermediate levels for each teacher in order to investigate the teachers' sensitivity toward their learners' language proficiency.

Results and discussions

At first, quantitative results are presented in terms of tables and brief explanations about each. Then, the nature of contributions the teachers had to the classroom discourse will be discussed qualitatively.

Quantitative Results

In this part, the quantitative analysis of the teachers' contributions to classroom discourse across learners' proficiency levels was done through analyzing and comparing each teacher's performance at different areas and comparing all teachers' performances at each area.

Analysis based on each teacher's contribution at different areas

This section reports the results numerically in terms of an analysis scheme for each teacher.

Analysis of teacher A's contribution to classroom discourse

Table 1. Analysis of teacher A's contribution to classroom discourse.

No.	Main elements (Adopted from Ellis, 2008; Cook, 2001; Lyster and Ranta, 1997)	Subsidiary elements	High Intermediate Level of Proficiency (Term 10)		Low Intermediate Level of Proficiency (Term 4)	
1	Corrective feedback	Explicit correction	2 times		5 times	
		Recast	2 times		2 times	
		Clarification request	9 times		4 times	
		Meta-linguistic feedback	None		None	
		Elicitation	None		None	
		Repetition	None		2 times	
		Miscellaneous	None		None	
2	Use of L1	To explain grammar	None	None	1 time	8 seconds
		To organize task/give instruction	2 times	5.2 seconds	16 times	1.13 mins
		To discipline students	None	None	12 times	33 seconds
		To explain the meaning of words/sentences	4 times	22 seconds	66 times	3.14 mins
		With Affective functions	None	None	3 times	4 seconds
		Miscellaneous	3 time	6.5 seconds	37 times	1.12 min

Table 2. Analysis of teacher B's contribution to classroom discourse.

No.	Main elements (Adopted from Ellis, 2008; Cook, 2001; Lyster and Ranta, 1997)	Subsidiary elements	High Intermediate Level of Proficiency (Term 10)		Intermediate Level of Proficiency Low (Term 4)	
1	Corrective feedback	Explicit correction	None		8 times	
		Recast	24 times		27 times	
		Clarification request	9 times		16 times	
		Meta-linguistic feedback	1 times		1 time	
		Elicitation	8 times		6 times	
		Repetition	None		2 times	
		Miscellaneous	None		None	
2	Use of L1	To explain grammar	None	None	1 time	2 seconds
		To organize task/give instruction	None	None	6 times	7 seconds
		To discipline students	None	None	None	None
		To explain the meaning of words/sentences	2 times	1 seconds	6 times	4.5 seconds
		With Affective functions	None	None	2 times	2 seconds
		Miscellaneous	None	None	9 times	9 seconds

Corrective Feedback

Though the teacher used exactly the same number of corrective feedback (13 times) at both levels of proficiency, the types of corrective feedback he applied at each level were different. For example, 'clarification request' is the most frequently used type of CF at high intermediate level, but 'explicit correction' was dominantly used at low intermediate level. However, the teacher did not perform well concerning amount of feedback.

Use of L1

According to the results shown in Table 1, the teacher used the first language for about 6.24 minutes in his interaction with low proficient learners and about 34 seconds in his talk at high intermediate level. The time and the frequency of each function of LI usage revealed that the teacher usually used L1 for the purpose of 'explaining the meaning of words and sentences'. Although the teacher's extensive use of L1, particularly at the low intermediate level was stronglyundesirable, its significant reduction can be regarded as a positive point in that the teacher took the learners' proficiency level into consideration.

Analysis of teacher B's contribution to classroom discourse

Corrective Feedback (CF)

The most frequently used CF by teacher B was of 'recast' type which, according to Lightbown and Spada (2006, p. 126), "involves the teacher's reformulation of all or part of a student's utterance correctly" at both levels of proficiency (24 of 42 times for high intermediate level and 27 of 60 times for low intermediate level). Subsequent to 'recast', 'request' was another widely used CF type by teacher B at both levels. Though the teacher corrected the learners' errors directly 8 times at low intermediate level, he avoided using it at high intermediate one. As a result, using corrective feedback more frequently at lower level shows the teacher's careful consideration to the learners' language proficiency level.

Use of L1

The teacher used L1 in his speech at low intermediate level (for about 25.5 seconds) greater than high intermediate one (one second) in which the teacher translated the meaning of two words. The most cases in which teacher B used the first language, referred to 'give instruction/organize task'. What can be concluded is that through decreasing amount of L1 at lower level, the teacher adjusted to learners' proficiency level.

Analysis of teacher C's contribution to classroom discourse

Corrective Feedback

Like previous results, 'recast' was the most frequently used type of CF by the teacher at both proficiency levels (21 times at high and 19 at low proficiency levels). Subsequent to 'recast', 'clarification request' was tagged as the other dominant type of CF used by teacher C in interaction with both high and low intermediate learners. The teacher also didn't use 'repetition' in both classes. Sometimes, he preferred to use 'explicit correction' which was

occurred more at high intermediate level. Consequently, the teacher's preference to use corrective feedback more at higher level than the lower level is unacceptable.

Use of L1

According to Table 3, teacher's avoidance of using L1when speaking to high intermediate learners was to be expected. So the teacher had a positive reaction toward learner's language proficiency. It is worth mentioning that the teacher applied L1 for the purpose of 'giving instruction', 'disciplining students', and 'explaining the meaning of words/sentences'.

Table 3. Analysis of teacher C's contribution to classroom discourse.

No.	Main elements (Adopted from Ellis, 2008; Cook, 2001; Lyster and Ranta, 1997)	Subsidiary elements	High Intermediate Level of Proficiency (Term 10)		Low Intermediate Level of Proficiency (Term 4)	
1	Corrective feedback	Explicit correction	7 times		5 times	
		Recast	21 times		19 times	
		Clarification request	8 times		7 times	
		Meta-linguistic feedback	4 times		2 time	
		Elicitation	3 times		1 time	
		Repetition	None		None	
		Miscellaneous	None		None	
2	Use of L1	To explain grammar	None	None	None	None
		To organize task/give instruction	None	None	2 times	2 seconds
		To discipline students	None	None	1 time	2 seconds
		To explain the meaning of words/sentences	None	None	3 times	1.5 seconds
		With Affective functions	None	None	None	None
		Miscellaneous	None	None	6 times	5.5 seconds

Table 4. Analysis of teacher D's contribution to classroom discourse

No.	Main elements (Adopted from Ellis, 2008; Cook, 2001;Leyster and Ranta, 1997)	Subsidiary elements	High Intermediate Level of Proficiency (Term 10)		Low Intermediate Level of Proficiency (Term 4)	
3	Corrective feedback	Explicit correction	None		None	
		Recast	23 times		7 times	
		Clarification request	7 times		None	
		Meta-linguistic feedback	4 times		None	
		Elicitation	1 time		1 time	
		Repetition	None		4 times	
		Miscellaneous	None		None	
4	Use of L1	To explain grammar	2 times	6 seconds	None	None
		To organize task/give instruction	None	None	None	None
		To discipline students	None	None	None	None
		To explain the meaning of words/sentences	None	None	None	None
		With Affective functions	None	None	None	None
		Miscellaneous	1 time	1 seconds	None	None

Corrective Feedback

Results again report the wider use of 'recast' by the teacher at both proficiency levels in which she applied it for high intermediate level three times more than low intermediate one.

Unexpectedly, the teacher corrected high profi-

cient learners' errors more than the lower learners' errors. It shows the teacher did not take learners' proficiency levels into consideration.

Another point that is worth mentioning is that the teacher refrained from correcting learners' errors directly at both levels of proficiency.

Using L1

The teacher did not use the first language at low intermediated level at all, but for high intermediate level she used it two times. Generally, use of L1 is strongly undesirable at higher level whereas the teacher used it when addressing the high intermediate learners. Using the first language at higher level rather than the lower one, demonstrates that the teacher was indifferent toward learners' language proficiency.

Analysis based on all teachers' contribution at each area

In this section, the performances of the teachers in each area were analyzed and compared.

The plus and minus signs besides tables are representative of teachers' positive and negative performances toward learners proficiency levels. Teachers' sensitivity to learners' proficiency levels when interacting to them was tagged by plus sign and teachers' indifference toward proficiency levels of learners was showed by minus sign.

Table 5. Corrective feedback.

Proficiency Level / Teacher	High Intermediate	Low Intermediate	Performance
Teacher A	13 times	13 times	-
Teacher B	42 times	60 times	+
Teacher C	43 times	34 times	-
Teacher D	35 times	12 times	-

Table 6. Use of L1

Proficiency Level / Teacher	High Intermediate	Low Intermediate	Performance
Teacher A	9 times/ 33.7 sec	135 times/ 6. 24 mins	+
Teacher B	2 times/ 1 sec	24 times/ 24.5 sec	+
Teacher C	None	12 times/ 11 sec	+
Teacher D	3 times/ 7 sec	None	-

According to the results shown in the Table 5, teacher B was the only one who took the learners' proficiency levels into consideration when correcting their errors. Others had the same amount of corrective feedback at both levels of proficiency or even corrected high proficient learners' errors less acceptably than the lower learners'.

As shown in Table 6, almost all teachers (excluding teacher D) took learners' proficiency level into consideration through decreasing the amount of using L1 when interacting to high proficient learners. It is worth mentioning that teacher A's excessive use of L1at both levels of proficiency was undesirable and can be regarded as a negative point for him, although he reduced the amount of it significantly when speaking to high proficient learners.

Qualitative results

The research was not confined to analyzing the results quantitatively; rather, it also intended to analyze the collected data qualitatively in order to find whether there would be a difference between teachers' nature of contributions to classroom discourse when addressing high intermediate level learners and low intermediate level ones or not.

Here, in this part, the elements which were mentioned in the previous section are separately investigated and compared in each teachers' interaction across two proficiency levels.

Analysis of teacher A's contribution to classroom discourse

Corrective Feedback

The teacher used the same frequency of CF at both

levels, but the greatest used type of CF belongs to 'clarification request', through which a repetition or reformulation on the part of the learner is required, at high intermediate level. Furthermore, the teacher preferred to employ direct way of correction more than other indirect ones, i.e., recast, repetition, elicitation, etc.

Use of L1

The teacher extensively used the first language when talking to the learners particularly low intermediate level ones. In other words, more than one fourth of teacher talk at low intermediate level was allotted to the first language that is a disappointing finding. In most cases, the teacher used L1 for the purpose of 'explaining the meaning of words and sentences'. Without involving the learners to guess the meaning of words and sentences; he selected the simpler and shorter way which was translating the words and sentences into the learners' first language. The excessive use of L1by the teacher, allowed learners to use it, too. It led to some interactions in Farsi between teacher and learners.

Analysis of teacher B's contribution to classroom discourse

Corrective Feedback

As learners' proficiency levels increase, a reduction in using CF which prevents a real and fluent interaction to be formed is expected. The teacher used CF at low intermediate level two times more than high intermediate level, which was according to the expectation.

Additionally, the teacher preferred to use explicit correction only at low intermediate level which was confirmed the findings of a study which was run by Ajideh&FareedAghdam (2012).

Like the other classes, the most frequently used type of CF was 'recast' by teacher B. This finding also is similar to what was found in Lyster and Ranta's (1997) study.

Use of L1

The results reported the excessive use of L1 particularly at low intermediate level which is not according to the EFL classrooms' goal, as was noted by Mingzhi (2005), in order to prepare learners to communicate fluently and naturally in the real world.

Analysis of teacher C's contribution to classroom discourse

Corrective Feedback

Just as the other teachers in this study, the teacher C's greatest preference was to use 'recast' among other types of CF. The teacher used almost the same number of it at both levels, with a little difference about two times. The teacher also didn't neglect using 'explicit correction'. Teacher C like other teachers in this study who seldom or never used the 'repetition' as a way of correction, didn't apply 'repetition' at both levels.

To sum up, the teacher corrected high intermediate learners' errors more frequently than learners' errors at lower level, which is undesirable.

Use of L1

Considering the learners' language competence, the teacher did not use the first language at the higher level. However, she employed it at lower level often for the purpose of 'explaining the meaning of new words'.

Analysis of Teacher D's contribution to classroom discourse

Corrective Feedback

Like the other three teachers in this study, teacher D preferred to use 'recast' for correcting her learners' errors more extensively than the other types of CF. It was also more widely used at high intermediate level than low intermediate level. The teacher was reluctant to use direct and explicit way to correct learners' errors because she wanted to encourage the learners to self-correction. This is why she used 'repetition' and 'clarification request', respectively, at low and high intermediate levels, as other ways of correcting the errors.

Generally, the teacher ignored the learners' proficiency level through correcting high intermediate learners' errors more frequently than the low intermediate learners' errors.

Use of L1

Teacher's avoidance of using L1 when addressing low intermediate learners is valuable, but using it however little when 'explaining some grammatical points' to high intermediate learners is worthy to criticize.

Conclusion and implications

After analyzing the collected data quantitatively and qualitatively, some points were concluded which are first presented in this part. Then, the implications that the study does have in the realm of language teaching and language learning will be discussed.

Conclusion

In order to base the conclusions drawn from the findings of the study on a clear representation of what was observed in the eight classrooms, the researcher would like to present the following points as the summary of the observations.

1. The great number of corrective feedback provided by teacher C and D at low intermediate

level was opposite the expected direction, whereas teacher B was the only teacher who provided his low intermediate learners with a higher number of corrective feedbacks. Among types of corrective feedback, 'recast' was welcomed by all teachers, except teacher A. Teacher C and D used it more frequently at the high intermediate level.

2. 'Metalinguistic feedback', 'elicitation', and 'repetition' were seldom used by the teachers. It is worth mentioning that 'repetition' was not used at high intermediate level at all.

3. The excessive use of L1 by teacher A clearly shows his ignorance of learners' language proficiency. Without asking the learners to guess the meaning of words and sentences, he selected the simpler and shorter way of translating the words and sentences into the learners' first language. Among other teachers, teacher C tried to decrease the use of L1 at the low intermediate level and avoided it at the higher level. Teacher B used L1 at both levels but decreased its amount at the high intermediate level. Although teacher D avoided using the first language when speaking to low intermediate learner, she applied it at high intermediate level, however little. The popular cases,in which the teacher applied L1, were 'explaining the meaning of the words and sentences' and then 'giving instruction' or 'organizing task'. The least amount of L1was used to 'explain grammatical points' and 'affective functions'.

In conclusion, although the teachers varied their contribution to classroom discourse across levels of proficiency, the fluctuations and lack of systematicity of the variations make us believe that the variations are not informed and professional variations. They seem to be haphazard. Some teachers showed positive sign of sensitivity to the proficiency level of their learners in a couple of areas but had very negative performance in other areas. Therefore, one can safely conclude that the observed teachers did not skillfully and professionally vary their contributions across proficiency levels.

Pedagogical Implications

In order to make teacher's contribution more effective and more profitable to classroom discourse, some implications for foreign language classroom interactions are suggested based on the results obtained from the present research.

First of all, the results of this study canprovide insights for teacher trainers. It means teacher trainers can run teacher education programs through which the teachers are instructed how to tune finely the amount and nature of corrective feedback and use of L1 in their interactions with learners of different proficiency levels in order to have effective contributions to classroom discourse.

Next, this study has unique implications for classroom observations. That is, observers of language classrooms can supplement or replace the traditional method of observing and note taking with analyzing video- or audio-recorded discourses. Presenting the analyzed transcripts or even the recorded files of the classes to the respective teachers can make them aware of their strengths and weaknesses.

Also, EFL teachers can benefit from the results and findings of this study. In order to increase their teaching quality, they can pay more attention to the linguistic needs of their learners at different proficiency levels rather than focusing on teaching methods alone. Only then can they professionally vary their contribution to classroom discourse.

Finally, one further implication of this study is the inclusion of a course in TEFL undergraduate programs to teach the prospective teachers the type and nature of their contribution to classroom discourse. In many cases, the EFL teachers do not make a proportionate contribution to classroom discourse mainly because they are not familiar with the nature and importance of teachers' contribution.

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