

Classroom Interaction: An Analysis of Teacher Talk in Moroccan EFL Classrooms

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Abstract

Classroom interaction has always been considered at the heart of the teaching-learning process since it allows students to deepen their comprehension of the course subject and improve their speaking skills. However, the previous studies denoted that teachers dominate when speaking in the classroom. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the nature of teacher talk along with the categories which are frequently used in the classroom based on the FLINT analysis system. The design of this research is descriptive qualitative. The sample of the study was 7 Moroccan secondary EFL teachers in Agadir. The data was gathered by naturalistic observation and recording. The data were processed using Moskowitz's (1971) Foreign Language Interaction (FLINT) system. The findings confirmed teachers' use of all of the categories of teacher talk as mentioned in FLINT. However, the most often utilized categories were found to be giving direction and lecturing. Moreover, the teachers primarily assumed the role of controllers in the classroom, frequently leading the flow of engagement. The findings have several implications for Moroccan EFL secondary classrooms.

1. INTRODUCTION

Interaction has always been at the heart of the communication process to obtain experience in English communication where teachers and students are in a desperate need to interact constantly using the target language (Brown, 2001). It takes place as soon as people exchange, share, send and receive ideas, and opinions anywhere and anytime including classroom context. Classroom interaction, according to Dagarin (2004), is a bidirectional process in which the teacher influences the learners during the teaching-learning process. Along the same lines, Richard (1990) asserted that classroom interaction is the pattern of either verbal or nonverbal communication that occurs along the types of social relationships that exist within any specific classroom.

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Through meaningful interaction, English teachers can create different opportunities for language learners to interact in the form of groups or individual work. In addition, classroom interaction is a pedagogical technique to trigger a student to participate and speak. Rivers (1987) argues that interaction is essential in language classrooms because it can boost students' linguistic store. The study of classroom contact is very significant and merits investigation since interaction in the language classroom serves well students' speaking abilities.

However, Nunan (1999) asserts that many language teachers were taken aback by how much time they spent talking in class; between 70 and 80 percent of class time was spent primarily by teacher talk. The prevalence of teacher discourse in language-classroom interaction appears to be irrelevant in the teaching of foreign languages since it does not give pupils the right opportunities to practice the language (Tsui, 1995).

Based on the aforementioned problem, the study attempts to investigate the nature of verbal classroom interaction of Moroccan EFL secondary classes in Agadir. It primarily aims to identify the predominant categories of teacher talk along with the types of interaction adopted. It, also, tries to look into how teachers' roles contribute to students' motivation. A qualitative approach incorporating case study characteristics was adopted. Furthermore, audio-recording observation was employed to collect data.

FLINT as a model of classroom interaction analysis claims that for-teaching to be effective, it is basically related to the extent to which directly and indirectly teachers influence the learners' behavior. According to Brown (2001), this model is useful in promoting interactive language teaching by (a) providing a taxonomy for observing other teachers, (b) providing a framework for evaluating and improving a teacher's own teaching, such as how well a teacher balances teacher talk and student talk, and (c) assisting a teacher, particularly the first seven categories, in creating a learning atmosphere for interactive teaching.

Table 1

FLINT system (Adopted from Moskowitz, 1971, as cited in Brown, 2001)

		Categories	Activities
Teacher Talk	Direct	1	Deals with feelings.
		2	Praise or encourage.
	Influence	3	Accepts and uses the ideas of students.
		4	Asks questions.
		5	Gives information.
		6	Gives directions.

Indirect Influence	7	Criticizes student behaviour/response.
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Based on the demonstration above, it is clear that teacher talk is split into two types; Direct Influence and Indirect Influence, each with different categories.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

When conducting research using a qualitative approach, the researcher adopts descriptive methods to obtain further information about a particular area of study. Qualitative research is a method used to investigate and analyze the nature of a social or human phenomenon that is attributed to specific people or communities (Creswell, 2018). The research process incorporates developing questions and methodologies, data typically obtained from the participant's environment, analyzing data inductively to generate themes, and the researcher's judgments of the relevance of the data (Creswell, 2018). In this context, this study, therefore, tries to examine the teacher's talk categories and the types of interaction used in teaching English in Moroccan EFL secondary classrooms.

After collecting the data from the FLINT observation sheet to analyze the interaction, the researcher used FLINT formulas to determine the proportion of teachers' and students' talking time during classroom interaction. These are the calculations:

a. Teacher Talk Ratio (TTR)

To find the percentage, add the tallies for the first seven categories and divide them by the sum of all the matrices tallies (N).

$$TTR = \frac{C1 + C2 + C3 + C4 + C5 + C6 + C7}{N} \times 100$$

b. Indirect Teacher Talk Ratio (ITT)

It denotes teachers' behaviours that encourage and facilitate student participation. To determine its percentage, add the tallies of the first four categories and divide them by the total of all the matrices tallies (N).

$$ITT = \frac{C1 + C2 + C3 + C4}{N} \times 100$$

c. Direct Teacher Talk Ratio (DTT)

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It implies teachers' actions that limit students' participation. To compute the percentage, the tallies of the 5th, 6th, and 7th categories are added and divided by the total of all the matrices tallies (N).

$$DTT = \frac{C5 + C6 + C7}{N} \times 100$$

The researcher seeks to determine the predominant categories of teacher talk along with the types of classroom interaction adopted.

This study tries to determine the predominant categories of teacher talk along with the types of classroom interaction adopted. In other words, the research questions are as follows:

1. What are the predominant categories of Moroccan secondary EFL teachers' and students' talk based on FLINT category analysis?
2. What are the main dominant types of classroom interaction that occur between Moroccan secondary EFL teachers and students?

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There were 7 observations of EFL classroom interaction and the data were mainly analyzed based on the transcription of the classroom interaction recordings. The results are presented in the form of tables below.

The following are the Results of Teacher Talk categories during the observations (in percentage).

Table 2

Percentages of Indirect Influence of Teacher Talk Categories (%)

	Teacher Talk			
	Indirect Influence			
<u>Categories</u>	DF (Cat 1)	PE (Cat 2)	UIS (Cat 3)	AQ (Cat 4)
<u>Observation Numbers</u>				
Obs 1	0.40 %	1.82 %	1.66 %	17.20 %
Obs 2	0.32 %	1.56 %	1.80 %	16.50 %
Obs 3	0.46 %	1.72 %	1.62 %	16.62 %
Obs 4	0.26 %	1.80 %	1.52 %	16.26 %
Obs 5	0.30 %	1.70 %	1.60 %	16.02 %

Obs 6	0.40 %	1.76 %	1.46 %	19.40 %
Obs 7	0.36 %	1.42 %	1.10 %	15.56 %
Mean	0.36%	1.68%	1.54%	16.79%

Note. DF. Deals with feelings / PE. Praise or encourage / UIS. Uses ideas of students. /AQ. Asks questions.

As shown in Table 2, indirect talk consists of dealing with feelings, praising or encouraging, joking, using the ideas of students, repeating student responses verbatim, and asking questions. The results are more different than similar. Table 2 shows that Dealing with Feelings (0.36%) and Using the ideas of students (1.54%), compared to other categories, occur as the least of teacher talk (indirect influence) in this study, which means that the teachers rarely acknowledged and checked on their students' feelings and make is of their ideas. The former usually appears when the teacher begins the lesson. Praising and encouraging (1.68%) occurs more frequently than dealing with students feeling. It occurs when students provide meaningful responses, and the teacher applauds and encourages them, confirming accurate answers and motivating them to communicate.

According to Burnett (2002), praise and encouragement are critical in motivating students to learn as praise is the positive reinforcement to stimulate desirable behaviour. Moreover, Burnett (2002) referred to praise as the positive reinforcement to inspire desirable conduct, underscoring the critical function that praise and encouragement play in inspiring pupils to study. He further opined that explaining behaviour or an assignment that deserves praise, stating the student's name, and carefully selecting the praise word can serve as a motivating tool in both classroom interactions and teacher-student relationships.

At the top, asking questions (16.79%) is found as the most frequently used category among all teacher talk components. It is clear from Table 1 that the category of Asking Questions (AQ) dominates Indirect Teacher talk. More specifically, during all the observations, it was noticed that the teachers ask questions (1) to encourage the students to participate, (2) to check the student's understanding of the material, (3) to elicit the students' opinions, or (4) to get information from the students.

The results are consistent with earlier research by Nurhasanah (2013), in which asking questions was the most common category of teacher talk during the teaching and learning process. Also, the findings are under Cotton's assertion (1988), that asking questions in

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classroom interaction dominates the teacher talk is very positive since instruction that includes posing questions during lessons is more effective in producing achievement gains than instruction delivered without questioning students. Oral questions posed during classroom interaction are more effective in fostering learning than written questions.

In addition, the results are under David's (2007) statement that the use of questions will attract students' attention. Therefore, the students think and express their ideas. However, most observed teachers tend to use Closed-ended questions that confine students to a particular answer. In contrast, Open-ended questions are deemed to help enhance students' cognitive abilities since they motivate them to articulate, elaborate upon their thinking and provide rationales for their thoughts (Lee et al., 2012).

In language classrooms, if direct influence outweighs indirect influence, it merely means that the model of the teaching-learning process is still dependent on the instructor i.e. teacher-centred. It would be important and advantageous if the students participated actively in class as well. The amount of lecturing, giving orders, and questioning or defending authority is reflected in direct instruction in the observed courses. They fall under FLINT Analysis categories 5, 6, and 7. The description of the result is as follows.

Table 3

Percentages of Direct Influence of Teacher Talk Categories (%)

<u>Categories</u>	Teacher Talk		
	GI (Cat 5)	GD (Cat 6)	CSB (Cat 7)
<u>N. Observations</u>			
Obs 1	46.2 %	5 %	0.10 %
Obs 2	46.3 %	5.56 %	0.16 %
Obs 3	46 %	5.76 %	0.12 %
Obs 4	47.06 %	5.40 %	0.01 %
Obs 5	48.40 %	4.82 %	0.12 %
Obs 6	43.56 %	5.10 %	0.16 %
Obs 7	49.12 %	4.80 %	0.22 %
Mean	46.66 %	5.21 %	0.13 %

Note. GI. Gives information / GD. Gives directions / CSB. Criticizes Student Behaviour.

In contrast to Table 2, teacher talk has a more significant direct influence than an indirect one. It was more than half (52%) of the average direct teacher talking time. Dominant categories in each meeting were giving information (46.66%) and giving directions (5.21%). More specifically, during all the observations, it was noticed that the teachers give information (including facts, opinions, lectures, or rhetorical questions) and give directions (commands, directing various drills; or facilitating whole-class and small group activity.). This proves the typical learning model of teacher-centeredness when the teacher talks more and the students less. It mainly represents the teacher-student interaction type. This result goes hand in hand with Krashen's (1992) claim that "The best way, and perhaps the only way, to teach [...] is simply to provide comprehensible input" (p, 23). The results are consistent with earlier research by Nurhasanah (2013), in which lecturing was the most common category of teacher talk during the teaching-learning process. These distinctions were influenced by the teaching approach used, or how the teachers guided the students through the learning activity.

Concerning the final category of teacher talk, there is a steady rate of criticism, which is always less than 1% in each observation. It occurred when the teacher rejected the student's behaviours, tried to change them, and adjusted the student's inappropriate performance. According to the statistics, criticizing (0.13%) was found to be less common than praising, indicating that teachers tended to give their students more positive comments than negative feedback.

Regarding the dominance of direct versus indirect categories in teacher talk, it is clear that the teachers assume direct teaching over indirect teaching more frequently. Academic factors, which have an impact on formal classroom context, are accounted for by the direct influence (Moon, 2000). However, language learners' classrooms necessitate a particular style of treatment and engagement in which teachers must establish a more intimate and cordial contact with their students in order to effectively teach them. Brown (2001) also makes the case that interactive teaching and indirect teaching are closely related.

Aside from the classroom atmosphere and student relationships, Brown (2001) believes that direct instruction affects the teacher's ability to serve as a controller rather than a monitor (tutor). This is clear from the fact that instructors led and pushed students more to accomplish various tasks and explained materials than they accepted students' feelings, praised their performances, used their ideas, and posed questions.

The following is the summary of Teacher Talk results during the observations (in percentage).

Table 4

Summary of Teacher Talk in Percentage (%)

<u>Observations</u>	<u>Summary of Teacher Talk</u>			
	ITT	DTT	TT	IRD
.1	21.1 %	51.3 %	72.4 %	Direct
Obs.2	20.13 %	52.03 %	72.23 %	Direct
Obs.3	20.46 %	51.9 %	72.36 %	Direct
Obs.4	19.86 %	52.56 %	72.43 %	Direct
Obs.5	19.63 %	53.36 %	73 %	Direct
Obs.6	23.03 %	48.83 %	71.86 %	Direct
Obs.7	18.46 %	54.16 %	72.63 %	Direct
Mean	20.38 %	52.02 %	72.42 %	Direct

Note. ITT. Indirect teacher talk / DTT. Direct teacher talk / TT. Teacher talk / IOD. Indirect or Direct.

The results showed that teacher's talk occupied a proportion of time that varied from 71.86 % to 73 % in the observed sessions. The average teacher talk in all sessions accounted for 72.42 % of classroom interaction. This latter goes under Nunan's (2001) assertion that teacher talk dominates the majority of classroom talking time. Particularly, the verbal behaviour of teachers which corresponds to indirect teacher talk varied in a range of values that extended from 18.46 % to 23.03 % of the total time of the teacher-student talk. The mean percentage of indirect teacher talk was 20.38 %. On the other hand, direct teacher talk accounted for 48.83 % to 54.16 % of the observed verbal behaviour that pertained to EFL instructors. The calculated mean percentage of direct teacher talk in the 7 observations was 52.02 %. The results showed that all the teachers exerted direct influence in teaching EFL since they marked a value that ranges from 0.25 to 0.47 which is less than 1.

Where is your discussion of the results in relation to your research question as well as the previous studies? Moreover, you should have to contextualize these results by discussing what these results mean in your study context and wider EFL context. Presenting results alone isn't enough and you should interpret, explain and have your say on these results...

4. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the observed teachers often used display questions to inspire and elicit responses from the class. This is proved by the high percentage of giving information (GI), asking questions (AQ), and giving directions (GD) by which the teachers led the flow of interaction. This latter proves the typical teaching model of teacher-centeredness when the

teacher talks more and the students less. It mainly represents the teacher-student interaction type in which the teacher speaks to the whole class. Also, during the teaching-learning process in these observed EFL classes there were other classroom interaction types of teaching, however with small frequency, namely, the teacher speaking to an individual and student(s) speaking to the teacher. Moreover, it is concluded that most observed teachers displayed the “controller” role in their teaching practices. All in all, EFL teachers should raise their awareness about their talks by reflecting upon the categories used and the types of classroom interaction adapted so that teaching practices and learning processes would move to the top gear. The study concludes by recommending further research about promoting EFL teachers’ awareness of Their talk categories and the types of classroom interaction adopted.

Based on the findings, the following implications are offered for EFL teachers and further research.

1. It is advised that English teachers encourage their students to speak and converse using English during all learning activities, to compliment them for their accomplishments, to boost their self-confidence, and to encourage them to interact more by using various types of questions that can help them improve their communicative competence.
2. More reinforcement for the students should be given by the teachers. The frequency of constructive behaviors may rise due to reinforcement, whereas the frequency of disruptive behaviors may fall. In other words, teachers can encourage students by complimenting them when they provide the right answers. Students will therefore be more engaged because they are eager to respond to teachers' inquiries.
3. Those who are interested in conducting similar research are advised to analyze teacher and student talk using another framework of observation instead of FLINT to obtain different senses of data and to analyze (1) whether students’ response was given by an individual or by a group, (2) whether the interaction occurs between teacher and student or student and student, or other types of classroom interaction (3) and the perceptions of the participants of the role of these types in developing students’ speaking skills.

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