

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN CLASSROOM INTERACTION

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Abstract: The article focuses on defining the role of a teacher as a public speaker in classroom interaction. The teacher must remain aware of how his role in pedagogical speech serves to organize and steer the learning process, as his/her main task as a public speaker is to hold his/her students' interest and attention on a definite topic for a stipulated period of time.

Key words: teacher's role, public speech, classroom interaction, face-to-face communication, mono and bidirectional speech, Flanders system and etc.

In classroom the teacher has the role of the public speaker, it is all about sharing information, ideas or opinions on a particular issue of interest and importance to students. In other words, the major task of a teacher as a public speaker is to hold his/her students' interest and attention on a definite topic for a stipulated period of time. In public speaking, the speech serves as the pivot of the basic things: the speaker, the subject under discussion and the audience whom the speech is meant for.

According to Ezeukwu, "Public communication or speaking is a concentric setting face-to-face communication in which one person speaks while a considerable number of other people listen" [2, 34]. For classroom communication to be effective, the teacher needs to observe the principles of successful public speaking while also paying attention to rhetorical and linguistic knowledge. Since the role of the speaker in pedagogical speech alternates between the teacher and the student, the characteristics of the teacher's speech in the classroom will be described by comparing them to those of the student. In practice, the teacher's share of speaking remains substantially higher than that of the students. The teacher's public speaking continues to be very frequent and thus of high importance.

The concept of classroom interaction in school, or the communication process in the classroom, was defined by several researchers. As a famous Slovenian linguist Tomic (1997) states, the teacher in a school is responsible for the initiation, reception and effect of his messages. If the act of communication is to be professional and complete, the teacher must be able to control it, as well as recognize how it is being received and what effect it has on the listeners. The teacher should speak in way that the students accept and that influences them in accordance with the intent of the message. The role of the teacher is to encourage and direct the communicative act [5, 48].

In teaching process, the teacher is responsible for effective and successful communication. Classroom interaction is a form of social interaction manifesting itself as an interaction of people mutually choosing their behavior, partly on the basis of opinions shaped about each other. Classroom interaction takes place on various levels, i.e. teacher—all students, teacher—single student, students among one another etc. and according to various rules, such as semi-formal, semi-informal rules. We try to stress that classroom interaction involves both verbal and non-verbal communication between the teacher and the students. The verbal communication has a more significant effect on the students and their learning process. The teacher's interaction and communication patterns act as a model on one hand and affect a range of emotional, motivational and cognitive processes with its form and content on the other. So, the type of communication in the classroom is an important factor in the student's language, cognitive and social development; for this reason, for more awareness among teachers about rules, laws and principles enabling the desired communication to take place, together with specific additions to teacher training which would provide the aspiring teacher with more knowledge about the structure of classroom communication. This knowledge may also be obtained by observing the interaction in class; for this reason, one must be familiar with the tools used to observe it.

There are a number of tools used for observing classroom interaction.

Many researchers consider the Flanders system of classroom interaction analysis as one of the most common. It derives from the basic dimension of initiative—response of the teacher and the students and is limited to verbal interaction, which is divided into several categories for the teacher's initiative and response, and for the response and initiative of the students.

Flanders (1970) interprets classroom interaction as the mutual contact between the teacher and the students. It is supposed to denote the chain of events occurring in an educational setting. Flanders referred to his observation system as interaction analysis and defined its purpose as the quantitative determination of qualitative aspects of verbal communication. The system is designed around the premise that most communication in the classroom is verbal. All non-verbal communication, as well as the content of information and some aspects of class organization, is ignored. The essence of the system is the categorization of verbal communication into following segments [3, 119]:

- a) *the teacher's initiative* – the teacher responds to the students' emotions, praises or encourages, accepts or implements a student's idea;
- b) *the teacher's response* – the teacher asks questions, explains, instructs, gives critique, appeals to authority;
- c) *student response* – the students respond to questions;
- d) *student initiative* – students comment independently, contribute their own ideas;
- e) *silence, confusion and independent work.*

The categories would need to fulfil two premises, i.e. being (a) capable of being objectively determined and (b) relevant to education studies. Here we are going to say that speech in class can be quantified and described using the following categories:

- a) the scope of the teacher's and the students' speech is expressed by the number of utterances, words, sentences and the type of sentences. This allows us to determine the most frequent speaker in the classroom and the type of texts,

sentences and clauses used;

b) the number and type of turn-taking—this is basic turn-taking in an interaction, which consists of a verbal initiative and a verbal response. The teacher may, for example, ask a question which a student then answers. The direction of the turn plays an important role in turn-taking. Two types are distinguished: *monodirectional speech* (the teacher initiates the speech of the student, who only responds to these initiatives) and *bidirectional speech* (the speech of the teacher and the student consists of responses and initiations);

c) the functional structure of pedagogical speech—the premise is the multifunctionality of speech in the classroom. This differs from specialized speech as well as practical communication, which consists of the expressive and interpersonal or social function. The function is assigned to the sentence as the basic communication unit. The scope of individual functions is determined by the number of words.

To conclude, classroom interaction analysis helps teachers to identify the events occurring during a lesson, to aid the teacher in developing and controlling teaching skills, to offer insight into understanding the chain of events by helping with interpreting the relationship between teaching and interaction on the one hand and student performance on the other.

Thus, the material discussed in this article allows young teachers to define the role of a teacher in the classroom interaction as a public speaker.

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