Analyzing Patterns of Classroom Interaction in EFL Classrooms in Iran

Nasser Rashidi
Shiraz University, Iran

Mahshid Rafieerad
Shiraz University, Iran

Applying Discourse Analysis (DA) approach, the present research investigated the classroom discourse in EFL classrooms in Iran. The goals of the research were: (a) to identify the interaction patterns between teachers and students, (b) to investigate the effect of the gender of the teachers and the students on their interaction patterns, and (c) to find out whether the interaction was teacher-dominated or student-dominated. The results of the analysis indicated that the interaction patterns between the participants vary with the participants making use of a variety of discourse acts. Considering gender effect, it was shown that more similarities than differences existed between male and female teachers. Furthermore, boys were found to be more willing to interact with their teachers than girls. Finally, the findings showed that although the classroom discourse was following an IRF pattern in which the teachers dominated a high portion of classroom talk, the students *did* initiate exchanges with their teachers, and at times they even *did* follow-up their teachers' responses to their questions, resulting in an IRF pattern even in Student-Teacher Talk.

Key words: discourse, interaction, patterns, initiation, response, follow up, teacher talk

INTRODUCTION

In light of Vygotsky's insights into the importance of social interaction in learning (1962, 1978), there is evidence of renewed interest in the nature of classroom talk and signs of willingness to reassess the pedagogic value of interaction patterns between students and teachers in the language classroom, since learning a language in the classroom is a consequence of the exposure of the learner to the linguistic environment manifested in the *interaction* between the participants, namely teacher and students, in that context. Such interaction has been defined as a process whereby two or more people engage in reciprocal action (Celce-Murcia, 1987). This action may be verbal or nonverbal. Furthermore, according to Allwright and Bailey (1991), Classroom-centered Research (CCR) concentrates on classroom interaction in order to gain insights and increase our understanding of classroom learning and teaching, its aim being to identify the phenomena that promote or hamper learning in the classroom.

Analyzing the patterns through which such interaction is realized between second/ foreign language learners and their teachers has long been a research interest leading to a major direction in applied linguistics and educational research which involves work seeking to understand the nature and implications of classroom interaction. Numerous studies have been aiming at showing the complexity of second language classroom interaction. Since the late 1940's there has been a growing interest in studies of language interaction inside the classroom. Bellack et al. (1966), Flanders (1970) (cited in Coulthard, 1985), and Coulthard (1985) describe classroom interaction structure; Hatch (1978) emphasizes the role of interaction in second language acquisition; Allwright (1980) analyses patterns of participation- turns, topics, tasks- in language learning and teaching; and Tsui (1995) discusses classroom interaction and its effects on participation and learning.

Following a Discourse Analysis approach, the present study is conducted to provide a detailed linguistic description of the patterns of teachers/students interaction in EFL classrooms in Iran.

Yet, to analyze classroom interaction and the patterns followed by the class participants in the interaction one analytic framework or another must be applied. Taking this into account, the present study investigated patterns of classroom interaction based on the descriptive framework proposed by Tsui (1994).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Discourse Analysis and Classroom Interaction

Several approaches to classroom discourse are used to measure, analyze and describe the behavior of participants in classrooms each of which has its own tenets. One such approach is Discourse Analysis (DA). *Discourse Analysis* is the study of language in use. In other words, it is the examination of language use by members of a speech community. It involves looking at both language form and language functions and includes the study of both spoken interaction and written texts. It identifies linguistic features that characterize different genres as well as social and cultural factors that aid us in our interpretation and understanding of different texts and types of talk. Stubbs (1983) defines discourse analysis as (a) concerned with language *use* beyond the boundaries of a sentence/utterance, (b) concerned with the interrelationships between language and society and (c) as concerned with the interactive or dialogic properties of everyday communication.

DA rests on the premise that linguistic items cannot be understood without reference to the context, both linguistic and extra-linguistic, in which they are used (Grenoble, 2000). In analyzing the data, discourse analysts adopt an *etic* or *external* perspective on human behavior. As Pike (1967) points out, "the etic viewpoint studies behavior as from outside of a particular system, and as an essential initial approach to an alien system." (p. 37, cited in Seedhouse, 2004). DA is a diverse area of study but it is used to refer mainly to the linguistic analysis of naturally occurring speech. It investigates the structure

and functions of a language in terms of the linguistic units it contains.

Since the major aim of the present study is to provide a linguistic description of the interaction which goes on in EFL classrooms, the approach to be adopted to analyze the classroom discourse in this study is based on Discourse Analysis approach which involves analyzing naturally occurring speech *linguistically*, by taking an *etic* or external perspective (i.e., studying the discourse as from outside of a particular system).

Unfortunately, very limited studies have been done on classroom discourse in Iranian context. Shokoohi's (2010) study showed that the conversations in classroom textbooks were artificial. Tavakkoli's (1995) research has revealed that most of the dialogs inserted in the English textbooks taught in Iranian senior high schools do not have appropriate contexts. Rastegar (1992) has analyzed and evaluated the dialogs in English textbooks taught in guidance- and high schools of Iran. The results of the study have revealed that lack of proper context and guidance for teachers and students are the significant deficiencies of the dialogs in the above mentioned textbooks.

In addition to the above studies, some other studies carried out in other contexts have focused on the effects of gender on classroom discourse. Although Doray's (2005) study indicated no significant effect of gender differences, Tsouroufli (2002), Drudy and Chathain (2002), Duffy et al. (2002), and Canada and Pringle (1995) found that gender had a role to play in the interaction patterns between teachers and students. Moreover, while Canada and Pringle (1995) and Li (n.d.) studied gender differences in *mixed-gender* classrooms where males express their opinions more than females do, Topoloski (2004) found that male and female students produced nearly equal amounts of talk in mixed-gender pair interaction.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

In order to make a systematic analysis of the data, an objective descriptive tool is necessary so that remarks made on the data will not be impressionistic or arbitrary. The present study used Tsui's (1994) framework for the

following reasons. Using authentic and naturally-occurring data as a source for examples, Tsui offers refinements and extensions to well-developed descriptive frameworks proposed by such scholars as Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) for the analysis of conversational data, and establishes in the process new insights into the sequencing of patterns of interaction. Furthermore, it is the most recent and comprehensible framework available. Tsui takes a three-part exchange as an organizational unit of conversation. She argues that the basic organizational unit of conversation is a potentially three-part exchange including an *initiation*, a *response* and a *follow-up*, with an optional fourth or fifth part, that is a follow-up being optionally recursive (Tsui, 1994). Within each of these three classes, Tsui further identifies subclasses. On the whole, Tsui's framework can be summarized in Table (1) below.

TABLE 1
A Taxonomy of Discourse Acts (Adapted from Tsui, 1994, p. 61)

Elements of Structure	I	R	F1	F2
Move	Initiating	Responding	Follow-up (1)	Follow-up (2)
Head act: primary class	Initiating (initiation)	Responding (response)	Follow-up (1)	Follow-up (2)
Head act: subclass	Elicitation Requestive Directive Informative	Positive Negative Temporization	Endorsement Concession Acknowledgement	Turn-passing

OBJECTIVE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present study is conducted to provide a detailed linguistic description of the patterns of teachers/students interaction in EFL classrooms in Iran. The study is meant to answer the following questions:

1. What are the predominant patterns of classroom interaction between teachers and students in EFL classrooms in Iran?

2. Are the interactions teacher-dominated or student-dominated?
3. How are such patterns affected by genders (that of teachers and students)?

METHODS

The Participants

The participants of the present study included 16 teachers, 8 female and 8 male, teaching at intermediate levels (lower and upper), together with their adult students in EFL classes in Shiraz University Language Center and Bahar Language Institute. The classes were single-gender, either boys or girls, boys being taught by male teachers and girls by female ones. Each teacher had several years of teaching experience. The books taught were Interchange Series, the third edition (Books 2 & 3).

Data Collection

In total, 20 classes (12 female & 8 male teachers) were observed and audio-taped using a SΛMSUNG YV-150 MP3 Player. The data collector was present in the classrooms as a non-participant observer during data collection. Each class lasted about one hour and forty-five minutes. From this database, 16 classrooms were chosen (8 all female classes and 8 all male ones) for data analysis based on their degree of comprehensibility and relevance. Transcriptions were made after the completion of data collection, coming up with almost 28 hours of classroom interaction (14 hours of all female classrooms & 14 hours all male classrooms). Each class period involved either (a) covering homework material, (b) teaching grammatical points, a reading passage, vocabulary items or a conversation or (c) listening to a text, either as a whole-class activity or as a pair work.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data collected through transcribing the conversations were analyzed in detail to derive the patterns of interaction among participants in EFL classrooms based on the model proposed by Tsui (1994). All talk that went on in the classrooms observed was classified into three groups: Teacher-Student Talk, Student-Teacher Talk, and Student-Student Talk. Analyzing the data based on Tsui's (1994) framework, the researchers faced some problems in characterizing a number of utterances as identifying certain acts, mainly in Teacher-Student Talk. A number of such problems are enumerated below:

(1) Observed in the teacher's talk were such utterances as 'you', 'yes?', or a pupil's name, usually occurring at the beginning of a move, the purpose of which was to nominate a student to for example, answer a question or to comply with an instruction. These could not be accounted for using any of the subclasses in Tsui's (1994) framework.

(2) Some categories were too general to depict subtle distinctions in the patterns of classroom interaction between teachers and students. For instance, the first subclass of elicitations 'Elicit: inform' and the first subclass of Follow-up acts 'Endorsement'.

Considering classroom settings, the purpose of the questions asked by the teacher varied. Sometimes, the teacher's aim in asking a question was merely to check the students' linguistic knowledge, the answer to which was already known to the teacher, at other times the answer to the question asked by the teacher was not known to her/him beforehand, rather the purpose was to provoke the student to share his/her world knowledge or opinions with the other participants in the classroom. Hence, to be indicative of classroom interaction, it was needed to classify the subclass 'Elicit: inform' into further subclasses. Furthermore, there emerged a need to classify the subclass 'Endorsement' into further subclasses to be used in characterizing certain acts

occurring at follow-up moves in a better way.

(3) While analyzing the interaction between the teachers and the students, some utterances were run into which were not analyzable using the framework proposed by Tsui (1994). For example,

> **T:** [writes the words 'life', 'living' and 'lively' on the board] What is the first word? Is it a 'verb', a 'noun', or an 'adjective'?
> **S1:** It is an adjective.
> **T:** No. For example, 'life is beautiful'.
> **S2:** It is a noun.
> **T:** Good.

In the utterance above, the teacher asks a question to which a student provides a wrong answer ('it's an adjective.'). Then, the teacher tries to help the students find the answer to the question by giving them a *clue* ('e.g., life is beautiful.'). This could not be accounted for using the categories in Tsui's (1994) framework.

To compensate for the above problems, in identifying certain acts in the interaction occurring between teachers and students in the classes observed, several categories were borrowed from the framework proposed by Tsui (1985), and were further inserted into the initial framework by Tsui (1994). The system proposed by Tsui (1985) is shown in Table (2) below.

TABLE 2
Tsui's (1985) Seventeen- Category System

		Acts	Sub-categorization
		1. Elicit	A. Display Qs
			a) Factual Q.
			b) Yes-No Q.
	Initiate		c) Reasoning Q.
			d) Explanation Q.
			B. Genuine Qs
Teacher Talk			a) Opinioning Q.
			b) Information Q.
			C. Restating Elicit

		2. Direct	
		3. Nominate	
		4. Inform	
		5. Recapitulate	
		6. Frame	
		7. Starter	
		8. Check	
	Respond	9. Evaluate	a) Encouraging/positive
			b) Negative
		10. Accept	
		11. Comment	
		12. Clue	
Pupil Talk	Respond	13. Reply	a) Restricted
			b) Expanded
		14. Apologize	
	Initiate	15. Request	
		16. Elicit	
		17. Interrupt	

The subcategories classified under the categories 'Elicit' and 'Evaluate' (positive and negative) and the categories 'Nominate', 'Accept', 'Comment' and 'Clue' classified under teacher talk were borrowed from Tsui's (1985) framework and were inserted into Tsui's (1994) framework, based on the similarities between the acts.

(4) Finally, certain utterances were not analyzable at all based on Tsui's (1994) framework. For example, consider the following utterance:

T: What would you have done in this situation?
S: I wouldn't have done <u>nothing.</u>
T: I wouldn't have done *anything.*
S: I wouldn't have done anything.

In the utterance above, the student has a grammatical mistake (using nothing instead of anything) to which the teacher provides a repair in the third move. Such an utterance could not be analyzed in terms of any of the categories in Tsui's (1994) framework. In an attempt to compensate for this

problem, the interactional unit *Repair*, divided into Self-Repair (The student corrects the mistake) and Other-Initiated Repair (i.e., Teacher (repair) or other students (peer-repair) correct the mistake), was borrowed from Conversation Analysts and added to the framework proposed by Tsui (1994) in order to identify the breakdowns in the interaction between the teachers and the students.

Inserting the categories borrowed from Tsui (1985) and adding the category 'Repair' borrowed from Conversation Analysts to the initial framework (that of Tsui, 1994), the final framework to be used in the analysis of Teacher-Student Talk was identified. Table (3) below shows the final framework used in analyzing the data.

TABLE 3
An Intuitive Taxonomy of Discourse Acts Cccurring in Teacher-Student Talk

Head Acts		Subclasses		
Initiating acts	1. Requestives	a) Request for action b) Request for permission	d) Invitation	
		e) Proposal	c) Offer	
	2. Directives	a) Advisives	1. Advice 2. Warning	
		b) Mandatives	1. Instruction 2. Threat	
		c) Nominate		

	3. Elicitations	a) Elicit: inform	A. Display Qs
			  a) Factual Q.
			  b) Yes-No Q.
			  c) Reasoning Q.
			  d) Explanation Q.
			B. Genuine Qs
			  a) Opinioning Q.
			  b) Information Q.
			C. Restating Elicit	

		b) Elicit: confirm c) Elicit: agree d) Elicit: repeat e) Elicit: clarify f) Elicit: commit		

	4. Informatives	a) Report	
		b) Expressive	
		c) Assessments	1. Assessing
			2. Compliment
			3. Criticism
			4. Self-denigration
			5. Self-commendations
		d) Clue	
Responding acts	Positive response		
	Negative Response		
	Temporization		
Follow-up acts	1. Endorsement	a) Positive/Encouraging Evaluation	
		b) Negative Evaluation	
		c) Comment	
	2. Concession		
	3. Acknowledgement	a) Accept	
		b) Repair	
		c) Accept with repair	
Second Follow-up move	Turn-passing		

(The categories added to the initial pattern are boldfaced.)

As shown in Table (3), the categories 'Clue', 'Positive/Encouraging Evaluation', 'Negative Evaluation', 'Comment' and 'Accept' were further inserted into the initial framework. The category 'Accept with Repair' was added to the framework to take care of those acts in which the teacher not only accepted the students' response, but also repaired the students' mistake at the same time. They could not be accounted for using Tsui's (1985 & 1994) frameworks. For example,

> *The teacher is working on a grammatical point:*
> **T:** Elahe is absent today. What do you think is the reason, Baharak?
> **S:** I think she might have kidnapped.
> **T:** Oh, she might have been kidnapped. (laughs) [Accept with repair]

In the utterance above, the teacher not only *accepts* the student's response by repeating her sentence, but also *corrects* her mistake (i.e., she might have

kidnapped.') in the third line at the same time. This was identified as 'Accept with Repair'.

In analyzing the discourse acts occurring in Student-Teacher Talk and Student-Student Talk, the initial framework proposed by Tsui (1994) with some modifications was applied, since the categories inserted or added to the framework used in analyzing Teacher-Student Talk were not relevant to Student-Teacher Talk and Student-Student Talk. Finally, in order to investigate the effects of gender (that of the teachers and the students) on the patterns of interaction between teachers and the students, frequency counts and percentage indices were reported for each category by counting the number of different acts occurring at different moves.

RESULTS

The Results of the Predominant Patterns of Classroom Interaction Between the Participants (i.e., Teacher-Student Talk, Student-Teacher Talk, and Student-Student Talk)

The dominant patterns of classroom interaction in all of the 16 classrooms observed were identified using the final framework. The results of the analysis are shown in the tables below. Table (4) shows the dominant patterns of Teacher-Student Talk.

TABLE 4
The Predominant Patterns of Teacher- Student Talk

Head acts	Subclasses		
Initiating acts	1. Requestives	a) Request for action *	d) Invitation
		b) Request for permission	
		e) Proposal	c) Offer
	2. Directives	a) Advisives	1. Advice*
			2. Warning*
		b) Mandatives	1. Instruction*
			2. Threat

		c) Nominate	

	3. Elicitations	a) Elicit: inform	A. Display Qs
			  a) Factual Q.
			  b) Yes-No Q.
			  c) Reasoning Q.
			  d) Explanation Q.
			B. Genuine Qs
			  a) Opinioning Q.
			  b) Information Q.
			C. Restating Elicit

		b) Elicit: confirm* c) Elicit: agree* d) Elicit: repeat* e) Elicit: clarify* f) Elicit: commit	
	4. Informatives	a) Report* b) Expressive* c) Assessments	1. Assessing* 2. Compliment 3. Criticism* 4. Self-denigration 5. Self-commendations
		d) Clue	
Responding acts	Positive response* Negative Response* Temporization*		
Follow-up acts	1. Endorsement	a) Positive/Encouraging Evaluation b) Negative Evaluation c) Comment	
	2. Concession*		
	3. Acknowledgement	a) Accept b) Repair c) Accept with repair	
Second Follow-up move	Turn-passing		

(* shows the presence of the discourse act in the pattern.)

As shown in Table (4), a large number of discourse acts were present in Teacher-Student Talk. Nevertheless, a number of the categories were absent

in Teacher-Student Talk which is quite a normal phenomenon taking into account the context of the classroom and the role relationships between teachers and students, the teacher being the authority in the classroom. For instance, concerning the subcategories 'offer', 'invitation', 'proposal', it can be said that they are mainly to be found in real-life situations out of the classroom, where the participants' role relationships are that of, for example, two friends. However, it seems that the presence of such categories in classrooms is not something impossible, especially in a friendly environment where the teacher attempts to build rapport with the students. Furthermore, concerning the absence of the subclass 'threat' in the teachers' talk, it can be argued that since the teachers have the right to get, or are sure of getting the addressees (i.e., the students) to comply, there is no need for them to state the undesirable consequence of non-compliance. Moreover, the reason for the absence of the subclasses 'self-denigration' and 'Self-commendations' in the teachers' discourse seems quite obvious, especially in the context of Iran. The teacher is not supposed to either downgrade or upgrade his/her abilities , the occurrence of the former taken by the students as being indicative of his/her weakness and that of the latter taken as being indicative of boast. Nevertheless, the presence of 'self-commendations' in teacher-talk is not something unimaginable in the context of classroom. Finally, the absence of the category 'Turn-passing' or the second follow-up in the teachers' talk can be related to the fact that in the context of classroom the teacher has the right to introduce a new topic, to carry on with the same topic, or even to terminate the conversation after the production of the first follow-up move, not passing the turn to the students.

The interaction patterns between students and teachers (i.e., Student-Teacher Talk) in both all male and all female classrooms are presented in Table (5) below.

TABLE 5
The Predominant Patterns of Student-Teacher Talk

Head Acts	Subclasses		
Initiating acts	1. Requestives	a) Request for action *	d) Invitation
		b) Request for permission *	
		e) Proposal	c) Offer
	2. Directives	a) Advisives	1. Advice
			2. Warning
		b) Mandatives	1. Instruction
			2. Threat
	3. Elicitations	a) Elicit: inform*	
		b) Elicit: confirm*	
		c) Elicit: agree	
		d) Elicit: repeat*	
		e) Elicit: clarify*	
		f) Elicit: commit	
	4. Informatives	a) Report*	
		b) Expressive*	
		c) Assessments	1. Assessing*
			2. Compliment
			3. Criticism
			4. Self-denigration
			5. Self-commendations
Responding acts	Positive response*		
	Negative Response*		
	Temporization		
	Silence		
	Self-repair		
	peer-repair		
Follow-up acts	1. Endorsement(thanking)*		
	2. Concession		
	3. Acknowledgement*		
	4. Accept (repair)		
Second Follow-up move	Turn-passing*		

As shown in Table (5), some discourse acts have been added to Student-Teacher Talk. The categories 'Silence' and 'self-Repair', and 'Peer-Repair' were added by the researcher under the head act 'Responding acts'. 'Silence'

refers to the times when no answers were provided by the student[s] to the teachers' questions or instructions; the student[s] simply remained silent as in the following example:

> T: Who wants to be rich? Who wants it?
> Ss: [Silence]
> T: No one? You don't like money? What about you, Mitra? Do you like money?
> S: Yes.

Moreover, 'Self-repair' and 'Peer-repair' were placed under 'Responding Acts'. The reason for doing so was that they occurred mainly as a response to the teacher's question mostly realized by either an 'Elicit: repeat' or a 'Factual Question' asked by the teacher. The teachers either made the students correct themselves (i.e., 'self-repair') or made other students correct their peers' mistakes (i.e., 'Peer-repair). For example:

(1)

The teacher is working on conditional sentences type I.
> T: If you become rich in the future, what will you do with your money? Think about it and then answer.
> S: I will *borrow* a person who needs the money.
> T: I will?   [Elicit: repeat]
> S: lend.   [self-repair]
> T: 'lend'. Good.

(2)

> T: Please, make some sentences using 'how many'. Come on.
> S: How many *brother* do you have?
> T: How many?   [asking other Ss a 'Factual Q.']
> Ss: *Brothers.*   ['peer-repair']
> T: Brothers do you have. Thanks.

Finally, 'Accept Repair', added to the category 'Follow-up acts', refers to those acts performed by the students whose function was to acknowledge the

teachers' correction of their errors. Consider the following example:

T: What would you have done in this situation?
S: I wouldn't have done *nothing.*
T: I wouldn't have done *anything.*   [Accept with repair]
→ S: I wouldn't have done anything.   [Accept repair]

In the utterance above, the teacher corrected the student's mistake in the third line which the student acknowledged in the next line by repeating the correct answer.

As it is revealed in Table (5) above, the patterns of interaction between the students and the teachers showed variation. The participants were not following a rigid version of IRF in which the teacher only initiated something, to which the student answered, and to which the teacher further provided a follow-up/feedback. It is shown that the students *did* initiate exchanges with the teachers by for example, reporting (i.e., a 'Report'), expressing something (i.e., an 'Expressive') or requiring the teacher to provide a piece of information (i.e., 'elicit: inform') and etc. Also, they *did* follow-up the teachers' response to their initiations by using an 'Endorsement' as thanking or an 'Acknowledgement'. Nevertheless, some categories are missing in Student-Teacher Talk which can again be related to contextual factors or the role relationships between teachers and the students. For example, concerning the absence of the category 'directive', the major reason seems to lie in the fact that in classroom settings the students *do not* have the right or are not supposed to direct the teacher to do anything, especially in the context of Iran.

Table (6) reveals the results of the analysis of Student-Student Talk.

TABLE 6
The Predominant Pattern of Student-Student Talk

Head Acts	Subclasses		
	1. Requestives	a) Request for action *	d) Invitation
		b) Request for permission	
		e) Proposal	c) Offer
	2. Directives	a) Advisives	1. Advice

Initiating acts			2. Warning
	b) Mandatives	1. Instruction	
		2. Threat	
	3. Elicitations	a) Elicit: inform*	
		b) Elicit: confirm	
		c) Elicit: agree	
		d) Elicit: repeat *	
		e) Elicit: clarify *	
		f) Elicit: commit	
	4. Informatives	a) Report*	
		b) Expressive*	
		c) Assessments	1. Assessing *
			2. Compliment
			3. Criticism
			4. Self-denigration *
			5. Self-commendations
Responding acts	Positive response*		
	Negative Response*		
	Temporization		
Follow-up acts	1. Endorsement		
	2. Concession		
	3. Acknowledgement *		
Second Follow-up move	Turn-passing		

As Table (6) shows, the interaction between the students reflected the use of a variety of discourse acts. The students were more or less involved in an interaction found in natural situations outside the classroom by the teachers. However, some acts were missing in their discourse, suggesting that their interaction was a limited one.

The Results of the Effect of Gender of the Teachers and the Students on their Interaction Patterns

To investigate the differences between male and female teachers on the one hand and male and female students on the other hand, frequency counts

and percentage indices were calculated for each of the three types of talk, that is Teacher-Student Talk, Student-Teacher Talk, and Student-Student Talk for both male and female participants. The results of each are presented below.

The Differences between Male and Female Teachers Manifested in Teacher-Student Talk

Table (7) reveals the differences between male and female teachers in their interaction patterns with their students.

TABLE 7
The Frequency and Percentage of Male & Female Teacher-Student Talk

Head Acts	Subclasses		No. of occurrence (Female Ts with female Ss)	Percent -age	No. of occurrence (male Ts with male Ss)	Percentage
	1. Requestives	a) Request for action	12	0.3 %	6	0.2 %
	2. Directives	a) Advice	8	0.2 %	3	0.1 %
		b) Warning	5	0.1 %	4	0.1 %
		c) Instruction	410	12.9 %	303	12.2 %
Initiating acts		d) Nominate	228	7.1 %	182	7.3 %
	3. Elicitations	A. Display Qs				
		a) Factual Q.	290	9.1 %	287	11.5 %
		b) Yes-No Q.	47	1.4 %	63	2.5 %
		c) Reasoning Q.	25	0. 7%	13	0.5 %
		d) Explanation Q.	216	6.8 %	122	4.9 %
		B. Genuine Qs				
		a) Opinioning Q.	11	0.3 %	33	1.3 %
		b) Information Q.	306	9.6 %	228	9.1 %
		C. Restating Elicit	25	0.7 %	17	0.6 %
		D. Elicit: confirm	29	0.9 %	26	1.04 %
		E. Elicit: agree	21	0.6 %	17	0.6 %
		F. Elicit: repeat	46	1.4 %	56	2.2 %
		G. Elicit: clarify	10	0.3 %	4	0.1 %
	4. Informatives	a) Report	113	3.5 %	157	6.3 %

		b) Expressive	57	1.7 %	41	1.6 %
		c) Assessing	23	0.7 %	14	0.5 %
		d) Criticism	2	0.06 %	0	0.0 %
		e) Clue	17	0.5 %	9	0.3 %
Responding acts	1. Positive response		91	2.8 %	101	4.1 %
	2. Negative Response		14	0.4 %	14	0.5 %
	3. Temporization		4	0.1 %	2	0.08 %
Follow-up acts	1. Endorsement	a) Positive/ Encouraging Evaluation	267	8.4 %	147	5.9 %
		b) Negative Evaluation	75	2.3 %	56	2.2 %
		C) Comment	50	1.5 %	12	0.4 %
	2. Concession		4	0.1 %	1	0.04 %
	3. Acknowledgement	a) Accept	643	20.2 %	471	18.9 %
		b) Repair	87	2.7 %	71	2.8 %
		C) Accept with repair	40	1.2 %	23	0.9 %

The results in Table (7) indicate that overall, there was not much difference between male and female teachers regarding their patterns of interaction with their students, except for the category 'Criticism' which was present in female teachers' talk but absent in male teachers' talk, with a percentage of (0.06 %). This can be neglected due to its minute amount. Hence, based on the results, it can be said that gender *did not* play an important role in determining the patterns of interaction between the teachers and the students. The categories 'Instruction' and 'Accept' took up a high percentage of both male and female teachers' talk. There was not much difference between male and female teachers concerning their questioning pattern. Both male and female teachers tended to ask more 'Display Questions' than 'Genuine Questions'. However, there were some slight differences between male and female teachers in the amount they used different discourse acts. In addition, there was a tendency among male teachers to ask more 'Yes-No Qs.' than female teachers. Comparing the evaluation given by male and female teachers, it is shown that female teachers were more encouraging than male

teachers, providing more positive evaluation to the students as feedback. Finally, the category 'report' took up a portion of (3.5 %) of female teachers talk, whereas it took up a percentage of (6.3 %) of male teachers talk.

The results of the Chi-square analysis show that the frequencies of the cells whose expected frequencies are above 5 are significant.

The Differences between Male and Female Students Manifested in Student-Teacher Talk

The results of the differences between male and female students regarding their interaction patterns with their teachers are shown in Table (8) below.

TABLE 8
The Frequency and Percentage of Male and Female Student-Teacher Talk

Head acts	Subclasses		No. of occurrence (female Ss & female teachers)	Percent-age	No. of occurrence (male Ss & male teachers)	Percentage
Initiating acts	1. Requestives	a) Request for action	1	0.05 %	2	0.1 %
		b) Request for permission	2	0.1 %	1	0.05 %
	2. Elicitations	a) Elicit: inform	99	5.4 %	107	6.2 %
		b) Elicit: confirm	10	0.5 %	3	0.1 %
		c) Elicit: repeat	3	0.1 %	4	0.2 %
		d) Elicit: clarify	2	0.1 %	1	0.05 %
	3. Informatives	a) Report	33	1.8 %	58	3.3 %
		b) Expressive	9	0.4 %	24	1.4 %
		c) Assessing	6	0.3 %	6	0.3 %
Responding acts	1. Positive response		1467	80.5 %	1366	80.07 %
	2. Negative Response		58	3.1 %	44	2.5 %
	3. Silence		42	2.3 %	14	0.8 %
	4. Self-repair		14	0.7 %	5	0.2 %
	5. peer-repair		22	1.2 %	8	0.4 %
Follow-up acts	1. Endorsement(thanking)		2	0.1 %	7	0.4 %
	2. Acknowledgement		14	0.7 %	4	0.2 %

	3. Accept (repair)	36	1.9 %	47	2.7 %
Second Follow-up move	Turn-passing	2	0.1 %	5	0.2%

As the results in Table (8) indicate, both male and female students made use of the same discourse acts in their interaction with their teachers. Nevertheless, there are some important points to be mentioned regarding the amount of interaction. A large proportion of both male and female students' talk was allocated to providing a response to teachers' questions or instructions. The category 'positive response' to be given by the students included (a) a restricted response to teacher's questions realized by either one word or a short phrase, (b) an expanded response to teacher's questions realized by statements expressing judgment, evaluation, and the like, (c) a compliance with the teacher's instruction, and (d) self-repair or repairing another student's mistake which was mainly an answer to teacher's question. Moreover, the category 'Elicit: inform' took up the highest portion of the students initiations. Regarding other categories, there were some slight differences between male and female students in the way they interacted with their teachers.

The Chi-square analysis of the data show significant results for the cells whose expected frequencies are above 5.

The Differences between Male and Female Students Manifested in Student-Student Talk

The results of the differences between female and male students in interacting with their classmates are summarized in Table (9) below.

TABLE 9
The Frequency and Percentage of Male and Female Student-Student Talk

Head acts	Subclasses		No. of occurrence (female & female Ss)	Percent-age	No. of occurrence (male & male Ss)	Percentage
Initiating acts	1. Requestives	a) Request for action	3	1.5 %	2	1.7 %
	2. Elicitations	a) Elicit: inform	71	37.1%	51	44.7 %
		b) Elicit: repeat	1	0.5 %	2	1.7 %
		c) Elicit: clarify	0	0.0 %	2	1.7 %
	3. Informatives	a) Report	9	4.7 %	1	0.8 %
		b) Expressive	18	9.4 %	4	3.5 %
		c) Assessing	10	5.2 %	0	0.0 %
		d) Self-denigration	2	1.04 %	0	0.0 %
Responding acts	Positive response		68	35.6 %	50	43.8 %
	Negative Response		8	4.1 %	2	1.7 %
Follow-up acts	1. Acknowledgement		1	0.5 %	0	0.0 %

As the results in Table (9) illustrate, there were some discourse acts which were absent in male Student-Student Talk, whereas they were present in female Student-Student Talk. They are: 'Assessing', 'Self-denigration', and 'Acknowledgement'. Except for the act 'Assessing' which took up a portion of (5.2%) of female Student-Student Talk, the occurrence of the rest is not of that much significance. Also, the act' Elicit: clarify' was present in male Student-Student Talk but absent in female Student-Student Talk, with a percentage of (1.7%), which is not of a great significance. Concerning other categories, they were present in both types of talk.

As a whole, it can be said that the interaction patterns between the students, both male and female, were dominated by an 'Elicit: inform'/ 'Positive Response' sequence; the students involved in a questioning/answering round, with a slight difference between male and female students. Yet, the female students seemed to be more interactive with one another, using the discourse acts classified under the category 'Informatives' to a much greater extent than male students.

Based on the results of the Chi-square analysis the frequencies of the cells with the expected frequencies above 5 are significant.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND IMPLICATION

By applying DA methodology to the analysis of the interaction taking place between the teachers and the students in EFL classrooms in Iran, the present study has shown the followings. Firstly, it is revealed that the interaction patterns between the participants in all three types of talk showed variation, sharing some commonalities with the interaction taking place in natural contexts occurring outside the classroom with the participants making use of a variety of discourse acts. Secondly, analyzing Teacher-Student Talk on the one hand and Student-Teacher Talk on the other, it is shown that the teachers/pupils interaction was rather dominated by the teachers in both male and female classrooms, with the teachers asking questions, calling on the pupils to answer them and the pupils giving answers which were then followed by the teachers' feedback. Moreover, considering the discourse acts in Teacher-Student Talk, they were more evenly distributed than in Student-Teacher Talk and Student-Student Talk, suggesting that these were the teachers who took up the major portion of all talk occurring in the classrooms. Nevertheless, the interaction between the participants was not following a rigid IRF pattern in which the teachers were the only initiators of talk. The students also *did* initiate exchanges with the teachers and among themselves by being given a chance to express their opinions, feelings, and personal experiences. Though it was of a small amount, the students also made comments, and indeed asked as well as answered questions, what was also found by Sunderland (2001). Thirdly, with regard to the effects of the gender of teachers on Teacher-Student Talk, it was found that there is not much difference between male and female teachers. Both groups tended to spend much of class time on directing the students to do something, asking more 'Display questions' than 'Genuine questions', and providing feedback to the

students. This result is in line with that of Doray (2005). It is however, in contrast to the findings of Tsouroufli (2002), Drudy and Chathain (2002), Duffy et al. (2001), and Canada and Pringle (1995), who found that gender had a role to play in the interaction patterns between teachers and students. This seems to be caused by having mixed-gender classes as a source for data, a context in which the teachers interacted with both male and female students, whereas in the present study the data came from single-gender classrooms. Irrespective of the similarities between male and female teachers, the results suggest that female teachers were more supportive and encouraging, providing the students with a 'positive evaluation' more often than male teachers. Furthermore, considering the effect gender had on Student-Teacher Talk, there emerged a significant difference between boys and girls. The findings show that generally boys were a bit more interactive with their teachers than girls. Boys tended to report events, or to express their opinions more often than girls tended to do. Amazingly, this is consistent with the findings of Canada and Pringle (1995) and Li (n.d.), who studied gender differences in *mixed-gender* classrooms; that is to say even in single-gender classrooms in the present study, boys still were more willing to interact with their teachers than girls, which can be attributed to the gender composition in the context of Iran where boys seem to be more outspoken and more likely to initiate exchanges. Concerning Student-Student Talk, quite surprisingly the results show that girls tended to interact more with their fellow students than boys tended to do, being caused by the fact that female teachers tended to provoke more interaction between their students than male teachers, by engaging the students in such activities as 'pair work', 'role play', and so on. This finding is a unique one in its own right, since most of the studies which have investigated the effects of gender on Student-Student Talk have been carried out in mixed-gender classrooms. For instance, Topoloski (2004) found that male and female students produced nearly equal amounts of talk in mixed-gender pair interaction. However, in the present study the interaction which was investigated took place between either girls or boys.

In conclusion, it can be said that in order to avoid a teacher-dominated

classroom, it is necessary for the teachers to reorganize the activities which can foster more interaction in the classroom, such as brainstorming and problem-solving, role play, simulations, and discussion. Using such activities in the classroom, teachers will be able to motivate students to learn in a more involving way. These kinds of activities can provoke a very positive attitude towards language learning since they resemble real life events. Moreover, students must be persuaded to interact positively and effectively in the language classroom. Tsui (2001) argued that language learners participated more in classroom activities when pair work and group work tasks were assigned. Such activities help students exchange information to obtain comprehensible input as they involve in constructing meaningful experiences to achieve academic success.

Practically and theoretically, the results of the present study will be useful to language teachers teaching English as a foreign language, in helping them investigate what actually is going on in their own classes, trying to move away from a teacher-dominated mode of teaching by adopting a more student-dominated mode of teaching. To this end, teachers should incorporate more real life like activities into their teaching practice such as 'problem-solving', 'information-gap tasks' and the like. Furthermore, the findings may benefit material writers and textbook developers by providing them useful information to be used in the process of developing a book. They should try to incorporate activities and tasks in the books which would provoke more 'genuine communication' between teachers and students.

THE AUTHORS

Nasser Rashidi is presently the academic member of the Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics at Shiraz University. His area of research is TEFL including language teaching and testing, discourse analysis. His recent publication is *Practical Contrastive Analysis of English and Persian with Special Emphasis on Grammar* with L. Yarmohammadi (2009).

Email: nrashidi@rose.shirazu.ac.ir

Mahshid Rafieerad has got her MA in TEFL from Shiraz University. Her areas of interest are: Discourse Analysis and Language Teaching.
Email: mrafieerad_57@yahoo.com

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