

ABSTRACT

This study argues that English language teachers can improve their classroom practices by engaging in the process of critical reflection on their classroom discourse. Developing a fine understanding of one's use of interactional strategies can help teachers to maximise learning opportunities in the classroom. As a major chunk of classroom interaction is controlled, directed and managed by teachers, it is imperative to make them an integral part of any investigation on teacher's discourse. Instead of simply describing features of L2 classroom discourse or generating huge amounts of quantitative data to reiterate claims about teacher dominance and strict Initiation Response Feedback (IRF) sequence, it is important to engage in developing context sensitive, flexible, teacher-friendly reflective tool(s) to promote understanding through reflection and facilitate professional development. Recognising the complex relationship that exists between language use, classroom interaction and learning can empower teachers to make more conscious decision-making in class which is in line with the changing pedagogic goals of the moment and guided by interactional choices available to her/him.

This study explores the ideas of critical reflection in the context of classroom discourse. The study critically examines the original tool proposed by Walsh (2006) Self-Evaluation of Teacher Talk (SETT) framework and presents a modified version of the original tool by closely looking at teacher's discourse in the Indian context. It unravels the dominant characteristics of teacher talk and identifies new modes, pedagogic goals, interactional features and teacher and learner roles operating in the language classrooms and thereby exploring ways in which teachers can possibly use this revised tool to engage in critical reflection. Theoretically, this study rests on three important areas of research ---classroom

interaction, Second Language Acquisition research and critical reflection for professional development.

The main arguments of this study are:

1. There is a need to strengthen the link between teacher's classroom discourse and her intended pedagogic goals. This in turn will enhance learning opportunities in the classroom.
2. Engaging in critical reflection on one's classroom discourse either within an individualistic or collective framework contributes to lifelong learning and better classroom practices.
3. Any second language lesson can be viewed as a dynamic and complex series of interrelated contexts, in which interaction is central to teaching and learning. Classroom cannot be viewed as a 'single social context'. This study considers that teachers and learners together co-construct (plural) classroom contexts.
4. Classroom interaction is considered to be an integral part of the language curriculum (Van Lier, 1996). There is also an increasing awareness that the teacher has an important role to play in shaping learner contributions.

Walsh (2006) puts forward a strong argument in favour of teacher's role in classroom interaction. He points out that interactive classrooms where learners are engaged in task-based learning surely promotes learner independence. However, even in the most learner-centered classrooms the teachers initiate, manage and sustain interaction. Therefore, classroom interaction offers a number of areas which can be exploited for teacher development. For instance, teachers can be encouraged to improve their questioning

strategies, to focus on their interactional choices and effectively deal with learner reticence can have a considerable impact on their overall classroom interaction.

This study has been presented in five chapters. In the first chapter the need to investigate classroom discussion is presented along with some dominant features of L2 classroom discourse. Various aspects of classroom interaction that can be exploited for teacher development are then explored. Ideas surrounding professional development and reflection are discussed briefly. This chapter also presents different views on the role of teacher within the field of teacher education. Discussions on the rationale and organisation of the study have also been presented. This chapter ends by outlining the research problem and research questions.

In chapter two, a review of literature in the areas of classroom research, classroom interaction and second language acquisition studies is done. Major ideas regarding the role of teacher in classroom interaction, reflective practices and critical reflection are also analysed. In this chapter the Self-Evaluation of Teacher Talk Tool (Walsh, 2006) is presented and critically reviewed. The revised version of this tool which evolved from and was applied to the Indian ESL teaching context is also presented. This chapter ends by discussing the proposed Reflective Framework for Classroom Discourse (RFCD) framework which evolved from this study.

The third chapter discusses the context of the study, the participants' profile and the research methodology. The use of case study method will be discussed and attempts will be made to justify it. Peer observations and team teaching were employed to encourage critical reflection as a group. The use of stimulated recalls is essential for critical

reflection. Various data collection tools which were employed for this study such as semi-structured interviews along with observation reports, teachers' self-evaluation using the revised SETT tool, workshops, questionnaire, field notes, formal and informal discussions have been described in this chapter.

The fourth chapter deals with data analysis and interpretation. This chapter first presents an analysis of the questionnaire. It then looks at the classroom discourse data collected in the initial phases a) to arrive at the revised SETT tool, and b) to identify the new modes and key characteristics of teacher talk found in the classes observed. In the initial phase of the study, the teacher-participants expressed certain concerns related to English Language Teaching. Therefore, two workshops were conducted to discuss their concerns and familiarise them with the revised SETT tool, and these form part of the above stated discussion.

This chapter also discusses three detailed case studies of two Trained Graduate Teachers (TGT) and one Post Graduate Teacher (PGT)) which present the reflective journeys of these teacher-participants. The implementation of the revised SETT tool was done in multiple stages allowing teachers to engage with the tool at their individual pace. This three-stage-engagement unravelled a connection between the different stages of implementation and different levels of reflection, starting from surface, descriptive reflection to deeper levels of personal and critical reflection which resulted in the formulation of the RFCD framework. This framework attempts to connect various stages of the revised SETT implementation with different levels and qualitative dimensions of reflection.

The fifth chapter discusses the findings of the study and its implications on teacher development. This chapter ends with the limitations of the present study and suggestions for future research.