

## Teacher Talk in an EFL University Classroom\*

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This paper investigates the characteristics and patterns of teacher talk through classroom discourse analysis in an EFL university context. After collecting the discourse data for a semester based on an English class with one native English speaking teacher (NEST) and 35 students, the researchers modified Chaudron's (1983) four points of view on teacher talk into three (i.e., teacher vocabulary, teacher questioning, and topic management) for further categorization and coding of the data. The results of the study showed that 1) the NEST used both simplified and coined words and code switched various words, 2) the NEST's unclear and fragmented questions often appeared to confuse the students, and 3) the NEST teacher used the strategies of providing the learners with hypothetical scenarios and role play opportunities for better topic management. Finally, the study discusses the importance of a discourse analysis approach in order to understand one's teaching practices and, possibly, help EFL learners engage in more meaningful and diverse interaction in the language classroom.

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### 1. Teacher Talk in ELT Classroom Discourse

Teacher talk is a fundamental and essential element of the classroom. Long and Sato (1983) stated that teacher speech for Second Language (SL) instruction is "a hybrid register characterized by features of teacher talk" (p. 271). In fact, Chaudron (1988) summarized the features of teacher talk as follows;

- 1) Rate of speech appears to be slower,
- 2) Pauses, which may be evidence of the speaker planning more, are possibly more frequent and longer,
- 3) Pronunciation tends to be exaggerated and simplified,

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- 4) Vocabulary use is more basic,
- 5) Degree of subordination is lower,
- 6) More declaratives and statements are used than questions,
- 7) Teachers may self-repeat more frequently. (p. 85)

In the context of classroom discourse analysis, one extremely important concern regarding teacher talk is whether it can facilitate learning and communicative interaction in the classroom (Cullen, 1998). Patil (1994) suggested that the NS teacher modifies his or her speech to help non-native speakers of English learners comprehend the speech successfully. Hatch (1983), as cited in Kil Young Lee (1999), also explained that native speakers of English speak more slowly, enunciate more clearly, use more concrete examples than abstract references, use simple and shorter sentences, make greater use of repetition and rephrasing than usual, and use a greater variety of non-verbal cues to help learners understand. Long and Porter (1985) also stated teacher talk is characterized by reduced and simplified forms, shorter and less complex syntaxes, use of higher frequency vocabulary items, and avoidance of idiomatic expressions. Cazden (2001) further investigated discourse patterns in the language classroom and identified a most common and frequent pattern, in which there is a three part sequence of teacher's initiation, student response, and teacher evaluation/feedback (IRE/F).

Teacher talk is also considered similar to foreigner talk, which is modified speech in various contexts (Chaudron, 1983). For instance, Gaies (1977), cited in Long and Sato (1983), noted that ESL teachers and native speakers of English modify their speech in similar ways. However, Deok-Jae Park (1999) explained that "foreigner talk is used as a general term for the modified language that native speakers use with non-native speakers" (p. 19) while teacher talk as foreigner talk can be characterized by "the systematic simplification such as lexical, phonological, and grammatical modifications" (p. 21).

## 2. Research Issues on Classroom Discourse in Korean EFL Classrooms

Regarding the limited existing research on classroom discourse including teacher talk between teachers and learners in Korean EFL context, Young Ja Lee, Im Deuk Kim, Moon Sub Han, and So Yeung Koh (1999) asserted that the structural approach to classroom discourse does not provide a deeper insight into what interaction occurs and "what kind of learning is promoted through the interaction" (p. 260). This argument captures the reality of Korean EFL classrooms in which the sequence of classroom discourse between the NEST and non-native learners of English may not fit the typical sequence of classroom talk researched in ESL or other contexts. For example, even though it is noted that NS teacher talk also dominates Korean EFL contexts, there may be different levels of involvement among Korean students due to their passivity (Young Ja Lee et al., 1999). Accordingly, more

EFL-based research on teacher talk in the context of classroom discourse is needed to investigate classroom interaction patterns by focusing on the “substance of classroom conversation” rather than “its structure” (Young Ja Lee et al., 1999, p. 260). In fact, more thorough research on classroom discourse in EFL contexts may reveal that there may be different features or issues in teacher and/or student talk in the classroom.

## II. METHODOLOGY

### 1. Participants

In order to investigate features of classroom discourse in a Korean university classroom, fifteen observations of a seventy-five-minute long class named Intercultural Communication were made during the first semester in 2003. The students were juniors and all majoring in English except one student. All students were Korean and one of them had lived in the USA until he was ten years old. The class consisted of 35 students.

The NEST for this class was a male who had taught EFL university students for more than 4 years in Korea. He received his B. A. in English Literature and an M. A. in secondary English education in North America.

### 2. Course Description

The class, Intercultural Communication, was offered to junior students majoring in English. The class met twice a week and had the objective of raising students’ awareness on cultural differences in order to help students understand their own and other cultures and broaden their knowledge and experiences.

### 3. Teacher’s Pedagogical Views on the Course

The thirteen interviews with the teacher during the observations revealed several of his prominent pedagogical views regarding this course. First, the teacher valued sharing ideas instead of focusing on forms of language. That is, he gave “message-focused corrective feedback” (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994, p. 1) to the students. The topics of the discussions in the lessons almost always involved “non-linguistic content” (Nystrom, 1983, p. 185). Second, the teacher valued teaching critical thinking to the students. The teacher tried to help the students question each topic and issue dealt in the class. Third, the teacher valued wait time so that the students in his EFL classroom could contribute their ideas and thoughts during the class. Finally, he stated that the teacher talk should be adjusted according to the learners’ proficiency levels and their needs.

#### 4. Data Collection

The data were gathered for nine weeks through non-participant observations. Borg and Gall (1989), as cited in Sun Young Park and Ki Wan Sung (2003), stated that a non-participant observation is more effective for the researcher to see the class objectively. Therefore, in order to examine “the social context of the second language such as speech interaction” (Seliger & Shohamy, 2001, p. 121) and describe “teacher and learner language in the language classroom” (p. 121), classroom ethnography was used. First, field notes were taken for the entire observations by the lead researcher so as to document important classroom events and her reflections on the classroom activities.

Second, each observed lesson was also tape-recorded and used to corroborate with the field notes. In other words, both tape-recorded lessons and field notes were constantly compared in order to identify important classroom activities and events relevant to research questions. In addition, in the field notes, the lead researcher wrote down some reflective thoughts on important classroom activities and events during the observation or immediately after the observation.

Third, the teacher interviews were conducted after each class with the exception of the two periods when the mid-term and final exams were held. During the first two weeks of research, the interviews were done in an open-ended manner so that the teacher could express his views on teaching English, classroom structure, teaching methods, and other instructional issues he chose to emphasize. Consequently the lead researcher played the role of confirming or asking clarifications of what the teacher stated even though there were some occasions when some specific questions regarding interesting classroom activities were asked. However, as weeks progressed, the necessity for more focused interviews prompted the lead researcher to structure the interviews by asking detailed questions regarding the daily events of the class and discussing those events in-depth with the teacher. The structured interviews affirmed the integrity of the coding framework by providing additional data to identify and code the manifestation of the teacher’s overarching discursive patterns and characteristics in classroom events.

Lastly, the students were interviewed individually or in group immediately after the class or on the same day in order to examine their views on lesson content, classroom activities, and, more importantly, levels of understanding the teacher talk for particular classroom activities. In addition, both the teacher and students had ample opportunities to share their opinions regarding many instructional activities and behaviors during the interviews. All interviews were also tape-recorded and transcribed for analysis on the same day.

#### 5. Triangulation of Data Sources

Stubbs (1983) noted that one major concept of triangulation is that “the analyst’s account

should be compared with participants' accounts" (p. 235). Therefore, various perspectives from the researchers, the teacher and the students were compared to ascertain the reliability of the data gathered. For example, the results of the analysis of the study were presented to the teacher in order to check whether the researchers' interpretations were appropriate or not. In addition, "checking out the consistency of different data sources within the same method" (Patton, 1990, p. 56) is important. Therefore, the data from observations, field notes, and interviews were compared to keep the "consistency of information" (Ki Wan Sung, 2000, p. 56). In other words, the field notes and interviews were constantly referenced when analyzing the classroom ethnographic data so that the representations of what went on in the classroom were accurate.

## 6. Data Analysis

Teacher talk concerning this particular class was examined following a modified framework of Chaudron's (1983), which is the teacher vocabulary, teacher questioning, and topic management. However, while using this particular framework, the researchers made every effort to identify and code some recurring and yet significantly meaningful patterns and characteristics of classroom interaction between an NEST and EFL university students. That is, the interesting and important aspects of teacher talk in this classroom were examined through maintaining a "naturalistic enquiry" (Allwright & Bailey, 1991, p. 41). In other words, based on classroom observations, field notes, and teacher and student interviews, classroom discourse analysis was done for "the investigation of relationship between NS input and learner interlanguage forms and the contribution of conversational interaction to SLA" (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991, p. 71). Finally, to maintain the anonymity of all participants in this study, the teacher and the students have been given pseudonyms.

## III. RESULTS

### 1. Characteristics of Teacher Talk in the EFL Classroom

#### 1) Teacher Vocabulary

##### (1) Teacher's Elaboration with Concrete Examples

###### Excerpt 1

T: Han, what is non-verbal communication skill?

S: Non speaking-

T: Just non speaking?

S: Body language, gestures-

T: Body language, gestures. Students! Quick review! Non-verbal...What is it called ...What is it called? When your face and your eyes..What is it called, when your face and your eyes, gestures, and your voice tone, voice tone, happy voice tone, and sad voice tone. They match the words...what's that called?

S: Congruence.

T: Congruence!.That's right..For example, for example, if all of you go like this ((teacher made face)), I'm happy to be in class...Very interesting ((students laughed)) congruence? ((students said no)) incongruence? Right!.So..By the way, why am I teaching you...

(Observation Data #1: April 11, 2003)

This interaction occurred during the review session of the previous lesson and there are many explicit and conventionalized ways of using simple words and phrases. The teacher asked a student to explain what communication skill is and the students provided a short and yet not quite appropriate answer to the question initiated by the teacher in line 2. Unsatisfied with the answer, the teacher repeated the student's utterance in line 3. Then, the student said two examples of non-verbal communication skills, which was followed by the teacher's examples. In line 11-14, upon the student's response prompted by the word 'match', the teacher again explained what non-verbal communication is by providing a more visual example of making a face. Obviously, in this excerpt, despite the students' rather short and simplified responses to his question, the teacher set out to explain in detail using elaboration and nonverbal gesture while still validating the students' answers as shown in the teacher interview below:

Excerpt 2

Researcher: You changed your speaking style to your students, I mean..it is different the way you speak to foreigners like Korean students.

Teacher: Oh...interesting question... First of all, I used essential English with detailed explanations and a lot of gestures.

R: I thought it worked well, like, today's class...when you encouraged the students to say the word 'congruence.'

T: Right.. I tried to use the most simplistic and efficient way of speaking English in class.

(Teacher Interview Data #1: April 11, 2003)

In a sense, though the students in this class used more simplified and short words while

the teacher engaged in more elaborated classroom discourse, there seems to be important negotiation of meaning in the process. The following student interview also reveals what went on in the classroom:

Excerpt 3

Researcher: You answered 'congruence' right after the teacher's long explanation. Did you remember?

Student: Ah...yes.

R: How were you able to understand the teacher's explanations and say 'congruence'?

S: First, I saw the teacher's face and all expressions and that was very easy to understand...and I tried to think the word I learned in class.

R: You mean, the teacher's explanations with body language were helpful?

S: Yes, yes.

(Student Interview Data #1: April 11, 2003)

Accordingly, in the lead researcher's reflective field note for this event, she wrote:

Excerpt 4

The teacher reviewed the previous lesson on what "nonverbal communication skills" are. He made every effort to get appropriate answers from the students. The teacher's ways and process of defining a word 'congruence' were very visual and I thought his elaborate trials to explain the word with gestures were very effective.

(Field Note #1: April 11, 2003)

In sum, the use of more basic forms of language and extended examples in ESL and EFL classrooms is well documented (Henzel, 1973; cited in Chaudron, 1988). It is also well noted that circumlocution to illustrate or describe the meanings of words and sentences is quite often used with paralinguistic strategies and non-verbal gestures by ESL and EFL teachers along with verbal and other visual representations. (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997)

(2) Teacher's Word Coinage and Code Switching

Excerpt 5

T: So...Look at this picture. Here...Sue, Meggy, Mihee, look at this picture...

Grace, I want you to do more homework, writing and discussion in my class...

Please do more work in my class...OK! That's what I want...I'm a foreign

professor, Oegookin kyosu[a foreign professor], and different culture...I want something. Grace, what do you want? What kind of study do you want? Do you want relaxing study, hard study, so-so study...how hard do you want? How hard do you want to work?

S: I want easy and interesting!

T: That's good because you're honest..so, look at this picture, everybody! ((the teacher and Nancy stood far away)) You see, body position over there and body position is over here...Why is it so hard to negotiate across cultures...I don't understand why? ...

S: People's opinions are too strong and different.

T: People's opinion are too strong and different..too strong and too different..Very well said! Very well said...Well, I need...Nancy! I can't be a teacher if there are not students...You need me so...What do we do? What do we do? How many classes did professors do like this ((the teacher made face)) to the students? Sometimes Lena? Never? Oegookin kyosu[a foreign professor], Hankook haksang[Korean student] never? Always happy? Sometimes not happy?...So I ask you to question again...Susan, We need each other ...What do we do?

S: ...

T: Take some time before we have group discussion ...Think about the teacher wants Grace really hard work, to be really like American ((wrote 'bwah bwah' in Korean, which means 'watch me'.)) Everybody watch...I want Grace, really hard work, to be really like Megook haksang[an American student]...and Nancy, tell me what did you say? I want push push study... You want?

S: Easy and interesting.

(Observation Data #11: May 27, 2003)

This lesson is characterized by the teacher's efforts to explain the difference in students' and his cultures. In order to explain the differences to the students, the teacher invoked cultural differences in the relationship between the foreign faculty and Korean students, used some Korean words, and demonstrated the meanings with some nonverbal gestures. In fact, many paralinguistic strategies and nonverbal behaviors abounded and it is obvious the teacher talk is dominant in the stretch of the classroom discourse.

There are, in particular, two interesting patterns in this talk. First, the teacher coined words 'so-so study' and 'push-push study,' and they were rhythmical. Coinage is to create a non-existing L2 word by applying a supposed L2 rule to an existing L2 word (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997). The words coined here seem more vivid and understandable nuances despite its simplification and nonnativeness. Second, code switching into Korean is important in this except, which seems to show the teacher's level of efforts to get the meaning across

and help the students understand what is being explained and be more attentive to the teacher talk.

The followings are the teacher and student post-hoc interviews and the lead researcher's reflection on this particular classroom interaction:

Excerpt 6

R: When you described three types of study, you used three words like relaxing study, hard study, so-so study. Why did you say like this?

T: In my class, meaning making is a more important part...I mean, the teacher's giving more clear meaning should be prior to others...so teachers need to always consider the learners' levels.

(Teacher Interview Data # 11: May 27, 2003)

Excerpt 7

R: Today, the teacher said three words "relaxing study, hard study, so-so study" and did you understand well?

S1: Yes.

R: Why do you think you understood well?

S2: All words are easy and very simple to understand...hum...they are very familiar to us ((smile)).

(Student Interview Data #11: May 27, 2003)

Excerpt 8

The teacher drew a simple picture of a Korean student and an American teacher. Then he said "relaxing study," "hard study," and "so-so study" with gestures. Nancy answered the question directly. I thought the teacher's word choices were appropriate for the students' level and very helpful and impressive in this EFL classroom even though the words were make-up words. Also, the teacher's using Korean such as "bwah bwah" could be effective, I thought.

(Field Note #11: May 27, 2003)

In this sense, it can be said that the teacher appeared to consider the learners' level of understanding by adjusting his talk using the words and phrases both in their mother tongue and target language so that the students could understand his speech more clearly. In fact, the abundance of the teacher's code switching aided in increasing students' attention and conveying immediate meanings to learners in the class. In addition, the teacher talk in this excerpt and others also are replete with incomplete sentences such as Korean and English words and phrases, which is very typical of oral discourse (Hatch, 1992).

## (3) Teacher Familiarity and Use of Students' L1 and Culture

This excerpt showed that the NEST's understanding of the learners' mother tongue and culture could facilitate EFL learners' understanding of the lesson differently:

Excerpt 9

T: Hardballer...What else can we do for a hardballer? Hardballer means baseball ...Park Chan Ho...Yah...Softball? Hardball?...Park Chan Ho, softball? ((made gesture to throw the ball)) hardballer...

T: ((wrote 'He really plays hardball.')) This is an American idiom..You really play hardball ...OK, Olivia, what do we do with hardballer?

S: ((no response))

T: Olivia, what do we do with hardballer?

S: ((no response))

T: You're smart..What do you do in your life? Somebody's a hardballer... Ahjumoeni ((a married woman))..What do you do when you negotiate with ahjumma who is a hardballer? How about Jungang market..Jung an..Jung-a market?

S: Jung-a?

T: Street market

S: Joongang Sijang?

Ss: Ahhhh...((The whole class laughed))

T: What do you do...hardballer Ahjumma...

S: ((no response))

T: OK, before meeting Fred. You gather information ((wrote on the board))...

(Observation Data #8: May 13, 2003)

In this excerpt, the teacher explained an American idiom 'hardballer' using his knowledge on the Korean culture; a Korea baseball player playing in the States, common perceptions related to married Korean women, and a local market in town. According to Excerpt 9, despite the teacher's familiarity with Korean culture and use of such cultural knowledge, the students in this discursive event seemed to have difficulty in understanding his explanation of the word 'hardballer'. The students' interviews after class revealed that they could understand the meaning of 'hardballer' in the end by relating the strong image of 'ahjumma' to the word 'hardballer.' In fact, the teacher's familiarity with Korean language and culture played an important role in establishing some common ground to negotiate meaning of the word between the NEST and the students as manifest in Excerpt 10:

Excerpt 10

R: In today's class, you explained the meaning of the word 'hardballer.' I found you had some difficulty in explaining it to the students.

T: Right, ((smile)) right!

R: Why did you try to explain the word 'hardballer' using Korean culture?

T: As you know, it is easier for you to understand something in your culture than another culture...so I tried to substitute the appropriate Korean words for a word 'hardballer.' Also, I've been here for so long and I...knew the image of 'ahjumma' in Korea is the same as the word 'hardballer.'

(Teacher Interview Data #8: May 13, 2003)

However, one of the students said in a post-hoc interview that the teacher's explanation using Korean words and cultural backgrounds confused her at first. Therefore, even though the teacher's use of some culturally meaningful Korean words helped explain the word 'hardballer' eventually, the students did not contribute to the interaction and were not able to understand until the end of the talk as shown below:

Excerpt 11

R: Why do you think that you couldn't answer the teacher's question?

S: Actually, I couldn't understand what 'hardballer' meant at first...And...I didn't understand why 'Park Chan Ho' came up at that moment.

R: Then, did you understand the meaning of 'hardballer' when the teacher related 'ahjumma' to 'hardballer'?

S: Um...It was little confusing at first but it became clearer for me because I knew the meaning of 'ahjumma' in the traditional market well in the end.

(Student Interview Data #8: May 13, 2003)

This may exemplify the fact that, though the teacher's familiarity with Korean language and Korean culture was essential to sustain the interactional sequence in this excerpt, such knowledge did not automatically guarantee an easier and more effective explanation of key vocabulary.

## (4) Students' Input as Instructional Cues

Excerpt 12

T: What does that mean? Lelia, there is a big word. What does that mean? Integration of skills? You can say hell if I know...((the teacher smiled)) Do you know?...Molra? ((means 'you don't know?' in Korean)). OK, come in [to a student came late] Anzeseyo ((means 'please sit down' in Korean)).

- T: Students, integration of skills...Lena, What does that mean? Integration of skills?  
Luzan, you are looking at dictionary? OK, take a second...
- S: ((After looking the word up in the dictionary)) Combination!
- T: Combination!..Well done! So, integration of skills- that means putting it all together...

(Observation Data #13: June 3, 2003)

In this excerpt, the teacher asked whether a student knows the meaning of 'integration'. Again, the teacher used Korean words, but he also repeatedly invited the students to contribute in finding out the meaning of 'integration'. Unable to get any response from the student he called on, he even invited a student to use the dictionary and gave some wait time for him to look up a word in a dictionary. As a result, the student substituted 'combination' for 'integration' in line 7 and the teacher gave the positive feedback and also explained using another phrase 'putting it together.'

Accordingly, the post-interview with one of the students revealed that she had initial difficulty in understanding the whole lesson regarding how to integrate various skills until the word, 'combination', came up. As a matter of fact, she said that it could have been better for the teacher to use either 'combination' or 'putting it together'. She also mentioned that the students in this class quite often did not understand the teacher's explanation because the students tried to figure out what the teacher said literally or translate each word independently instead of thinking the meanings of words and phrases in context. The following Excerpt 13 and the field note illustrate these points:

Excerpt 13

- R: Was it helpful for you to look up the word 'integration' in the dictionary?
- S: Yes...Because...I found an easier word and it was more familiar to me.  
Actually, it would be more helpful if the teacher had used the word 'combination' instead of 'integration' at first.
- R: Why do you think so?
- S: The word 'combination' is often used in Korea like 'combination pizza' ((the student laughed))
- R: Is there any reason some students did not understand the teacher's question in this situation?
- S: Maybe...most students can not relate the overall contents of class to the teacher's question.
- R: What you mean is that some students can not understand the meaning of question in contexts?
- S: Yes, right...

(Student Interview Data #13: June 3, 2003)

Excerpt 14

The teacher wrote the following on the board: “Time to tie everything together, Time to tie all the semester together, Integration of skills.” The students read the board together. The teacher asked each student to say what “Integration” means. Then, the teacher gave a student time to look up the word in a dictionary. The teacher’s giving such an opportunity was helpful for negotiating meaning in today’s class.

(Field Note # 13: June 3, 2003)

## 2) Teacher Questioning Strategies

Long and Sato (1983) noted that the teacher’s questions facilitate and sustain participation by the learners. Tsui (1998) stated that teachers’ questions have different functions such as “focusing attention, exercising disciplinary control, encouraging student participation, moving the lesson forward” (p. 1). Considering such importance of questions in English classrooms, the NEST’s questioning strategies in the class were also collected and analyzed. However, what is in focus in this process is some unique patterns of the teacher and student interaction in questioning instead of identifying all the question types as done in other studies. First, though there were many instances of questions that went along with the classroom flow, there were also quite interesting cases when many turns and confusion were manifest in the teacher-student interaction as illustrated below:

Excerpt 15

T: Sometimes you’re gonna meet a foreigner, Oekookin [a foreigner] for business purpose, for school purpose... If you want to be just natural but walking tall... Cindy, what do you think?

Cindy: ((no response))

T: Cindy, what do you think? You are a smart person, what do you think?

Cindy: What happens when walking talk?...Maybe I forget about walking talk.

T: OK, let me say it again...Very, very basic...Naturally walking tall.. Let me show you... Let me show you walking more confident...Hi, Class! Good to see you ((saying with gestures))...Let me show you...((the teacher stopped talking because a student came late and sidetracked a bit))...All right...So, very simple technique walking tall...Walking tall...Walking tall...Do you understand?

Cindy: How can we use it?

(Observation Data #2: April 15, 2003)

The teacher’s use of colloquial expressions seems to be the main cause of confusion in

this excerpt. The teacher talked about 'walking tall' in meeting a foreigner and he began the question with if-subjunctive mood but ended the main clause with an open-ended question directed to a student. Being called upon by the teacher, Cindy asked the teacher to clarify his question, which resulted in the teacher's elaboration of the meaning of 'walking tall' in line 7-11. The teacher did his best explaining the meaning of the expression using an example with some gestures and a few repetitions of the phrase also. However, such effort did not help the student who misunderstood the teacher's pronunciation 'tall' as 'talk', which eventually caused her to ask for more concrete example of using it. As a result, it is clear that, due to the misunderstanding of the expression 'walking tall' and the teacher's rather insufficient explanations for it, their miscommunication was not easily overcome. This obviously shifted the classroom interaction in an unexpected way since there was no meaningful discussion of what the students should do to engage in meaningful communication. The followings are the teacher and student interviews regarding this classroom event:

Excerpt 16

R: I thought your first question about walking tall was too broad to answer. What do you think?

T: Humm...I thought I should have given more detailed explanation for 'walking tall' at that moment...

R: Yes...before asking a little broad question, checking students' understanding for your question is more important, I think, and the question should be more specific.

T: Yah...right!

(Teacher Interview Data #2: April 15, 2003)

Excerpt 17

R: You didn't understand the meaning of 'walking tall', right?

S: I couldn't understand why the teacher asked the meaning of 'walking talk' suddenly. Later, I found that I mistook 'walking tall' for 'walking talk.'

R: Then, what do you think the teacher should have done in such a situation?

S: Um...I think the teacher's clearer explanation could have been more helpful before asking questions.

(Student Interview Data #2: April 15, 2003)

Classroom observations and frequent documentation in the reflective field notes indicated that the teacher's use of certain words or expressions was not well matched with the students' levels. This shaped the classroom interaction in unintended ways. Therefore, the teacher had to make an extra effort to get certain meanings across while the students

were often too confused and tried to figure out the teacher's words and expressions. The following is another example that the teacher's question were not in sync with the student's response, greatly affected classroom interaction, and changed the flow of instruction more often than not:

Excerpt 18

- S: You yield to principle but never to pressure--  
 T: I think that's interesting too--You yield- yield...June, yield means what?  
 June: ((no answer))  
 T: OK, giving up...You first...Agree or disagree...What does your experience-?  
 My experiences-- What's your experience? Does your experience make you agree or disagree?  
 S: ((still didn't say anything))  
 T: Does your experience make you agree or disagree?...Okay?

(Observation Data #5: May 2, 2003)

In this excerpt, the teacher's frequent fragmented and unfinished questions confused the learners, who may have intended to say something more. In fact, the teacher's question on the meaning of 'yield' seems inappropriate since it cuts off the student's talk and shifts the focus to another student who was not able to answer the teacher's next two questions. In fact, the teacher's array of frequent fragmented words which were not completed 'what does your experience?...what's your experience?' could cause much confusion to the learners who tried to follow the meaning of the teacher's questions. The following student interview and field note also confirm what caused such difficulty in classroom talk:

Excerpt 19

- R: Was the teacher's question difficult?  
 S: It was confusing to me...  
 R: Why do you think so?  
 S: The teacher changed the way of questioning a lot while he was asking...Also, the questions were not completed...Um...I mean-I think they were not perfect sentences...

(Student Interview Data # 5: May 2, 2003)

Excerpt 20

Before asking questions, the teacher asked the students to read and think about an article. A student said she couldn't understand the article as a whole. Then, the teacher said "Hankookmal English mixing, OK?" He asked what was difficult. Then, a student said "You yield to principle but never to pressure." At this point,

the teacher's questions confused the student: I thought his questions were incomplete and too fragmented.

(Field Note #5: May 2, 2003)

In sum, it may be that the teacher's excessive focus on the vocabulary and frequent and fragmented question could confuse the NNS learners and shifted the classroom interaction in the way the teacher wanted while the students became more silent and doubtful about the teacher's provision of concrete examples or elaborations.

### 3) Teacher Topic Management

Chaudron (1983) noted that teachers have various means at their disposal for establishing the topic or sub-topic of discussion. The topic structuring devices can be summarized as follows:

They include such syntactic phenomena as fronting, left-dislocation, extraposition, pseudo-clefting, and subordinate clauses; phonological phenomena such as stress or lengthening; demonstrative pronouns and quantifiers; repetition; sentence fragments; and many more (Chaudron, 1983, p. 136).

In this class, the teacher engaged in various ways of managing the topics related to lesson points. First, the teacher attempted to provide frequent opportunities for students to express their opinions regarding the topics in the lesson. Second, if necessary, hypothetical scenarios and role plays related to the topics of the lesson were used. Finally, the teacher made an attempt to use his knowledge on the learners' cultures with a varying degree in terms of its effectiveness.

#### (1) Using Instructional Scenario for Topics

In this lesson, the teacher often prepared hypothetical scenarios suitable for the lesson of which the content reflected the learners' school life and was more authentic.

##### Excerpt 21

T: This scenario...(inaudible) scenario and- People look at the scenario step by step...Here's a scenario: You don't have enough money for school. You just got 70 on a unit test. You are going to lose your scholarship... John is your professor ((wrote and read together)) Those are the facts of the scenario. Now my question is What Do You Do? ((wrote and read)) Luzan, what do you do?...Now, I'm giving you suggestions...This is

- what I think would work...But later...I wanna give my suggestions but later you gonna do what?...Compare to...Give some questions about what I think would work...Step 1. Gather information...((wrote down them on the board)). Juju, what do you think-negotiating skills-Step by step-First step. Gather information-
- Juju: ((Said something but inaudible))
- T: What?...What kind of man is-((kept writing on the board)) For example, what kind of man is John? June, before you meet John, before you negotiate for higher grades, gather information. In any negotiation, gather information. You gather information...What kind of man is he? Did he raise grades in the past? Why? How? ((still wrote these on the board)) OK. Gathering information-Next, Brainstorm option ((kept writing the steps)). Brainstorm option. That means-Brainstorm options means...This is-I could do this-I could do this-I could do this. This could be OK?... Different ways. Think of different ways-.Think of different ways you can “win” ((writing the word on the board))...OK!, Write that down. Brainstorm option...Three, Discuss with-((wrote it on the board)). Good use- Good body language skills ((kept writing while talking to the students)). Understand what I mean?- For example, what- Use good body language skills when you talk to John. Meggy! For example, What?
- Meggy: Uhm...We can-uhm. We can speak in a smiley face
- T: OK! Natural smile...Sophie, what else?
- Sophie: Congruence.
- T: Natural comfortable distance? Natural, comfortable distance. ((wrote and read the phrases)). And Lelia, what else could you do? Body language skills for success-
- Leila: Eye contact.

(Observation Data #6: May 6, 2003)

In this excerpt, the teacher presented a scenario and scaffolded the students' understanding of the lesson point in order to negotiate meaning. Not only were there many repetitions of the questions and key points but the teacher presented some important steps and strategies regarding how to “win” during negotiation while writing all these on the board. In fact, the teacher's repeated and more concrete questions following the general question ‘What do you do?’ in line 5, gave some concrete suggestions to guide the learners such as ‘What kind of man is John?’ and ‘Step 1, gather information about John,’ and so forth. In this excerpt, the teacher engaged in a deliberate, but rather a long teacher talk. However, given that the three students came up with appropriate answers at the end of the explanation, the scenario the teacher developed successfully provided concrete and logical

explanations. The following excerpts show the teacher's reason for using the scenario and the students' views on this:

Excerpt 22

R: The interesting thing was you presented a scenario for the topic in your class.

T: Yes, right!

R: What's the reason for doing this?

T: When the class topic was little complicated, giving a clear scenario beforehand is more helpful. It could be a guide for learners to understand what they're doing now and what they're going to do next.

R: How did you prepare the scenario?

T: I made a scenario for my class topic and I tried to make a familiar scenario for the students.

(Teacher Interview Data #6: May 6, 2003)

Excerpt 23

R: You know today's scenario, right?

S1: Story?

R: Right. Do you think the scenario was helpful?

S2: Because, the scenario was like story...simple story...I can understand the situation looking at the scenario beforehand.

S3: The teacher gave many scenarios in class so far.. so we knew what they are.

(Student Interview Data #6: May 6, 2003)

(2) Role-playing for Topic Explanation

Excerpt 24 shows an example of role-plays which were often used as an effective tool in this class.

Excerpt 24

T: ((While writing "With a trickster, point to his trick, in a gentle way" on the board)) Who can read this? Sue, can you read first?

Sue: ((read what was written on the board))

T: What do you think about this? Let's try to read it together.

Ss: ((read it in chorus))

T: Lelia, what do you think about that?

Lelia: ((no response))

T: Susan, what do you think about that?

Susan: ((no response))

T: Grace, what do you think about that? Do you think this works?

- Grace: ((no response))
- T: Mina, what do you think about that? With a trickster point to the trick but in gentle way-
- Mina: Pardon me?
- T: What? Pardon me? OK, Let's get it together...Henry, Mitt and MR. Hwang turn your chair to this way.
- Ss: ((turned their chairs to the teacher))
- T: Grace, Iriwahbah[came here]. ((The teacher role played with Grace.)) This chair..Let's imagine this chair is under the heater, so hot...I'm Arnie Azzol. ((The teacher started role playing)) Oh! Hi Grace, sit here.
- Grace: Hi, Tom!
- T: Please. Yes! Yes! ((smiled))
- Grace: Can I move this chair?
- T: Why?
- Grace: So hot!
- T: OK, she was gentle and pointed to my trick...How do you fight, Boa? How do you fight trickster and gently point to the trick? ((read the sentence slowly and clearly)). Let me quickly---You are Arnie and I am a student.
- Boa: Hi, Tom, please sit here.
- T: Oh! It seems like you put my chair in a very uncomfortable spot. Is it possible we can move it?
- Boa: Okay.

(Observation Data #9: May 20, 2003)

In this excerpt, unable to elicit any answer from the four students, the teacher used two concrete role plays to explain how the students could deal with some tricks against them in a gentle way as shown in lines 17-25 and 28-31, 'with a trickster, point to the trick but gentle way'. Through the cooperative role-plays with the teacher, the learners could understand the meaning of the sentence more specifically as stated in the following excerpts:

Excerpt 25

- R: In the class, your teacher did a lot of role-playing. What do you think about that?
- SS: We actually don't like to do role-playing in front of the class but watching it is fun ((smile)).
- R: ((smile)) Anything else? Is it helpful?
- SS: Yes.. because when we do role-playing we can see many things other than

words and sentences.

R: Right...body language like facial expression and gestures.

SS: Yes...we can understand better.

(Student Interview Data #9: May 20, 2003)

#### Excerpt 26

The teacher tried to explain what “counter moves” are by using body language and role-playing. When the teacher and a student did a role play, the student responded well to the teacher. In this class, I thought role-playing used quite often in this class was a very effective instructional method.

(Field Note #9: May 20, 2003)

Role play can be an effective means to explain difficult lesson points since it is more visual and has elements of a drama. Through a contextualized role play, the teacher can convey “a socio-cultural function” in which the teacher and student can co-construct more meaningful processes of learning (Cazden, 1988, p. 195). However, as with many other EFL classes, the teacher sometimes had difficulty in managing some topics and, accordingly, Excerpt 27 shows an example of how the teacher attempted to develop a topic using his and the students’ cultural knowledge:

#### Excerpt 27

T: Right. Culture-Learning of the cultures ((wrote on the board while speaking)) good ones... Steven, do you have something else?

Steven: ...Best thing of the cultures-

T: Best things...what are the best things of the cultures ((still wrote on the board)).

T: Mihee, what do you think?...

Mihee: ((no response))

T: Yes, go ahead ((to Steven)).

Steven: Koreans never write down a name in red pen-

T: Koreans never write down a name in red pen ((spoke and wrote)) is it true, students? ...Grace read this for us Korean-

Grace: ((read what was written on the board.))

T: Is it true? Why?

S: Red means dead.

T: Red means dead? OK...Here’s an idiom for you...here’s a crazy idiom. Better dead than Red ((wrote this while talking)). If you can tell me what that means, I’ll buy coffee for you...No? Red means communism...communist.. North Koreans-

- Ss: Ah ha...
- T: North Korea.
- S: Better to die than join the communists.
- T: Right. Better to die than join the communists...Better dead than Red but it has nothing to do with this lesson So, forget it! ((the teacher laughed)) Students! It has absolutely nothing to do with our lesson...Students listen to me. Don't make face seriously, nothing to do with our lesson. Don't worry about. Just silly question. OK. Back to your conversation...Emmy, what do you think? How can I help you on negotiation unit?
- Emmy: ((no response))
- (Observation Data #4: April 29, 2003)

In this excerpt, the teacher talked about some cultural differences but was off the topic due to Steven's comment in line 9. The teacher came up with an idiom that was irrelevant to the learner's idea: 'better dead than red.', which shifted the topic of negotiation to the student's idea of 'red pen', which is also stretched to the idea of 'communism'. Such a leap obviously confused the students given the lack of the students' contribution and the teacher's rather a long acknowledgement on the irrelevance of the talk to the lesson topic. The teacher interview for this segment reveals no particular reason of linking 'communism' and 'red'.

Excerpt 28

- R: I wonder why you did say about 'communism' right after the student said 'red pen'?... I think it can be better for you to comment on and develop the student's response for a good dialogue between you and the student.
- T: As I said before in my class, 'communism' was nothing to do with my class. It was just from the color, red.
- R: I saw the students looked at you blankly at that moment.
- T: Yes...they did.

(Teacher Interview Data #4: April 29, 2003)

The post-interview with a student showed that she thought communism was another topic of the class and did not make the connection between color, red, and communication until later as in the following interview:

Excerpt 29

- R: The teacher asked you to ask a question about culture. Then, he talked about 'communism.' What did you think at that time?
- S: I couldn't understand what the relation was between color 'red' in Korean

culture and 'communism.' So I thought the teacher changed the topic 'color red' in Korean culture into another topic 'communism.'

(Student Interview Data 4#: April 29, 2003)

As shown in the above excerpts, the teacher made such an abrupt digression through the impromptu topic conversion that the student's previous engagement became almost irrelevant and broke the flow of communication. Therefore, the teacher's choice of relevant topic for learners' ideas should be done with more care to support or develop their ideas. It is true that the teacher's appropriate feedback to a student who expresses his idea at the beginning could have been more effective in sustaining a continuous engagement in classroom talk.

#### **IV. DISCUSSION**

It is well noted that the communication in the language classroom can be differently characterized compared to the communication one engages in their everyday life (Cazden, 2001; Hatch, 1992). Seedhouse (1994) argued that some essential characteristics exist in the communication in the language classroom which is different from other types of communication. Accordingly, Seedhouse (1994) emphasized the importance of investigating the characteristics of particular discursive practices in a specific context in which the teacher and students engage in diverse and dynamic communication and manifest diverse patterns of interaction depending on pedagogical purposes and activities.

This research study on classroom discourse analysis attempted to expose some taken-for-granted issues of NS teacher and NNS learners' interaction in a Korean EFL context. Using a modified framework from Chaudron's (1983) four points of view on teacher talk, this paper looked into how the teacher explained and elaborated words, phrases, and other points of lesson using relevant examples, make-up words, and the students' input as well as L1 and culture. The teacher in this study seemed to use many Korean words and cultural knowledge and manifested a varying degree of instructional behaviors and engagement with the students. However, though successful in helping his students in most of the cases, the teacher seemed to have some difficulty in explaining certain aspects of lesson content such as specific words, idiomatic phrases, and topic development and task directions.

In this class, the teacher stated that he viewed language learning as to communicating messages rather than acquiring linguistically accurate forms. Therefore, even when the learners' answers were not relevant to the teacher's questions, he did not devalue their attempts to share their opinions and gave each learner a number of opportunities to become part of classroom interaction, for example, by calling on each student to express his/her

views regarding the topics concerned. In fact, for this particular class, the teacher used both directed and non-directed interaction (Seliger, 1983). The former was used more when the teacher called on a student to respond while the latter used when questions were directed to the whole class.

In terms of the teacher talk regarding vocabulary, words, and some expressions, the teacher used both simplified and coined words in various ways and also code switched various words to facilitate his explanations. What was noted in the teacher talk was that the teacher missed many articles in his speech as shown in Excerpt 9. It could be understood as the simplification of the way of speech. The teacher also seemed to have an adequate understanding of the students' culture and was able to use Korean words often. He also used the students' knowledge as instructional input. As for the teacher's questions, there were some cases where the teacher's unclear and fragmented questions appeared to confuse the students' understanding of particular words and phrases, and topics or explanations. In such cases, the flow of communication was interrupted and there was more teacher talk, which may have caused more confusion on the part of the learners. Accordingly, teachers' questions should be evaluated by the pedagogical purposes instead of question types such as display or referential questions (Seedhouse, 1996).

With regard to instructional topic management, while manifesting some difficulties, the teacher in this study also valued the contextualization of his talk and used the strategies of providing interactional scenarios and role play opportunities for the learners. Accordingly, despite the varying degree of oral proficiency, the NNS learners could engage in various types of classroom discourses. In fact, using the NNS learners' talk as well as role plays appeared working well in explaining the lesson points in this class. According to Ali-arishi (1994), role playing provides students with the chance to rehearse the typical activities they will presumably perform outside of the class. It also allows EFL students "to use all non-verbal elements which are a natural part of talking" (Ali-arishi, 1994, p. 340). In this research, both the teacher's scenario and role-playing appeared to be unique and conducive to meaningful interaction in various instructional contexts.

As the NEST in this analysis showed, many EFL teachers probably understand their students' cultures, learning styles, and levels of their students' language proficiency. The EFL teachers also do their best to help learners interact with them or among students themselves. Accordingly, the teacher in this research tried to negotiate meanings with the students but it would have been better if the teacher had encouraged the students to use more interactional strategies such as, asking for clarification, asking for confirmation, and asking for repetition. In fact, as Pearson and Dole (1987; cited in Cohen, 2003) noted, the teacher could model some effective strategies to overcome some problematic instructional moments such as sustained silence and hasty abandonment of lesson points.

Despite the presence of NESTs in English classrooms in Korea for several decades, there has been a paucity of research that investigates the discursive patterns and characteristics

of NESTs while teaching English to various groups and levels of students. In other words, instead of believing the current myth that NESTs are better at teaching pronunciation, listening, or speaking while Korean or other nonnative English teachers at teaching reading or other study skills (Medgyes, 2001), more rigorous and systematic research is needed to examine EFL classroom discourses by focusing on such important issues as what types of NESTs' talk exist, how similar or different their talk compared to those in ESL settings, and to what extent their talk facilitates students' learning. In doing so, some important micro and macro issues related to English teaching will automatically emerge. At micro levels, contextualization of research on teacher talk is of importance since instructional settings where authentic discursive practices occur should be examined and analyzed according to a number of different pedagogical perspectives. At macro levels, some long-overdue but critical issues such as to what extent NESTs impact on English teaching in Korea and how effective their teaching is in various instructional contexts can be examined using classroom discourse data, both quantitatively and qualitatively. In addition, results from such research can also be utilized to help Korean speaking English teachers teach English through English (TETE) in the classroom, which is the current direction recommended by the 7th National English Curriculum developers and many school districts.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the nature of teacher talk in an effort to describe and analyze authentic classroom discourse in an EFL context. This study is unique in that diverse participants' views on particular classroom interaction were tapped into through classroom observations, teacher and student interviews, reflective field notes, and, more importantly, through a careful analysis of the data. However, the results of the study cannot be generalized to other EFL teaching contexts, because it was conducted using qualitative research methods to gather data on teacher talk in a specific Korean EFL classroom. Given the nature of context-based research and methodological particularities of identifying overarching and yet partial points of interests from the data, this study should be understood as an effort to approach classroom discourse analysis by way of examining more micro-levels of concrete interactions. In doing so, it is expected that future research will consider many dynamic factors such as the teacher's pedagogical views, instructional strategies regarding teacher talk, and learners' reaction to the teacher's discursive practices. Furthermore, quantitative research methods and longitudinal studies may reveal different, yet equally important aspects of teacher talk in EFL contexts.

Despite some limitations in this research study, some suggestions for EFL teachers are in order: EFL teachers should be aware of their language practices in order to increase comprehensible input the students receive during the class. In order to do this, the teacher

should be more reflective in the evaluation of his or her talk. As Cazden (2001) and Cohen (2003) noted, transcriptions of audiotape recordings of moments of talk in a classroom can be honest and powerful sources to both the teacher and the learners. Furthermore, EFL teachers also should do their best to maintain meaningful communication under various circumstances and utilize many different pedagogical and discursive practices. As the teacher in this class did, using role-plays, providing scenarios that are relevant to the topic, and being knowledgeable of EFL learners' cultures and their languages will also be helpful.

EFL teachers also need to understand that there are many gaps between their points of view on the lessons and those of the students. In fact, differences in points of view can result in disorders of classroom discourse as well as students' inability to comprehend lesson content. Barnes (1969), as cited in Cazden (1987), stated that the teacher and students do not have the same point of view for lesson content or activities. Therefore, the speaker (generally the teacher) should formulate his or her message from the listener's (generally the students) point of view. As a result, it is expected that, initial difficulties and frequent challenges in understanding between NESTs and their EFL students will lead to an important meaning-making negotiation process. This process will include a negotiation of meaning involving various types of teacher and student talk since such modifications in communication promote comprehensible input and facilitate classroom interaction.

As Seliger (1983) noted, "the language classroom may be viewed as a complex drama of social interaction" (p. 247). Therefore, EFL teachers should be armed with various tactics to confront the variables of the complex drama in their classroom. As a matter of fact, the process of negotiation of meaning is not only for reaching mutual comprehension but also for developing a social relationship between the teacher and student through interaction in the classroom, which is a miniature of society.

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