Analysis of the Impact of Teacher's Classroom Discourse Strategies on Students' Second Language Acquisition Level Based on Fieldwork Method

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Abstract: In the context of globalization and multiculturalism, the importance of second language acquisition (SLA) has become increasingly prominent. However, there is still insufficient research on the influence of teachers' classroom discourse strategies on students' SLA levels. This paper aims to provide empirical support for improving SLA teaching quality by analyzing the influence of classroom discourse strategies on students' second language acquisition levels. Through in-depth analysis of the correlation between teachers' classroom discourse and SLA, combined with corrective feedback, ZPD (area of proximal development), scaffolding teaching, Krashen's input hypothesis, and Swain's comprehensible output hypothesis, this paper takes English classroom teaching records as an example to discuss in detail the performance and role of teachers' discourse in second language acquisition. It is found that teachers' classroom discourse strategies not only directly affect students' language learning, but also play a key role in improving students' language ability. Based on these findings, this paper proposes strategies to improve the quality of SLA teaching by promoting interactive discourse, integrating real language use, and providing effective feedback. These insights and recommendations have important implications for better understanding and utilizing teachers' classroom discourse strategies to facilitate students' second language acquisition.

Keywords: Classroom Discourse, Second Language Acquisition, English Language Teaching

1. Introduction

The social background of globalization and multiculturalism has led to a growing emphasis on language diversity and proficiency. As people interact across borders and cultures, the demand for individuals proficient in multiple languages continues to rise. In response, educational institutions worldwide are focusing on enhancing language education to equip students with the necessary linguistic skills for success in the globalized workforce.

Second language acquisition (SLA) has become a critical skill, facilitating communication, cultural understanding, and global collaboration. Within the realm of language education, the role of teachers and their classroom discourse strategies in shaping students' language acquisition processes has garnered significant attention. Within the field of language education, researchers have long been interested in understanding the factors that influence SLA. Among these factors, the role of teachers

and their classroom discourse strategies has emerged as a key area of study. Classroom discourse encompasses the verbal interactions between teachers and students during instruction, including questioning, explanation, feedback, and other forms of language use. Researchers seek to examine how various discourse strategies employed by teachers impact students' language learning processes and outcomes. The significance of investigating the impact of teacher classroom discourse strategies on students' SLA lies in its potential to inform and improve language teaching practices. By understanding how different discourse strategies affect language acquisition, educators can tailor their instructional approaches to optimize students' learning experiences.

The focus of this study is to analyze the impact of teacher classroom discourse strategies on students' acquisition of a second language. Through the use of field research methods and by utilizing English teaching classroom recordings as a primary example, this study aims to examine and analyze the correlation between various discourse strategies employed by teachers and the language learning outcomes of their students. The ultimate goal of this study is to offer valuable insights into effective language teaching practices, while also contributing to the development of language education theory and pedagogy.

2. Research Method

2.1. Concepts

Classroom discourse refers to the verbal interactions between teachers and students during instruction, encompassing various language behaviors such as questioning, explanation, and encouragement. Discourse strategies are the language behaviors employed by teachers to achieve specific instructional goals in the classroom, including asking open-ended questions, providing examples, and repeating key vocabulary. According to an expert, teacher discourse is considered a core element in the teaching process. It serves not only as a linguistic medium for teachers to implement their teaching plans and strategies but also as the most important language input source for students in the process of acquiring a second language. Teacher discourse plays a crucial professional role in effectively organizing classroom teaching and promoting the development of learners' language skills [1].

The correlation between teacher classroom discourse and second language acquisition (SLA) concerns the direct influence of language input and interaction provided by teachers during instruction on students' acquisition of a second language. Classroom discourse encompasses verbal exchanges, explanations, questions, feedback, and other linguistic interactions that occur between teachers and students in the classroom setting. Effective classroom discourse strategies, such as providing comprehensible input, encouraging student participation, and offering corrective feedback, can significantly impact students' language learning outcomes. By understanding and optimizing the relationship between teacher discourse and SLA, educators can enhance students' language acquisition experiences and promote their overall language proficiency.

2.2. Research Description

This study is a qualitative case study focusing on the effectiveness of language point teaching in real English classrooms and the learning process of students. The original data subject is a 45-minute live video of a middle school English class. The researcher transcribed the dialogue between teachers and students in the classroom recording and selected a representative fragment from an English classroom as a case for in-depth exploration. The main focus of this class revolves around the teaching and learning of the phrase "catch up with". Here is a detailed description of the excerpted class:

T: teacher
Ss: multiple students
Sx: single student

T: Alright, let's take a look at another sentence pattern, "catch up with". So, for example, 'Tom had to run faster to catch up with his friends who were already ahead.' Can anyone give me another example of when you might need to catch up with someone or something?

(Students think and discuss possible examples)

S1: Maybe if you're late for a meeting, you need to catch up with your colleagues.

T: Exactly, great example. So, if you're late for a meeting, you need to catch up with your colleagues.

(Teacher writes down 'catch up with' on the board)

T: Catch up with.

Ss: Catch up with. (Students repeat after the teacher)

T: Alright, let's try another one. If you miss a few classes, what do you need to do?

S2: I need to catch up with the teacher.

T: Catch up with the teacher?

S2: Oh! Catch up with the lessons.

T: That makes sense. Yeah. You need to catch up with the lessons.

(Teacher writes down 'lessons' on the board, students repeat after the teacher)

T: But what if you're watching a movie and you need to pause it for a moment?

S3: You need to catch up with the plot when you come back.

T: Exactly, you need to catch up with the plot when you come back.

(Students nod and acknowledge)

T: So, "catch up with" can be used in different situations, whether it's catching up with people, work, or even a storyline. Great job, everyone.

3.   Research Analysis

The discourse that occurs in the classroom by teachers plays a vital role in the acquisition of a second language. This involves providing clear language output, creating opportunities for input, and stimulating students' interest. The quality of classroom discourse directly impacts students' learning outcomes, as effective classroom discourse can facilitate language output, improve proficiency, enhance motivation, and promote second language acquisition.

Effective teacher communication involves using clear and concise language, providing appropriate scaffolding, and implementing strategies that encourage active engagement and comprehension among students [2]. In recent years, sociocultural theory has emerged as a prominent perspective in research on interaction within second-language classrooms. This theory is highly relevant for explaining the relationship between interaction and cognitive development. It posits that social interaction based on meaning is the primary mechanism for learning [3]. When exploring language teaching and second language acquisition, it is important to consider a comprehensive framework that incorporates corrective feedback, the zone of proximal development, scaffolding theory, Krashen's input hypothesis, and Swain's comprehensible output hypothesis.

Drawing from these theories and perspectives will provide an in-depth analysis of classroom records from various angles.

3.1. Feedback Strategy

Corrective feedback refers to the evaluation of a learner's language output or comprehension in terms of its appropriateness and accuracy [4]. It can take various forms, such as explicit correction, clarification requests, recasts, and elicitation of self-correction.

In the provided classroom interaction, there are instances of corrective feedback, although they are relatively subtle. One such instance occurs in line 12 when S2 provides an incorrect response: "You

need to catch up with the teacher." In response, the teacher uses a questioning tone to repeat the student's answer: "Catch up with the teacher?" This prompts S2 to reconsider their answer, leading them to self-correct: "Oh! Catch up with the lessons." The teacher then acknowledges the correction and reinforces it: "That makes sense. Yeah. You need to catch up with the lessons."

This exchange exemplifies recasting, a form of corrective feedback where the teacher repeats the learner's incorrect utterance with necessary changes to produce a correct utterance without explicitly pointing out the error. By doing so, the teacher subtly guides the students to recognize and correct their mistakes on their own. Recasting is advantageous as it allows for an uninterrupted flow of conversation and encourages learners to actively engage in the learning process.

Additionally, positive reinforcement from teachers following corrections serves to validate students' efforts and encourage further participation. This supportive atmosphere fosters a safe learning environment where students feel comfortable making mistakes and learning from them.

Overall while corrective feedback in this classroom interaction may be subtle, it effectively promotes student learning by encouraging self-correction and maintaining a positive and supportive learning environment.

3.2. Guidance Strategies

In the field of English teaching, the instructional strategy employed by teachers plays a pivotal role in students' learning outcomes. To begin with, at the onset of the course, the teacher explicitly introduced the sentence pattern "catch up with" for students to learn. The example "Tom had to run faster to catch up with his friends who were already ahead" served as a clear starting point for students and facilitated their swift engagement in learning.

In addition to language learning, some studies have focused on the role of teacher discourse in supporting the cognitive development of English learners during interactions with teachers and peers. For instance, Li & Zhang investigated the impact of support provided in a reading class for English majors on the enhancement of students' higher-order thinking skills [5]. During the teaching process, the teacher utilized scaffolding as a pedagogical strategy. Originally used in construction for workers to build platforms or access work areas, scaffolding has evolved from an architectural term into an educational concept through research. In education, scaffolding refers to "instructional supports provided by a teacher to help students build upon their existing knowledge and skills, gradually guiding them towards independent learning." Effective use of scaffolding techniques in a classroom setting facilitates student understanding and language acquisition. This approach encourages independent thinking through questioning and provides examples of applying "catch up with" in various contexts. For instance, teachers may prompt students with questions such as "Can anyone give me another example of when you might need to catch up with someone or something?" Such interactive questioning not only promotes active student participation but also allows them to expand their comprehension under guidance.

Furthermore, written reinforcement is employed as new vocabulary is displayed on the board by the teacher. The meta-analysis conducted by Lim and Renandya demonstrates that written corrective feedback yields a significant and enduring impact [6]. This visual aid serves to reinforce students' understanding and offers a reference point for future learning endeavors. The teacher also models correct pronunciation and usage while guiding students in repeating and internalizing the target language.

In addition, teachers effectively utilize the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in the teaching process. The ZPD theory, proposed by Vygotsky in the 1930s, is an important concept. It refers to the difference between students' independent problem-solving level and what they can achieve with guidance, emphasizing that teaching should be ahead of development. This perspective considers teaching and development as two mutually influencing and interdependent processes. The area of

proximal development varies among individuals and transcends traditional education modes where knowledge is imparted one way from teachers to students. Instead, ZPD theory regards teachers as facilitators of student development, students as active participants, and interpersonal interaction as a crucial mechanism for knowledge generation.

Teachers start with simple examples and gradually guide students to think about more complex situations, allowing them to explore new knowledge under teacher guidance. This teaching strategy reflects the application of Vygotsky's ZPD theory in practical teaching and promotes language acquisition among students.

It is important to distinguish between ZPD and scaffolding. The ZPD represents the optimal challenge level for student learning while scaffolding refers to support provided by a teacher or more knowledgeable peer to help students accomplish tasks within their ZPD.

Through analysis of this class recording, it is evident that teachers have adopted various effective teaching strategies when instructing on the phrase "catch up with". These strategies not only promote student engagement and understanding but also provide opportunities for them to expand their knowledge and skills under guidance. In particular, the application of scaffolding teaching strategy effectively supports students in entering their nearest development area and stimulates their learning interest, and independent learning ability.

Therefore, in English teaching, teachers should pay attention to adopting a variety of teaching strategies to optimize the teaching effect.

3.3. Acquisition Strategies

In the process of promoting language acquisition, teachers skillfully employ a variety of strategies that not only align with language learning theory but also significantly enhance students' learning outcomes. Firstly, the example sentences and situations provided by the teacher offer understandable input that is slightly above the student's current language level. This challenges the students' language skills just enough to require effort in understanding and absorbing new knowledge. This application reflects Krashen's input hypothesis, which posits that learners effectively acquire language when exposed to comprehensible input slightly above their current level. Input refers to the linguistic information that learners receive in their environment, which may or may not be understandable to them. According to Krashen, language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to "adequate" (i+1) and "comprehensible" input - meaning that the input should be slightly above the learner's current level so that most of it can be understood while still presenting some challenge. By receiving input slightly beyond their current level, learners can continuously progress in absorbing and understanding more language. The study conducted by Omar Ali Al-Smadi and Siti Soraya Lin Abdullah Kamal also identified language modifications, such as repetition, simplification, pronunciation adjustment, and avoidance of idioms. These modifications indicate a teacher's dedication to promoting student understanding and engagement in a professional learning environment. By implementing these adjustments, teachers ensure the clarity of communication, reduce language barriers, and support active participation and interaction among students [7].

At the same time, teachers also place significant emphasis on students' language output. According to Swain's study of language learners, fluency in a second language is heavily reliant on intelligible output, which serves as validation of the input. Language output also plays a crucial role in arousing learners' vigilance and identifying existing problems in language learning. In 1995, Swain proposed the Output Hypothesis theory, suggesting that the function of output is to attract learners' attention, stimulate cognitive processing, and verify hypotheses. This process can promote acquisition and improve the standardization of language use by learners.

In classroom communication, teachers should provide students with easily understandable inputs such as simple sentences while also offering ample opportunities for students to use the second language they have learned.

The observed English classroom exemplifies Swain's Comprehensible Output Hypothesis through the teacher's emphasis on student participation and the production of language output. The hypothesis posits that fluency is facilitated by learners' production of understandable language output, reinforcing comprehension and promoting acquisition.

Throughout the lesson, the teacher actively engages students in producing language output by encouraging them to provide examples using the target sentence pattern "catch up with." By eliciting responses from students--such as S1's example of catching up with colleagues or S3's example of catching up with a movie plot—the teacher creates opportunities for students to express themselves in English. This process not only reinforces their understanding but also encourages active engagement in language production.

Through continuous practice, students can improve their language skills in expression and enhance self-confidence and ability to express themselves.

In addition, the teacher also makes clever use of the students' immediate development area. They designed a series of tasks and challenges that were slightly above the students' current abilities, based on their actual level. These tasks and challenges are neither too difficult for students to lose confidence nor too easy to challenge. In this way, teachers guide students to gradually explore and understand new knowledge, thereby advancing their language acquisition.

This teaching strategy effectively utilizes the student's proximal development zone, allowing them to gradually improve their language ability under the guidance of teachers.

3.4. Room for Improvement

In the observed classroom practice, a variety of discourse strategies have been effectively used to support second language acquisition (SLA). However, there is still room for improvement.

Firstly, teachers can maintain students' interest and promote effective learning through diversified language output. This means that teachers should not only use fixed teaching terms but also adjust their expressions according to students' reactions and interests to make teaching more lively and interesting.

Secondly, increasing the interaction between students is also an important way to improve language learning outcomes. The meta-analysis conducted by Vuogan and Li has revealed that peer feedback plays a positive and significant role in enhancing learners' writing skills. The research suggests that teachers should fully utilize peer feedback in their teaching, allowing learners to engage in interactive information processing during the peer feedback process. It is recommended to promote peer feedback and emphasize the importance of revision following the feedback to facilitate foreign language learning [8]. Teachers can encourage students' active participation by organizing group discussions, role-playing, and other activities to cultivate their cooperative spirit and communication skills. Such interaction can not only improve students' oral expression ability but also enhance their language application ability.

Additionally, promoting the use of language in real contexts is key to improving the language learning experience. Teachers can introduce authentic language materials such as news reports, movie clips, etc. so that students can feel the charm and practicality of language in real situations. At the same time, teachers can create real-life communication opportunities for students by organizing campus activities, community services, etc., so that they can improve their language application ability in practice.

4.   Suggestions

4.1.   Language Input and Interaction

Providing diverse and comprehensible language input is crucial for supporting language acquisition. Teachers should employ a variety of discourse strategies, such as simplified language, visuals, and multimedia resources, to cater to different learning styles and proficiency levels. This ensures that students receive meaningful input that meets their language development needs, promoting understanding and engagement in the classroom.

The teacher's use of the "eliciting students' knowledge" discourse strategy helps students use academic vocabulary correctly, while the "prompting attention phenomenon" strategy may facilitate the use of everyday language [9]. Fostering interactive discourse patterns encourages student participation and engagement.

Incorporating communicative activities, group discussions, and role-plays promotes meaningful language use and interaction among students. Interactive discourse not only enhances language proficiency but also cultivates communication skills and fosters a supportive learning environment where students feel empowered to express themselves in the target language.

4.2.   Feedback and Authenticity

Establishing effective feedback mechanisms is crucial for supporting language development. Providing timely and constructive feedback on students' language production helps to reinforce accurate language use and address areas for improvement. Offering specific praise for correct language usage and gentle correction for errors contributes to a supportive learning environment that promotes both language accuracy and fluency. Liu, Xinyu further emphasizes the significance of utilizing different feedback languages for various objects when providing classroom feedback. This requires teachers to possess a profound understanding of each student, meticulously observe their performance in class, and acknowledge the individual differences among them. Such a personalized approach to feedback language is crucial for effective communication and support in the classroom setting [10].

Integrating authentic language materials into classroom discourse enriches the overall language-learning experience. By incorporating real-world texts, videos, and audio recordings, students are exposed to natural language usage and cultural contexts, which in turn enhances their language skills and cultural competence. Encouraging engagement with authentic materials fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation of the target language.

The foreign language teacher should act as the leader, participant, and supporter of the class. Simultaneously, it is essential to have a deep understanding of the intricate interactive relationship between discourse, interaction, and thinking. This understanding will enable the implementation of classroom teaching through timely and effective discourse strategies while consciously guiding students into deeper and broader thinking activities [11].

4.3.   Interest Development and Emotional Attention

Interest is the most effective teacher, as it creates a learning environment that closely resembles real life and effectively stimulates students' interest to achieve teaching goals. In the context of English language instruction, educators should prioritize establishing a harmonious classroom atmosphere and enhancing students' enthusiasm for learning through various classroom activities [12].

Emotional factors play a crucial role in second language acquisition. Teachers need to establish a strong rapport with their students, attentively consider each student's psychological well-being, and tailor their teaching methods to suit individual aptitudes. Unlike first language acquisition, the process

of learning a second language necessitates a relaxed and enjoyable environment. Only when students have complete trust in their teachers can they freely engage in English communication. Increased communication fosters greater trust, leading to improved learning outcomes and creating a positive feedback loop over time [13].

Furthermore, students benefit more from praise and encouragement than criticism. Therefore, teachers must provide positive reinforcement and alleviate any anxiety or tension experienced by their students.

4.4. Cultural Sensitivity and Professional Development

Being culturally sensitive in classroom discourse is essential for establishing an inclusive learning environment. Recognizing and honoring cultural differences in communication styles and norms fosters mutual understanding and respect among students. Creating a setting where diverse perspectives are valued promotes meaningful interaction and language acquisition.

Balancing teacher-led instruction with student-centered activities is crucial for maximizing language learning outcomes. Minimizing teacher talk and providing ample opportunities for student participation and interaction encourages active engagement and language production. Integrating technology and offering ongoing professional development opportunities further enhances discourse strategies, supporting educators in delivering high-quality language learning experiences for their students.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of teacher classroom discourse and its impact on second language acquisition (SLA) provides significant insights into language education practices and pedagogy. The social context of globalization and multiculturalism has increased the importance of language diversity and proficiency, making SLA a crucial skill for individuals navigating the globalized workforce. Within this framework, understanding the role of teachers and their discourse strategies in shaping students' language learning processes is essential.

The relationship between teacher-classroom discourse and SLA highlights the significance of effective language input, interaction, and feedback in promoting students' language acquisition outcomes. Through various discourse strategies such as scaffolding, recasting, and authentic language use, teachers can create dynamic and engaging learning environments that facilitate language learning and enhance students' overall language proficiency.

However, current issues in teacher classroom discourse such as monotonous discourse, lack of interaction, and ineffective feedback present challenges to optimizing SLA outcomes. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach that prioritizes student-centered communicative language teaching practices while emphasizing cultural sensitivity, technology integration, and professional development for educators.

Insights into the rational use of discourse strategies offer practical guidance for educators seeking to improve SLA quality. By providing varied input, fostering interactive discourse, and integrating authentic language use educators can create rich language learning environments that optimize SLA outcomes and promote students' linguistic proficiency fluency, and cultural competence.

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