



Research Paper

Stepping into Classroom Dialogical Interaction for More Revolutionized Instruction

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ABSTRACT:With the recent advent of interactive approaches to English language teaching (ELT), researchers' concerns have become more directed than ever towards the various strategies whereby to modernize instruction, namely the one related to the teaching and learning of English as a Foreign language (EFL). These strategies embed the interactive components that are in turn propelled by the principle of dialogy, being a major catalyst for teacher-student and student-student classroom interactions (CIs). The aim of this paper is to emphasize today's need for an urgent shift to more revolutionized instruction by promoting classroom dialogical interaction.

KEY WORDS:ELT, EFL, strategies, interactive, dialogy, CIs, revolutionized, instruction

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I. INTRODUCTION

Encouraging students to be 21st century learners has recently become the pursuit of today's educators, linguists, and applied linguists (Crouse, 2013). This pursuit is bound by certain pre-requisites that both the teacher and the learner should beware of like abiding by certain instructive strategies that innovate both the teaching and learning processes. Such strategies are based on classroom interaction. Once applied in the classroom setting, it could entail dialogy-based strategies that put both the teacher and the learner on equal footing with each other. This is backed up by Brown's (1998) principle of empathy. This principle advocates that interactive strategies would foster a dynamic and unique relationship between classroom participants, which goes beyond classroom interaction to dialogical instruction.

1. What is classroom interaction (CI)?

1.1. CI as the quintessence of today's education

Being propelled by the recent interactive approach to English language teaching and learning, CI has become the quintessence of classroom communication and one of its basic pillars and catalysts. It has long been at the heart of the educational process be it elementary, secondary, or tertiary (Choudhury, 2005; Bonavetti, 2015). It is about engaging students in lively discussions with their teachers, vivid conversations with their peers, and fruitful interrogations with the whole class. Teacher-student, student-student, and student-teacher interactions converge towards shaping the overall teaching and learning experience. Besides, CI is "a productive teaching technique" (Yu, 2008, p. 49) for managing language learning. More, Yu (2008) stresses that CI is based on the important notion of collaborative dialogue. It proves to be based on the amalgam of the verbal, non-verbal, and social.

1.2. Verbal, non-verbal, and social interactions

1.2.1. Verbal interaction

One of the basic pillars of classroom communication is verbal interaction, which can equally be labeled verbal communication (Bonavetti, 2015). The latter involves the transmission of the message via the spoken channel. It is a way whereby to express one's thoughts, feelings, and opinions in the form of speeches, discussions, presentations, and conversations. In the classroom setting, verbal interaction shapes teachers' and students' patterns and exchanges during the course per se and while performing activities (Csomay, 2007). Moreover, verbal interaction has become a powerful strategy that the 21st century teachers tend to use to empower their instruction and ensure better student achievement. Indeed, verbal interaction patterns can keep students motivated and encourage them to develop different types of skills which they require in the shorter and longer runs (Ben-Noun, 2015).

1.2.2. Non-verbal interaction

Non-verbal interaction complements the verbal one in the sense that it supports it with the use of wordless cues. Hong-li (2011) underpins that this type of interaction is a system that combines both verbal and non-verbal cues which reflect the emotional and attitudinal behavior of participants in CI. In the classroom setting, sharing these cues goes on par with the oral mode. They can be illustrated through eye contact, gestures, posture, pitch of the voice, hence the use of both visible and audible phenomena (Birjandi & Nushi, 2010). According to Birjandi & Nushi (2010), three core functions shape non-verbal interaction: cognitive, emotional, and organizational. The first function emphasizes the inter-relationship between communication and TL acquisition. The second function translates the amalgam of both verbal and nonverbal messages for better instruction. As far as the third function is concerned, it underlines the role of non-verbal communication in classroom management.

1.2.3. Social interaction

Verbal and non-verbal interactions cannot take place and shape without anchoring them in their social context. The latter entails the amalgam of both components in addition to social interaction that coexists with both learning and development, thence learning and achievement (Vygotsky, 1978). The result is embracing the *zone of proximal development (ZPD)*. Vygotsky (1978) views that reaching ZPD is bound by the knowledge of what is learned with and what is learned without the help of the teacher. Therefore, ZPD limits the interval between dependent and independent learning, both of which could mirror the extent of social interaction applied in a given classroom-based setting. This includes the amount of talk exchanged between teachers and students as well as among students themselves, the scope of collaboration and interaction occurring between these participants (Yu, 2008), and the extent of student empowerment for more autonomous learning and dialogical teaching.

II. WHAT IS DIALOGICAL INSTRUCTION?

2.1. Dialogism, interactionism, contextualism, and constructionism

The theory of dialogism is based on the assumption that human communication is a give-and-take between its participants (Linell, 2003). It is an amalgam of "theoretical and epistemological assumptions about human action, communication and cognition" (Linell, 2003, p. 2). By the same token, Linell (2003) emphasizes that dialogism is closely tied to interactionism. The latter concept invokes the interdependence between the self and the other in the interactive discourse that is mutually exchanged between two or more parties. For sure, interactions are a crucial component of discourse. Being equally context-dependent, interactions blur the divide between interactionism and contextualism (Ibid). Since discourse is bound by the setting in which it occurs, "context is extensively dealt with as a social background for discourse" (Van Dijk, 2008, p. vi). From this angle, it is worth highlighting the role of context in interpreting different types of discourse, hence in knowledge construction and meaning negotiation. This relates dialogism to constructionism. Besides, "communication is not a transfer of ready-made thoughts. Knowledge is largely communicatively constructed" (Linell, 2003, p. 3).

2.2. Dialogism and dialogue

Dialogism provides meaning negotiation and construction with a dialogical dimension that is based on the use of dialogue. "Meaning is dialogically constituted, made in dialogue (cognition and communication), with reference to the world and against the background of the world, which is then dialogically appropriated and dialogically recognised" (Linell, 2003, p. 3). The use of dialogue in the classroom is one of the basic parameters for channeling classroom spoken discourse and funneling it through the face-to-face (F-t-F) practice of the target language (TL). The F-t-F mode is the lead mode in the dialogism applied to the classroom setting, hence in dialogical instruction. It follows that dialogical instruction is a F-t-F instruction. The latter has been so far connected to traditional classroom teaching, as opposed to online course delivery (Simon et al, 2013). Besides, Traditional classroom teaching focuses on a number of elements where learning is conducted in a synchronous environment. The instructor and the students must be in the same place at the same time in order to derive motivation and instruction from the teacher as well as from the other students. (Simon et al, 2013, p. 108)

Pursuing the same threads of thoughts, Simon et al (2013) maintain that it is such a traditional learning environment that pushes instructors "to identify the needs of students and motivate them on an individual basis". However, there are certain avenues that could be applied to give the term "traditional" a more positive alternative. Such avenues converge towards the interactive, hence the dialogical perspective.

III. STEPPING INTO DIALOGICAL INSTRUCTION

3.1. The learning environment

Dialogical instruction is bound by the learning environment in which it can take place. According to Kataoka (2010), the quicker the shift to sociopetal setting is, the more CIs is ensured. Sociopetal setting is where

the physical configuration of the classroom allows students and teachers to F-t-F each other. It is suggested as a better alternative to sociopetal setting where students sit into rows facing the teacher's desk. Unlike sociopetal setting, sociofugal setting conveys a traditional mode of instruction that is teacher-centered. Furthermore, the more students are relaxed in their classrooms, the more their feelings are released, hence the more their interactional patterns are shaped. This stance is advocated by Cordall (2014) who relates the spread of a positive learning environment to learners' successful achievement. Such an environment is both physically and emotionally appropriate for the emergence of a learner-based instruction.

3.2. Learner-based instruction

Recently, educational circles have directed attention to the humanistic approaches to ELT (Prabhavathy&Mahalakshmi, 2016; Derobertis& Bland, 2017). The emergence of the Humanist Psychology started since the 1950s. Its main pioneers were Abraham Maslow in 1970 and Carl Rogers in 1964. It converges towards prioritizing the human qualities of well-being, which could ensure better development of the self. Prabhavathy&Mahalakshmi (2016) as well as Derobertis& Bland (2017) confirm that these positive qualities are those that can pave the way for human creativity, and the growth of the human potential. "The term humanistic describes learning approaches that assert the central role of the 'whole person' in the learning process" (Prabhavathy&Mahalakshmi, 2016, p. 5). Since the emergence of the humanistic perspective, the concepts of self-direction, self-regulation, and self-help have been steadily booming along with the rise of the notion of counseling in ELT. The affective and social components have become at the core of the teaching and learning processes. Only through them could learners' engagement be fulfilled. In the meantime, innovative pedagogical and methodological practices have related more than ever to the application of humanism in instruction (Prabhavathy&Mahalakshmi, 2016; Derobertis& Bland, 2017). Humanism advocates the learner's empowerment. In other words, it gives the learner more power in the classroom. "Empowerment as a term has been used in educational literature since the early 1980s" (Sullivan, 2002, p.1). Empowerment entails involvement and engagement. It also means that students are responsible for their own decision-making and academic achievement. Partnership is a key pre-requisite in student empowerment. In other words, both teachers and students represent main partners in the classroom. Teachers can provide students with a leeway to act, react, and to try new learning processes, strategies, and techniques by themselves. Needless to say, student-led instruction, based on the important concept of student empowerment, represents one of the current visions of the 21st century learner (Sullivan, 2002; Crouse, 2013).

IV. REVOLUTIONIZING INSTRUCTION

4.1. The need for dialogical interaction analysis

Dialogical analysis is based on intersubjectivity which can be defined as the psychological relation that binds two people in a given setting (Gillespie & Cornish, 2010). Methodologically speaking, it is meant to diagnose the utterances, patterns, and actions produced by classroom partners; notably, those having interactive and communicative significance. This dialogical conception of interaction relates between not only partners but also between partners and the space in which they function (Grossen, 2010). Thus, it could be deduced that dialogical interaction analysis is about involving the self and the other, who can ask a myriad of questions targeting reflection upon what each partner thinks about themselves, the roles they assume, the register and the discourse type they use, the communicative acts they perform, the alternatives for what they could say. Therefore, dialogical analysis invites both the teacher and the learner to rethink their own practices before rethinking the practices of the others. It acknowledges the importance of the voice and partakes in guiding it. As such, dialogical analysis merges both discourse analysis and conversation analysis by targeting what partners speak and achieve through their talk. It even goes beyond them by seeking better comprehension of communication beyond the border of the self, hence the inculcation of the intersocial, interrelational, hence intersubjective components (Gillespie & Cornish, 2010). Merely, it is about recognizing not only the voice but equally multivoicedness.

4.2. The need to reconceptualize instruction

Revolutionizing instruction requires reconceptualizing it. To this effect, efforts are to be directed towards more application of innovative pedagogies that are more based on humanism (Prabhavathy& Mahalakshmi, 2016; Derobertis & Bland, 2017). The take off starts from the classroom where learning should become a more pleasurable experience for the learner and the teacher alike (Cordall, 2014). It is the place where roles can be swapped via meaningful dialogism and tolerated multivoicedness. The latter is the outcome of classroom-based discursive interactions occurring between teachers and students as well as among students themselves (Mortimer, 1998). Reconceptualizing education entails thinking and rethinking classroom-based practices which embed more dichotomies such as the teacher-student and the researcher-educator as well as the thinker-practitioner. Needless to say, such dichotomies need the positive presence of the self and the other,

hence reshaping power relations in favor of more recognition of student empowerment (Reeves, 2008). The latter can occur by relinquishing teacher control to create more responsible learners who can take ownership of their classes. In brief, empowerment is based on acknowledging plurality which is in turn necessary in the process of revolutionizing education.

V. CONCLUSION

Stepping into dialogic instruction requires the inculcation of dialogical interaction. The latter is based on the advancement of the humanistic approach to language teaching and learning and humanistic strategies in the classroom. Such strategies should prioritize the human component. Turns, teacher-student and student-student roles, power relations, interactive patterns, and conversational exchanges complement each other to draw a cogent picture about the dialogic classroom where reshaping practices and rethinking methodologies is important to revolutionize instruction and export more original ideas for better achievement.

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