Analyzing Classroom Discourse in an EFL Situation:
Towards Critical Classroom Discourse Analysis

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Abstract: Classroom interaction analysis requires a variety of systematic approaches to interpret the classroom discourse in its unique socio-educational context. Investigating classroom interaction based on sole reliance on quantitative techniques could be problematic, since they conceal more than they reveal of the intricacies of classroom interaction. This qualitative study aimed at analyzing classroom discourse from two perspectives. First Grice's Cooperative Principles in 1975 was used to examine maxim observance in different genders by 22 EFL learners. Learners were required to listen to some audio materials and to discuss the topics through presenting their own perspectives. They were asked to make their arguments clear, brief, relevant and sincere. Transcriptions of classroom interactions were put into a qualitatively, critical interpretation of males and females' adherence to or flouting of four maxims. Results indicated limitations in applying these descriptions in revealing the hidden motivations in interactions between genders. Thus, researchers utilized Critical Classroom Discourse Analysis framework (CCDA) proposed by Kumaravadivelu in 1999 which draws on Poststructuralism and postcolonialism concepts of discourse to examine classroom interaction in terms of power/knowledge and dominance/resistance.

Key words: Critical classroom discourse analysis, Gricean maxims, gender issues, voice gaining, genders, Iran

INTRODUCTION

Neither Aristotelian nor Russellian rules give the exact logic of any expression of ordinary language for ordinary language has no exact logic (Strawson, 1950). Construction and reconstruction of meaning is at the very heart of communication. Apparently, interlocutors do not have any problem in grasping implicit or intended meaning of communication. How could we account for this sophisticated fact? There are various models of classroom interaction/discourse analysis such as speech act theory, interactional sociolinguistics, conversation analysis, variation analysis, pragmatics and ethnography of communication (Schiffrin, 1994).

These models draw on the premises of several disciplines of linguistics, anthropology, sociology and social psychology to offer appropriate and systematic tools for observing, analyzing, understanding and critiquing classroom aims, events and communication. Although, each approach emphasizes different aspects of language use, they all view language as a social interaction which is shaped by social contexts. This study follows two goals; the first aim is to enhance the teacher's confidence in using their classroom as a site of research to improve their knowledge and skills. Taking into account the importance of classroom research which urges the teachers to improve their teaching performance through research; classroom discourse analysis could be a viable tool that not only increases the learning opportunities (through monitoring input/output) but also it will help the teacher to theorize their own practice through self-reflection and reassessment of their situated knowledge.

The second goal of this study is to analyze the differences in the discourse of males and females from perspectives of a conventional model; Grice cooperative principles and a critical model; Critical classroom discourse analysis.

Although, many scholars do not indicate any place for Gricean pragmatics in ELT, this communication theory of language use could arguably be of highly valuable tool for reflective teachers who do not deal with language as a system or product per se but rather with the interrelationship between language form, messages and users (Spencer-Oatey and Zegarac, 2002). The study deals with an overview of Grice (1975)'s Cooperative Principles and its application to analyze the relationship between learners' gender and their adherence to or violation of

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maxims in classroom interaction. Transcriptions of classroom interaction of 22 EFL learners (12 females, 10 males) studying at semester eight of university will be analyzed. Later we discus that this approach is quite limited since, it was unidimensional (from observer's prespective) and only provided us with a fragmented picture of classroom reality without any clue about the hidden motivations of dealing with maxims. Description of this type then sees dominant discourse conventions as natural (instead of naturalized product of power relations) and perpetuates the unjust status quo that marginalizes less powerful groups.

Thus, researchers utilized another approach called Critical Classroom Discourse Analysis (CCDA) which is mainly concerned with critiquing existing educational institutions and practices and subsequently transforming both education and society (Benesch, 2001; Giroux, 1988; Pennycook, 2001). This model is more qualitative, interpretive and ethnographic than Grice's prescriptive, quantitative model with predetermined categories. This study revealed how this model contributed to learners in gaining critical awareness about their gender/identity and helped the teacher to reconceptualize her cognition as well as practice.

Gricean's theory of conversation: Collision of jets in Teffron was attributed to the lack of shared meaning between pilot and controller! To learn a language is to learn how to communicate in that language which is a dynamic, interactive and irreversible act. In his remarkable study of Logic and Conversation in 1975, Grice suggested that there are certain constraints that govern conversation and limit the interlocutors as to what they can say and infer. Grice called the overriding principles of conversation as cooperative principles which stipulates: Make your conversational contribution such as is required at the stage at which it occurs by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. He lists four maxims that follow from the cooperative principle.

Quantity: Make your contribution as informative as is required. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required (Do not be loquacious).

Quality: Do not say what you believe to be false or for which you lack adequate evidence (Do not be phony).

Relation: Be relevant (Do not be rambler).

Manner: Avoid obscurity of expression; avoid ambiguity; be brief be orderly (Do not be opaque).

Adherence to the maxims is rational, though not prescribed because it ensures that the interlocutors pursue the shared goal most efficiently. But talk would be extremely tedious if you just observe the maxims. Grice (1989) proposed that speakers may frequently fail to observe any of above conversational maxims that may lead to violation, opting out, infringing and flouting. Violation is a sort of breakdown in communication due to irrelevant, unclear or insufficient information to misinform or mislead your interlocutor (Quietly and unostentatiously, no implicature). Clashing is conflict between maxims, i.e., to avoid violating the maxim of quality, you violate the maxim of quantity. Flouting is when the speaker chose to blatantly and deliberately not observe a maxim.

Through flouting speaker seeks to prompt the hearer to look for a meaning which is different from or in addition to the expressed meaning called conversational implicature.

Toward critical classroom discourse analysis: Dissatisfied with previous models of classroom interaction analysis, Kumaravadivelu (1999) criticized classroom interaction analysis in terms of their definition, scope and method. In terms of discourse definition, he believed if discourse can be seen as a three-dimensional construct consisting of a (Socio) linguistic dimension, a sociocultural dimension and a sociopolitical dimension then previous classroom discourse analysts may be considered to be involved with the first, interested in the second and indifferent to the third.

As for scope, classroom is treated as a self-contained minisociety insulated and isolated from the outside world rather than as an integral part of the larger society where the reproduction of many forms of domination and resistance based on such factors as class, gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, language and sexual orientation is almost a daily occurrence. Meanwhile, preferred method of classroom discourse analysts, micro-ethnography has enabled them to study crucial classroom issues such as input and interaction, form and function, topics and tasks, questions and corrections and the way they all relate to each other. Critical Classroom Discourse Analysis (CCDA) on the other hand, assumes that classroom reality is socially constructed, politically motivated and historically determined. It is mainly concerned with Foucault (1972)'s view of discourse that empowers and disempowers, privileges and marginalizes. As practitioners, researchers have to encourage the learners to deconstruct dominant discourses as well as counter-discourses by posing questions at the boundaries of ideology, power, knowledge, class, race

and gender (Kumaravadivelu, 1999). The major methods of data collection in CCDA are: Gathering of spoken and written, audio and video data from multiple sources, including interactional episodes, participant observation and interviews and discussions with participants at different times and levels or in Geertz (1973)'s term thick description and thick explanation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants: This study is conducted with 22 EFL learners, 12 females and 10 males, studying at semester 8 of English Translation at Technology University of Isfahan, Iran. Learners' level of proficiency was mainly assessed as upper-intermediate and advanced based on an informal interview conducted at the beginning of the course by teacher. Most of the learners admitted that they had exposure to other sources at the time of the study; e.g., some worked as translators in companies, other were involved in teaching in institutions or even providing movie subscription.

Objectives: Allwright (1980) and Van Lier (1988) advocated an ethnographically interpretive approach toward classroom discourse analysis which contextualizes the actions and contributions of participants in the classroom.

Meanwhile, they asked for multiple perspectives of participants, e.g., the researchers, the teachers and the learners in collection and interpretation of data. The major goals of this study were to evaluate the usefulness/effectiveness of classroom discourse/ interaction analysis models; Grice maxims and critical classroom discourse analysis in gaining an understanding over the conversations' logic in the classroom between different genders, to see how different genders may gain awareness over their identity and use their voice to express themselves in their own languages. It is worthy to note that since, the mere description might provide us just with a superficial and fragmented picture of the classroom talk, to unveil the underlying structures, motivations, agendas and voices, researchers used two approaches proposed by Grice (1975) and Kumaravadivelu (1999) as complementary.

Research questions:
- Is there any relationship between maxims' observance and genders?
- Do different genders have different motivations for maxims violation?
- Do different learners gain awareness over their identity/gender through language?

Procedure: The class was held once a week >4 months (totally 18 sessions). Each session lasted 100 min. The course title was oral interpretation and the learners were supposed to gain an acceptable level of proficiency in simultaneous translation both from L_1-L_2 and vice versa. There was no fixed syllabus (though the coverage of the course required us to use some mandatory materials) thus, learners were asked to bring some materials which were utilized beside mandatory ones. Audio/video materials received more positive reaction due to its multi-media, dynamic nature.

Researchers have selected a host of topics which seemed to be related to the socio-cultural context and educational themes of the learners. A set five comprehension questions (mainly open-ended), designed to be applied in small groups was given to the learners which gave a sense of authenticity encouraged the learners to engage in more discussion activity. We advised the learners to support a main idea (maxim of relation) to elaborate (maxim of quality) and to create well-formed utterance through clear and ordered conversation (maxim of manner). During their interaction; learners were told that their performance would be assessed on the basis of 4 principles; beravity, orderdness, clarity and relevance.

Data analysis: Data were gathered from learners' performance on Oral Interpretation course. About 16 sessions of classroom interaction were recorded. Later, data extracts were selectively and purposefully transcribed and examined in detail. Data were triangulated from three sources, in-depth observation by teacher in the classroom; audio-taping of classroom interaction and reflective analysis of field notes gathered by teacher (Table 1). Through transcription of interaction; we counted the number of violations. The results just indicated that males violated the maxims quite more frequently than females. There may be several suggestions to justify these results such as cultural schemata, different social roles, gender issues, various linguistic repertoires and so on. But it is not exactly clear what propelled different genders to violate maxims. Did they have the same motivations or reasons to violate or adhere to maxims at particular times or during particular discussions?

What we need is a meaningful and true understanding of the sociocultural aspects of maxim observance/violation which can not be achieved just through the surface-level features of conversational exchange between genders rather we have to appraise the competing and complex world of discourses that exist in

Table 1: Obsetrvation of teachers in the classroom

Violation	Quantity	Quality	Manner	Relation
Female	14	8	3	12
Male	22	12	25	20

the classroom. To get a clue over these issues, we used another approach, Critical classroom discourse analysis, to analyze data more in depth.

Critical qualitative data analysis
Example:
A1: Flouting quantity maxim: Dominance
S1: Anyway, yeah...anyway, I told it before see... I just wanted to explain what you said
S2: I just said....
S1: No, no, wait... am sure that your argument was not logical. It was only...
S2: You try....
S1: See...and then suddenly there was a change, changes in your topic... see... I say...

Guess genders of S_1 and S_2!

Example:
C2 : Flouting manner maxim: Power
T   : Are you fully prepared today, Armin?
MS : You know; I had a very bad headache!!

Example:
C3 : Flouting manner maxim: Power
T   : Mr. Adeli, you were supposed to watch movie like all your classmates
MS : Well if you are talking about them (Females), they have more empty rooms of mind! We have better things to think about!!! (Laughter)

Example:
D: Social power distribution
2nd session: Male: The way or highway
12th session: Female: Get use to it because you can not get over it
Males: More competitive, lecturer, take the floor, exclusive
Females: More sympathic, modesty, agreement

Males being socially more powerful are able to define the conditions that prevail in a given social situation including the right to flout a conversational maxim. Flouting of Grice maxims included not providing all information required using derogative terms being deliberately vague providing conflicting stories giving unnecessary background information and offering

confused and/or misleading accounts. They deliberately exploit the maxims for deriding and showing their dissatisfaction without directly going into the danger of confrontation. They tended to be more competitive, lecturer take the floor, exclusive. When they were in power they tend to use more male strategies being less indirect, fewer politeness and more negative face. But after several sessions; the females under certain adverse circumstances begun to manipulate and subvert the males' argument. About four sessions were devoted to gender issues during which we examined the sociocultural conditions and inequalities that different genders may encounter in their own society. We admit that it might take more time to deal with this issue but we hope that students become aware that most of the expectation and limitations for females and males are socially constructed which should not be treated as statue-quo. Rather we must require the learners to challenge or transform these established traditional sex roles.

Critical reflections on Grice theory: The cooperative principles can be used as the cornerstone of investigating the ground-rules of classroom discourse to gain an insight over social interaction. But there are several criticisms which shed doubts on Grice theory both theory-wise and practice-wise. Blow some of these challenging arguments are presented:

Rationality: On what basis the maxims are grounded? What is the theoretical justification behind Gricean taxonomy? In his early research on CP, Grice acknowledged that his classification was a replication of Kant theory of declarative clause taxonomy; Relevance, Quality, Quantity and Modality. Then Grice classification is completely borrowed from a philosophical and pre-linguistics theory, ambitiously and directly transferred to the domain of discourse description without any reformulation or adjustment.

Do the maxims' definitions precisely specify their concrete nature or they are just some general, vague rules that lead to bafflement instead of enlightenment? For maxim of quantity stipulates: be as informative as required; what determines the exact degree of informativeness? Common-sense knowledge? Intuition? or only a loose subjective judgment? Another problem as sensibly alluded by Levinson (1983) is overlap among maxims, e.g., it is not possible to determine whether irony is a flouting of quality or relevance maxim! Irony seems to flout both of them simultaneously and maybe maxim of manner too! Sperber and Wilson (1989)'s Relevance theory seems to provide more delicate and rational definition for relevance rather than its arch-creator.

Anarchy rules vs. maxims: Language acts that run counter to Grice's Maxims are called violations. What if in a particular culture, violations are not at all violations rather they are norms instead of maxims. Does the explanatory power of theory evaporate and the theory itself turns out to be either a mere abstract conceptualization or a groundless prescription for language use?

Tri-perspective vs. uni-perspective: Since, Grice treated discourse just as an utterance or a talk exchange without any focus on social context, devising a meta-description of discourse which deals with discourse as a combination of individual utterance, social interaction and social context seems to be an inextricable constituent of explication of Gricean maxims in discourse analysis (e.g., a combination of Goffman (1967) Face-wants and Brown and Levinson (1987)'s theory. This meta-analysis can also draw a rejection line on unilateral exploitation of Grice maxims that led to several objections; e.g., Tannen (1986)'s argument that since, people are not always cooperative, CP is inaccurate). If two theories α and β are expected to explain a phenomenon γ and both of them do so, the simpler explanation with the minimum assumptions would be accepted. Relevance theory set pose by Sperber and Wilson (1989) strives to lag Grice CP behind by adhering to this economy principle.

Defeasibility: Grice made a distinction among different pragmatic inference such as; presupposition, entailment, illocutionary force and CP in stark contrast to Kleifgen (1990)'s objection to social context view of discourse as inevitably incomplete, we may focus on what counts as cooperation; e.g., power status between teacher and learners. This flexible, context-dependent view of CP can be applied to any discursive setting. Gazdar (1980) and Hirschberg (1985) pointed out that maxims can not be directly transplanted to empirical work such as classroom discourse analysis, teacher research. Wierzbicka (1992) criticizes this theory due to its endeavor for universality and ethnocentricity. Deciding over adherence, observing or violation is perceived differently cross-culturally. They are culture-bound.

However, there is apparently no consistent model of the how CP should be applied in describing across different discourse genres; e.g., classroom discourse, courtroom discourse and friendly-talk each reveals certain features, quite peculiar to their own genres.

According to Grice to determine what was said one has to disambiguate the sentence (i.e., to select one of its possible readings) and assign referents to all referential expressions. Grice claimed that this is everything one has

to do. Now-a-days many researchers assume that the gap between the meaning of the sentence and what is said is wider than Grice suggested. In many cases the under determination is not limited to reference-assignment and disambiguation. For example, what is said with the bat is too big? A bat is too big for something. If one does not know what that something is one does not understand what is said with an utterance of this sentence. Hence, many researchers have tried to find new criteria to distinguish between what was said and what was implicated.

CONCLUSION

In stark contrast to the claims that Gricean pragmatics as intrinsically interesting but of little practical adaptability to the language teaching context, we aimed to apply the Grice theory to analyze the relationship between learners' gender and their adherence to or violation of maxims in classroom interaction. Meanwhile, researchers tried to incorporate a framework called Critical classroom discourse analysis which is mainly informed by poststructural and postcolonial thoughts on discourse; springing a critical look at the discourses and counter-discourses that shape and reshape practices in ESOL classrooms (Kumaravadivelu, 1999).

Classroom interaction of an oral interpretation course with 22 EFL learners (12 females, 10 males) studying at semester eight of translation major was critically analyzed through Grice and Kumaravadivelu framework. The former framework is more quantitative and descriptive while the latter is more qualitative and interpretive. The ratio of maxim violation by two genders was analyzed through Grice principles and the interpretation of the results to reveal the hidden motivations behind maxim violation was examined through CCDA.

This emancipatory study considered learners as active participants and intellectuals who use their understanding for creating new perspectives and empowerment rather than passive digestive of received knowledge. Although, 22 learners and 16 week semester could not be considered a perfect reliable sample from which the results can be generalized the main goal of this study is to raise the critical-consciousness of learners reflect upon taken for granted gender issues that may be overtly neglected through foreign language learning.

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