Discourse Analytical Study of Teachers' Language and Gender with Specific Reference to EFL Classroom in Iraq

Muna Mohammed Abbas
Babylon University/College of Engineering

1. Introduction

We are surrounded by gender from the time we are very small. Gender is embedded so thoroughly in our institutions, our actions, our beliefs and our desires that it appears to us to be completely natural. The definition of males and females, people's understanding of themselves and others as male and female is ultimately social. Gender is a learned behaviour which is both taught and enforced, and leading to the conclusion that gender is collaborative in the sense that it connects individuals to the social order.

As the need being increased to study in depth the teacher's role, the present study is conducted in order to understand and explore the relationship between language and gender by investigating the differences and the similarities in the discourse of male and female teachers who teach English as a foreign language, in Department of English at the College of Education\ University of Babylon. In particular, the discourse of teachers in the area of providing explicit instructions, questioning and feedback strategies were examined, as these are the primary components of teacher talk as defined by Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) IRF framework of analysis, the overall framework adopted in this study.

2. Sex versus Gender in Explaining Social Inequality

Sex refers to biological and cultural aspects of reproductive status, it is a biological determinant, while gender describes culture and identity carrying with it psychological and sociological implications. According to Graddol & Swann (1989), Simon de Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex* captures the essential characteristic of gender: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman". They (1989:3)also argue that gender is a socially rather than a biologically constructed attribute – people are not born with but rather learn the behaviours and attitudes appropriate to their sex. West & Zimmermann (1987:126-127) expound the view that gender "is a routine, methodical, and recurring accomplishment" and that it is "the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category". Taking over Austin's term 'performativity' from philosophy of language, Butler expands its meaning from speech acts to all social acts performed by men and women. She defines gender as:

> … the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a rigid regulatory frame which congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance of a " natural" kind of being.
>
> (Butler, 1999:33)

In summary, in the last two decades of gender studies, it has been made apparent that gender is a complex category, the unifying theme of which is the idea that gender, unlike sex, is a continuous variable (Graddol & Swann,1989: 8).Therefore, an individual can be more or

less 'feminine' or more or less 'masculine', depending on the context in which they are 'doing' gender. In the teaching situation, it is apparent that teachers are constantly renegotiating/reconstructing their roles in the context of the classroom through their teaching activities and discourse, performing their roles through particular discourse features. To take Coates (1998) example of woman who 'perform' various types of femininity, the current study looks at the specific context of the classroom and the teaching activity in particular, to determine the negotiation and performance of 'selves' through discourse.

3. Procedures and Limitations

The aim of this study is to investigate the discourse of male and female teachers in the context of the EFL classroom using gender as the overall construct. In particular, the discourse of teachers in the area of providing explicit instructions, questioning and feedback strategies were examined as these are the primary components of teacher talk as defined by Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) Initiation Response Feedback framework of analysis, the overall framework adopted in this study. As the aim of the research question is to describe *'what is going on'* in the classroom, in the natural setting, the adoption of a predominantly qualitative approach which focused on describing the patterns observed, seemed to be in keeping with the research question.
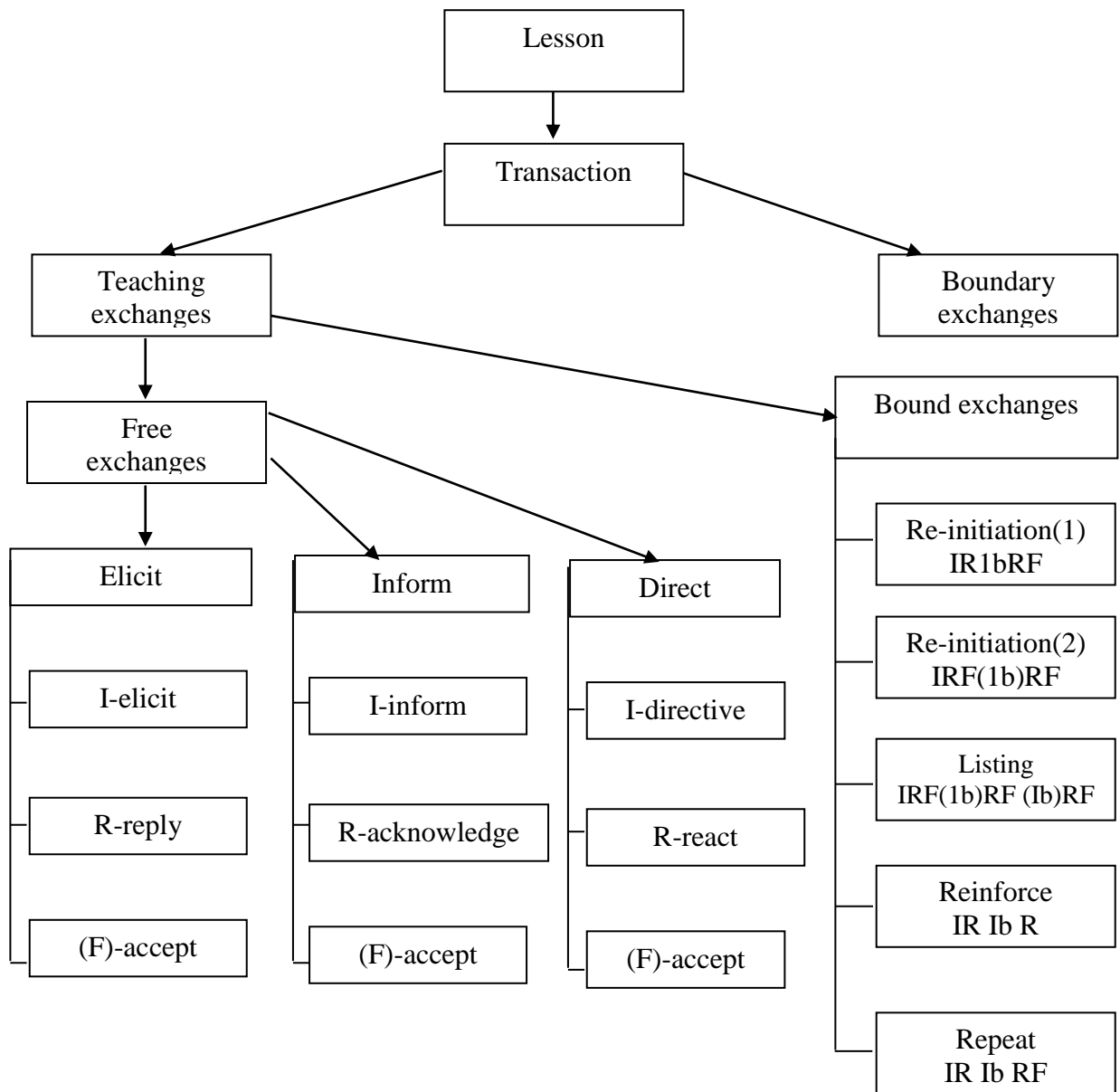
The objectives for this study are to explore and document teaching discourses in classrooms being taught by male and female teachers and to determine the extent to which gender plays a role in the classroom discourse of teachers. The classroom, as a community of practice, operates on the interactions having definite roles vis-à-vis each other.

The selected participants were teachers of English language at College of Education/Babylon University. In order to determine gender differentiates, (three males and three females are selected). To achieve the objectives of the present study, non-participant observation method is used. Non-participant observation occurs when the participant does not interact with the person(s) or events being observed. An observation schedule is drawn up for the two sets of observations. Each of the six participants being observed for three hours in two different classes. These observations are video-recorded, to allow the researcher access to both verbal and non-verbal elements. The latter is not for the purpose of analysis but to contextualize the lesson.Following the observations, the researcher proceeded to transcribe the lessons. The transcripts are a vital aspect of the qualitative research methodology, verbatim records of speech which show how classroom interaction develops as a dynamic phenomenon (Allwright & Bailey, 1991).

4. Discourse Analysis (DA)

Discourse analysis is the examination of language used by members of a speech community (Douglas, 2000), where both language form and language function are studied from spoken and written texts.'Discourse' refers to language 'beyond the sentence', with meaningful combinations of language units which serve various communicative purposes and perform various acts in various contexts (Georgakopoulou & Goutsos, 1997:65).DA, as a classroom research tradition, grew from a variety of disciplines and provided a foundation for research in applied linguistics and language pedagogy. It is important to note that this tradition began in L1 classroom settings, which then was adapted for the use in the foreign language classroom.Sinclair & Coulthard have identified eleven subcategorize of teaching exchanges, of which six are free exchanges and five are bound (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975; Coulthard 1992). A diagrammatic representation of the Sinclair & Coulthard model is set out in **Figure 1:**

Figure 1: Sinclair & Coulthard's IRF Model

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                        ┌─────────────┐
                        │   Lesson    │
                        └──────┬──────┘
                               │
                               ▼
                        ┌─────────────┐
                        │ Transaction │
                        └──────┬──────┘
             ┌─────────────────┴──────────────────┐
             ▼                                     ▼
      ┌──────────────┐                      ┌──────────────┐
      │   Teaching   │                      │   Boundary   │
      │  exchanges   │                      │  exchanges   │
      └──────┬───────┘                      └──────────────┘
             │         └──────────────┐
             ▼                        ▼
      ┌──────────────┐         ┌──────────────────┐
      │     Free     │         │ Bound exchanges  │
      │  exchanges   │         └────────┬─────────┘
      └──────────────┘
```

Elicit	Inform	Direct
I-elicit	I-inform	I-directive
R-reply	R-acknowledge	R-react
(F)-accept	(F)-accept	(F)-accept

Bound exchanges:
- Re-initiation(1) IR1bRF
- Re-initiation(2) IRF(1b)RF
- Listing IRF(1b)RF (Ib)RF
- Reinforce IR Ib R
- Repeat IR Ib RF

(Adapted from Farooq 1999:31)

The most important relevance of the DA model is that it is related to classroom interaction in an EFL setting, which by virtue of being a foreign language class, of necessity is rigid, where the traditional IRE/IRF cycle tends to be favoured by the students. As Nunan (1993:20) argues that the aim of discourse analysis is to study the purposes and functions of text-forming devices in the context that it occurs "with the aim of showing how the linguistic elements enable language users to communicate in context". Brazil also provides support for the use of the DA model in language classrooms, when he argues that the structured nature of classroom discourse is:

….the teacher knows what he or she wants to tell the class but chooses to do it by setting up situations in which they are steered- more or less into telling it themselves.

(1995:22)

Thus, the integrated approach of DA, as suggested by Seedhouse (2004) in order to capture the dynamism and fluidity of interactions may already be present in the DA approach.

5. Classroom Interaction

According to Tsui (2001:120), the term 'classroom interaction' refers to the interaction between the teacher and the students, as well as interactions between the students. Allwright (1980) views classroom interaction in terms of turns, topics and tasks, while Van Lier (1982;1988) observes that there are two dimensions to classroom interaction; the first dimension being the teacher's control of the topic (i.e. what is being talked about) and the second referring to activity (i.e. the way the topic is talked about). Based on these dimensions, Van Lier (1988:17) further identifies four basic types of classroom interaction. The first type is where the teacher does not control the topic or the activity. The second type is when the teacher controls the topic but not the activity, therefore providing information or exampling issues. The third type is where the teacher controls both the topic and the activity and finally where the teacher controls the activity but not the topic (teacher sets up small discussion groups with students able to nominate the topic for discussion).

While the above views of classroom interactions were considered, in the context of this study, classroom interaction is defined as the communication between the teacher and the students.

5.1 Instructional Strategies

In order to explore the gender variable, three main sub-categories of teachers' classroom discourse were examined qualitatively, through textual analysis and quantitatively through calculation of frequency of use. The following sub-categories were examined individually as follows:

1. Indirect instructions include the following:

- Use of pronouns in conjunction with modals as in the following constructions:
    1. *First person + verb*
    2. *Second person + verb*
    3. *First person +verb+ Second Person + verb*

2. Directive Instructions

- Imperatives : Verbs used to give firm commands, directions and instructions.
- Hortative: the phrase '*let's*' implies a sharing of power with the students unlike imperatives and statements of obligation, necessity and request which tend to make the power of the teacher quite explicit.

'Feminine' language has traditionally been seen as inclusive and sharing while 'masculine' language expresses dominance and priorities of the individual over the group (Holmes, 1995:187). For the study, the use of pronouns was chosen as a means of analyzing the truth of this claim in the discourse of EFL teachers. The use of the traditionally inclusive (and therefore 'feminine') *We* with the traditionally exclusive (and therefore 'masculine') *I* were compared. At the same time, the use of *You* was examined separately from the use of *I* as when the former was not used with the *'I'*. For example, in a sentence like '***You need to write this down***'

(*second person + verb*) it can be seen to indicate a student-centred, rather than a teacher-centred approach to teaching, i.e., the speaker is focused on the students' task, not on the importance of the teacher. However, when the teacher uses *I* in conjunction with You as in the sentence '*I want / would like you to write this down*', (*first person + verb+ second person+ verb*) there is emphasis on the speaker, while also clearly delineating the addressee.

The objective for investigating pronouns is that use of each of these person verbs implies a subtle shift in roles, relationships and expectations; in addition to which statements of obligations and necessity can also be determined through the use of modals. The use of the first person plural *we,* according to the principles of deixis, generally indicated common ground, building solidarity between teachers and students (Wales, 1996:60) while the use of the second person *you* serves to distance or separate the teacher from the students (Wales, 1996:3). In other contexts, the use of *you* can also be used to express teachers' expectations. For this study, as it has been carried in a country where English language is considered as a foreign language, it has been proposed that gender differences can be manifested in teachers' use of modality and pronouns integral aspects of the teachers' regulative register, as these also relate directly to the teachers' authority position, in those classes, which carries with it power. Thus, the researcher could then determine if the gender variable is overridden by male and female teachers' equal manifestation of power in the EFL classroom in Iraq.

Traditionally, 'feminine' language is seen as tentative, including more examples of face saving politeness strategies and as avoiding expressions of personal authority; the converse is true of 'masculine' language, which is seen as more direct and containing more face threatening acts that are bald on record (West, 1998:343). In order to test this linguistically, the use of directives (imperatives and hortatives), modals which indicate external compulsion on the speaker and modals which indicate internal compulsion or compulsion by force outside that of the speaker were compared. Therefore, the analysis investigates teachers' use of 'direct imperatives/ hortatives' versus their use of '*want*', '*would like*' versus '*need*' , '*must*' and '*have to/have got to*'.

Instructions, which are an instrumental aspect of the teacher's role as an organizer, are defined for the purposes of this study as the language used by teachers in setting up tasks and in telling students what they will be doing during the course of the lesson. This combines those definitions of 'instructions' as produced by Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) IRF structure and later revised in (1992) . The table below summarizes these patterns, according to gender, based on the frequency with which participants used these discourse features:

able 1: Summary of Instructional Discourse Patterns

Participant/ Discourse Pattern	Female A	Female B	Female C	Male A	Male B	Male C
First Person Singular + Modals:						
I want you to	11		10	6	3	8
I would like to		11	4	5	6	2
I'm going to			2	1		4
First Person Plural + Modals:						
We're going to	2	11	7	3	4	11
We'll	2	1		1	11	
Second Person + Modals:						
Need to			1		4	1
Have to/ Have got to	7	7	8	6	4	5
ust			3	3	2	3
Use of Let's			7	8	11	7
Imperatives	12	22	12	8	9	35

The Extracts below show the female usage of imperatives in their classroom:

Extract 1: Female Participant A: Use of Imperatives

       Give me some synonyms for a trim as a verb.

Extract 1: Male Participant A:

       Answer the following questions in your own words as far as possible/ **Name** two of the disadvantages of the dots system.

Extract 3: Female Participant B (Use of *we are going to + verb*)

       We are going to say the milk…**we** are going to say the book…**we** are going to say the books. And **I'd** like **you** to analyze **the** by giving the deep structure

5.2 Questions Strategies

In order to explore the gender variable, two broad types of questions are used; cognitive and procedural. The importance of the cognitive level of questions lies in the relationship the questions have to the subject matter and the students' and teachers' intents. Investigating these aspects allows the researcher to draw, meaningful conclusions from the data. The question classification systems had some limitations making it necessary for the researcher to move beyond the simplistic categorization of referential and display questions or open/closed questions. The key aspect of these classifications is dependent on the knowledge of the questioner with the definite assumption made that either the questioner knows or does not know the answer. Van Lier (1988:224) challenges the distinction between display and

referential questions from an ethnographic perspective suggesting that the most significant feature of instructional questions is their eliciting function.

Language research in classrooms which are more skills-based than content-based has to develop a classification system of questions that allows for cognitive aspects to be considered. Any analysis of questioning behaviour must also look both at the purposes of the teacher as well as the nature of the task. With some tasks, knowledge questions would better serve the teacher's objective than would application questions and vice versa. The following analysis will attempt therefore to look at the types of questions and how they relate to the teacher's objectives based on the teacher's discourse. In the analysis, a distinction is also made between the function of cognitive questions and procedural questions which are related to classroom procedures such as "Do you know what to do" (Richards and Lockhart, 1996:185-187).

Thus, the analysis framework for this section consists of an adaptation Bloom's Taxonomy with Richards and Lockhart's (1996) classification. Borich refers to Bloom's Taxonomy as "one of the best known systems for classifying questions" (2004:266).This is based on the rationale that this adopted model will allow a more comprehensive analysis to be made firstly because it will embrace the cognitive aspect of questions enabling the researcher to categorize asked of the questions the participants. Secondly, it would also enable the coverage of a different function of questions, that of classroom management which Richards & Lockhart (1996) have defined as procedural questions. **Table 2** provides a brief outline of the functions of these questions:

Table 2: Types of Questions and Functions

Type of Question	Function
Knowledge	To test recall and memory
Comprehension	To test understanding
Application	To test information transfer
Procedural	For clarification, organization of class

Questioning is an instrumental aspect of teacher behaviour in the classroom, with teachers spending between thirty-five to eighty percent of their instructional time on questions (Borich, 2004:184). This emphasizes the need to examine both the frequency and type of questions that teachers ask in the EFL classroom. In the analysis of the discourse used in questioning, one has to consider the type of thinking implicit in teacher questions and the cognitive challenges offered to the students through various questioning strategies. This in turn cannot be isolated from the task objectives. Thus the importance of questioning is how it helps the task to progress in addition to its intimate relationship with the objectives of the task or the lesson.

In addition, gender differences have been noted in male and female discourse in relation to questioning behaviour. For example, Fishman notes that "women ask more questions of any kind" (1983:85) while Holmes claims that females ask more 'facilitative' or 'supportive' questions and male tend to use more 'organizing' questions. Coates (1993:123) argues that in asymmetrical discourse, it is the powerful speakers that ask more questions. Therefore, the frequency and type of questioning strategies being adopted by the participants in this study is examined to determine the differences in male and female teachers discourse in relation to questioning.The participants' use of questioning type is summarized in **Table 3:**

Table 3: Summary of Questioning Discourse

Participant	Female A	Female B	Female C	Male A	Male B	Male C
Knowledge Questions	29	10	19	13	8	23
Comprehension Questions	6	17	19	13	21	5
Application Questions	3	13	5	10	21	5
Procedural Questions	5	25	16	11	23	20

For example, **Male B** uses application questions for the purpose of making the students think and comprehend the given topic. Each of the questions is explained by the teacher as he provides them with a brief discussion as in the following **Extract**:

Extract 4: Female Participant B
> What's that relationship?**Can we apply rhythm to our speech**?**What do you think**?**Can we speak rhythmically**?\ Okay. **How can we study rhythm** ?\ **What does it mean that we have degrees of rhythm**?\

5.3 Feedback Strategies

Feedback strategies available to the teachers are varied, ranging from explicit error correction to more implicit strategies. The choice of the strategy seems dependent on the order of the difficulty of the question (according to Bloom's Taxonomy). Therefore, teacher feedback can range from a simple, straightforward explicit acknowledgement of the correctness of the student response to an elaborate, complex student-teacher interaction involving recasts or reformulations.

For the purpose of analyzing the feedback strategies in this study, a framework involving Sinclair & Coulthard's (1975) IRF structure is employed. The F-move' which refers to the 'follow-up' or 'Feedback' move represents the third move in the IRF exchange structure. The feedback component of classroom discourse is what distinguishes the classroom talk most obviously from speech events which take place outside of the classroom. As stated by Chaudron (1988:132), the teacher's status and superior knowledge "results in an imbalance in the expectations as to who provides feedback and when it is provided". Thus, it is due to status and knowledge superiority that the teacher is able to dictate the type and amount of feedback.

Therefore, teachers' strategies in providing feedback should enable the creation of a supportive emotional climate. Consequently, the teachers' choice of error correction strategies which makes students comfortable enough to take risks are of great importance. Based on the literature on feedback and the strategies observed in the teacher discourse, the following feedback strategies are identified:
- Repetitions
- Recasts/ Reformulations
- Praise
- Explicit positive acceptance of student response
- Explanations
- Explicit rejection of student response

Recasts have been defined according to Long (1996) and Nelson (1981) as target like reformulations of ungrammatical utterances that maintain the central meaning of the original utterance. The adoption of this definition has allowed for both recasts and reformulations to be seen synonymously.

Another feedback strategy which requires definition is repetition, a common strategy utilized by the participants. This can be seen as an imitation by the teacher of the same structures used by the learner in providing the answer. Therefore, the distinction between repetitions and recasts/reformulations is that while the former relates to similar structures, the latter involves the revision of structures while retaining the essential meaning.

Praise is another common classroom teaching strategy. In the context of the classroom, where there are time constraints, these are often general positive comments to student responses. Other strategies which are used by the teachers in this study include explicit and implicit acceptance of student answers. This is distinct from praise in that the discourse used in this context is less effective and does not involve the use of superlatives. It refers to the teacher accepting a student response, primarily through 'yes'. This can be seen as explicit acceptance. On the other hand, student responses are not always accepted so explicitly. The teacher's discourse, however, implies correctness/incorrectness of the answer. Teacher explanations refer to the implicit or explicit ways in which teachers explain vocabulary, including paraphrase, definitions, exemplification and naming. Finally, explicit rejection of a student response refers to the participants' providing a negative evaluation of the student response.

For the purposes of analysis, the participants' dominant feedback strategies were further classed according to a continuum of feedback strategies implying correctness, incorrectness and partial correctness. This is presented in **Figure 2**:

Figure 2: Framework of Analysis

Correctness	**Partial Correctness**	**Incorrectness**
I --I------------------------I		
Praise	Recasts/Reformulations	Outright rejection
Explicit acceptance	Repetitions	of student response
of student response	Explanations	

The analysis which follows adopts the framework set out above in order to discuss the purposes of the different feedback strategies.The rationale for examining teachers' feedback strategies is two-folds. Firstly, the role of the teacher in the classroom is to provide feedback to his students, thus making this a dominant discourse strategy. In addition, the researcher can also determine gender differences and similarities based on the view that females generally adopt a cooperative speech style and males a competitive, direct speech style. In particular, the claim that women exhibit positively polite behaviour with the purpose of supporting the speaker while men adopt a competitive speech style with the objective of dominating others and asserting their status is tested through a study of feedback strategies (Holmes, 1995: 67). Therefore, analyzing feedback strategies which convey to the students correctness, incorrectness and partial correctness of their responses would indicate the extent to which participants' in this study adopt supportive or direct feedback strategies. **Table 4** outlines the

individual participants' dominant feedback strategies and their frequencies in order to determine prevalence of gender differences.

Table 4: Summary of Feedback Strategies

Participant	Female A	Female B	Female C	Male A	Male B	Male C	Total
Repetitions	38	36	41	13	14	21	163
Reformulations/ Recasts	2	20	25	28	26	15	116
Explicit Positive Acceptance	15	8	8	20	5	6	62
Explanations	10	3	6	4	3	6	36
Praise	Not observed	8	5	6	10	5	34
Explicit Negative Feedback	3	6	1	5	1	1	17

The following **Extracts** illustrate **FA**'s and **MA**'s use of negative feedback which serves the function of outright rejection of student's responses:

Extract 5: Female Participant A
> **No...No.** Name of that branch...Another shop...Another supermarket or shop...They have in High Street Branch.

Extract 6: Male Participant A
> **No, it is just interesting or fascination**. You know, I'd like you to remember what I told you before that the meanings of the words should be taken according to the context or the passage in which it is used...You know that each word has many meanings. So, you have to refer to the word that suits the passage. Right?

6. Conclusions

In order to examine the role of gender, this study examined the extent to which male and female EFL teachers adopted cooperative, facilitative or direct, competitive speech styles. The first category involves an investigation of male and female teacher discourse in giving explicit directions/instructions to their students, distinct from pedagogical instruction. Participants' use of the pronouns in conjunction with modals of obligation and necessity, and the use of imperatives are examined. More similarities than differences emerge from the findings in this category.

In the first sub-category of analyzing the use of the first person singular with modals of obligation, two dominant discourse patterns are observed; '*I would like you to+ verb*' and '*I want you to+ verb*'. The frequent use of 'want' by three participants (two females and one male) and the use of '*would*' by two participants (one female and one male) shows that in the context of the observed classroom, the teacher's authority makes the request an implicit directive but female teachers try to make their instructions being more directives. In addition,

the understanding and acceptance of the roles of the students and teachers also oblige the student to carry out the teacher's request. Thus, the use of those modals in the classroom conveys the message that the teachers' desire has to be carried out through the illocutionary force apparent, especially in the giving of instructions indicating that the positional authority of the teacher allows both male and female teachers to adopt more masculine features of speech.

The second sub-category of analysis involved examining the use of the first person plural with '*going to*'. This feature is observed in the discourse of all the participants. The use of '*we*', as highlighted earlier is inclusive with the purpose of solidarity-building. Thus, the use of this feature by both the male and female participants but with higher frequency from females illustrates the roles and build solidarity and encourage team work. However, the male participants limited use of the construction 'we're *going to + verb*' shows that solidarity-building may not be as important to the male participants as the female participants.

The use of both the person system and modality is to a large extent determined by the perception of power that the speaker has over the hearer. It has been argued in this study that the use of modals in particular is governed by interpersonal power relations where the tacit power structure of the teacher over a class of students is accepted. Linguistic forms are one way of conveying/expressing that power. Therefore the use of 'must', preceded by the second person as in 'you must' is a clear indication of the obligation the student has to complete the task as set by the teacher. This is an indication of the power the teacher has over the students while at the same time demonstrating that the teacher has the power to affect a change in behaviour, mainly through linguistic means.

It is also observed that all three females and one male participant favour the use of imperatives, suggesting that perhaps there is a gender difference. Firstly, giving orders and directions is traditionally viewed as masculine discourse thus suggesting that females have adopted this masculine behaviour, which is appropriate given the current pedagogy of gender research. Secondly, one male teacher is also noticed to favour imperatives, thus suggesting that this discourse feature is not peculiar to only the females. Therefore, rather than indicate gender difference, this example further substantiates the view of male and female teachers adopting discourse features based on context, where they are constantly negotiating their language along a continuum of masculinity and femininity. It also clearly indicates that in their role as teachers, females are comfortable with issuing directions as the dominant members of the group, thus indicating the importance of context in determining discourse.

Questions as a discourse are investigated firstly from the perspective that they comprise an important aspect of teacher talk; and secondly from the gender perspective, where differences have found to exist between male and female speakers in different settings.

As both male and female teachers are powerful speakers, due to their status and authority, it can be concluded that despite research indicating that men ask more questions than women, in the context of teaching, females also adopt what has been seen as a masculine discourse feature, further substantiating the view that it is the context that determines discourse rather than gender.

Finally, it must be noted that teachers' questioning behaviour in the EFL classroom is further complicated by the prevalence of students' from diverse linguistic backgrounds and levels in addition to different levels of cultural literacy. It can therefore be concluded that other variables seem to play a more important role than gender in determining the participants' questioning strategies.

Finally, the last main category of analysis investigated participants' feedback discourse and identified the dominant strategies employed by the participants in providing both implicit and explicit feedback.

It is noteworthy that three female and one male participants preferred an implicit feedback strategy while the other two male participants favoured recasts/reformulations strategies.Another dominant feedback strategy noticed was following up an acceptance of student response with further explanations. This aspect of teacher behaviour was noticed in three of the six participants. Firstly, this supports the notion of context being more important than gender and secondly it is also an indication of the importance participants in this study place on students understanding not only why an answer is acceptable but also the reasons for its acceptance.

The argument made above with regard to gender and politeness also applies to the last category of findings, negative feedback which is noticed to be prevalent among two females and one male participants showing a direct approach to answers rejected by the participants. Negative feedback essentially refers to teachers not accepting a student answer by explicitly saying 'No' or ' Not correct'. It can be argued that this is a feature common to the language of the powerful, thus in this context female participants were making their power explicit through the use of direct language.

Therefore, the findings of this study indicate that male and female participants claim and exercise authority and power through their classroom discourse by using primarily similar strategies although some differences are also apparent. This is shown by the participants adopting features of both cooperative and direct speech styles. However, the differences indicate a pattern of difference. While it is conceded that the sample size is too small to make a conclusive finding, it cannot be denied that potential does exist for differences in male/female teacher discourse, which needs to be substantiated by further studies in this area. In addition, it has also been argued that some of these differences are not only related to gender but to other variables such as personality, educational background, experience in teaching and including most importantly, the immediate classroom demands in relation to tasks set and teacher objectives.

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