AN INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN MODEL FOR CLASSROOM DISCOURSE ACQUISITION: HELPING PRE-SERVICE NON-NATIVE ENGLISH TEACHERS ACQUIRE CLASSROOM LANGUAGE

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Abstract: In EFL classes, English language should ideally be made the medium of instruction and communication. This is certainly intended to provide EFL learners with English language input, besides to foster and to engage them in using English in the classroom. However, not all practicing non-native English language teachers, including in Indonesia, seem to have excellent command in English. Whereas, some literatures have acknowledged that teachers’ oral proficiency would include good command on the use of classroom English. As a matter of fact, teachers’ ability to employ the use of classroom discourse or classroom language would help them deliver the lesson (i.e.: elicit, give instructions, explain, or clarify things) and communicate with their students in English effectively and meaningfully. This article wishes to provide an overview of an instructional design approach used to introduce classroom English/ classroom discourse to the future English language teachers in their pre-service teacher training education. It will then portray and exemplify how the teaching and learning procedures on classroom English introduction are carried out in order to help promote and enhance student teachers’ awareness and acquisition of oral English classroom discourse.

Keywords: Classroom discourse, instructional design model, non-native English teacher

Classroom Language

Classroom language or classroom discourse is an important part of classroom practices. Tamer (2013) mentions that their use in the classroom is, among others, to help teachers control, manage, and guide their classroom practices (i.e.: to elicit, give instructions, explain and communicate with their students in English). This implies that effective class teaching, regardless the subject, would require the teacher to employ classroom language effectively. This is especially true in the context of English language classes where English is taught as a second and/ or foreign language. In this context of teaching, the teacher’s effective use of classroom discourse or classroom English will serve more good to the class than just mere classroom instructions. In a classroom setting where English is learnt as a foreign language, classroom English discourse could be one of the rich and meaningful sources of exposure for the students learning English. Tamer (2013) further asserts that the teacher’s articulation of a second or foreign language could be the only exposure to the language that the learners actually receive. With that reality in mind, the use of classroom discourse maintained by the teachers could easily seen as an important tool and a sensible medium through which the class members together develop and promote English learning.

Regarding the central role of classroom discourse and classroom interactional strategies, Walsh (2012) has confidently acknowledged that its importance is by far equal to the other aspects related to teaching methodology in teacher education program. He suggests that student-teachers who are at their pre-service teacher training program would benefit from a major course which orient them with content and practices that specifically deals with or informed by classroom interaction model. Walshs’ claim seems to coincide with The 2002 MBEC’s report on English Language Proficiency of Namibian Teachers and that of Moskowitz (1976) as cited in Olivier (2002) that teachers with poor L2 oral proficiency who uses the language as medium of instruction has given negative effect on the teaching and learning process. This problem, as reported further, resulted not only in the teacher or the teacher trainees’ lack of self-confidence, but also instilled some feelings of inadequacy. This is understood since (English) language teachers are expected to be good role models of language use and ideally have good or excellent command of the language (Oliever, 2002).

The introduction of classroom discourse subject in English Language Education Department of Islamic University of Indonesia has been informed by such concern. It tries to recognize the importance of both teachers’ excellent use of classroom language, as their means of classroom instructions and communication, and their pedagogical knowledge base and practices. At the moment, the study program introduces the classroom discourse skills via a four-credit subject given to second semester students. Although the proportion is still less than ideal and far from adequate, it has been initiated and trialed for two semesters. The course syllabus and its content has, since then, been informed by what has been done in the classroom and by what has resulted from the learning process.
In this article, I intend to review the instructional design model of the classroom discourse subject by outlining its teaching and learning procedure, class activities and learning materials along with the rationales which underlie their application. This instructional design model is also a preliminary one, in a sense that not all of the sequences and elements in the model have been completely applied and tried out. It is since the model I wish to elaborate here is a refinement of the previous model of the class instructions. My next project will then concern with investigating the effectiveness of its learning process and outcome resulting from the design especially in terms of looking at how much have the learners got a good handle on classroom language following the class instructions. The instructional design model of the classroom English course itself has been informed by some important principles in second language acquisition which are said to have conditions and foundations to help facilitate learners’ acquisition of second language. As with the instructional strategy, the model in general follows ESA (Engage – Study – Activate) sequence (Harmer, 2012: 178) and expands the stage with feedbacks and learning reflection.

Balanced Input and Output-Based Practice

Any instructions and programs in second and foreign language would acknowledge the importance of language input and output provision in its learning plan. In my elaboration of the instructional design model for classroom discourse which I propose here, I am content with the idea that balanced and appropriate input and output-based practice should form and inform what is intended to be an effective second or foreign language learning. The premise, as Renandya (2013) holds firmly, suggests that the role of input in L2 acquisition is as important as that of output. Renandya, citing Wang and VanPatten (2013), further asserts that while input contributes to the development of L2 learners’ implicit linguistic system, output-based practice enables learners to develop fluency in language use.

Meanwhile, Renandya (2011) also points out that the oral and written language that learners receive as input in their language instruction should ideally, among others, be comprehensible, abundant, frequent and meaningful. It is the kind of conditions that most educationalists would see them resemble the states in which learners acquire their first language. Harmer (2012) suggests that such conditions may also well be created through acquisition-like activities which will help learners to acquire L2 better and more naturally. This type of acquisition-like activity would normally involve students in using the language they are learning to communicate in a communicative activities while focusing its task more on the content than on the language form.

The obvious knowledge that the right amount of comprehensible, meaningful and frequent input must precede and become the conditions for sufficient output to take place, should not undermine the importance of output-based practice itself in promoting L2 acquisition. Just as Swain (1985) stated that comprehensible input alone will not be sufficient for the development of learners’ linguistic competence. Further, Renandya (2013) argues that L2 or foreign language instruction must also provide not only an appropriate amount of balanced input and output practice, but must also ensure learners’ engagement in a deliberate, systematic, and sustainable language learning plan.

The Proposed Instructional Design Model for Classroom Discourse Subject

By considering the importance of input and output factors as well as the value of engaging learners in a deliberate, active, systematic and sustainable learning plan, the proposed model tries to facilitate the acquisition of classroom English discourse and learners’ enhanced awareness of its use through five-stages of learning sequence namely Engage – Study – Activate – Feedback - Reflection.

The learning episodes and activities follow the sequence mentioned above as they take into account the nature of the language items (lexical phrases) and the skills (oral/communicative ability) to be taught to and acquired by the learners through this classroom discourse subject. This follows Harmer’s idea (2012) that a more lexical approach-based teaching or the teaching of language functions would be best taught when adhering to PPP (Presentation – Practice – Production) sequence.

As with the learning materials, the class uses excerpts from Hughes and Moate’s Practical Classroom English (2007) which contains and presents useful classroom English phrases, also known as teacher-talk. In the course, learners are introduced with, drilled and asked to reflect on various classroom English phrases such as phrases used by teacher to begin, run and end the lesson, to invite students to participate, to group students for activities, to give feedback on students’ work, to check students’ understanding and many more.

The process of learning those classroom English phrases is outlined in the following steps.

1. **Step 1: Engage**

   In this step, learners are introduced with sectioned of classroom English phrases by category (i.e.: greeting the class, taking register, dealing with lateness, displaying and discussing information or visuals from text-book, etc). To engage and to get the students to notice the phrases they are going to learn in that particular meeting, the teacher either starts the class with a game (individual or group game) which uses the pre-taught phrases (i.e.: in jumbled sentences, running dictation, labeling activity, etc), or show a sample of related teaching
video which the teacher has compiled from Youtube. The game with the target phrase is also meant to serve as a lead-in to the next (study) step. While the video showing is intended to provide and complement learners’ repertoire of classroom language phrases with a sample of more authentic language input.

2. Step 2: Study
   The study step entails activities that will encourage learners to further explore the language input which they get in the previous/ engage step. The activities will engage students in some input and output-based practices.

   Following the game or video showing, the teacher would invite learners to identify and analyze the usage of the classroom phrases they have encountered. The teacher, for example, would ask and discuss with learners “what do the phrases mean?”, “what is the purpose of using the phrase (at a particular stage of teaching)?”, etc. At this point, the teacher will then proceed to conduct drills on the learned phrases. The drill is intended to familiarize and routinize students with the phrases, and thus expected for a stronger retention of the expressions being learned. This activity can be done in a different ways like teacher/ student read-alouds, dictation, substitution drill, working on worksheet with multiple choice or gap-filling activity which also involves some scaffolding of the learned lexical phrases. An example of this is the lexical phrase used to check understanding:

   Example 1:

   Find two other similar expressions for “Did you get that?”
   a. Did you think it’s correct?
   b. Did everyone catch that?
   c. Do you have the answer?
   d. Are you following?
   e. Could you check it out?

   Example 2

   Fill in the sentence gaps with the appropriate verb and noun for the sentence to mean the same as the following expression:
   Teacher: “Please, listen to the instructions”
   Teacher: “(Please). ____________ to _____________ “

   The above activities besides aimed at gaining a better retention of the learned phrases, according to Renandya and Farrell (2011) as cited in Renandya (2013), listening to comprehensible materials through simple and familiar classroom activities such as dictation, repeated listening and frequent teacher read-alouds can improve EFL students’ listening skills.

   Before or after the drill, the teacher would also encourage and elicit from the students variations or similar phrases of what have been presented to them earlier. The elicitation of variation (phrases of the same or similar meaning) from the students is necessary to help check and clarify students’ understanding of the phrases and their usage. According to Schmitt and Carter (2000), variation in learning lexical phrases is possible and recommended especially related to phrases that contain open slots, such greeting expressions as “How are (you today)?” “How is (everybody this morning)?” Making students aware of and being able to come up with variations and alternatives is also expected to further instill learners’ creative production of the target language, thus making learning more relevant and meaningful.

3. Step 3: Activate
   The activate stage of the lesson also serves as the semi-controlled practice which is also the output-based practice of the lesson. In this part, students are encouraged to produce the target phrases and use them in a brief simulated-teaching activity. The teacher provides a situation or a class scenario from which the students
need to work on by choosing and using relevant phrases for the situation while role-playing as teacher. In this activity, the rest of the class will play a part as students.

At the initial stages of activate step, in order to scaffold and guide the learners in being able to produce and use the target phrases, they can bring with them a set of expression cards (students are allowed to choose the expressions they want to use in the role play by writing each of them down on small cards). In much latter stages of activate, when students have become more confident and familiar with the phrases, they are only given phrase or instruction prompts during their role-play activity.

The teaching-learning role play in this stage is intended to allow students to process and practice using the phrases in a real-life like situation while letting them incorporate the inputs (the classroom English phrases) into their teacher -character development.

4. Step 4: Feedback
The feedback comes after a few samples of teaching-learning role play by the students. While following the role-play, the teacher would take note of the students' effective and ineffective use of classroom English. The teacher then offers some feedbacks to the students and also encourages some peer feedback from the class members. The teacher, among others, correct students’ faulty, inaccurate and inappropriate use of classroom phrases. Thus, the feedback is not only given toward the aspects of form of the phrases, but the correction is also given related to students’ choice of words, dictions, articulation, and pronunciation intelligibility.

The feedback on students’ performance and on the quality of the target phrase they have produced is important to help them overcome misinformation and misconceptions, and to prompt them with correct input whenever possible serial failure of recalling and remembering learned information take place (Thalheimer, 2008)

5. Step 5: Reflection
After a series of class meetings, the teacher concludes the sessions with a teaching-learning reflection. The reflection activity in this stage requires students to conduct classroom observation and reflect on what they have observed.

Students are sent to other teachers’ English classes to do a sit-in and observe the teaching and learning process in the immediate class. Prior to the classroom observation, students are given an observation checklist and they are encouraged to study them. The observation checklist mainly encourages and directs the students to particularly observe, take note and comment on the use of classroom English phrases by the teacher being observed. After that, the students are asked to write their thought about the classroom phrases they have encountered during the observation. Students are also asked to reflect on the benefit or any lesson they learn from the classroom observation. Through this kind of learning reflection activity, the course would like to instill some values, as stated by Higgs (1988:47) in Ong (n.d.), that learning reflection can in fact help learners clarify their thoughts, gain insights and deepen their understanding of the information that they receive. As for me, I believe that the reflection which the students have generated from a real-life activity like classroom observation will steadily help them pick up and make them more aware of the academic/ educational context and athmosphere that they will be dealing with as future teachers.

Conclusion and Recommendation
The instructional design model for classroom English discourse which I propose here is meant to offer some insights and alternatives to understanding the importance of teachers’ mastery and excellent use of classroom discourse to help them become more empowered and effective English language teachers. This considers that teacher-talk or classroom talk in English may serve as one of the most important sources of language input for EFL learners. Yet, the model, outlined and rationalized here, need to be fully tried out, to understand if it could translate all the pedagogical theories which underlie its design into practice, and whether it could result in effective learning outcome in the course of four-credit subject (200 minutes per week for 14 weeks) as it is allocated by the study program.

From my experience teaching this subject for two semesters, and accordingly coming up with the revised model of the previous course design, the allotted time is less efficient, considering the lavish numbers of classroom English expressions that learners need to know and master. One way to solve this time constraint, amid the loads of the learning material to be taught, is by sorting out and selecting classroom English phrases which are considered more essentials or those among the higher-frequencies. In addition, the selection of classroom English exponents should be informed by careful consideration partly on the students’ level and partly on what functions/phrases the students need to be able to use (Harmer, 2012:71) to ensure a reasonable target of classroom language acquisition.

Following Walsh (2012) who advocates the importance of Classroom Interactional Competence (CIC), then ideally, teacher education program must go beyond a mere teaching of classroom English expressions (classroom spoken discourse). Teacher education program also needs to provide additional and more...
comprehensive course, as an extension to the proposed model. This course should orient and train future English teachers especially the non-native ones with the micro-approach and strategies such as wait-time, withholding feedback, rephrasing for simplicity, asking/eliciting the right questions for mediating, assessing and promoting more effective L2 language learning. This classroom interactional strategies may also be integrated and given portion in other courses like classroom management and microteaching practicum.

Bibliography