

**Identifying features of dialogic interaction in EFL teacher discourse:
A literature review**

Roehl Sybing (rsybing@umass.edu)
University of Massachusetts-Amherst, USA
<http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8379-3250>

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Abstract: Instructional conversation (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988) is an approach to dialogic interaction (Hall, 1993) between teacher and student intended to co-construct meaning and foster learner comprehension. Despite the potential impact dialogic interaction can have on learner outcomes in language education, the current research has adopted an input/output orientation that quantifies language rather than assesses the effectiveness of meaning-making processes in the classroom. To that effect, this paper aims to inductively recognize features of dialogic interaction in the contemporary research on English as a foreign language (EFL). Analysis of research from 26 qualitative studies on university EFL classroom contexts highlights how various discourse strategies among language educators such as questioning, scaffolding, and L1 usage satisfy the imperatives of instructional conversation defined by Goldenberg (1992). While discrete elements of instructional conversation can be found in the research, the overall cognitivist orientation in the field poses challenges for holistic observation of instructional conversation, warranting further research into dialogic interaction in language education.

Keywords: teacher discourse, English as a foreign language, instructional conversation, dialogic interaction.

Introduction

Dialogic interaction is a sociocultural approach to classroom teaching that places the responsibility on the teacher to facilitate mutual and, at times, open-ended interaction for the purpose of co-constructing meaning and assisting students in their development of knowledge. Such an approach is based on the assumption that what students contribute to the classroom discourse is as important as what the teacher contributes, in that the knowledge and perspectives of all classroom participants have value to the negotiation of meaning and the learning of target languages.

Ultimately, however, the teacher plays a guiding role in elicit the students' engagement with classroom learning. Nunan (1991) asserts that "in all sorts of classrooms, not only those devoted to the teaching and learning of languages, it is the teacher who does by far the most talking" (p. 189), highlighting the importance of shaping teacher discourse in a manner that encourages negotiation of meaning between teacher and student to facilitate language learning. This requires researchers to explore the influence a teacher's interaction with students has on the learning of English as a foreign language (EFL) for the benefit of discussing best practices for classroom pedagogy.

This paper reviews the contemporary research on EFL education to examine evidence as to the extent of what Hall (1993) calls "mediated dialogic interaction." A total of 26 articles relevant to EFL education are presented to illustrate the prevalence of a cognitivist epistemology that focuses on comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985) or student output (Swain, 2000). This misses opportunities for mediated interactions that could foster mutual understanding in the target language in favor of a search for quantifiable interaction within the classroom.

In exploring this research, however, this paper asserts that there are elements of teacher discourse that can form the basis for an epistemology focused on the mediation of meaning between teacher and student as a tool in building target language proficiency

among students. This paper aims to apply an analytical lens informed by discussions of instructional conversation practices presented by Tharp and Gallimore (1988) and Goldenberg (1992) to the literature on teacher discourse in EFL education.

A discussion of the contemporary literature will explore how commonly defined teacher discourse strategies such as feedback, L1 usage, and questioning strategies can help to foster the elements of instructional conversation defined by Goldenberg (1992). Analysis and discussion can serve as a starting point for discussing how instructional conversation can be fostered for the benefit of teaching English as a foreign language.

Discourse in language teaching

Much of the theoretical underpinnings on teacher discourse in foreign language education frames the construction of knowledge in the language classroom as a problem of decoding and the quantification of learning activities and their resulting output. As a result, the importance of teacher discourse is especially emphasized for the role it plays, not only in transmitting instructions and expert knowledge, but in presenting a model for target language use (Brown, 2001; Harmer, 2007). The historical development of language education has seen multiple and disparate approaches to the teaching of languages relating to how much a teacher says in relation to what students produce. While teaching approaches have changed over time, the degree to which the teacher provides target language input to learners remains a common question that persists well into contemporary discussion of current approaches in communicative language teaching and task-based language teaching.

The purpose behind this appears to concern a theoretical orientation founded on either the input hypothesis proposed by Krashen (1985) or the output hypothesis proposed by Swain (2000). In brief, Krashen asserts that language acquisition is possible when language learners are exposed to language that is only slightly beyond their current abilities. Swain, on the other hand, makes the same claim, but for learners' production

of language. For the purposes of this discussion, that both theories conflict with each other is immaterial. Whether one or both theories are applied to classroom pedagogy, target language use for its own sake is seen as having benefits for language learners, while all other concerns are ancillary to language education. As a result, researchers adopting any form of this orientation perceive a pedagogical imperative to compel students' language production, with teacher discourse as a tool to establish learners' comprehension in order to ensure that production.

Mediated dialogic interactions

In Hall's (1993) view of classroom discourse, teacher and student (and, indeed, any group of interactants) exist within the same cultural and schooling contexts, yet engage in the same interaction from different perspectives owing to bases of knowledge and sociocultural identities. Because of these differences, meaning is negotiated between speakers through "mediated dialogic interactions" where both speakers find common understanding and construct meaning with each other. Effective mediation requires a teacher's understanding of the students' prior knowledge and sociocultural characteristics as well as the teacher's interactive resources to convey meaning that can be understood by learners. Given this conceptualization, a discussion of an effective approach to facilitate this dialogic interaction is thus required.

Definition of the "instructional conversation" (IC) is a response to the almost-exclusive focus on recitation teaching in more traditional models of Western education (Tharp & Gallimore, 1991), assuming instead that the student plays just as important a role in the meaning-making processes of interaction. Tharp and Gallimore (1988) highlight a simple example of a child who loses a toy and a father who asks guiding questions to deduce where the toy might be. The child eventually finds the toy by herself, but not without the father's guidance to help the child through the thought process. According to the authors,

In this mundane interaction are the roots of higher mental functions. When the father organizes the strategic aspects of this simple recall task by a series of questions, it becomes clear that the child has the relevant information stored in memory. Without the father's assistance, she is able to recall only (as is typical for her age) isolated bits of information; she is unable to choose a strategy to organize the information toward a particular goal-oriented purpose. But with his assistance, her performance reveals a level of development to come. (p. 7)

This concept of "assisted comprehension" relies on a key Vygotskian conceptualization of a learner's zone of proximal development (ZPD), which defines the capabilities of any given individual when assisted by more capable individuals or when left to their own devices (Vygotsky, 1978; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). This zone expands as the experiences derived from assisted performance are internalized, allowing the cycle of teaching and learning to repeat and allow for further development of the individual's capabilities. Through this assistance, dialogue intends to raise learners' awareness of unfamiliar language and content knowledge as well as provoke thinking and reflection among learners in a manner that transcends simple paradigms of knowledge transfer.

Goldenberg (1992) outlined a series of discrete elements, reproduced in Table 1, that are seen as necessary to the instructional conversation approach.

Table 1. Excerpt from Goldenberg (1992, p. 319).

Elements of the instructional conversation	
Instructional elements	
1.	<i>Thematic focus.</i> The teacher selects a theme or idea to serve as a starting point for focusing the discussion and has a general plan for how the theme will unfold, including how to "chunk" the text to permit optimal exploration of the theme.

2. *Activation and use of background and relevant schemata.* The teacher either "hooks into" or provides students with pertinent background knowledge and relevant schemata necessary for understanding a text. Background knowledge and schemata are then woven into the discussion that follows.
3. *Direct teaching.* When necessary, the teacher provides direct teaching of a skill or concept.
4. *Promotion of more complex language and expression.* The teacher elicits more extended student contributions by using a variety of elicitation techniques—invitations to expand (e.g., "tell me more about that"), questions (e.g., "What do you mean?"), restatements (e.g., "in other words, -"), and pauses.
5. *Elicitation of bases for statements or positions.* The teacher promotes students' use of text, pictures, and reasoning to support an argument or position. Without overwhelming students, the teacher probes for the bases of students' statements – e.g., "How do you know?" "What makes you think that?" "Show us where it says_____."

Conversational elements

6. *Fewer "known-answer" questions.* Much of the discussion centers on questions and answers for which there might be more than one correct answer.
7. *Responsivity to student contributions.* While having an initial plan and maintaining the focus and coherence of the discussion, the teacher is also responsive to students' statements and the opportunities they provide.
8. *Connected discourse.* The discussion is characterized by multiple, interactive, connected turns; succeeding utterances build upon and extend previous ones.
9. *A challenging, but nonthreatening, atmosphere.* The teacher creates a "zone of proximal development," where a challenging atmosphere is balanced by a positive affective climate. The teacher is more collaborator than evaluator and creates an atmosphere that challenges students and allows them to negotiate and construct the meaning of the text.

10. *General participation, including self-selected turns.* The teacher encourages general participation among students. The teacher does not hold exclusive right to determine who talks, and students are encouraged to volunteer or otherwise influence the selection of speaking turns.

Through examining these discrete elements, it becomes possible to view the teacher as both a subject-knowledge expert and a facilitator of interaction depending on the changing needs of the classroom dynamic. At some points in a given lesson, a teacher employing the IC model may engage in direct teaching in order to point out important knowledge relevant to their students' goals. At other times, that teacher is eliciting answers from students through probing questions in order to explore and give value to their ideas in co-constructing knowledge. The degree to which this teacher discourse is present in the EFL classroom is the focus of this literature review.

Research questions

This literature review is based on two research questions:

- RQ1: To what extent are elements of instructional conversation apparent in contemporary research in EFL learning environments in university contexts?
- RQ2: What epistemological assumptions are apparent in contemporary research in EFL learning environments in university contexts?

In employing IC as part of an analytical framework for the contemporary literature on teacher discourse, it becomes possible to identify what avenues of research have been left unexamined. Discussion of RQ1 seeks to define the extent to which the foundations of instructional conversation can be observed in the language classroom through the current research. Using this discussion, RQ2 aims to identify the extent to which the overall theoretical orientation in the relevant research is congruent with a sociocultural approach to language teaching. The university context is emphasized here to highlight

that learners bring their own knowledge and perspectives to the classroom, which must be negotiated by that of the teacher.

Methodology

An initial search for literature relevant to this paper indicates a significant absence of research that applies an instructional conversation lens to teacher discourse in EFL learning contexts. Using the search terms "instructional conversation" and either "English as a foreign language" or "EFL," there were few results that would be relevant to this literature review. Furthermore, a search of the exact phrases "instructional conversation" and "foreign language" yields only 11 results, most of which do not adequately address either of the above research questions. For example, a number of results report research in non-university contexts, while this literature review aims to focus on interactions within university classrooms. The lack of suitable results after searching for direct discussion of instructional conversation in research related to EFL education raises a supposition that, by and large, IC theory is not prominently discussed within the field. Therefore, a more systematic, and admittedly indirect, approach to the literature was required to sufficiently address the research questions.

Literature collection

Articles for this literature review were collected via multiple and extensive searches of various online databases such as EBSCOhost, Academic Search Premier, ERIC, and CiNii. Table 2 is a list of keywords used to find articles relevant to the research focus outlined earlier in this paper. Search terms were used in combination with each to narrow the focus. For example, "Japan," "ethnography," "university," and "English as a foreign language" were used in one particular search for articles.

Table 2. List of keywords used for literature search.

<i>Context</i>	<i>Research methods</i>	<i>Research area</i>
Japan	Ethnography	EFL Classroom techniques

University Higher education Classroom Language education	Ethnogra* Qualitative Participant observations Discourse analysis Conversation analysis Case study	English Dialogic interaction Student-teacher communication Teacher practices Pedagogy Teacher questioning Classroom discourse	Instructional conversation Willingness to communicate Language socialization Academic socialization Teacher talk
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Because of the nature of pedagogical moves in a spontaneous, if semi-structured, environments, studies that employ ethnography and other observation methods are the best fit for understanding research in this area. Mason (1996) recommends that the methodological strategy employed in the research agenda be informed by the logic involved in answering the potential research questions. To that end, research methods that are centered on direct observation or participant observation can most comprehensively capture what is happening as it is happening. Finally, literature collection was restricted to scholarly researched published on or after 2013 for the sake of timeliness and relevance to the contemporary state of EFL education. Using this search methodology, a total of 26 articles were compiled for this literature review.

Analytical framework

Articles deemed relevant to this study were categorized by keywords listed in each article's abstract and by the particular teacher discourse strategy that is given focus in each article. The list of teacher discourse strategies was inductively determined by the researcher. Table 3 lists the categories the researcher used to determine teacher discourse strategies being discussed. An examination of each article's keywords, theoretical foundations, and findings helped to identify the teacher discourse strategies that are examined.

Table 3. List of categories of teacher discourse strategies.

Feedback (non-IRF)	Multimodality
Humor	Non-L1 code switching
IRF questioning	Politeness
L1 usage	Scaffolding

At the outset, it is important to note that, in searches that included the search term "instructional conversation," articles reporting qualitative research relating to non-university or non-language education contexts were found. However, such articles did not meet the criteria for timeliness (i.e., research published on or after 2013) or context (i.e., research related to university EFL contexts) and were not included for this paper.

A portion of the literature discusses findings naturally relevant to IC theory. A supplementary approach, however, was necessary to arrive at further findings. Todhunter's (2007) analytical framework for instructional conversation is helpful in providing this analysis in that descriptions are provided for the discrete elements of IC discourse, reproduced in Table 4.

Table 4. Reproduction of Todhunter's (2007) analytical framework for instructional conversation discourse.

<i>Instructional Conversation Discourse in a Foreign Language Class: Feature Description</i>		
TF	Thematic Focus	A topic is initiated by a question or comment, and develops with related subtopics throughout the discourse.
C	Connected Discourse	Multiple, interactive, connected turns Balanced turn-taking & coherent topic development

DT	Direct Teaching	Provision or confirmation of linguistic or other factual information when necessary, in response to student request or use of English student stopping before completing idea student correction of form incomprehensible or inappropriate utterance
QU	Questions with Unpredictable Answers	Questions are open-ended or have unpredictable answers
PL	Promotion of Language Expression	The teacher extends the quantity and quality of student production
R	Responsiveness	The teacher responds to content confirmation of the student's prior contribution, without reformulating follow-up question that elicits new information follow-up comment that contributes new information or teacher opinion
RPL	Responsiveness + Promotion of Language	The teacher responds to content, while extending the quantity and quality of production confirmation of content while reformulating follow-up question or making a follow-up comment that incorporates a reformulation follow-up question that suggests new information

Using the above codes and their respective feature descriptions, data excerpts of classroom discourse and quotations of narratives from each of the studies are analyzed through this analytical framework for instructional conversation, allowing for discussion of synthesis between teacher discourse strategies and the IC elements that coincide in teacher-student interactions. Table 5 provides a data exemplar of this analysis using an excerpt from Inan (2014), supplementing the original findings with new assertions made through an instructional conversation lens.

Table 5. Data exemplar using analytical framework and data from Inan (2014).

Source	Inan (2014)
Data excerpt with supplementary codes	<p style="text-align: center;">DT</p> <p>T: They are not discriminating, but they are discriminated when they go to the city ((2))</p> <p>S2: They are not racist.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">R</p> <p>T: Ok, they are not racist [RESTAT]; they are not discriminating among people.</p> <p>S24: They respect old people.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">R</p> <p>T: Wonderful, very good.</p> <p>S24: Here old age is important</p> <p style="text-align: center;">R</p> <p>T: Old age is important [RESTAT], they respect the old [RESTAT], very good.</p> <p>S2: It's a female dominated society.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">RPL</p> <p>T: Wonderful! ((2)) Matriarchal. (pp. 64-65)</p>
Instructional conversation elements	Direct teaching, responsiveness, promotion of language, connected discourse

Instructional conversation discussion	Revoicing allows the instructor to validate students' language and provide positive reinforcement to students' expression during class, while providing input that students understand as it is their words that the instructor is using.
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This discussion of the data above seeks to advance complementary assertions that can be made about the original research that would not otherwise be made apparent without the lens of instructional conversation applied to the data. Thus, a broader discussion of the study published by Inan (2014) demonstrates how a teacher's tendency to revoice students' target language utterances can promote further spoken output by students. By viewing this research with the paradigm of instructional conversation in mind, the teacher shows that, through revoicing, they are responsive to their students' output and encourages aspects of connected discourse that contribute to the conversational flow of the classroom discourse. This complementary analysis allows for discussion that connects teacher discourse strategies to elements of instructional conversation.

Findings

All studies in this literature review are primarily or exclusively qualitative in nature and present excerpts of data derived from research methods requiring direct observation. Table 6 provides brief summaries of findings reported from each article.

Table 6. Summary of reported findings of articles in this literature review.

Article	Findings
Al-Zahrani & Al-Bargi (2017)	Questioning techniques should be used judiciously, on the assumption that some questioning techniques are more effective depending on students' level of language proficiency. Complexity of question, type of question, and communication pattern also affect classroom interaction.
Alsubaie (2015)	The three teachers in the study tended to ask students more closed/display questions than open/referential questions. Questions that required only a yes or no answer made up a sizable portion of their discourse. On the other hand, it was unclear as to whether referential questions fostered greater oral participation.
Arizavi et al. (2015)	The two teachers in the study dominated classroom discourse, as most student output was elicited by teachers' initiation. Student responses mostly classified as restricted with few details. No strong correlation between type of question and type of response.
Bao Ha & Wanphet (2016)	Written and spoken instructions complement each other and provide opportunities for exemplification and repetition to reinforce comprehension. Spoken instruction allows for interactivity with students, while written instruction provides students a permanent reference.
Cancino (2015)	Teacher strategies for classroom interaction include direct error correction, scaffolding, content feedback (as opposed to feedback on form), and back-channel feedback (rather than direct intervention which might curtail student input). Teacher strategies, if "poorly calibrated," can help or hinder meaning-making with students as well as their level of participation in interaction.
Danli (2017)	The teacher engaged in a variety of scaffolding strategies to ensure

	student comprehension. These interventions also lend to the dominant power dynamic that the teacher enjoys. For example, "[w]hen he encountered awkward silences in class, the teacher performed dominant roles to push the students to generate answers through frequent use of questions and explicit feedback" (p. 424).
Dao & Iwashita (2018)	Task-related assistance takes the form of task procedures (clarifying directions), task guidance (what to do/what happens in a specific circumstance), task modeling and task eliciting (specifically, what language to use during the task). Language mediation occurs during collaborative interaction (e.g., as the teacher elicits language, the teacher resolves misuse of language by learners).
Ghafarpour (2017)	The intention in each discursive move made by the teacher can be identifiable by the discursive features made apparent from the classroom interactions, so long as the pedagogic goals of each move are clearly stated. Despite this, moves concerning classroom management may also act as a supporting sub-mode to the other modes.
Gulzar (2013)	Length of teaching experience is suggested to be a factor in whether a teacher employs code-switching between sentences, and code-switching is employed for a variety of reasons. Gender does not appear to be a significant factor, as code-switching is an inevitable phenomenon across gender.
Inan (2014)	Functions for teacher revoicing include increasing comprehension, error correction, maintaining discourse flow, maintaining discourse relevance, and management (as in advancing the teacher's agenda).
Jing & Jing (2018)	The teacher dominates the classroom discourse most of the time through IRF patterns. The teacher appears unaccustomed to classroom silence and seems to fill the silence with teacher talk.

	However, the teacher also uses non-verbal gestures in order to motivate students and allows L1 usage in order to provide students with more opportunities to offer input.
Kamimura et al. (2018)	Peers tended to give higher scores for microteaching than did the teachers. Teachers also gave more concrete feedback than did peers. Differences appeared to be statistically significant. Comparisons of feedback on the same microteaching episodes revealed that teachers provided greater detail in what to do and why it's important.
Le & Rendaya (2017)	The teachers had a high general level of English proficiency but not specific classroom language proficiency which may "lead to their inability to utilize the interactional features of the language that can provide affordance and learning opportunities" (p. 78). Because of the limited interaction, there was thus limited negotiation of meaning between student and teacher.
Morales (2016)	Teacher in the study asserts that the informal but structured interaction with students helped with classroom management and created a friendlier atmosphere. Starting the class with teacher-student and student-student interactions in English promotes more English usage in class overall. Corrections made during small talk appear to be less threatening and more welcomed by students.
Peng et al. (2014)	Discursive strategies such as humor, politeness, and encouragement by the teacher appear to have an effect on mitigating face-threatening acts in order to maintain students' face and thus mitigate the role of affect in classroom interactions.
Petraki & Nguyen (2016)	Some teachers base their rationale for using humor in motivating students who are unengaged or unmotivated at the outset, either from intrinsic factors or extrinsic factors such as content material. Humor can be wordplay or cultural (e.g., mock scolding) in nature.

Pinzon-Jacome et al. (2016)	The feedback component of traditional initiation-response-feedback exchanges between teacher and student should be used by teachers to promote output that resembles genuine target language interaction.
Rashid (2014)	No discernible commonalities found regarding the ratio of display and referential questions across teachers. Interaction generated in some cases without the use of questioning, depending on the topic choice and level of students' interest. Referential questions generated more classroom interaction than did display questions.
Sato (2015)	Recasts and explicit correction are the most common forms of corrective feedback, followed by elicitation. As students express greater communication apprehension, they express greater preference for corrective feedback.
Shea (2017)	Largely positive reaction by students to classroom activities where individuals are required to speak in front of the whole class, while those who didn't like the activity suggested that they found it effective nonetheless. Questionnaire suggests that students perceive a value in the stand-up activity in being compelled to speak. Students note in open-ended responses that stand-up promotes focused attention and fairness.
Smotrova & Lantolf (2013)	The use of gestures by both teacher and student to imagistically display their understanding of target language utterances can help to foster comprehension within the classroom.
Tarnopolsky & Goodman (2014)	Use of Russian in EFL and EMI classes is common, and has several rationales perceived by teachers and students, particularly psychological (affect) and ecological reasons. For example, the use of Russian allows the teacher to explain English vocabulary in L1.
Thoms (2014)	The tendency of teachers to reformulate the utterances of students

	can help to foster students' comprehension of their peers' utterances, which in turn can foster comprehension of the input (e.g., literary texts) being discussed in class.
Tsuneyasu (2017)	Teacher tended to use questions to offer corrective feedback, while students in her class tended to prefer more direction negation of errors. One student commented that indirect feedback was irritating when direct feedback saves time.
Wangru (2016)	Teachers tended to ask more display questions than referential questions. No clear consensus on type of questioning strategy, or in type of student response elicited. IRF pattern dominates classroom discourse of teachers observed.
Yashima et al. (2018)	Removing teacher control (in this case, use of the IRF pattern) increases likelihood of student communication since the research design "encouraged the participants to take up the challenge of keeping the discussion going" (p. 132). Students become more willing to communicate as structure is removed.

As indicated earlier in this paper, a survey of the contemporary literature indicates little, if any, active discussion of IC theory in research on EFL education. Rather, discrete elements of instructional conversation as defined by Goldenberg (1992) can be found when examining the literature through the criteria defined in Table 1. As discussed below, three themes become apparent through this analysis, relating to instruction, student contributions to classroom discourse, and open dialogue.

Instruction in language learning

Feedback as an explicit discourse strategy appears to indicate a number of instructional elements. A teacher's feedback in response to students' target language use is an expression of expert knowledge of which language learners arguably need to be aware. There is potentially a substantive difference between feedback given by an expert such

as a teacher and that given by a peer novice. Kamimura et al. (2014) examined a course in a Japanese university intended for prospective EFL teachers and analyzed "microteaching" episodes where students demonstrated their emerging teaching skills. Comparisons of peer feedback given during class sessions and feedback from expert teachers given in response to video recordings of class sessions indicated that teachers were more critical of the demonstrations and provided more concrete feedback than did student peers.

A number of studies in the literature collection (e.g., Inan, 2014; Sato, 2015; Thoms, 2014) discuss the act of the teacher rephrasing a student's target language utterances in a way that the teacher considers more grammatically accurate or more conducive to comprehension. This act of recasting provides feedback to students about their utterances as well as further comprehensible input seen as necessary to fostering students' decoding skills, particularly in the absence of learner comprehension of written input that is discussed in class (Thoms, 2014).

Feedback also plays a role in building learners' language skills in a way that allows them to experiment and internalize more complex language. Cancino (2015) studied scaffolding and feedback strategies in Chilean EFL classrooms and asserted the importance of carefully considering scaffolding techniques in order to maximize learning opportunities. Feedback and scaffolding are relevant, not just in the endeavor of direct teaching, but in the activation of students' background knowledge. An excerpt from Sato (2015) exemplifies a simple recast through L2 English interaction intended to raise the student's awareness of what the teacher perceives as grammatically inaccurate and elicit the "correct" utterance from the student.

Teacher: You learned the subjunctive mood or "Kateihou" in high school. Do you remember the rule? Anybody? ... Kouki?

Kouki: I wasn't study hard, so...

Teacher: I didn't study hard. (← *explicit correction*)

Kouki: Ah, I didn't study hard, so I can't.

(p. 23)

Under the assumption that the students are aware of the English conjugation (translated into Japanese as *kateihou*), the teacher explicitly raises this point before prompting a student to answer. Here, the teacher provides both direct instruction and activation of background schemata to raise the students' awareness of what they might already know.

L1 usage is another common strategy for direct teaching in language learning contexts. Gulzar (2013) discusses inter-sentential switches where teachers utter one sentence in the target language and then translate into the students' first language. Ghafarpour (2017) and Tarnopolsky and Goodman (2014) also discuss the teacher's use of L1 as a means to facilitate students' learning of vocabulary and grammar. This practice of code-switching between L1 and L2 allows the teacher to point intended meanings out to students while still providing useful target language input.

Nonverbal communication such as gestures and written instructions can also contribute to a learner's understanding and schemata activation. Smotrova and Lantolf (2013), for example, studied the role of gestures in an instructional conversation model in the Ukrainian EFL context. A conversation analysis that examined a teacher's speech in conjunction with their gestures found that there are multiple ways through which meaning in the classroom is mediated. Bao Ha & Wanphet (2016) discuss the importance of supplementing spoken instructions with written instructions, which allows learners to confirm their understanding of oral instructions through additional input.

Incorporation of student voices

Paradigms emphasizing dialogic interaction stress an equitable balance in interaction between teacher and student for the former to perceive information about what the latter might be thinking during classroom activity. Indirect feedback can take the form of recasting or what Inan (2014) calls revoicing, but they refer to similar strategies of the teacher repeating or paraphrasing what students say. Inan asserted that teacher revoicing "giv[es] students authority and authorship" (p. 59) of their contributions while also "acknowledging student contribution" (p. 59), even if such acknowledgments are short such as "very good" or "wonderful."

Naturally, there is a dimension of affect that should be considered as, per Goldenberg (1992), the classroom must be challenging but also nonthreatening. To that effect, humor and politeness appear to be an important elements in establishing rapport between teacher and student. Petraki and Nguyen (2016) observed the Vietnamese EFL context, where teachers in used humor to motivate unengaged students and provide a comfortable classroom atmosphere by mitigating the formal nature of language learning. Peng et al. (2014) also present a case study of a Chinese EFL teacher who uses humor and politeness in a strategic manner in order to establish comfort and rapport within the classroom. In their discussion of politeness, the authors explore expressions of politeness that are intended to mitigate face-threatening acts for the students' benefit while also aiming to accomplish various classroom objectives. Several politeness strategies, such as "using honorifics, cute addresses and encouraging compliments to stimulate students' learning enthusiasm, and build up their self-confidence" (p. 114), are seen in this study as important to fostering a language learning experience that is comfortable to students.

For the same reason, Morales (2016) examined the role of L2 small talk as a structured activity used in EFL classes as a means for projecting informality in the classroom. The small talk activity challenged students to produce the target language that was thought

to be well within their abilities. However, the warm-up activity also appeared to create a friendlier classroom atmosphere by instilling students with some degree of confidence in the target language while also allowing the teacher to connect with students on an interpersonal level.

In general, affordances that break from expectations of formality contribute to the notion of the classroom as a safe space for students. Tarnopolsky and Goodman (2014) examined the Ukrainian EFL context, where Russian, the students' L1, was used by the teacher to scaffold understanding of English vocabulary and to perform classroom management tasks. Moreover, the perspectives of the students do not appear to align with any fears about dependence on L1 as a challenge to language learning. Gulzar (2013) and Tsuneyasu (2017) also explore the teacher's L1 usage as a means to either scaffold knowledge or provide feedback to students' output. Gulzar, in particular, noted that teachers switched between L1 and L2 in order to translate features of L2 input that might otherwise be problematic for students.

Goldenberg's (1992) definition of IC suggests that there is, indeed, a tension in creating a comfortable classroom that is also challenging, the latter of which is the case of an action research project that focuses on an oral communication activity called "stand up" (Shea, 2017), where students stand up and are not permitted to sit down until they express ideas in the target language. While acknowledging that the nature of this activity has a coercive nature, the author notes that students find the activity useful in terms of the opportunities provided to practice the target language. Interestingly, when students commented on the positive aspects of the activity, several students noted its "fairness," with one student saying that "stand up" prompts everyone in the class to speak, rather than leaving the responsibility to a few who are less anxious and thus volunteer their ideas.

Open dialogue between teacher and student

In applying Goldenberg's (1992) definitions of connected discourse and general participation, the questioning strategy a teacher employs to interact with students is a central discussion point. A survey of the research regarding questioning indicates that IRF (initiation-response-feedback) exchanges tend to be so structured that the questioning tends to limit the opportunities perceived by students to express their ideas in what would otherwise be an open dialogue.

Al-Zahrani and Al-Bargi's (2017) research indicated that teachers tended to adjust the content and intent of their questioning according to their students' level of language proficiency. Judicious selection and usage of questioning techniques according to complexity is recommended by the authors, for their findings indicate that students' anxiety in understanding and answering questions is a factor that teachers must consider. This, in turn, appears to compel language teachers to make conscious decisions about what they say to their students and how they say it. Pinzon-Jacome et al. (2016) and Rashid (2014) present research that suggests that questioning strategies should be tailored in response to students' level of target language proficiency, balanced with the expectations of the teachers observed in the respective studies.

Wangru (2016) corroborates the notion that "known-answer" questions are common in EFL contexts. In their study, they noticed that EFL teachers at a Chinese university tended to ask more display questions than referential questions, defined as questions for which teachers know and don't know the answers, respectively (Brock, 1986). Wangru finds that the teachers appear to limit their use of questions that probe learners' knowledge when the answers are not readily known by the teacher. This, in turn, tends to limit overall classroom discourse, leaving the teacher to dominate the discourse for the sake of mitigating learner anxiety.

Arizavi et al. (2015) compared the discourse of two language teachers and noted that one teacher asked far more display questions than referential questions, while the other teacher had a more noticeable balance of both question types. Despite this, an analysis of the extent of elaboration in student responses indicated that the first teacher was able to elicit more detailed answers than that elicited by the second teacher. As a result, the researchers assert the importance of limiting the use of excessive "known-answer questions," but also state that "both types of questions have their places in classrooms and teachers should use them adequately to achieve certain purposes" (p. 547).

The contradiction between instruction and conversation is apparent when employing instructional discourse strategies that, in turn, limit opportunities for conversational interaction with students. For example, Danli (2017) explored the question of scaffolding strategies and power dynamics. In one telling example, the teacher in that study "performed dominant roles to push the students to generate answers through frequent use of questions and explicit feedback" (p. 424). Motivating students to engage in interaction requires an overt and controlling act on the teacher's part, per the findings of this study. Moreover, Jing and Jing's (2018) study discusses a teacher's propensity to control classroom discourse through additional questioning in response to perceived classroom silence. The assertion that connects the tendency of a teacher to dominate the interaction to the teacher's fear of silence speaks to the broader cognitivist goal of ensuring learners' target language output above all other considerations.

The imperative to foster a positive and nonthreatening classroom atmosphere may also conflict with the imperative of generating general participation. Alsubaie (2015) highlights instances where the teacher provides abundant positive encouragement to students, which may be seen as validating students' language performance but leaves little opportunity for other students to contribute input to the classroom discourse. In contrast, Yashima et al. (2018) assert that, when the teacher does relinquish control of the classroom discourse through decreased reliance on IRF interactions, limiting their

control over the classroom discourse, the likelihood of interaction with and among students is bound to increase.

This raises one final point about open dialogue and instructional conversation in general. Le and Rendaya (2017), in observing L2 English teachers with a perceived high level of English proficiency, pointed out that general English proficiency alone is insufficient in fostering a degree of open interaction necessary to what was perceived as an adequate negotiation of meaning of target language utterances. Knowing when to prompt students and when to relinquish control of the discourse, a skill not readily indexed to general language proficiency, appears to be a central aspect of successful instructional conversation.

Discussion

The analysis of the literature suggests that instructional conversation is apparent in discrete elements in language learning contexts, while IC as a whole is yet to be fully examined. The need in this literature review to inductively examine instructional conversation in the current research highlights the divergence of theories that are relevant to teacher discourse in language education. As a result, while elements of instructional conversation may be present in language education, it can be argued that the more central aims of Vygotskian approaches to learning are, indeed, missing in the current research orientation.

Discussion of IC theory as applied to this literature review should raise questions about the input hypothesis/output hypothesis orientation found in the contemporary research and its current capability to address theories regarding learners' zones of proximal development. Scholars in language education should consider whether the expansion of target language-related ZPDs in learners can be served by a mere exercise of linguistic expression or if it requires a more conscientious effort in developing thought processes regarding language and literacy.

Finally, researchers and practitioners should consider the extent to which the epistemologies implied in the theories to teacher discourse highlighted in the collected research address the ideals of learner-centeredness embodied in contemporary approaches to language teaching. Alternatively, scholars should also critically examine whether such theories merely perpetuate the existing power dynamics that privilege the teacher's voice over that of their students. In establishing this distinction between the cognitivist and sociocultural orientations, between concerns of quantifiable input and output and emphasis on mutual meaning-making processes between teacher and student, future research can then explore the possible correlation between both approaches and their respective contributions to learning outcomes in language education.

Limitations

The assertions made through analysis and discussion of the studies in this literature review are based on the presentation of those studies in the literature. Synthesizing literature that does not address instructional conversation holds limitations in that the purposes of the original data collection are substantively different than the goals outlined in the research questions outlined in this paper (Schensul et al., 1999). Moreover, without access to the primary data, there are limits on the reliability of the interpretations of the literature that led to the generation of assertions advanced in this paper.

Given how a portion of the collected literature deals with multimodality (e.g., pragmatic and written discourse in addition to spoken communication), analysis of a number of studies is also limited in the scope of discussion in that data collection from most classroom observations presented in this literature review are restricted only to spoken discourse. Where possible, future research should expand data collection to take notice of nonverbal forms of communication in order to account for the full range of

input and output that is present within the language classroom. Even where the measure of input and output is imperative to the study of language education, the collection of data that documents the visual elements of the classroom can, at minimum, provide important context about language education that may be unfamiliar to consumers of empirical research (Schensul et al., 1999).

Finally, there are a number of studies that report teachers' discursive strategies without giving sufficient treatment to how students respond. Peng et al. (2014), for example, point out expressions uttered by the teacher to highlight what politeness strategies are employed within the classroom. However, the presented findings appear to be limited to the teacher's intent, rather than whether students respond positively to such strategies. Studies such as Sato (2015) and Shea (2017) use questionnaires or retrospective interviews to capture the students' perspectives after classroom observations, but a number of the studies in this literature collection are limited strictly to direct observation of classroom interactions. While studies that employed data collection methods requiring direct observation were a central focus in this literature review, it is important to recognize how other methods can more ably capture behavioral and attitudinal patterns within all classroom participants. Such limitations, of course, can only reinforce the need for further research on this topic.

Conclusion

This literature review aimed to articulate the current state of research on teacher discourse in university EFL classroom contexts, with the principles of instructional conversation theory applied critically to the available data and discussion in the contemporary literature. What a discussion of the recent literature highlights is the substantial potential for researchers to explore a more holistic view of instructional conversation in the foreign language classroom, whose potential distances of language, literacy, and culture between a teacher and their students make apparent the need for mediated dialogic interactions (Hall, 1993). Despite the respective histories of

instructional conversation theory and language education, there is very limited current research that explores teacher discourse in the foreign language classroom beyond the mere potential to expose learners to target language input or draw out target language output in learners.

In other words, while the teacher discourse strategies outlined in this paper can be associated with elements of instructional conversation, it is not for certain that those strategies can foster dialogic interaction without a more conscientious and holistic effort to foster a mutually open classroom dialogue. What appears to be missing from the current discussions on EFL education, at least in university contexts, is exploration of best pedagogical practices oriented toward dialogic interaction, particularly in language learning contexts where mediation is of utmost importance. A more critical examination of the current research orientation in the field, as a result, should be given due consideration.

If a primary goal of the teaching of foreign languages, according to Pratt et al. (2008), is to facilitate the growth of "educated users of a [target] language who have deep *translingual and transcultural competence* in [the target language]" (p. 289), then it is necessary to look beyond simple orientations of input and output and tap into the resources and knowledge that learners bring to the classroom. Future research, therefore, should examine how teacher discourse balances both the teaching of the mastery of knowledge and skills necessary for target language usage while also eliciting students' ideas in the target language to foster that mastery among learners. Scholarly literature on language teaching can benefit from further qualitative research that examines teacher discourse through an analytical lens that examines the presence and depth of dialogue within the language classroom.

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