Investigating Iraqi English Secondary School Teachers' Classroom Strategies

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الخلاصة

هذه الدراسة هي عن المدرس الفعال للغة الانكليزية في المدارس الإعدادية وقد ركزت على الإستراتيجيات الصفية في أربع محاور : إدارة التفاعل الصفي، التساؤل، التغذية الراجعة للمدرس، وأخيرا تصحيح الأخطاء . وقد أكدت النتائج على أن المدرسين يستخدمون بعض الإستراتيجيات التي تشجع الطلبة على التحدث داخل الصف من اجل خلق صف متفاعل .

الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو لتعريف وبحث أهم الاستراتيجيات التي يستخدمها المدرس الفعال لخلق صف متفاعل .

اثنتان من النظريات العلمية تم اعتمادها في التفاعل الصفي ، الأولى هي الأنواع السلوكية وهي بدورها تصف سلوك المدرس والطالب في ضوء نتائج المهارات السلوكية في اكتساب اللغة . وهي تتطلب استخدام شكل أو جدول يتألف من أنواع متعددة من السلوك .

النظرية الثانية المعتمدة في هذه الدراسة هي تحليل الخطاب وقد استخدمت كأداة للوصف المنظم لأنواع التفاعل الذي يقع في الصف. تهدف الباحثتان للإلمام بجميع ما يقوم به المدرسين والطلبة وكل ما بخص موضوع الدراسة.

Abstract

This study is about Iraqi excellent English secondary school teachers' classroom strategies . The study focuses on teachers' classroom strategies in four aspects: managing classroom interaction, questioning,

teacher's feedback and error correction. The findings show that the teachers use some classroom strategies that encourage students to speak at class in order to create an interactive classroom.

The purpose of this study is to identify and investigate what exact strategies the excellent teachers use to create an interactive classroom. Two kinds of approaches are mainly used in the studies of EFL classroom interactions (Chaudron,1988: 1) Behavioral Category: behavioral category classifies behaviors of the teacher and students in terms of language skill acquisition consequences of the behaviors. It involves the use of a form or schedule consisting of a set of categories for coding specific classroom behaviors. 2) Discourse analysis: discourse analysis serves as a device for systematically describing the kinds of interactions that occur in language classrooms. The researchers aim to account for the joint contributions of teacher and students and describe all the data.

Introduction

1.1 The Problem and its Significance

for teacher effectiveness than ever before, and we are seeing that teacher effectiveness is becoming a significant part of the national discussion on education. The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers" (McKinsey & Company, 2007). In fact, the single greatest factor affecting student achievement is classroom instruction and the strategies that teachers use in their classes (Ur, 2012: 296).

Aims of the Study

The study aims at investigating teachers' strategies the excellent Iraqi secondary school teachers use to create an interactive classroom.

1.3 The Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that excellent Iraqi secondary school teachers' strategies are in agreement with students' ideal teacher strategies showed in the questionnaire.

1.3 Limits of the study

This study is limited to:

1. Classroom strategies in four aspects: interaction management, questioning, teacher's feedback and error treatment.

2. Excellent Iraqi secondary school teachers.

1.5 Procedures

To achieve the aim of the present study, the following procedures will be adopted by the researcher to collect data:

1. Excellent teachers from three Iraqi secondary school are chosen to represent the study sample (They are chosen from several classes because their classes were highly interactive).

Teachers are the executors of teaching. They play a significant role in instruction designs, teaching activities and classroom management. With gifted students' acute desire for extensive and profound knowledge, along with external pressure and parents' relatively more attention (Shahbazi, 2009:3), only love and patience could not guarantee successful teaching.

The study on foreign language teachers' classroom strategies is neither the study on teaching methodology, nor the study on the teaching of grammar, vocabulary, listening, reading and so on. It focuses on the real classroom process, classroom interaction, aiming at finding out what kinds ofteacher's behaviors will contribute to students' language acquisition, so as to improve teachingefficiency (Yang Xueyan, 2003:259). Defining the excellent teacher is difficult; (Daniels &Bizar,2005:11). Excellent teaching evolves from experiences and beliefs about teaching (Wideen, Mayersmith, & Moon, 1998: 130), particularly as beliefs "are parts of the foundation upon which behaviors are based" (Enochs& Riggs, 1990: 694). The difficulties in defining excellent teaching are embedded in the numerous characteristics and roles of the classroom teacher. One of the greatest challenges facing today's school teachers is the challenge of raising the expertise of their teachers. We hear more calls

craft which has a set of specialized and skilled physical techniques thatteachers have to master them during their education. (Kontra, 1997: 242)

Teaching strategies shape the learning environment. As part of the lesson design, an effective teacher selects a particular teaching strategy or set of strategies to engage students in learning. There are teaching strategies that can be transferred from one subject to the next. There are also strategies that are more specific to a subject area. There is a growing and authoritative consensus that the most effective professional teacher education is focused on teachers' classroom practice and strategies (Earley&Bubb, 2004:.89).

2.2 Teaching Strategies

Strategies are defined as the specific methods of approaching a problem or task, the modes of operation for achieving a particular end and the planned designs for controlling and manipulating certain information (Brown, 2007: 119)

Teaching strategies refer to the structure, system, method, techniques, procedures, and processes that a teacher uses during instruction. Marzano (1998:62) conducted a theory- based meta-analysis of studies on instruction, which he defines as " those direct and indirect activities orchestrated by the teacher to expose students to new knowledge, to reinforce knowledge, or to apply knowledge".

2.3 Promoting Positive Classroom Interactions

2. Questionnaires are conducted among 100 students in Baghdad. It consists of two parts: one is structural, in which students' attitudes are investigated; the other is open. Students' comments are encouraged to write here. The questionnaire is modified several times and three pre-tests were done among 60 students before it is finally conducted.

3. Interviews are also conducted among some of the student to investigate how they could be encouraged to speak at class.

4. Checklist under the supervision of a number of specialists who examine its validity and make any comments, suggestions and modifications if necessary.

5. Interpreting the results in the light of the hypothesis by using the proper statistical means that suit the study.

1.6 Value of the Study

1.The present study is expected to be of value for Iraqi secondary school students.

2. Teachers of English to devise the essential and appropriate strategies that will help students overcome their difficulties in learning English successfully.

3. Curriculum designers to be aware of such kind of strategies.

2. Theoretical Background
2.1 Introduction

Teaching is viewed as an artistic performance that depends in large measures on the characteristics of the particular teacher and so cannot be reliably predicted from teacher education. Also, teaching is seen as a

classrooms when they model interpersonal concern, nurture student autonomy and self-direction, encourage student thinking, and facilitate student collaboration (Watson & Battistich, 2006: 56).

2.4 Questioning Techniques: Research-Based Strategies for Teachers

Questioning techniques are a heavily used, and thus widely researched, teaching strategy. Research indicates that asking questions is second only to lecturing.

WHY ASK QUESTIONS?

Teachers ask questions for a variety of purposes, including:

To actively involve students in the lesson
To increase motivation or interest
To evaluate students' preparation
To check on completion of work
To develop critical thinking skills
To review previous lessons
To nurture insights
To assess achievement or mastery of goals and objectives
To stimulate independent learning

A teacher may vary his or her purpose in asking questions during a single lesson, or a single question may have more than one purpose. In general, research shows that instruction involving questioning is more effective than instruction without questioning. Questioning is one of the nine research-based strategies presented in Classroom Instruction That Works (Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock 2001: 11).

TYPES OF QUESTIONS

Educators have traditionally classified questions according to

It is important to foster a positive relationship with each and every student in your classroom, and to foster these relationships among students as well. Taking time at the beginning of and during the year to get to know what your students value is time well spent(Mawhinney& Sagan, 2007: 231).

Students value teachers who value them. Even students who are living in seemingly intolerable situations, but have an adult who cares about them outside of their home environment will adjust their behavior by taking care to safeguard that relationship. In doing so, many students begin to internalize the value system of the caring adult. For that reason, bonds with adults are essential for a student's healthy social and emotional development. By showing students that you care about who they are, you can foster positive relations with them. By encouraging other students to care for one another, you can foster positive relations among each and every person whom you teach(ibid) .

Teachers develop positive relationships with their students by constantly exhibiting respect, courtesy, fairness, caring, and understanding (Moore, 2007:151). High teacher expectations regularly foretell positive student goals and interest in class, and negative teacher feedback is correlated with low academic achievement and inappropriate social behavior (Wentzel, 2002: 32).

Teachers encourage the development of a sense of community in their

incorrect answer is given or students misinterpret the question. Teachers may probe for further explanation when a partial answer is given. Finally, teachers may validate a correct response(Nunan 1991:104). Research in this area shows that redirection and probing are effective when they are explicitly focused on student responses. Vague or critical feedback (such as "That's not right, try again") has been shown to be unrelated to achievement(C. Chaudron 1988: 133).

2.6 Strategies to Minimize classroom Managing interaction problems.

1. Write out some questions when planning the lesson.

Teachers seldom write down their questions while planning; instead they generate them extemporaneously during the lesson. This approach can lead to vague questions that do not engage students in deep, high-quality thinking and, consequently, unengaged learners may misbehave out of confusion or boredom.

Wilen et al.(2004:167) encouraged teachers to generate questions that are clearly written, appropriate for the students' ability, and sequenced in a logical way.

To go a step further in their support, teachers can project the planned questions on a screen using overheads or PowerPoint® slides. By doing so, all students can see them on the screen and hear the teacher asking them.

In effect, the instruction becomes clearer and multisensory by Bloom's Taxonomy, a hierarchy of increasingly complex intellectual skills. Bloom's Taxonomy includes six categories:

Knowledge – recall data or information

Comprehension – understand meaning

Application – use a concept in a new situation

Analysis – separate concepts into parts; distinguish between facts and inferences

Synthesis – combine parts to form new meaning

Evaluation – make judgments about the value of ideas or products

Some researchers have simplified classification of questions into lower and higher cognitive questions. Lower cognitive questions (fact, closed, direct, recall, and knowledge questions) involve the recall of information. Higher cognitive questions (open-ended, interpretive, evaluative, inquiry, inferential, and synthesis questions) involve the mental manipulation of information to produce or support an answer (Moore, 2007:151).

2.5 Feedback: Redirecting, Probing, and Responding

Feedback is an inevitable constituent of classroom interaction (C. Chaudron 1988: 133). It is a verycomplex phenomenon. Lots of research shows that positive feedback is more helpful to improve learners' behavior than negative feedback .A teacher's response to students' answers is just as important as the question asked. A response may redirect students when an

resemble the skills associated with playing video and computer games. Teachers should use this cueing technique cautiously because the noise and enthusiasm levels can quickly escalate out of control. If the cueing strategy is used before the question is asked, then the problems should be few because the students know the teacher's expectations.

• Ask all students to think of an answer before asking the question

5. Ask questions that are the appropriate level for each student. There is an old saying, "success breeds success."When students feel success, they are more inclined to persist with a task. To help them feel success, the teacher should tactfully ask questions at the appropriate level.

6. Ask questions that elicit positive or correct responses. This technique often is used by speakers to keep their audience engaged for as long as possible.

7. Provide students with sufficient wait time after asking a question and before responding to their comments. In a study on questioning, Rowe (1974) found that teachers wait a mere 0.9 seconds on average for their students to respond to a question. This amount of time is too short for average learners to complete the four mental steps that are required to answer a question. Students must first hear the question and decide whether they understand it. Second, they must recall the information from their memories. Third, they must consider whether their response will be accepted; and,

providing both auditory and visual input.

2. Establish your expectations for behavior before beginning the questioning period. Teachers may want to remind students to raise their hands, listen carefully to classmates' comments, and respect one another's right to self-expression (Emmer, Evertson, and Worsham 2006: 22).

3. Call on a variety of students. The elements of surprise and uncertainty are ways to "keep students on their toes" during a discussion. Teachers can keep students' attention by calling on them randomly.

4. Cue students before asking the question. Classroom management problems arise because well intentioned students cannot read their teacher's mind and thus do not know how to respond. Cueing the class before asking the question can minimize disruptive outbursts. Four cueing techniques are available:

• Call on a specific student and then ask the question

• Ask students to raise their hands and then ask the question

• Ask students to shout out the answer and then ask the question . Best used at the beginning of a discussion, this approach encourages participation because students do not have to worry about the correctness of their answers. Furthermore, bright learners tend to like the chance to demonstrate their quick intellectual reflexes, many of which

feedback (Burden2003:43). Respond to every answer and offer specific praise.

By doing so, teachers show their students that they value their ideas. As a result, students will be more inclined to behave because they know that they are respected. Furthermore, if a student does not seem to understand, ask a classmate to rephrase the question or rephrase it yourself.

11. Ask follow-up questions.

The goal of a question-and-answer session is to get everyone to talk, and one way to foster more discussion is to ask follow-up questions.

12. Encourage students to ask questions.

The teacher is usually the person who asks the questions during the discussion. In a longitudinal study of elementary and secondary school classes, Dillon (1990)found that each student asks only one question per month on average. Teachers must take deliberate steps to get their learners to ask questions. At the beginning of the school year, a short activity or game could be planned that requires the class to ask questions about a topic. For example, students could play the game "Twenty Questions." Repeating the activity and rewarding participants will foster the desired behavior. Once the classroom culture of questions has been established, students then will feel more comfortable asking them(ibid).

3. Procedures

3.1 Population & Sample

fourth, they must decide whether the teacher will praise or rebuke their response (Jones and Jones 2004: 220).

8. Vary the way students respond to questions.

Responding verbally is the most common way for students to answer the teacher's question. An alternate approach is to ask everyone to jot down an answer before calling on a student (Thompson 1998:43). The act of writing makes the question-and-answer session more multisensory; specifically, it adds a tactile component to the lesson. Requiring students to record their answers encourages wider participation by the class and reduces management problems because students are too busy writing and do not have time to misbehave. In addition, the teacher may want to call on several people before providing the answers. Again, this strategy provides more opportunities for participation, thus reducing management problems (Wilen et al.2004:167).

9. Vary the person who responds to the questions.

Rather than the teacher always responding to the students, another variation is to ask classmates to respond to one another's responses. This approach promotes positive social interaction by encouraging respectful listening.

10. Respond to every answer and correct errors.

Listen carefully to students' comments and maintain a high ratio of positive to negative verbal

at class. It consists of 45 items of teacher's classroom strategies drawn from the literature review. The questionnaire is designed to investigate the ideal teacher's classroom behaviors to motivate them to speak at class. It consists of two parts: one is structural, in which students' attitudes are investigated by using Likert Scale; the other is open.

Interview Guide is designed to investigate students' inner thoughts toward some of the classroom strategies.

3.4 Face Validity

Face validity is the best type of validity in the case of self-rating (Nunnaly, 1972:353). It is secured if the list of items appears to be measuring what is intended to be measure(Ebel, 1972:78).

After constructing the checklist items, they are submitted to the jury to assess its validity. Jury members were selected on the basis of their specialization and experience in the field of education, psychology, and EFLT. Each member of the jury was requested to point out his/her remarks and suggestions about the suitability of questionnaire items. Accordingly, some items have been modified and others excluded. The majority of jury members have verified the validity of the questionnaire items. The remaining are 20 which constitute the final version of the questionnaire.

The jury of experts are:

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The population refers to any set of items, individuals, etc . Which share some common and observable characteristics and from which a sample can be taken (Richards . et al ,1992:282) . The population of this research comprises Iraqi secondary school teachers and their students for the academic year (2012 – 2013).

Sampling as defined by Al-Samawi (2000:112) is selecting a number of individuals to represent the population. Berg (2004:34) states that the logic of using a sample of subjects is to make interferences about some larger population from a smaller one (a sample).

The population comprise three excellent teachers from three secondary schools are chosen to represent the main study sample and fifty Students' comments are developed to be used here. Questionnaires are conducted among 100 students in Dejlah secondary school in Baghdad. Interviews are also conducted among some of the student to investigate how they could be encouraged to speak at class.

3.2 The Instrument of the study

In order to fulfill the aim of the present study, which is "identifying the main strategies that are used by the qualified and effective teachers", Three data collection instruments are used: Questionnaire on secondary English Teachers Classroom Strategies and the Student Interview Guide.

The Observation Checklist is designed to identify what strategies the excellent teachers employ to encourage students to speak English

operation between the teacher and students, it is usually considered normal for the teachers to make many of the managerial decisions, about who should talk, to whom, on what topic, in what language and so on.

According to D. All Wright and K.M. Bailey (1991: 19), successful interaction in a classroom involves everybody managing at least five different things: participants' turn distribution, topic, task, tone and code. Table 1 shows what is observed in the excellent teachers' classrooms

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3.5Results and discussion
3.5.1 Managing Classroom Interaction

Although everything happened in a classroom depends on the co-

Table 1 Checklist of Teachers' classroom strategies: Managing Classroom Interaction

	Managing Classroom Interaction	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C
Code	The teacher speaks English fluently.			
Emotional strategies	Speak in a tone which is friendly. Maintain eye contact with the			X
	Use nonverbal gestures such as nodding, facial expressions, hand gestures etc.			
	The position of the teacher in a classroom is flexible.			
Managing strategies	Organize the students into groups or pairs.			
	Choose topics which are related to students or the students are interested in.			
	Use humors or jokes.			X
	Encourage all the			

	students to be involved in classroom activities by questioning.			

X stands for "the behavior was not observed in the class". stands for "the behavior was observed in the class".

Questionnaire also shows that 95% of the students hope their ideal teacher would speak English fluently.

Table 1 shows all the teachers have a good command of spoken English and they all used managing strategies and emotional strategies at their classes. This is in agreement with the ideal teacher's behaviours showed in the questionnaire.

3.5.2 Questioning strategies

Efficient questioning can stimulate student to participate in classroom activities (Ur, 1996). Strategies employed by the three excellent teachers when questioning are showed in Table 2.

Teacher's language proficiency is a factor of teacher-student interaction. As a good manager and model so he will set a good example for the students to follow.

Table 2 Checklist of Teachers' classroom strategies: questioning strategies

	2. Teachers' Classroom Strategies	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C
Queestioning Strategies	Ask questions relevant to students.			
	Ask open-ended questions.			
	Ask follow-up questions.			
	ask for evidence to support a particular point			
	Ask different types of questions.			
Controlling strategies	Phrase the question first, and then call on the student.			
	Call on specific students to answer questions.			
	Call student's name when asking a student to answer a question.			X
	Select students to respond randomly			
	pattern when calling on students			
	Beware if the students who dominates in class by asking or answering all the questions.			
Controlling strategies	Give students sufficient time to think about before answering the question.			
	Ask questions of the entire class and			

	try to encourage all students to participate.			
	Encourage students to consult each other before answering teacher.			
	Encourage students to initiate questions.			X
	Move closer to students when asking questions.			
Nominate non-volunteers.	Repeat the question when there is no response.			
	Nominate non-volunteers.			
	Modify the question when it is not understood.		X	X

Table 3 shows all the three teachers used a lot of positive strategies. Questionnaire shows the means of positive strategies are very high. Although questionnaire shows 80 % of the students strongly agree or agree teacher's praise, some research showed simple and mechanic positive feedback such as "good", "very good" did not lead to good results(Brophy 1981, Nunan 1991). Interview shows students are not in favor of simple and mechanic, especially unreal praise. Neglecting is not observed in the classes. 93.5% of the students disagree or strongly disagree teachers' non-evaluation at class

Although64.1% of the students strongly agree the teacher's moving closer when questioning, 17.7%show their disagreement. Some students feel their relationship with the teacher would be more intimate when the teacher moves closer; while others feel it will add to their stress, and cause them to speak in lower voice.

Interview shows that some students hope the teacher would step back after they invite them to answer a question.

Modification of questions is not observed in Teacher B and C's class.

3.5. 3 Teacher's feedback

Table 3 Checklist of Teachers' classroom strategies: teacher's feedback

	Teacher's Feedback	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C
Negative Neglecting	Negative Criticize a student for his/her incorrect answer.	X	X	X
	Neglecting Respond to students' answers in a non-evaluative manner.	X	X	X

	Positive	Acknowledge students for their correct answers.			
		Summarize the student's idea.			
		Praise the student with comments.			
		Praise the student by repeating orquoting students' answer.			
		Modify the idea by rephrasing it or conceptualizing.			
		Repeat students' responses.			
		Listen to the students carefully.			

3.5. 4 Error treatment

It is discussed as an independent part in the study because it plays a very important role in classroom interaction. Teacher's strategies Employed in the classes are showed in Table 4.

Table 4 Checklist of Teachers' classroom strategies: error Correction

Teachers' Classroom Strategies	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C
Criticizing	X	X	X
Interrupting		X	X
Probing		X	
Redirecting	X		
Neglecting			
Repeating with changes			
Self-repair	X		

4.1 Conclusion

The study shows that three excellent English teachers use some of the same strategies at their classes to encourage the students to speak, so that to improve the classroom interaction. The result of the study is clearly in agreement with students' ideal teacher strategies showed in the questionnaire. Thus, we can conclude: Excellent English teachers use some classroom strategies to stimulate students to speak at class in order to create an interactive

Table 4 shows criticizing were not observed in all the three classes. As to student's oral errors, all the teachers used "neglecting". It is commonly considered ignorance of small errors will help build the self-confidence of student so as to encourage them to speak the target language. However, questionnaire and interview show that some students expect their teacher to correct their mistakes.

4.Conclusions, Recommendations & Suggestions for Further Research

students who dare not try to express
themselves.

Teachers should express genuine delight and offer a word of praise because "people are more likely to continue a conversation when other people agree than when disagree"

4.3 Suggestions for Further Research

1.A similar research is needed to investigate other excellent teachers' strategies that promote students' performance.

2.A similar research is needed to identify the problems faced by English teachers of English in using certain teaching strategies.

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classroom. What is found from this study may provide some theoretical and practical guidance to language teachers, especially new teachers, and help them know more about efficient classroom strategies to improve their teaching efficiency. It may also provide some insights into the subject matter and, though having the following limitations, may serve as a basis for furtherresearch:

1. Classroom teaching is a very complex process. It includes more aspects to be tackled and recognized.

2. The classes observed in this study are three demonstration classes. It is inevitable that some demonstrative factors exist in the classes.

4.2 Recommendations

In the light of the findings achieved and the conclusions derived , the researchers recommend the following:

The teacher should design more problem-solving tasks, two–way information gap tasks and pair or group work, for these tasks encourage more speaking turns, oral output and negotiation of meaning. Emotional strategies can help to create a good atmosphere in the classroom to improve classroom interaction.

Interaction is also an affective, temperamental matter, not merely a question of someone saying something to someone. Without mutual respect, the building of confidence, and the creating of many opportunities, classrooms will remain quiet places with inhibited

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