DYNAMIC DISCOURSE APPROACH TO CLASSROOM RESEARCH (Anne Bannink and Jet van Dam, English Department, University of Amsterdam)

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Abstract:
Today, there is a growing awareness of educational researchers and practitioners to link learning and thinking, educational success and failure to a discursive social situation which is constructed by a sense-making process. The review, therefore, focuses on a classroom practice dealing with dynamic discourse approach applying to second language classroom. The review is based on two premises: first, a classroom practice is assumed to be a key point of students' successful in learning. Second, it is considered as a part of social communities where the impact of government policies is clearly seen. In particular, the review is intended to look at how the researchers conceptualize classroom features; how they relate each of the features of the classroom; and how they address questions like how and why this phenomena occur. The review suggests that despite of its epistemological and methodological shortcomings, the current study represents a promising progress over previous works on classroom practices.

Abstrak:
Dewasa ini, kesadaran peneliti dan praktisi pendidikan tumbuh dalam rangka untuk menghubungkan proses belajar dan berpikir, keberhasilan pendidikan dan kegagalannya dalam situasi sosial diskursif yang dibangun dalam konteks proses berfikir yang efektif. Dengan demikian, artikel ini difokuskan pada praktik kelas yang berkaitan dengan pendekatan wacana dinamis yang digunakan dalam pembelajaran bahasa kedua. Tinjauan ini didasarkan pada dua premis: pertama, praktik kelas diasumsikan menjadi titik tekan dari keberhasilan siswa dalam belajar. Kedua, hal ini dianggap sebagai bagian dari komunitas sosial dimana dampak kebijakan pemerintah terkait pendidikan dapat dengan jelas terlihat. Secara khusus, reviu ini dimaksudkan untuk mencermati bagaimana para peneliti mengkonseptualisasi karakteristik kelas; bagaimana mereka menghubungkan setiap karakteristik kelas; dan bagaimana mereka menjawab pertanyaan seperti bagaimana dan mengapa fenomena ini terjadi. Tinjauan ini menunjukkan bahwa meskipun ada kekurangan secara epistemologis dan metodologis, studi saat ini mewakili kemajuan analisis yang menjanjikan berkaitan dengan penelitian praktik kelas sebelumnya.

Key words: Classroom Practice, Dynamic Discourse, Problem of Demarcation, Second Language.

INTRODUCTION

Today, there is a growing awareness of educational researchers and practitioners to link learning and thinking, educational success and failure to a discursive social situation which is constructed by a sense-making process. In the United States, for example, teachers' classroom practices are linked to students' academic performance. Many of educational reformers especially those associated with standard movements viewed the importance of a rigorous curriculum, appropriate assessments, and standard skillful teachers are likely to contribute to the improvement of students' academic performance (Wenglinsky, 2002).

Classroom problems are basically similar to social problems as a whole. Since then, social contexts of classroom must be taken into account. This is important as van Lier (1988) believes that without social context it is difficult to see how a classroom interaction can be understood and what cause-effect relationships, if they can ever be established, really mean.

This project is intended to review one classroom practice dealing with dynamic discourse approach applying to a second language classroom. This review is based on two rationales.

First, very often classroom practice is assumed to be a key point of students' successful in learning a number of articles in educational studies, In fact, classroom practices are somehow still far from being expected to that end. Secondly, we consider that classroom practices as a part of social communities where the influence of government policies in particular educational policies can clearly be investigated. Since then, we want to look at how the researchers conceptualize classroom features; how they relate each of the features of the classroom. In addition, this review wants to look into how the researchers address questions like how and why this phenomena occur.

In the first part of this review, we introduce an overview of the study. This is aimed to give a general picture of what dynamic discourse approach is about and how it is applied in the classroom. Our discussion begins with correlating epistemological point of view between dynamic discourse approach applied in the classroom and the problem of demarcation. In this section, we want to see how this study as a construct of knowledge relates to the problem of demarcation: scientific, pseudo, and everyday knowledge, from epistemological point of view.

The next discussion is about the relationship between the research design and its methodological perspective. In this part, we seek to understand how this study as a micro-ethnographic study is methodologically developed and to what extent its methodology is scientifically accepted to contribute to scientific knowledge development. On the basis of its methodological discussion, we reveal some character flaws concerning with the study design. Finally, we deal with central arguments on the discussion reported.

An Overview of the Research

This study explored dynamic discourses that happened in the multi-party talk classrooms. In its basic form, it was a theoretical reassessment of the discourse analytic tools applied in the classroom setting. Three main perspectives where these multi-party talks took place were discussed. The first perspective is viewed from emerging discourse complexity; interactional construction of competence. According to the researcher, this is about an instance of discourse which is almost prototypical exchange structure in classroom talks. Here, the analysis of the three-part *Initiation-Response-Evaluation/Feedback (IRE/F)* is presented in-depth. This is set up in a conventional teacher-fronted first English (EFL) lesson in the very first meeting of the academic year of secondary school group.

The second viewpoint is about the structural features of the interactions where the interactional construction of competence is more emphasized. This is something to do with linguistic development constructed through the creation of multimodal participation in joint activities and the exploitation of structural features of evolving discourses as well as speaker/hearer roles.

This is mentioned that two episodes from Dutch as a second language classes in a school for refugee children are discussed. The first part is given in the morning where teachers and students are seated in a circle. The second episode is done later in the day where teachers took a group of eight students to another room for a *'Total Physical Response (TPR)'* . In this episode, individual learners were called upon to follow up formulaic instructions and perform actions that identified specific landmarks in the classroom.

The third viewpoint is about the emergent discourse complexity in relation to classroom management. Here, two instructional units were used as a reflection data in a university teacher training course.

Dynamic Discourse Approach and Problem of Demarcation

According to MacDonell (1986), discourse is social in a sense that statement made, words used and meaning of words being used, depend on where and against what the statement is made. As we commonly know that there are many types of discourses. These can be identified by institutions to which they relate and by the position from which they come and which they mark out for the speakers (Macdonell, 1986). Classrooms as a unit of social community have a particular set of discourses and it is dynamic as social discourses are. What is different between a classroom and a community in a broader perspective is the arena. A classroom discourse is limited to teacher-students talk, while the latter is broader and has some different characteristics in some ways.

One of influential studies of dynamic discourse especially spoken discourse was developed at the University of Birmingham (McCarthy, 2002). This study was initially concerned with structure of discourse in the

classroom. This dealt with study of speech acts and at the same time tried to capture larger structures of the speech acts in the classroom.

Unlike the study of discourse structure developed by the University of Birmingham, the dynamic discourse approach to this classroom interaction especially multi-party talk one is more a process-oriented approach. It means that the researchers emphasise more on the flow or the move of teacher' s talk rather than on the result of the talk which can be seen as socially and situationally developed in teacher- students' talk moment-by-moment interactions.

In relation to demarcation problem, we are interested to present an illustrative example of refutation which once was theorized by Adler and Freud. *"that of a man who pushes a child into the water with the intention of drowning him/her; and that of a man who sacrifices his life in attempt to save the child"*. Each of this event, according to Popper (1969: p.35) can be explained with equal ease in Freudian and Adlerian terms. To Freud, the first man suffered from repression while the second man had achieved sublimation. According to Adler, the first man suffered from inferiority and therefore he intends to prove that he dares to commit a crime). And so was the second man, he needs to prove himself that he dares to rescue the child (Popper, 1969).

From the example presented, it can be inferred that to arrive at a scientific statement, refutability is certainly required. The statements regarding the men are two competing statements. In a sense that both of them could be equally at ease, explained Popper (1969), and therefore it would hardly be accepted as scientific truth.

Likewise, how Victor (a name mentioned in the article) expressed himself during silent period; how his face looked when he realized that he could not answer his teacher's question; and how the classroom situation during that particular moment basically yielded multilevel interpretations. Silence or confusion: pauses, short period of silence and period of confusion in which communication happened cannot clearly be understood by the observers (see Flanders, cited in Wragg &Kerry (1979). However, the researchers provided an analysis in terms of period of silence (addressed to Victor) by simply representing the absence of 'switch code' move that should be taken by his teacher though the teacher had to break the rule (English is used in the classroom). In other words, the researchers considered that Victor' s teacher had to take initiative to switch code in order to save Victor from being silent. However, the argument of Popper suggests that the period silent such in a case of Victor could be something else other than his inability to understand his teacher' s question.

Related to this problem, Popper (1969: p.37) views the importance of criteria of scientific status of a theory such as falsifiability, refutability, and testability. According to him, the problem which he tried to solve by proposing the criterion of falsifiability was neither a problem of meaningfulness and its significance, nor a problem of truth and acceptability. It was a problem of drawing a line between statements or statements systems of empirical science, and all other statements - whether they are of a religious or of a metaphysical character, or simply pseudo-scientific (Popper, 1969: p.39).

In contrast, Kuhn (1962) view that falsifiability is inadequate to falsify whether a statement could be scientifically accepted after it is falsified through observations or a series of observations or not since the paradigm which is supposed to help for comparison is under one paradigm. Therefore, falsifiability is unhelpful to understand why and how science has developed as it had. To Kuhn, in scientific practice, it is only possible for a theory after falsification is accepted as a new science if a credible alternative theory which can be used to compare the former is available.

In that point of view, Popper (1969: p.42) has strongly contrasted what Hume has previously stated that induction cannot be logically justified. Therefore there can be no valid logical arguments allowing us to establish that those instances of which we have had no experience, resemble those, of which we have had experience. Consequently, he states that even after observation of frequent or constant conjunction of objects, we have no reasons to draw any inference concerning that object beyond those of which we have had experience.

Unlike Popper, Kuhn (1962) asserts that in principle, only three types of phenomena about which a new theory might be developed. First, phenomena which have been well-elaborated by existing paradigm. However, these phenomena rarely provide either motive or point of departure for theory construction. Dynamic discourse approach to the classroom research, for example, is an approach which has been developed and undertaking prolonged time of debate. Nevertheless, the researchers were confident that

this approach is a workable approach to their study. And therefore, the researchers did not provide sufficient evidences of the applicability of this approach in relation to their claims. In relation to the rational properties of scientific and common sense activities, Garfinkle (1967), for example, claims that degree of rationality is determined by category and frequency of activity. Another point to consider is the error tolerability. In that sense, degrees of goodness to fit between observation and theory should be taken into a careful account. Dunne et al (2005:12) state that research in social settings is often recursive in nature. That is to say that in understanding what is happening we need to take into consideration contexts wider than immediate social action in which we are participating.

The second class of phenomena are those whose nature is indicated by existing paradigms. However, its details can only be understood through further theory articulation. The third type of phenomena, that is, the recognised anomalies whose characteristic feature is their unreasonable refusal to be assimilated to existing paradigm. This usually happens when the articulation of theory fails to be achieved. On the basis of Kuhn' s concept of theory development, Blunden (1998) infers that in principle, a new theory does not have to conflict with any of its predecessors. Rather, a new phenomenon might emerge without reflecting destructively upon any part of past scientific practice. Again, new theory might simply be a higher in terms of argument and analysis than those previously known.

Related to the concept of falsification, teacher-students' talks which were built up on moment-by-moment interactions, it is basically a flaw to claim that the result of the analysis is scientifically accepted as scientific knowledge for some reasons. First, from epistemological perspective, it is the nature of the researchers' claim to know things about themselves and the world they participate in and to how they justify those claims (Dunne et al, 2005).

Another reason is that the value the researchers put on their claims might be contested. In any situation, multiple truths can more likely be constructed. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) (cited in Dunne et al, 2005) states that the age of value-free inquiry for human discipline is over. Meanwhile, Gray (2003) argues the analysis of text themselves no matter how sophisticated the framework used, nor how broadly a text might be defined is limited in a way to understand circulation of culture and production of meaning. She further states that text itself can be subject to analysis and in relation to identity, race, class, gender and sexuality and therefore a claim to scientific truth is dynamic.

Research Design and its Methodological Perspectives

Before going through the analysis of the research design, let us look what research is about. Research is a term loosely used in everyday speech to describe a multitude of activities, such as collecting mass of information, investigating obscure theories, and creating wonderful new products (Walliman, 2001). In fact, there are some ways the term ' research' is wrongly used. According to Walliman (2001), the term research' is wrongly used as a mere gathering of facts or information; as a moving facts from one situation to another; as restricted theorizing activities, it is sometimes far removed from practical life; and finally; used as a word to get your product noticed. Therefore, Dunne, et.al (2005) remind us that as a social process, research has social and affective dimensions and consequences that we will explore alongside practical, technical and methodological issues that are necessary to the enterprise. They further explain that what sort of entity we think social world is; how we think we can have knowledge of it is prior and continuing questions in relation to research process.

For example, if you are interested in a teacher-students interaction in the classroom, you can do it for a short period of time and could be either part-time or full-time basis. The topic, however, should be tightly defined. This means that it is necessary for a researcher to conceptualize where the interaction happens; what the interaction is all about; how the interaction occurs; and why the interaction changes. How we understand these ideas has formative influence on how we conceive and conduct our research (Dunne et al, 2005). Lather (1997) in Dunne et al (2005:12) argues that we live in a time of post-positivists enquiry where a researcher may have a goal, prediction, understanding, emancipation, or deconstruction. All these categories embedded to researchers are connected to epistemological and methodological perspectives.

As a micro-ethnographic study, the study being reviewed essentially acquire to reveal actual discourses dynamically happened in the classroom. By this study, the researchers expects

to gain a more precise understanding of the way contexts of interpretation in classroom (multi-party situations) may emerge, change and become more complex on a moment-by-moment basis.

Bryman (2004: p. 293) suggests that it may be possible to carry out a form of micro-ethnography by focusing on a particular aspect of a topic. This is essentially related to how the research is conducted and how the data is collected. Over all, it is about methodology as much to do with reasoning as it does with data (see Anderson and Burns, 1989: p. 45). They further suggest that there are three things needed to conduct a classroom research study. First, it is a question or a set of questions that defines the purpose of a study. Second, a conceptual framework is required to guide collection and interpretation of evidences. Finally, a plan for collecting evidences are needed to address question or questions being investigated.

Willems and Raush (cited in Anderson and Burns, 1989) state that two basic questions are more general than issues of research technique. First, it is about how to obtain interpretable data; how to obtain data for which ambiguity of evaluation is reduced to the lowest possible degree. Second, given a purpose or a set of purposes; a question or a set of questions, what kind of investigative exercises, operations, and strategies should a researcher embark upon to fulfil the purpose and answer the questions.

Related to the design of the research, where the point of departure was the individual's cognitive processes inextricably interwoven with their experiences in physical and social worlds, the idea of ethno-methodology applied is in line with what Malinowski's core idea.

One of the first conditions of acceptable ethnographic work certainly is that it should deal with the totality of all social, cultural, and psychological aspects of the community, for they are so interwoven that not one can be understood without taking into consideration all the others. (Malinowski, 1922)

Denscombe presents his argument on ethnography in a more elaborative way as follows:

The points to consider to conduct an ethnographic study are the reasonable amount of time required; sharing rather than observing from a distance; routine and normal aspects of everyday life considered as research data; special attention to the people's world; a holistic approach which stresses process, relationships, connections and interdependency; the final account acknowledged more than just a description-it is a *construction.* (Denscombe, 2003)

Similarly, Hammersley (1990); Creswell (2003) emphasize an *intact* cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time by collecting primarily observational data. Meanwhile, LeCompte and Schensul (1999) assume that ethnography process is flexible and typically evolves contextually in response to the lived realities encountered in the field setting. What we can learn from (Malinowski, 1922; Hammersley, 1990; Creswell, 1999 and 2003; and Denscombe, 2003) is that in the ethnographic study, a role of a researcher basically needs a particularly longer involvement in society where he or she conducts a study. The aim of this prolonged period of participation is to help a researcher to come up with a highly reasonable amount of data collected from primary observation rather than taken from a distance.

Some Character Flaws of the Study in Relation to the Research Design.

As an ethnographic study, an unconvincing point is apparently seen in this study in relation to the in-depth of analysis presented. The first point we are concerning with is that the central question of the study was not introduced. Instead, they started with topics of discussions without providing clear descriptions about topics rather than questions. Since the absence of the research question in this study, it confuses readers especially upon what the researchers aim to achieve in the study. Though readers may grab the ideas being investigated but in some ways, in Our opinion, many readers are not patient enough to read the whole research. And therefore, a clear description about research questions are absolutely required to help readers understand the topic of investigation.

The following we introduce an illustration of how important the research question is. Finders (1996) (cited in Creswell, 2003) writes: '*How do early adolescent females read literature that falls outside the realm of fiction?'* Creswell further describes in detailed that a central question begins with 'HOW'; it uses an open-ended verb '*read'*; it also focuses on a single concept, the *'literature'* or teen magazines; and it mentions participants of the study, '*adolescent female'.*

Here, what we understand is how researchers need to craft a concise, a single question that is needed to be focused in the study. The central question especially in ethnographic

study is crucial not only for researchers themselves but also for readers. For researchers, it will help them answer questions easily because the central question has covered all aspects that researchers are going to breakdown into several detailed questions. Meanwhile, readers will benefit from clear ideas or understanding to focus on reading.

The second point we need to consider is that since the researchers claimed to collect data from various instructional contexts and from different classes, then the data might be too wide to theoretically picture the in-depth information of the classroom interaction being investigated. Whilst the aim of ethnographic study is to provide an in-depth description of a particular community (for example, classroom) rather than a number of different groups of community being in a broader sense. Hammersley (1990) states that an ethnography emphasizes on producing theoretical; analytical; and thick description - whether of societies, small communities, organization, etc. He further suggests that description must remain close to concrete reality of particular events but at the same time reveal general features of human social life.

Though this study might result a more precise understanding of the way the contexts of interpretation evolved throughout the classroom multi-party situations, there should be some things remained unclear especially those related, for example, to nonverbal interaction. Woolfolk and Galloway in Robinson (1994: p.19) claim that although a good deal of research has been done on various aspects of nonverbal communication, the studies have had little or no impact on teaching. To them, this was possibly because it was so difficult for teachers, or anyone else, to become aware of their nonverbal communication. Similarly, Hammersley (1990) describes that the case of non-verbal elements of actions is more difficult. What is required, is an accurate portrayal of patterns of physical movement.

The Central Argument on the Basis of Empirical Claims

Referring to the analysis presented by the researchers sequentially through the viewpoints of the study, it can be drawn several central arguments on the basis of empirical claims. First, the individual's cognitive processes are inextricably interwoven with their experiences in physical and social worlds. This is the idea that knowledge and the knower of knowledge are not separable. Second, the challenge for researchers is to make an expert orchestration and synchronization of classroom participation and classroom events more analytically transparent. Brew (2003) (cited in Dunne et al, 2005) suggests that anyone coming into research arena or wanting to understand more about the nature of research faces a number of puzzles. This is caused partly by the fact that traditional disciplinary research has to give a way to new forms of enquiry, requiring self-knowledge on the part of researchers. We should not consider confirmatory studies as conclusive evidence for corroborating a theory (Silva, 2007). Theoretically, research programs progress as long as its theories continue to make new prediction; empirically they progress as long as the predictions receive empirical support (Anderson and Burns, 1989).

This study is expected to promote how classroom discourses could be well understood in order to improve teaching and learning in the classroom. In relation to this issue, Wragg & Kerry (1979: p. 5) propose two aspects in which interest has commonly centered to the classroom study. The first one is verbal behaviour within which most of the classroom activities deal with such as teacher's explanation, instructions, and his/her questions. The second aspect is about non-verbal behaviour. Serbin in Delamont (1984: p.273) considers that in every classroom there is an unofficial curriculum, a part of the learning experienced that is determined by teacher's attitude and behaviour rather than a formal syllabus. For example, interpreting student' s silence during the interaction implied competing possibilities. According to the researchers, except for insightful ethnography study in speaking, they found no tools to interpret silence. Neither pedagogy nor educational linguistics could provide the tools to construe silence.

Robinson (1994) claims that in general, business of teaching is understood as the activity which is almost exclusively verbal. However, she argues that nonverbal communication is integral to classroom climate or atmosphere which in turn form context in which interaction between a teacher and students takes place. Despite the claim, it is in fact revealed that only about 35 percent of interaction happens verbally (Ross, 1989). Even less than that of previously revealed as Bennet (1990) estimated that 35 - 90 percent of the communication was channeled through nonverbal communication.

The authority of teacher is a key point in initiating negotiation once student(s) find a question hard to respond. The negotiation of meaning is important especially in learning a language of either as a second language (L2) or a foreign language (FL). Here, the researchers argue that constructing feedback on the nature of learner's problem is problematic if teacher strictly observes self-imposed rules of addressing learners exclusively in English. Lier (1988: p.20) argues that given the nature of L2 classroom as a formal setting is not an environment conducive to language development.

Conclusions

Despite of its methodological shortcomings, this current study represents a promising progress over previous works on classroom practices. Referring to overall presentation of the study, it can be concluded that the study revealed a strong argument about how ethnographic study can be applicable to classroom settings. Unfortunately, however, since the study attempts to cover three different data resources concerning with dynamic discourse in three different classroom settings, the inquiry did not seem to yield an in-depth understanding about what sort of interactions really took place during the teaching and learning process. Finally, this study is epistemologically refutable and therefore it can be fallible no matter how much data is acquired and how sophisticated method of analyzing data the researchers use. Based on Popper's principle of falsifiability, we come to an inference that a good theory should prohibit the occurrence of specific phenomena. In this sense, researchers should always be worried when a theory claims to explain almost all types of behaviours.

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