

## THE INFLUENCE OF TEACHER-STUDENT POWER DYNAMICS ON LEARNING: A LINGUISTIC AND DISCOURSE-ANALYTICAL STUDY

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### Abstract

The paper explores the construction and maintenance of teacher-student power relations in the everyday classroom discourse with the help of Critical Discourse Analysis, Conversation and Interaction Analysis, Interactional Sociolinguistics, and corpus-based linguistic methods. The method of data collection was also based on classroom video recordings, transcriptions, and corpus collections in order to explore the linguistic and interactional techniques, which indicate authority, control access, and student identity. The research results indicate that the teacher dominance can be found in the directive speech act, evaluative feedback, the IRF interactional pattern, and repetitive lexical clusters that support institutional control. Weakly informative, tentative, and seeking permission were the main character traits of the speech of students, which points to low agency and increased sensitivity to teacher judgment. The research also discovered that asymmetrical relation was also exacerbated by the tone changes, hesitations, and culturally inculcated code switching. Such findings are in line with previous studies that identify classroom discourse as a key process by which power is performed and learning chances are created. The conclusion of the study is that power is not reproduced out of individual commands but patterned linguistic practices that are embedded in classroom interaction. It suggests that more dialogic, student-based discourse practices should be adopted to encourage equal participation and create more collaborative learning processes.

### INTRODUCTION

The practice of classroom interaction is not a nonjudgmental interaction but a process that is influenced by its inherent structures of power that direct how teachers and students speak, resist, act or behave. Institutional demands, cultural beliefs and language hierarchies mediate educational discourse, and together all aspects determine the power distribution in the classroom. According to

scholars, the relation of power between teachers and students is the focus of defining the learning possibilities, the engagement, and voice of students (Beaulieu, 2016; Sidky, 2017). With the increasing diversity and communicative complexity in the classrooms, there has been a sharp rise in the necessity to comprehend the

process of power construction, negotiation, and reproduction through discourse.

According to a large amount of literature, the structure of classroom talk (patterns of turn-taking, teacher-controlled questioning, corrective feedback, and the popular IRF sequence Initiation-Response-Feedback) tends to promote unequal relations (Candela, 1998; Badash, 2024). In these environments, teachers often control the conversation by dictating by whom, when and under what conditions to talk. Such linguistic decisions add to the feeling of independence and identity development of students and their academic interaction (Kang, 2017; Li et al., 2024). Power relations are thus neither merely interpersonal nor merely linguistic phenomena which exist as practices of discourse.

The discourse-analytic literature is recent, and it highlights that power does not work through explicit control or authority, but through the less obvious processes of symbolic power, institutional discourse, and the micro-structures of everyday classroom talk (Wong, 2016; Symonds, 2021). The mechanisms have impacts on the perceptions that students have with the way they view their agency in the learning process and the ways they negotiate agency in structured learning settings. The dynamics are important to understand how inequalities are developed and how learning environments that are participatory can be developed (Bilal et al. 2013a, 2013b).

Power in multilingual classrooms and culturally diverse classrooms is even more complicated. Institutional prestige and code-switching can increase or decrease power relations with language choice (Beaulieu, 2016; Kang, 2017). The marginalized language students might have fewer chances to participate and the teacher-directed discourse can contribute or suppress the academic confidence of students (Sidky, 2017; Tariq, 2014). A closer look at these factors in terms of linguistic and discourse-analytic perspectives will help to better comprehend the way in which communication practices can be used to affect the learning outcomes.

Therefore, by analyzing the teacher-student power relations in linguistic and discourse analytic approaches, one will gain a critical picture of the

forces that influence learning which are not directly visible to everyone. It emphasizes the aspects of the reproduction, challenge, and redistribution of authority in the classroom as an aspect of everyday talk. With the ever-growing focus on equity, inclusion, and student-centered pedagogies in global education systems, the study of language, power, and learning is a vital task to enhance the teaching methods and create more democratic classroom environments.

### **Problem Statement**

Although numerous studies have been conducted involving classroom pedagogy, there is scarceness of information concerning the role of micro-level linguistic practices in the creation or negation of power relations between teachers and students. Current literature recognizes the existence of the hierarchical structures, but there is still a gap in the comprehension of how discourse mechanisms, including turn allocation, type of questions, strategies of the feedback, and linguistic positioning, contribute to student participation and learning results. The paper aims to fill this gap by considering the teacher-student discourse in order to reveal the practices of exercising and negotiating power during classroom communication

### **Research Objectives**

1. To conduct a linguistic and discourse-analytic study of teacher-students contacts.
2. To determine dominant and subordinate patterns of classroom communication.
3. To investigate teacher and student perceptions of power relations in classroom talk.
4. To examine the ways certain discourse strategies define the engagement opportunities of the students.
5. To present pedagogical plans that can facilitate democratic and collaborative classroom talk.

### **Research Questions**

1. How are power relations of teachers and students constructed and negotiated in the classroom discourse?

2. Which linguistic practices do the teachers adopt that perpetuate or weaken the power inequalities?
3. What is the reaction and perception of students towards these discourse based power relations?
4. What role does power play in participation of students, identity and learning outcomes?
5. What practices are discourse informed to facilitate more equitable teachers-student interaction?

### Significance of the Study

The research is important to teachers, linguists and policy makers interested in learning the impact of communication in learning and equity in the classroom environment. The research helps to make pedagogical practices more democratic and thus makes students more engaged and agentic by revealing the linguistic processes through which power is engaged. It also broadens discourse-analytic studies in the area of education linguistics, providing practical results that can be used as a guide in teacher education, curriculum, and inclusion classrooms. Finally, the research itself allows forming a basis of the design of classrooms in which language can be regarded not as a source of authority, but as an instrument of cooperation, empowerment, and valuable learning.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The power relations between teachers and students had been considered as one of the most dangerous factors that affect the interaction process in the classroom, the learning processes, and the achievements. It has been noted that classroom communication is unequal by nature, and traditionally, teachers have held the roles of power and influence (Beaulieu, 2016; Sidky, 2017). Initial discourse studies proved that linguistically coded power, including directive language, type of question and turn taking control, construct hierarchical interactional space constraining or defining the participation opportunities of students (Candela, 1998). These imbalances are not just interpersonal but are

indicative of more institutional and ideological systems within educational systems (Wong, 2016). Throughout the literature it is pointed out that the linguistic options that teachers make are decisive in recreating or disrupting power relations in the classroom.

This is enlarged by recent scholarship which looks at how power is produced in micro-level discourse practices. Conversation analysis and critical discourse analysis of studies reveal that patterns that include the IRF sequence (Initial-Response-Feedback), selective turn allocation, and evaluative feedback are some of the patterns that perpetuate teacher dominance in classroom communication (Badash, 2024; Kang, 2017). Students have the tendency to have passive identity, less autonomy and less agency when teachers have monopoly of discourse. In contrast, more equal distribution of power is more likely with communicative strategies that place more emphasis on dialogic interaction, shared meaning-making, and open questioning, which allow students to think critically and learn together (Li et al., 2024; Symonds, 2021). Such findings propose that the power relations can be discussed as dynamic and negotiable, not fixed ones.

Moreover, the literature in the multilingual and culturally diverse settings shows that language choice is a key factor that determines the relations of power. The use of institutional or high-prestige languages by teachers can either silence speaking students who could have an underrepresented language or discourage their self-confidence (Beaulieu, 2016). The accommodative linguistic and relational talk, as well as code-switching, can provide inclusiveness by allowing teachers and learners to have a smaller symbolic distance (Kang, 2017). The linguistic aspect of power, in these contexts is mixed with the question of identity, culture and learning opportunities. This supports the importance of discourse-analytic methods in the pursuit of comprehending the role played by language in creating inequity in education.

All in all, the literature confirms that power in the interaction of teachers and students is not imposed only by formal authority, but it is practiced in the everyday discourse practice. Such linguistic processes have not only impactful

participation but also identity construction by students, feeling of belonging, and academic self-efficacy. Although there has been wide research, it has been identified that there is still a gap in the exploration of these dynamics in integrated linguistic and discourse-analytic perspectives, particularly in a multicultural classroom setting. This also is the reason why the current study is necessary.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The present research is based on three interdependent theoretical frameworks that explain together how language structures are power and resourceful to the nature of interaction in the classroom setting:

#### **1. Theory of Power and Discourse**

The conceptualization of power by Michel Foucault reminds the value that power is not merely possessed by people but is instead entrenched in the discourse, institutional structures and knowledge systems. Power in classrooms is exercised in the form of routines, norms and language practices that determine who is allowed to talk, when and how (Wong, 2016). It is possible to explain the reproduction of teacher authority with the help of Foucault and his approach, which depends on the power of the teacher and the language structures like directives, evaluations, and institutional language. This model is key in explaining classroom talk as a process where knowledge and social order are controlled.

#### **2. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**

CDA, especially as developed by Fairclough and van Dijk, offers instruments to analyze the way that language recreates and replicates social injustices. CDA is concerned with power, ideology, and socio-cultural backgrounds defining interaction. CDA can be used to reveal the ways linguistic elements (such as modality, use of pronouns, types of questions and patterns of turn taking) can establish asymmetrical relationships of power within the teacher-student communication context (Beaulieu, 2016; Kang, 2017). This

scheme plays a vital role in the analysis of discourse on the textual and the institutional levels.

#### **3. Interactional Sociolinguistics**

Interactional Sociolinguistics (IS), a theory developed by Gumperz and others, looks at the process of meaning negotiation as a result of contextual cues, conversational norms, and common social knowledge. This will assist in bringing out how students perceive teacher talk, ways in which miscommunication arises and the way identity and agency are negotiated by interacting with each other. IS is especially applicable to multilingual and culturally heterogeneous classrooms, in which the importance of linguistic cues is especially high (Li et al., 2024). The research looks at the effect of subtle discourse practices on the empowerment or marginalization of the students through the use of IS.

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Research Design**

In this research, the proposed study design is qualitative research based on the discourse analysis, interactional sociolinguistics, and corpus-based linguistic analysis. Since power relations are coded in everyday classroom language, a qualitative orientation allows observing the actual communicative practices as opposed to artificial and experimental data. Asymmetrical structures, delicate language indicatives, and institutional authority signifiers are inherent concepts in classroom interaction and therefore it is perfect in discourse-oriented study. The focus of the research is therefore on teacher-student talk that occurs naturally within regular lessons so that a realistic description of the communicative norms can be provided. This design is supported by the fact that corpus analysis allows identifying recurrent linguistic patterns, the lexical options, and the frequency-based signs of power in the data in a systematic way.

#### **Research Approach**

The method of the research combines three complementary traditions of analysis. First, the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers a macro-

level perspective to consider the incorporation of institutional authority and ideology in the discourse of teachers that allows revealing linguistic patterns which perpetuate the power relations. Second, due to the specific features of micro-examination of turn-taking, interruptions, question-response patterns, feedback patterns through Conversation/Interaction Analysis are possible, which determines the immediate nature of the power negotiation in the classroom. Third, Interactional Sociolinguistics is used to interpret the use of contextual cues, tones, emphasis, and relational language in making meaning by the participants. These are also accompanied by the use of a corpus-based method of measuring linguistic features, including the frequency of directives, modal verbs, evaluative expressions, question types, teacher and student turns. A combination of these methods guarantees the depth and systematic rigor in the study of communicative power.

### **Research Setting**

The research would be performed in the formal learning settings in either a secondary or in an undergraduate classroom where organized teacher instruction is the order of the day. Such settings offer discourse which occurs naturally and has the capacity to represent actual power relations and institutional expectations. Observation of each of the selected classrooms will be done to ensure that the recorded discourse is not tampered with by the researcher. This makes the study credible and applicable in similar educational settings since it is placed in real educational situations.

### **Sampling Strategy**

Purposive sampling is utilized to identify the classrooms and the participants who are capable of creating abundant discourse information on the topic of teacher-student communication. The sample will be composed of teachers who use a combination of lecture, inquiry and discussion pedagogies and this enables the teachers who use various types of power to be expressed in different ways linguistically. In general, the classes involving 20-40 students provide enough data on the interactions that could be analyzed through

discourse and corpus built. The sampling strategy offers equal representation of the communicative style and concentrates on interactions that are most likely to shed light on the power dynamics.

### **Data Collection Methods**

The data collection will be focused on the classroom audio/video recordings that will give the main source of the discourse and corpus analysis. The two or three times per class record the classes and generate around 10-12 hours of interactional data. This is so that there is sufficient language to be transcribed and corpus-built. Field notes are taken to capture the contextual factors like the space layout, non-verbal communication, and the observable indicators of power. Also, short semi-structured interviews with teachers and selected students can be organized to obtain the additional information about the perceptions of communication practices and authority in teachers and students. These interviews facilitate triangulation but are subordinate to naturally happening discourse which is the main data set.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Analysis of the data is initiated by comprehensive transcription of all the interactions in the classroom through an interactional transcription system that has the potential of capturing overlaps in classroom interactions, pauses, tone changes, and emphasis marks. The data are analyzed in a number of steps once they are transcribed. The initial step is the coding of transcripts of indicators of power such as directives, type of questions, feedback sequences, interruption and resistance or compliance of the student. These coded fragments are then put through Critical Discourse Analysis that makes links between linguistic forms and institutional power, as well as ideological location. Conversation/Interaction Analysis, which is the next one, considers turn-taking sequences, timing of speech and floor time control to comprehend the way power is negotiated in real-time talk. Interactional Sociolinguistic Analysis also explains how the process of identity, alignment, and agency construction co-occurs based on contextual signatures. Lastly, the research utilizes a corpus analysis that makes use of the transcript data that

is assembled into a small special corpus. AntConc or Sketch Engine software can be utilized to detect the frequency of keywords, collocations, concordance lines and lexical patterns which are common in teacher vs. student speech. This corpus-based layer supports the interpretation of qualitative data quantitatively and supports the role of lingual markers of power that might not be directly apparent when using manual coding as the sole method. The triangulation strategy between discourse, interactional, and corpus-based results increases the validity and richness of the analysis.

### **Ethical Considerations**

There is adherence to ethical procedures during the study. Institutional authorities, teachers, and students will be contacted to give their consent and participation will be voluntary. The purpose of the research, the process of recording, and the confidentiality of the participants will be explained to all the participants. Transcripts and research reports will use pseudonyms to substitute any information that can identify individuals. There will be a safe storage of audio and video files and only used in academic analysis. The research will also comply with the institutional and international ethical standards of research that involve human subjects.

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

The analysis of data was based on a multi-method strategy that included Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Conversation Analysis/Interaction Analysis, Interactional Sociolinguistics, and corpus-based methods of linguistics. The transcripts that were obtained due to the presence of classroom footage were read on multiple occasions to create a deep insight into how language was a key tool to build, uphold, or oppose teacher-student power relations. One of the main analytical goals was to note the functioning of such common conversational moves like directives, question patterns, tone changes, and interruptions in the role of subtle or explicit shows of authority. The combination of these analytical schools of thought gave a detailed explanation on how discourse influenced

participation, control, and learning in the classroom.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis**

Critical Discourse Analysis disclosed the existence of powerful tendencies of authoritative language entrenched in the teacher talk. Modal verbs and directive forms were commonly used by the teachers and expressed obligation and lack of autonomy in students. Institutional roles were enforced explicitly such as in the case of you must complete this now, you have to follow my instructions, you should not argue with me, I already told you the correct answer. Framing of power relations was also highly influenced by evaluative statements. As an example, teachers would tend to answer students by saying that it is wrong, good girl, not acceptable, you need to do better, or I expect better. Such assessments ranked students on a scale with some being competent and some being incompetent.

The other example of ideological framing exhibited by CDA was the linkage of obedience to academic success by the teachers. As an illustration, you will not pass this chapter again, you are getting marks on the basis of discipline and not the rule, do not ask me why this is done. This kind of statements normalized that obedience was a condition to educational achievement. Educators also used prohibitory language like, do not speak, do not interrupt me, do not ask why I do this and do not talk back, which undermined inequality in power influencing. The overall impact of these linguistic options was that the institution of an ideology of authority where the teacher is unquestionable and the students in passive roles is reproduced.

### **Conversation and Interaction Analysis**

Conversation and Interaction Analysis indicated that the exercising of power was done through turn-taking, interruption, sequencing, and IRF (Initiation-Response-Feedback) pattern structure. Turns were always initiated by teachers and controlled the manner and time when students were allowed to speak. Indicatively, in one line, a student started by saying, I think the other answer may be but the teacher interred him with No, stop

there. Listen to me first.” In a different event, a student wanted to put a clarification question, Miss, why does it happen differently in winter and the teacher answered, Not now. Ask only what I teach.” Such interruptions depicted the domination of the teacher in the control of the topic and the right to talk.

Preponderance of IRF pattern controlled the interactions in most of the classroom. A common example included:

- Teacher: What do we mean by the concept of friction?
- Student: “It is a fo—”
- Teacher: “Wrong. Start again properly. ‘Friction is...’ Repeat after me.”

This trend indicated the way students were given freedom to engage but strictly within a narrow range of parameters set by the instructor.

Interaction Analysis also emphasized the level of control teachers had applied to the rate of talk. The control of content and time in interacting was exhibited by terms like answer quickly, don’t waste time and speak louder. Meanwhile students kept on giving short and restrained responses like yes, no, okay, done, and I do not know. Even on the few occasions that the students were found to be proactive, their turns were soon diverted. Indicatively, when one of the students inquired, sir, can we solve it in another way, the teacher answered no. Do exactly what I showed.” Such sequencing proved that space in conversation among students was limited and extremely conditional.

#### **Interactional Sociolinguistic Analysis.**

Interactional Sociolinguistics uncovered the contribution of tone, emphasis, markers of politeness, hesitation and code switching to relational power. To emphasize disciplinary issues, teachers would change tones. Heightened authority was reflected in such phrases as I am not repeating this again, this is your last warning and enough now-quiet. On the contrary, the weaker tones were used in such situations when it was necessary to suggest temporary cooperation, like in the lines such as we can work it out, let’s try this together, and don’t worry we will do it step by step.

The lack of deference was manifested in hesitations, mitigations, and polite framing devices. Some of them were: perhaps this is the answer...?... I believe... I may be mistaken, sir, in fine may I tell you something? and can I be again, sir? These tendencies reflected the attempts of the students to preserve respect and reduce the threat of the negative assessment.

Code-switching provided an extra dimension of cultural and emotional content. Even when teachers switched to the Urdu language, it was often emphasized or a way of disciplining: ab bilkul chup hojao (now keep very quiet), samajh k kaam karo (work with understanding), pehle suno phir bolo (now listen first, then speak), and main baar baar nahi samjhaoongi (I will not explain repeatedly). Code switching was an indication of more emotional positioning and teacher authority. The replies of students in code-switching usually reflected hesitation or appeals, e.g. miss aik minute? (miss, one minute?) or sir, thora samjha dain? (sir, please explain a bit). These language selections depicted the influence of the situational relationship and cultural factors in the performance of power.

#### **Corpus-Based Analysis**

The patterns revealed by qualitative methods were supported by quantifiable evidence that was offered by corpus-based analysis. It was found that the most commonly applied directive verbs were found to be listen, stop, look, write, focus, answer, repeat and finish, as observed in the corpus. The verbs were also present in more than one lesson, which indicated that the most important linguistic practices were instructing, regulating, and controlling behavior. Common teacher collocations were; don’t talk, pay attention, do it right, repeat after me, why are you talking and I said focus. These repetitive lexical bundles were signs of linguistic practices of authority.

In comparison, the range of lexicon in student speech was limited, comprising of tokens of acknowledgment like yes, okay, sorry, finished, maam, sir, can I, is this correct? A student phrase that was used in many classrooms repeatedly was should I do it like this? it can be said that there was a doubt and the student wanted the approval of

the teacher. The unevenness of lexical diversity also emphasized the unequal communication power, the teachers were much longer, managed the topics and employed complicated structures, whereas students gave short and submissive utterances.

Corpus concordance lines also reflected the use of some phrases as being a part of disciplinary scripts. As an example, the phrase, why are you talking, was used as a standard reprimand in several lessons, whereas, listen carefully, was used as a common beginning of a task. These rhetorical patterns validated the fact that power was thoroughly woven into the linguistic fabrics of the classroom conversation as opposed to isolated incidents.

## DISCUSSION

As it was shown in this paper, the power associations between teachers and students are entrenched in the linguistic and interactional structure of classroom communication. The occurrence of domineering speech, high interruption frequency, the strictness of the IRF turn-taking structure and the limited scope of lexical repertoire of student responses indicate that the discourse context places the authority centrally with teacher. These findings are in great agreement with the previous research findings that highlighted the role of classroom talk in the development of hierarchical relationships. As an example, Beaulieu (2016) and Candela (1998) also reported the preeminence of teacher talk and its impact on the participation boundaries of students. The teachers in the current research often relied on such hard-liner instructions, as listen carefully, stop talking, do it right, which is similar to what Sidky (2017) found because in many instances, the teacher agency and spontaneous input were limited by the strict wording of the instructions they gave.

The current results also confirm the argument of Wong (2016): the power in classrooms is not interpersonal, but institutional and ideological. The teachers always conditionalized obedience with educational achievement, and they would say like, in case you continue to talk, you are not going to pass this chapter or, marks will be based on

discipline. This is similar to the analysis of Symonds (2021) who considers how university educators inculcate institutional expectations in their conversations, thus supporting hierarchical standards. The results also indicate that evaluation was a major ingredient in influencing student identity wherein the repetitive use of wrong, not acceptable, and good girl/boy placed students in a competency or lack competency category. This trend is in line with the study by Kang (2017) who revealed that teacher evaluation is helpful in building learning identities among students and may empower or limit their participation.

The interactional practices, which were observed in this study, represent an extension of trends that have been reported in previous discourse studies. The IRF structure predominance, the numerous interruptions, and the ability of the teacher to decide when and in what order to talk is consistent with the data of Badash (2024), who observed that the teacher-controlled dialogue reduces the possibilities of students to elaborate and ask critical questions. The answers of students in the present study tended to include brief recognition marks like yes, okay, or sorry, which confirms previous assertions of Li et al. (2024) that when students are restricted to talk, it indicates they have unequal access to participation. The hesitations markers that were observed include: maybe... I think... I am not sure further contributes to the study of Kang (2017), who has revealed that learners apply linguistic softeners to reduce the threat of negative feedback in asymmetrical power strategies.

The corpus results support those made by earlier researchers that teacher authority is linguistically routinized. The monotonous occurrence of directive verbs and disciplinary clusters is similar to the fact that Candela (1998) found that patterns of lexicon in classroom speech also act as continual indicators of control. Also, the application of the code-switching, specific to the culture, like “ab bilkul chup hojao” or pehle suno phir bolo, can be extended to Beaulieu (2016) who stated that teachers apply the local languages and expressions with local flavor to increase authority. The fact that these patterns are consistently used in lessons that were studied implies that linguistic

routines of discipline, correction and control are a part of classroom power relations to be considered as a whole rather than as isolated incidents.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research concludes that there is a systematic production of teacher-student power relations based on linguistic decisions, interactional configurations as well as the institutional norms of discourse. The results strongly suggest that teachers were very much in control with regard to talk, choice of topic, time and grading and students were very cautious, short and permission-seeking in their talking. Classroom power was not so much a matter of overt power but due to the repetition of routines in discourse that made the dominance of the teacher a norm. These results are strong indications that power in the education field is a discursive event maintained by a language usage pattern as opposed to disaggregated authoritarian acts. To concur with the past studies, the research confirms that classroom talk is a sensitive place where power, subjectivity and educational opportunities are formed.

According to the results, teachers should be encouraged to engage in the dialogic and participatory practices of discourse that lessen the barriers of hierarchy and enable students to have more agency in their classroom communication. This can involve prompting long student answers, minimizing intersections, permitting student-generated queries, and structuring assessment to facilitate learning as opposed to perpetuate status disparities. Professional growth of teachers might be enhanced through the areas of interactional awareness, discourse sensitivity, and culturally responsive communication. Collaborative discussion, open questioning, and shared meaning-making practices in classrooms can help to create more equitable learning environments. Another suggestion of the study is that academic establishment should review their pedagogical cultures so as to accommodate discourse that appreciates student voice and encourages participatory learning whereby power is realized positively to create engagement instead of being reproduced passively by language practices.

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