

## **Spoken Discourse Analysis of an Adult EFL Classroom in Japan**

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### **Abstract**

This case study uses the model of spoken discourse analysis developed by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975, 1992) to look at classroom interactional exchanges in an adult EFL business English class. The purpose of this study was to assess how well interaction would fit into categories set out in the model of discourse analysis and to determine the use for understanding communication in the classroom in light of teacher professional development and critical reflective practice. This study describes some of the challenges of using the model and highlights some of the practical benefits for teachers to use critical discourse analysis.

### **Keywords:**

Critical Discourse Analysis, EFL, Critical Reflective Practice, Professional Development

## 1. Introduction

The language that teachers use in classrooms and their interactional exchanges with learners is something that teachers can benefit from paying close attention to. Understanding the kinds of exchange teachers have with learners can be instrumental in transforming classrooms from fixed transmissive styles of education to more collaborative interactions that do not solely rely on the teacher. In this small case study, the Sinclair and Coulthard (1975, 1992) model of spoken discourse analysis was used to explore one foreign language teacher's interactions with Japanese adult learners in a business English setting to find out how useful spoken discourse analysis models can be. Although many teachers may readily claim their classes to be interactive or learner-centered, these claims are often anecdotal. Using spoken discourse analysis models therefore has the potential to confirm or challenge fixed teacher assumptions about learners and learning that take place in the classroom.

The purpose of this study was to closely examine two points. The first, to determine the extent the teacher's interaction converged or diverged from traditional classroom teaching. A traditional classroom is where the role of the teacher and learner are clearly defined. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975, 1992) propose that such classrooms are characterized by a three-part communicative structure that rigidly imposes a sequence of initiation (I), response (R) and feedback (F) (hereafter IRF). This structure is controlled by the teacher and places the learner in a subordinate position (McCarthy, 1991). Whilst it is a fact that IRF exchanges are pervasive in traditional contexts (Lin, 2007; Wells, 2000), it is also true that IRF exchanges alone are insufficient to explain all spoken discourse interactions in a classroom.

The second point was to investigate how using this model of spoken discourse analysis might be useful in understanding classroom communication as part of a teacher's critical reflective practice (Brookfield, 1998). That is, as a process of inquiry that could lead to professional development insights and change, both on a theoretical and practical level, in how the teacher frames interactions in the classroom

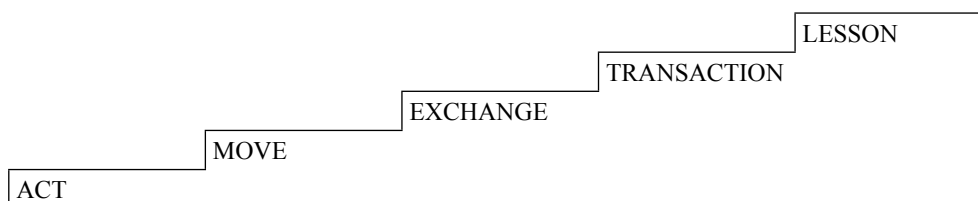
## 2. Research Questions

Two main questions guided this research study.

1. Would the data analysis fit neatly into the categories proposed by Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975, 1992) model of discourse analysis?
2. How useful is this kind of analysis for understanding classroom communication?

## 3. The Rank Scale

The seminal work of Sinclair and Coulthard on spoken classroom discourse analysis set the foundation of an analytical model that has been referred to and used by many researchers interested in classroom interactions (Lin, 2007). The model works on a system that ranks the smallest unit of interaction through to the largest. Each unit becomes the structure of the next rank above it and is a relatively simple way to approach discovering linguistic patterns in classroom communication (McCarthy, 1991).

**Figure 1: An overview of Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975, 1992) model**

At the top of the rank scale is the category of *lesson*. A lesson corresponds to the period of time in which a lesson (or class) takes place. Lessons consist of *transactions* which are best understood as a number of stages that learning moves through in the course of the class. These transactions then consist of shorter *exchanges* which comprise a number of utterances between participants. Exchanges are made up of *moves* such as opening a conversation, answering, and following-up which in turn consist of more fine-grained definitions called *acts* which represent the function that language is used for. For example, opening a conversation might be to elicit information, to inform students of something, or to check information. These acts, or functions of language being the smallest possible unit that can exist in their proposed model of spoken discourse.

Each rank in the model is also shown to have *elements of structure* – that is the position within discourse, and which structures which are possible at a particular rank in the system. In addition, there are *classes of exchange* – which are the elements of structure which relate to the rank below. This study examines the content of one teacher's lesson using the frame of three of the ranks: exchange, move and act because in this model of spoken discourse they reveal the most about how communication develops in the classroom. It is important to note that, move and act are subsumed under two main types of exchange: boundary and teaching (see appendices 1a-c) . In short, boundary exchanges are where transitions in the lesson occur. This might be the teaching focusing attention or moving students on to a different section of the textbook. Teaching exchanges are those in which we expect to confirm whether the teacher is following an IRF sequence in their classroom.

### 3.1 Exchanges

Exchanges are the building blocks of conversation. These are short stretches of interaction between two or more participants for the purpose of giving and receiving information. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975, 1992) propose that these stretches of interaction consist of two main types: boundary and teaching.

### 3.2 Boundary exchanges

Boundary exchanges are parts of spoken classroom interaction where the beginning or end of a particular stage in a lesson is signaled. This signaling takes place through a *framing move* realized by *markers* (words such as “okay”, “now”, “good” and “right”) or silent stress (a short pause following a marker) . Signaling can also take the form of a *focusing move* which is realized by a meta-statement (directing attention to what will come next). Both framing and focusing moves in this model are

thought to be moves that are decided by the teacher.

In table 1 below, interaction is marked by a framing move that functions to terminate the previous conversation and focus attention toward the teacher's next question.

**Table 1: An example of a framing move from this study**

Dialogue	ACT	MOVE	IRF	Exchange type
T: So, last time.	m	Framing		Boundary
T: Did we talk about shirts?	s	Opening	I	Elicit
L3: Yes.	rep	Answering	R	
T: Oh, okay.	acc	Follow-up	F	

\*T indicates teacher and L3 indicates the learner (In this case, learner number three).

In table 2 below, interaction is marked by a focusing move which occurs after a framing move by the teacher to mark a shift in topic.

**Table 2: A focusing move from this study**

Dialogue	ACT	MOVE	IRF	Exchange type
T: So, [pause] anyway.	m	Framing		Boundary
T: Last week, where did we get to?	s	Focusing		Boundary

### 3.3 Teaching Exchanges

In contrast to boundary exchanges, the other main class are teaching exchanges. It is generally thought that teaching exchanges can be characterized by the occurrence of Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) sequences (Molinari, Mameli & Gnisci, 2012). These IRF sequences occur in situation where the teacher has control of the discourse and acts as the initiator and evaluator of a large number of exchanges that take place (Thoms, 2012).

Table 3 below shows the construction of an IRF sequence as part of a teaching exchange.

**Table 3: A typical IRF exchange from this study**

Dialogue	ACT	MOVE	IRF	Exchange type
T: So, how about the phone number?	el	Opening	I	Elicit
L4: 01172276741	rep	Answering	R	
T: Excellent, alright, yeah, good. That's it.	e	Follow-up	F	

In ACT column of table 3 we find information about the kind of act that the dialogue realizes. First an elicitation (el) from the teacher, then a reply (rep) from the learner, and finally an evaluation (e) given by the teacher. Each act is linked to a move in the next column. Moves are a broader category that can realize a number of different acts. For example, the teacher may start an IRF sequence by giving information (i) instead of starting with a question (el). Nevertheless, both types of act are realized by

the category of an opening move.

#### **4. Participants**

Data was collected from an adult business English class in rural Japan. Four adult male Japanese between the ages of 25 and 40 working for an engineering company took part in the study. The teacher was a British national with 12 years of experience teaching English in Japan, but no formal qualification in teaching English. Classes were held once a week for the period of eighteen weeks and were partially paid for by the company the students worked for. The textbook, "Business Start-up 1" (Ibbotson & Stephens, 2006) had been pre-selected by the outsourcing company the teacher worked for as material to be used in class.

#### **5. Data Collection**

Learner consent was given to make an audio recording with the provision that all names and details referring to the company were omitted due to the company's privacy policy. For this reason, learner names have been replaced with indicators L1, L2, L3 and L4. The class recording selected for this study is representative of an average class for the course. Several classes were recorded using a TASCAM DR-05 voice recorder and then transcribed by the researcher. Additional notes were also taken during class on noticeable paralinguistic features such as affirmations realized by nodding heads in order to capture nuance that might not be caught by recording alone.

Audio transcription software f4 (downloaded from [www.audiotranskription.de](http://www.audiotranskription.de)) was used to transcribe the recordings. This software allows for variation in replay and rewind speed, as well as being able to jump to specific points in the dialogue. After the transcriptions were completed analysis of each session was conducted using Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975, 1992) model.

#### **6. Limitations**

One important limitation of this study is the absence of video footage which follows the point about the benefit of capturing paralinguistic features. There may not be a quantifiably direct connection between interaction and paralinguistic clues such as intonation and body language, but they are considered helpful in understanding the meaning of utterances (Coulthard & Brazil, 1992). Paralinguistic features such as eye-gaze, and gesture (Francis & Hunston, 1992) and kinesics (Willis, 1992) could not be accurately captured through notetaking in the classroom in this study.

#### **7. Discussion**

##### **7.1 First Research Question**

The first research question sought to answer whether the data analysis fit neatly into the categories proposed by Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975, 1992) model of discourse analysis. There were a number of difficulties with applying this model using the data collected as part of this study. These difficulties will be discussed in the following section with a view to illuminating how changes current trends in education such as shift from teacher to learner-centered classes impacts on and raises interesting question for researchers to address when using this model of spoken discourse analysis.

### 7.1.1 Boundary Exchanges

As introduced earlier in this paper, in this Sinclair and Coulthard model (1975, 1992) it is proposed that teachers tend to mark the stages of a lesson using a framing move. This often takes the form of utterances such as “So”, “Well”, “Okay”, “Let’s” and other words that serve to focus and draw attention to the interaction that follows. In this data sample, boundary moves occurred in conversation either to mark a change in topic or to focus learners back onto the topic. Table 4 below shows a move congruent with Sinclair and Coulthard’s (1975, 1992) model. Table 5 shows a move incongruent with the discourse model, where the flow of conversation is interrupted due to the CD player unexpectedly not having any power.

**Table 4: A boundary move signaling a change in topic**

Dialogue	ACT	MOVE	IRF	Exchange type
T: So, last time.	m	Framing		Boundary
T: Did we talk about shirts?	s	Opening	I	Elicit
L3: Yes.	rep	Answering	R	
T: Oh, okay.	acc	Follow-up	F	

**Table 5: A boundary move refocusing conversation**

Dialogue	ACT	MOVE	IRF	Exchange type
T: Ah, there is no power. [attempts to play CD]	i	Opening	I	Inform
L2: No power?	rep	Answering	R	
T: How about here, is there an on switch? Ah, here we go. [CD starts to play]	com	Answering	R	
L1: Okay.	??			
T: Okay, sorry.	m	Framing		Boundary
T: Okay, so, does number one, does he write a memo, does he write a message? Does he write something?	el	Opening	I	Direct

In table 5 we can see that having started the CD player, learner 1 says “Okay.” This presents a problem in transcription as it could be coded in a number of ways. A comment, an aside, or the learner marking the framing move to signal that the lesson can proceed are all possibilities. The utterance on its own is not enough to determine how it should be coded so it is necessary to rely on other indicators such as the coders’ intuition of a learner’s behavior, tone of voice or other paralinguistic features. Where coding became problematic, I inserted question marks into the data table for further review and consideration.

Classifying exchange types that followed each boundary exchange also raises interesting question for the coder as it requires subjective decisions to be made on how acts and moves are classified using

a discourse model. In this model, each move is realized by a single act. However, there were occasions where acts could be classified by using more than one act. For example, table 6 below shows the teacher's final move comprises an acceptance of L1s response and includes an additional comment. Although not explicitly stated in the model, I felt that the model could probably allow for the use of two acts realized by one model.

**Table 6: An example of one move that comprises two acts**

Dialogue	ACT	MOVE	IRF	Exchange type
T: So, call number one. Louise is out of the office. Out of the office. What does this mean? What does this...	el	Opening	I	Elicit
T: How about L1? Do you know? Out of the office.	n	Opening	I	
L1: Ah, She isn't to...in the office.	rep	Answering	R	
T: Yeah, basically. But, we say, out of the office, meaning, out somewhere, not here.	acc/ com	Follow-up	F	

Throughout the coding process there were a number of instances where it was difficult to fit the data to categories in the model. Another example is shown below in table 7. In this example, I have coded the opening exchange between teacher and learner as an elicitation exchange comprised of a marker and response. This differs from other elicitation exchanges because greetings tend to be formalized rituals in the EFL classroom. One suggestion has been that these ritualized acts could be coded as *greetings* and *re-greetings*. The function of these acts, or utterances, being not to mark boundaries in a conversation but to "initiate a conversation" (Francis & Hunston, 1992, p. 134).

Following Francis and Hunston's proposal we can conceptualize greetings as forming an exchange type of their own. It appears that this would be an acceptable modification to Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975, 1992) but Francis and Hunston (1992) also state that the model does not address formal teaching contexts. The question remains then how we conceptualize adult EFL classes in Japan.

**Table 7: Boundary exchange or ritualized greeting?**

Dialogue	ACT	MOVE	IRF	Exchange type
L1: Hi.	m	Opening	I	Elicit
T: Hi.	rep	Answering	R	

### 7.1.2 Teaching Exchanges

It is uncontroversial to say that in traditional classrooms interactional moves often form a three-part sequence of opening (I), answering (R), and follow-up (F). These moves form the basic structure of teaching exchanges and interaction between teacher and learner. Within the broader category of the teaching exchange, Sinclair and Coulthard (1975, 1992) introduce eleven sub-categories of teaching exchanges (see appendix 1c for a list of sub-categories and their descriptions). Interestingly, the model

does not distinguish between the type of elicitation questions used. This is an important consideration for teachers though when analyzing the data from their own classrooms.

Traditional classrooms have been characterized by teacher control (McCarthy, 1991; Thoms, 2012) and part of the wider discussion by researchers has looked at the extent to which teachers use display and referential questions. Display question are those where the teacher already knows the answer. Referential questions are those to which the teacher does not have a specific answer, or there may be a number of alternative answers. We will look at both types and consider them in light of interaction in the classroom.

Firstly, display questions are often used in traditional classrooms as they are thought to elicit and develop accurate responses from learners. However, we cannot say these questions alone are proof of a focus on accuracy development. In fact, these questions may represent a kind of false fluency (Willis, 1996) because learners are only required to display their knowledge or understanding of language that has been chosen in advance by the teacher or the textbook authors. For this reason, students do not require the use of higher cognitive function (Willis, 2007) and the result is this kind of false fluency mistaken as accuracy.

Simply put, the follow-up move by the teacher usually only confirms or negates the accuracy of the reply and then communication is effectively terminated by the teacher. This type of abrupt termination of discourse does not, in general, reflect the nature of communication outside the classroom. On the other hand, for traditional classrooms that are dominated by the teacher, it is fairly simple to code responses using the Sinclair and Coulthard (1975, 1992) model of spoken discourse.

Secondly, referential questions create complexity in interaction between teacher and learner. While display questions and interactions that are controlled by the teacher are fairly straightforward to code using the spoken discourse model, referential questions and occasions where the teacher relinquishes control and allows the learner greater participation in class, results in complex exchanges that are difficult to code. The reason for this difficulty is that a number of different acts may be co-occurring at the same time. This is a potential weakness of the Sinclair and Coulthard (1975, 1992) spoken discourse model because more complex interactions require a more sophisticated means of coding.

In table 9 below we can see the following pattern of IRF – IRIRRRFR which clearly is different to a simple IRF pattern that is proposed as characteristic of traditional classrooms. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975, 1992) have pointed out that the model does not address interaction between learners (1975, p. 6), but this information is absent from the reformulated (1992) version. This seems to be an important limitation for the model which needs to be stated as it limits the analytical approach that can be taken.



**Table 9: Referential questions create complexity**

Dialogue	ACT	MOVE	IRF	Exchange type
T: What do you cook on barbecues in Japan?	el	Opening	I	Elicit
L3: Ah, barbecue.	ack	Answering	R	
T: Mm.	acc	Follow-up	F/I	
L3: In Japan, um, barbecue...	rep	Answering	R	
L2: <i>dou yatte, donna cook wo, donna ryouri...</i>	cl	Opening	I	
L3: We cook, ah, meat	rep	Answering	R	
All: [Laughter]				
L3: Ah, ano – meat <i>yaku</i> – meat burn, ah, ah, not burn, ah...	rep	Answering	R	
T: Ah, okay.	acc	Follow-up	F	
L3: <i>Yakisoba</i> , we cook, <i>yakisoba</i> .	rep	Answering	R	

### 7.1.3 Co-constructed Language

In table 9, the teacher had withheld giving a direct answer to the learner and instead made a comment which performed the function of evaluation. This withholding allowed other learners to contribute to the conversation and thus avoiding the kind of IRF sequence that ends in a pre-determined answer.

Another strategy used by the teacher was accepting wrong answers from students. In table 10 below we see an occasion where the teacher accepts a wrong answer, repeats the answer and allows other learners the opportunity to join the interaction.

Dialogue	ACT	MOVE	IRF	Exchange type
T: What does, what does he say? She's something, something, number... She's na, na, na – number.	el	Opening	I	Elicit
L2: She's my telephone number.	rep	Answering	R	
T: Excellent, okay. She's my number.	e	Follow-up	F	
L4: <i>saki hodo</i> she, she my telephone number.	com	Answering	R	
L2: Ah, phone.	ack	Answering	R	
L3: Phone.	com	Answering	R	
T: He doesn't use telephone. It's something... my number.	cl	Opening	I	Re-initialization (i)
L2: She's take...take.	rep	Answering	R	
T: Ah, good	e	Follow-up	F	

L4s contribution in Table 10 still does not lead to the correct answer and so the elicitation is re-initialized by the teacher. Looking at just the transcription it seems odd that the teacher accepts

an incorrect answer. What is not shown here, but is recorded, at this point through the teacher's open body language and gestures, learners were invited to contribute to the discussion. Thus, it represents an example of co-constructed language.

Co-constructed language represents an important shift from didactic to dialogic teaching (Wells, 2000) and whilst this creates problems for classification using the current discourse model, it highlights an opportunity to capture a moment useful for professional development. In a follow-up interview with the teacher, they commented that they wanted to move away from teaching classes that had little to no input from learners and only required students to parrot back language that given by the teacher. In other words, using less language that has already been provided to them through textbook sections such as "Useful Phrases" where the language has been pre-specified (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988) to teaching language patterns as they are needed by the learners. This idea is also similar to the idea of choosing natural language use over formulaic language, because the latter leads to learners being less engaged in the learning process as meaningful interaction is placed in a secondary position to memorization (Willis, 1992; Willis & Willis, 2007). However, this shift in teaching also creates a problem for the current model of discourse analysis.

#### **7.1.4 Self-directed speech**

Another area that is problematic for classifying exchanges in this classroom context was self-directed speech. That is, language that is used but not considered part of the discussion. At the beginning of the lesson learners were grouped around a small table looking at an Internet page on a laptop computer. In Table 11 below we can see several utterances that have been coded as *asides* but not attributed to a move. In particular, the teacher's contribution is related to the opening inform exchange but not considered as a comment, as it is self-directed and serves no real function in communication between teacher and learners.

**Table 11: Self-directed speech example**

Dialogue	ACT	MOVE	IRF	Exchange type
T: So, that's about two thousand five hundred Japanese yen.	i	Opening	I	Inform
L3: Mm.	ack	Answering	R	
T: [Inaudible] ah, it's not the same.	z			
L4: Mm. <i>Yasui</i> .	z			
T: And the delivery charge is twelve pounds and takes about one week.	i	Opening	I	Inform
L3: Mm.	ack	Answering	R	
T: And no import charge.	i	Opening	I	Inform
L3: Mm. <i>Yasui</i> .	ack	Answering	R	
T: Mm. Twelve pounds is what? How much?	z			
L4: Mm. <i>Yasui</i> .	z			
T: Ah, that's about one thousand five hundred yen.	s	Opening	I	Inform
L2: Mm.	ack	Answering	R	
T: For transportation. That's cheaper than some Japanese companies.	i	Opening	I	Inform

L4s contribution could have been classified as a comment and formed part of an answering move. However, on review of my notes and the sound sample I determined it was not part of the conversation. Other contributions in this sample were also problematic and left unclassified with a 'z' mark.

Another point is that each exchange has been coded beginning with a teacher inform rather than a comment on the acknowledgements given by learners. The teacher begins each inform after learners have responded and while these exchanges appear linked together, coding them as IRIRIRIRIR would not fit the Sinclair and Coulthard (1975, 1992).

## 7.2 Second Research Question

The second research question looks at how useful this kind of analysis is in understanding classroom communication.

If teachers are able to better understand interactional exchanges and the nature of communication in their classes then it becomes an effective source of professional development and critical reflective practice, or ongoing development over time as a teacher challenges and examines their own assumptions about learners and learning (Brookfield, 1998). The rich nature of dialogue in the EFL classroom is evident when we look at the difficulties in coding exchanges. When exchanges or interaction in the classroom does not fit well with the Sinclair and Coulthard (1972, 1992) model, this requires us to adapt the model to the situation. Following this, we might look for other models that better suit the kind of classroom we are observing.

### 7.2.1 Passive recipients to co-constructors

This data from this study showed that the teacher treated students as both passive recipients in parts of their class and in others, co-constructors of dialogue. This relates to the teacher's conception of how language is learned. It was evident that they thought learners could have more input into the lesson through the language acts I transcribed as well as their body language and other paralinguistic cues I noted in observations.

Part of the usefulness of understanding classroom communication then is to uncover and highlight where teachers are helping learners develop their sense of self in the classroom and not simply, memorize and recite language facts. Walqui and VanLier (2010) sum this up clearly:

Learning a language is not merely a matter of studying grammar and vocabulary and practicing the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. Language is learned primarily in the process of developing a "voice" in the language, an ability and desire to be heard while claiming the right to be listened to." (pp. 56-57)

The first aspect of usefulness for understanding classroom communication then is raising teacher awareness of when and how they are helping learners shift from passive to active co-constructors of dialogue.

### 7.2.2 Question Types

A second area where discourse analysis is useful for teachers is the type of questions they use. In particular, a lot of attention in the literature on classroom instruction has focused on the difference between display and referential question (Long & Sato, 1983). In Table 12 below we see an example of a display question, answer and follow-up by the teacher that could have been an opportunity for the teacher to build on the quantity and quality of interaction rather than restricting it through a short IRF sequence.

**Table 12: Display Question Use**

Dialogue	ACT	MOVE	IRF	Exchange type
T: What is this word, extension?	el	Opening	I	Elicit
L4: Extension mean?	z	Answering	R	
T: Mm.				
L4: <i>ehto</i> , phone, phone, <i>ehto</i> , only come, come in, in the company only, local...	rep	Answering	R	
T: Excellent.	e	Follow-up	F	
L4: Local phone.	rep	Answering	R	
T: Yeah, great. So, inside the company. Excellent, very good explanation.	e	Follow-up	F	

In this short exchange the teacher tried to elicit learner understanding of a word before making a decision over whether to give the answer directly or not. Here there is arguably a missed opportunity, and a useful point to reflect on. Could the teacher have built on learner utterances rather than sticking

to very short IRF sequences? For the teacher to understand communication better in their classroom, highlighting points where teachers could do more to encourage social interaction is a clear benefit of using a discourse analysis approach to coding interaction.

Promoting social interaction has been frequently reported in the literature on classroom discourse analysis (Tsui, 2004b) and specifically within in Japan based research by deBoer (2009, p. 43) who suggests that teachers need to focus on redirecting question to promote better social interaction. For example, the teacher uses the utterance, “Mm” in Table 12. Here they could have opened the question to other learners by asking them to give some example sentences using the word extension. This would allow for more collaborative learning between the learners, promote peer feedback and to engage learners in thinking about language in context (Willis & Willis, 2007).

In addition to helping teachers understand where they are shifting from passive to collaborative learning then, the way questions are used in the classroom and the way they contribute to that collaborative learning is something that can be shown through the Sinclair and Coulthard (1975, 1992) model.

## 8. Conclusion

While there are problematic areas in using the Sinclair and Coulthard (1975, 1992) model of classroom discourse analysis, it offers a simple way for teachers to critically reflect on their teaching practice and assumptions about learners and learning. Even though the process of recording, transcription and then analysis takes time, one of the clear benefits is that it provides a snapshot of how the teacher thinks and acts. From this point, teachers' own reflection and observation could lead to future action research and professional development in their teaching context. Teachers are likely to see effective change when key functions of classroom discourse, such as the kind of interactive turn used after a response to a learner (Lin, 2007). In addition, active learning and inquiry-based learning are increasingly discussed by researchers and the government in Japan. This discourse model can also contribute to understanding of how a teacher is contributing to that atmosphere of inquiry (Wells, 2000) as we as how teachers as facilitators attend to learner interaction. This is something that observing the extent to which IRF sequences are present in classroom discourse can help uncover.

One interesting consideration that tends not to be addressed in the literature on spoken discourse models is the topic of private speech. This is the kind of speech example where learners make utterances, not as a tangible contribution to the ongoing discourse, but to themselves, as a “tool for the internalization of the L2” (Ohta, 2000, p. 53). One of the stated aims of the Sinclair and Coulthard (1975, 1992) model is to understand the linguistic basis of interaction that occurs in the classroom. Private speech in Japan-based EFL classes often takes the form of utterances in Japanese which are self-directed. While these are not covered by the Sinclair and Coulthard (1975, 1992) model, they could also serve as a useful basis for understanding communication in the EFL classroom more deeply.

If teachers are to become strategic thinkers (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) in their classrooms then learning how to analyze their teaching contexts is of critical importance. In this sense, taking a systematic approach to classroom observation, interpretation, and evaluation in order to identify problems, find solution and to improve on them can be supported by using the Sinclair and Coulthard (1975, 1992)

model of discourse analysis. This inquiry into classroom discourse based on IRF sequences gives us the opportunity to look more deeply at three inter-related perspectives. These are the IRF sequence, teacher feedback and resultant learning opportunities (Waring, 2008). These three perspectives in turn helping us understand the nature of communication in the classroom and how feedback from the teacher impacts on learning opportunities.

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### Appendix 1a

Boundary exchanges, their moves and classes of act. (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1992:5)

#### Rank III: Exchange (Boundary)

Elements of structure	Structures	Classes of move
Frame (Fr)	(Fr) (Fo)	
Focus (Fo)		

#### Rank IV: Move (Framing)

Elements of structure	Structures	Classes of move
head (h)	hq	h; marker (IV.1)
Focus (Fo)		q: silent stress (IV.1)

#### Rank IV: Move (Focusing)

Elements of structure	Structures	Classes of move
signal (s)	(s) (pre-h) h (post-h)	s: marker (IV.1) pre-h: starter (IV.2) h: system at h; choice from metastatement of conclusion (IV.12)
post-head (post-h)		post-h: comment (IV.8)

**Appendix 1b**

Teaching exchanges, their moves and classes of act. (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1992:5)

**Rank III: Exchange (Teaching)**

Elements of structure	Structures	Classes of move
Initiation (I)	I (R) (F)	I: Opening (III.3)
Response (R)		R: Answering (III.4)
Feedback (F)		F: Follow-up (III.5)

**Rank IV: Move (Opening)**

Elements of structure	Structures	Classes of move
signal (s)	(s) (pre-h) h (post-h)	s: marker (IV.1)
pre-head (pre-h)	(sel)	pre-h: starter (IV.2)
head (h)	(sel) (pre-h) h	h: system operating at hl choice of elicitation, directive, informative, check (IV.3) post-h: system operating at post-h; choice from prompt and clue (IV.4) sel: ((cue)bid) nomination (IV.5)

**Rank IV: Move (Answering)**

Elements of structure	Structures	Classes of move
pre-head (pre-h)	(pre-h) h (post-h)	pre-h: acknowledge (IV.6)
head (h)		h: system operating at h; choice of reply, react, acknowledge (IV.7)
post-head (post-h)		post-h: comment (IV.8)

**Rank IV: Move (Follow-up)**

Elements of structure	Structures	Classes of move
pre-head (pre-h)	(pre-h) h (post-h)	pre-h: accept (IV.9)
head (h)		h: evaluate (IV.10)
post-head (post-h)		post-h: comment (IV.8)



**Appendix 1c**

Teaching exchanges and their sub-categories based on Sinclair and Coulthard (1992:26-30)

Sub-category of teaching exchange		Type of exchange	Structure	Description
I	Teacher inform	Free – informing	I (R)	Teacher communicates information to learner(s).
II	Teacher direct	Free – directing	I R (F)	Teacher directs learner(s) to do, but not say something.
III	Teacher elicit	Free – eliciting	I R F	Teacher elicits a response from learner(s).
IV	Learner elicit	Free – eliciting	I R	Learner elicits a response from the teacher.
V	Learner inform	Free – informing	I F	Learner communicates information to teacher.
VI	Check	Free – checking	I R (F)	Teacher attempts to find out how learner(s) are getting on.
VII	Re-initiation (i)	Bound	I R I <sup>b</sup> R F	Teacher makes further attempts to elicit a response from learner(s).
VIII	Re-initiation (ii)		I R F (I <sup>b</sup> ) R F	Teacher makes further attempts to elicit a response from learner(s) after an incorrect response.
IX	Listing		I R F (I <sup>b</sup> ) R F	Teacher evaluation withheld until learner(s) have given two or three answers.
X	Reinforce		I R I <sup>b</sup> R	Clue, prompt, or nomination given by teacher after a learner has not understood the initial teacher direct.
XI	Repeat		I R I <sup>b</sup> R F	Teacher asks learner(s) to repeat their response.
*In the structure, column moves in brackets are optional elements.				

