

**Department Of Languages and Intercultural Education**

**GENDER DIFFERENTIATED DISCOURSE: A STUDY OF  
TEACHER DISCOURSE IN THE ADULT ESL CLASSROOM**

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**This thesis is presented in fulfilment of the requirements for  
the award of the Degree of Master of Arts  
of the Curtin University of Technology**

**June 2005**

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## Dedication

*This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Felix and Bernadette Doray and my brother Francois for their constant support and encouragement of my academic pursuits. I also dedicate this thesis to my husband Philip and children Olivia, Levina and Brandon for their patience and tolerance in putting up with the demands my research imposed on the family.*

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate similarities and differences in the classroom discourse of male and female ESL teachers in the academic stream of one Western Australian tertiary institution's ELICOS program. Language and gender research generally suggests that males and females have different and quite 'distinctive communicative styles'. This study attempts to examine if this finding is also manifested in male and female teachers' discourse in adult ESL classrooms in the three main aspects of classroom interaction; giving explicit instructions, asking questions and providing verbal feedback, using Sinclair & Coulthard's (1975) IRF framework. A sample of six teachers, three males and three females were observed through a process of non-participant observation and their lessons video-recorded in the naturalistic situation of the classroom in order to make a comparative analysis of their discourse.

Teacher discourse in the three aspects of classroom interaction, namely, instructions, questioning and feedback, was examined with the purpose of exploring gender differences and similarities so that the reasons and implications for the manifestation of such similarities and differences can be further investigated. Conclusions were then made about the influence of traditional masculine and feminine speech styles on the discourse choices of the teachers.

The discourse analysis found that more similarities than differences existed in the teachers' classroom discourse supporting the notion that the choice of discourse features is dependent firstly on the context and secondly on the role of the interactants vis-à-vis each other in the community of practice. Although some differences emerged, the teachers in this study generally adopted a facilitative, cooperative speech style in their classroom discourse.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF STUDY

The link between language and gender was recognised as early as the sixteenth century (e.g. Vives 1523) with debate on the issue intensifying since the 1970s. In recent decades, the debate has enabled research in the area of language and gender studies to move significantly from a recognition and acceptance of women's comparatively disempowered position in society being manifested in their language to a more nuanced, sophisticated model. This model makes the distinction between sex and gender where the former refers to biological attributes while the latter is defined as fluid and dynamic, depending on context. Thus, in order to better understand and clarify the discourse choices of males and females, it is important for gender research to situate male and female discourse within specific contexts as different demands of different situations dictate the choice of particular discourse features. As the aim of the research reported in this thesis was to clarify and understand the discourse of male and female teachers, it was decided to situate the study in the classroom context.

It was felt that understanding and clarifying male and female teacher discourse was necessary as many studies which have investigated language and gender issues in the classroom have not examined gender and discourse in teacher talk to the same extent. In language interaction studies, which also coincidentally also became a focus of investigation in the 1970s, the concentration was primarily on interaction patterns between teachers and students. This led to the study of certain aspects of gender in the classroom, such as the teacher's choice of topics, the use of materials and turn-taking for male and female students. It is noteworthy that most studies of gender usage in language have concentrated primarily on the elementary classroom, based on the belief that this is where gender differences manifest themselves most clearly.

In the area of foreign language teaching, significant research has also been done into gender stereotyping and analysis of discourse roles in textbook dialogues. Classroom research on gender thus far has focused on the learner or on teaching materials; the

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teacher's role needs to be studied in greater depth. Gender-differentiated teacher discourse in the Australian ESL classroom, in particular, has not been examined. Therefore the aim of this study is to understand and explore the relationship between language and gender by investigating similarities and differences in the discourse of male and female teachers in the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom. For the purposes of this study, ESL and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) are synonymous.

## **1.1 CONTEXT OF STUDY**

As intimated earlier, this study has two main strands: language and gender, and classroom interaction. At first sight, it appears as if these are two disparate strands but in this study the strands are brought together as the gender construct is used to study the discourse of male and female teachers in a specific context, namely that of teaching in an ESL classroom. In choosing this as the research focus, two questions were considered:

- Why should gender be the overall construct for the study?
- Why should the ESL class in general, and the academic English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students (ELICOS) class in particular, be selected as an appropriate context for analysis?

The first premise in this study concerns the concept of 'gender', which is defined here as a 'social, performative construct'. (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003:30; Butler 1999:6) In this regard 'gender is not something we have but that we do' (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003:32). It carries with it the notion of gender being fluid, a function of the construction of social reality which allows males and females to negotiate their identities in the context in which they operate. Thus, the definition of gender is distinct from 'sex', which in this thesis refers to biological differences between males and females, or to data gathered on the basis of these biologically-based categories.

The second premise of this study is the importance of context, as highlighted in the definition of gender. This point is also expounded on by Mills (2003) who fuses Butler's (1993) model of performativity with the model of gendered domains as

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developed by Freeman and McElhinny (1996). As Coates says, being a man or woman is not a 'unitary and unified experience' (1998b:295) because the woman/man one performs is not the same man/woman in all circumstances. Coates (1998b) provides the following example:

the 'me' that changes a baby's nappy or mashes a banana for a toddler is a different 'me' from the one who participates in a committee meeting or who poses as a life model at the local art school (Coates 1998b: 295).

The above example emphasises that it is circumstances, the event, that determines the identity, not the biological sex of the individual. This enables gender to be discussed at the discourse level rather than at the level of an individual or utterance level as 'gender is dispersed into contextual elements rather than being located at the individual level' (Mills 2003:5).

Based on the importance of context in analysing gender discourse, a third premise is the notion of classroom interactions, the other major strand of this study. Using the Sinclair & Coulthard's (1975) IRF framework, the classroom discourse of male and female teachers in this study is investigated in the context of the ESL classroom, with reference to three specific features of classroom interactions:

- Language of classroom management i.e in giving students explicit instructions
- Questioning strategies
- Feedback strategies

Prior to a discussion of the rationale for selecting the above categories, the rationale for studying teacher interaction in the language classroom, in particular in this study, the ELICOS Academic classroom will be discussed. Classroom-centred research, according to Allwright & Bailey is a 'cover term for a whole range of research studies on classroom language learning and teaching' with the intention of attempting to understand what goes on in the classroom setting (1991:2). Studies here cover areas such as teacher response to learner errors, the nature of classroom interaction and the types of linguistic input provided in classroom settings. Classroom research provides researchers and the larger teaching community with a deeper understanding of teaching and learning processes as the research is conducted within the authentic environment of the classroom, thus providing a human face to

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the research. This emphasises that classroom research is based primarily on ‘naturalistic’ inquiry, dependent on context which plays a vital role in forming a sophisticated theory of learning. Therefore, this emphasises the need for conducting this study in the classroom setting, which then leads to the question of why the Academic ELICOS classroom has been chosen.

ELICOS classrooms are, in a sense, microcosms of the global society in that they are multicultural in nature, culturally and linguistically diverse. These classrooms also provide the environment to study English language learners in the context of adult education, a comparatively under researched area in comparison to first language classrooms. While most ESL students in general have varied learning experiences, it can be argued that those in the Academic ELICOS class generally have the common purpose of proceeding to further studies at the university, thus the level of motivation tends to be higher. This commonality in purpose is also indicated through anecdotal evidence which illustrates that the students in this study had the aim of progressing to a mainstream university course either on completion of the ELICOS or by proceeding to the English Language Bridging Course. This common purpose is also reflected in the syllabus, thus providing a common variable among the teachers, which leads to certain commonalities in the discourse used by them.

Having discussed the context of the study, it is necessary to provide the rationale for selecting the three main categories of classroom interaction analysed in this study.

A unique aspect of the ESL classroom is that language has a dual purpose. It not only is the medium of instruction but also forms the content of the lesson. Therefore, the first task is to differentiate between the two purposes for which language is used. In the context of this study, it is the language used by the teachers in giving their students explicit instructions which will be studied. As will be explained in Chapter Two, Section 2.3.3, teachers discourse in the classroom consists of an ‘Inner’ and ‘Outer’ structure. Briefly, the ‘Outer’ provides the framework for the lesson. The language used here is for purposes of clarification and checking, evaluating, socialising, explaining and generally to conduct pedagogic activities. On the other hand, the ‘Inner’ language consists of the target forms of the language that the teacher has selected as learning goals (Sinclair & Brazil, 1982).

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In Christie's view, classroom texts comprise two registers or set of language choices (2002:14). These are the 'first order' known as the *regulative* register, which is to do with types of behaviours in the classroom, similar to Willis' (1992) 'Outer' structure. The *instructional* discourse which constitutes the second order refers to the content of the classroom, in the vein of Willis' (1992) 'Inner' structure. Christie argues that the regulative register is an important aspect of classroom discourse in the realisation of content objectives as it 'brings the classroom text into being ...and determines the directions, sequencing, pacing and evaluation of an activity' (2002:162). Therefore the regulative register is not only appropriate but also speaks through the instructional register, indicating the importance of studying the discourse of teachers in giving explicit instructions.

The importance of studying teachers' regulative register is further highlighted by the fact that both students and teachers take up different roles vis-à-vis each other in classroom texts. Identifying their speech roles provides an indication of their relative roles and responsibilities. In practice, the teacher-student relationship is an asymmetric one, which is made apparent through the teacher's power. This power is manifested most obviously in the teacher's direction of the activity, which as Christie argues is 'very marked in the operation of the regulative register' (2002:16).

Therefore, the discourse used by teachers in setting up tasks, specifically in providing the students with instructions on the nature of the tasks needs to be examined. In fact, teacher instructions, as part of the regulative register described by Christie (2002) can also be seen as part of the 'Outer' language, its occurrence being more natural, spontaneous and interactive than 'Inner' language.

The second category of analysis involves examining the language and strategies used by the participants in questioning. In addition to teachers spending between thirty-five to eighty percent of their instructional time on this aspect of teaching behaviour (Cotton 2001; Borich 2004; Holland & Shortall 1998), the use of questions is also important to analyse in that it invokes the power relationship. This emphasises the need to examine both the frequency and type of questions that teachers ask in the ESL classroom.

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In the analysis of the discourse used in questioning one has to consider the type of thinking implicit in teacher questions and the cognitive challenges offered to the students through various questioning strategies. This in turn cannot be isolated from the task objectives. Thus the importance of questioning is how it helps the task to progress in addition to its intimate relationship with the objectives of the task or lesson.

The final category of analysis involved an examination of the participants' feedback strategies. The rationale for examining these strategies is two-fold. Firstly, the role of the teacher in the classroom is to provide feedback to the students, thus making this a dominant discourse strategy. In addition, the researcher can also determine gender differences and similarities based on the view that females generally adopt a cooperative speech style and males a competitive, direct speech style. In particular, the claim that women exhibit positively polite behaviour with the purpose of supporting the speaker while men adopt a competitive speech style with the objective of dominating others and asserting their status is tested through a study of feedback strategies (Holmes 1995:67). Therefore, analysing feedback strategies which convey to the students correctness, incorrectness and partial correctness of their responses would indicate the extent to which participants' in this study adopt supportive or direct feedback strategies.

Finally, being an ESL teacher herself, conducting second language classroom research would also enable this researcher to develop a more sophisticated theory of teaching and learning, for the purposes of personal professional growth.

In summary, the appropriateness of the choice of the second language classroom to study gendered discourses is made apparent when the teachers' status and position of authority is taken into consideration. Teachers have the position of being the knowledge-givers, the ones with the control of interaction patterns, in terms of who gets to speak, when and for how long. As this position of authority is similar for both male and female teachers, it enables the study to be conducted from a context where both males and females operate from equal platforms. Studying the teachers' discourse separately enables the researcher to make valid comparisons of the discourse strategies used by the teachers. Therefore, teacher discourse was examined

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with the purpose of exploring gender differences and similarities so that the reasons and implications for the manifestation of such similarities and differences can be further discussed.

## **1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

As differences in the speech styles of males and females are well documented (e.g. Holmes 1986, Coates & Cameron 1986) as discussed in Chapter Two, this study aimed to investigate if these differences were also apparent in the discourse of male and female ESL teachers. Therefore the major research question which, as stated earlier, was to investigate the prevalence of similarities and differences in male and female teacher discourse with particular reference to the language used by male and female teachers in the ESL classroom. As mentioned earlier, the focus is on pre-tertiary English language programs such as the ELICOS (Academic Classes) in WA tertiary institutions. The following comparative research questions were considered:

- What similarities and differences are there in the way male and female ESL teachers in the advanced ELICOS classroom in WA use language to give explicit instructions to their students?
- What similarities and differences are there in the way male and female ESL teachers in the advanced ELICOS classroom in WA tertiary institutions ask questions?
- What similarities and differences are there in the way male and female ESL teachers in the advanced ELICOS classroom in WA tertiary institutions provide feedback to student responses?

The investigation was carried out using the approach of non-participant observation, where each of the six participants (3 females and 3 males) was video-recorded for three hours.

## **1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Classroom research is an important aspect of any research into teachers' behaviour and roles. The classroom, according to Gaies (1980) is the crucible where teachers and learners come together and where language learning happens. The main players are the teachers and the learners, who each bring into the classroom their individual

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expectations, needs, experiences and resources. Most important, however, are the interaction patterns, which ultimately determine if learning is taking place (Allwright & Bailey 1991).

As highlighted earlier, the focus of this study is the discourse used by the teachers in the ESL classroom. In studying language functions, the importance of a discourse view of language cannot be underestimated. According to McCarthy, a discourse-based view of language involves examining how bits of language contribute to the making of complete texts as well as exploring the relationship between linguistic patterns of complete texts and the social contexts in which they function. Thus, 'discourse analysis is fundamentally concerned with the relationship between language and the contexts of its use' (McCarthy 1991:10).

In classroom discourse, the lesson has been recognised as the highest unit. According to Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) the lesson comprises of exchanges and transactions. The model they developed of Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) to classify the teaching process is a useful model which is used in this study to observe the manner in which teachers structure their lessons. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) consider a typical classroom exchange to consist of an initiation by the teacher, followed by a response from the student which is then followed by the teacher's feedback to the student's response. The model developed by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) is relevant to this study as it provides a framework for lesson observation, as well as a focus for investigating gender differences in the way teachers use frames and moves in their lessons, such as in giving explicit instructions, asking questions and providing feedback. The IRF model is explained in detail in Chapter Two.

One primary aspect of classroom discourse analysed in this study is the strategies used by male and female teachers to control student talk, especially when initiating discussions and providing opportunities for students to speak and answer questions. The strategy of controlling student talk is relevant to the discussion of teachers' verbal behaviour as in maintaining order and stimulating learning teachers give directions to the students, lecture to the class, ask questions, and generally limit the chances for students to comment. Therefore, the talk strategies of teachers tend to ensure their control of and dominance over both the overall classroom setting and the

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specific nature of interaction. It has been argued that by their talk patterns, 'teachers are covertly signalling to their pupils what their role as learners is to be' (Barnes 1971:27).

In maintaining domination over the classroom, teachers wield power. Thus, power and the manner in which male and female teachers use it will become apparent when investigating the manner in which teachers control talk by their discourse or verbal behaviour. This aspect of power can also be seen in the manner in which male and female teachers ask questions. Edwards (1980) says that teachers ask questions primarily to illustrate that they 'own' the interaction patterns. It is undeniable that teachers are expected to manage and organise student behaviour especially since they have absolute control over who should speak next.

Another important aspect of classroom interaction is how teachers evaluate student responses or provide feedback to students. This can indicate the strength of the relationships between the students and teachers. Evaluating student responses can take the form of praise or correcting, either through implicit or explicit feedback strategies.

It is also important to briefly review the literature on gender to place the current study in context, as highlighted earlier in this chapter. As the feminist movement gained ground in the sixties and seventies, more studies appeared on language and gender, primarily because women were beginning to scrutinise social practices that served to perpetuate discrimination against women. One such area of study was language. The correlation between the feminist movement and gender and language studies is a very apparent one as language was seen to reflect and help perpetuate the subordinate position of women. At least three theories have been put forward in language and gender studies: the deficit theory, the difference/cultural difference theory and social constructivist theories.

The deficit theory looks at how women use speech from a disadvantaged position, a consequence of their early sex-role socialisation. The work of Robin Lakoff (Lakoff 1975) has been especially influential in this area. The works of this period promote female interaction style at the expense of male interaction styles, where women were

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seen to be negotiating their relatively powerless position in their interactions with men while male social privilege is made apparent through their language use. The work of Candace West (Zimmerman and West 1975; West 1984) and Pamela Fishman (1983; 1990) are examples of work done along the lines of this model.

The second model, the difference model is based on the underlying assumption that gender is an indirectly developed entity, eventually integrated into the formation of other categories. Essentially, this approach draws analogies between gender and other social divisions such as ethnicity. Sex segregation during childhood and adolescence produces marked differences in their future conversational goals and styles (Cameron 1995). The work of Cameron (1995) and Tannen (1990) are examples of this approach. In recent years, approaches towards language and gender have been further refined by poststructuralism, as evidenced by the works of Butler (1993, 1999, 2004), Poynton (1989) and Threadgold (1997).

Coates and Cameron (1988) suggest that future research should pay more attention to social and linguistic differences within gender groups as neither men nor women form homogeneous categories whose members live in the same conditions or think and act in identical ways. In addition they also suggest that many of the differences that exist between the sexes are a direct or indirect result of the inequality between them, and thus, researchers must not only take account of this but also reflect on the political character of sex-difference research in a society where inequalities still exist.

The early 1990s brought a radical change to the perception of gender with Judith Butler's book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999). Taking over Austin's term 'performativity' from the philosophy of language, Butler expands its meaning from speech acts to all social acts performed by men and women (1999:33). Understood in this way, gender is to be constructed over and over again at different times in different situations through the subject's acts but never on its own – always in relation with other characteristics of the subject.

Views such as that expressed by Butler (1999) and Coates & Cameron (1998) led to the general consensus that previous conceptualisations of gender had been too

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simplistic, given the adoption of superficial views of sex, which see the categories of females and males as prerequisite variables (Kramarae 1986). It also indicated a failure to recognise gender as a social construct (Kessler & McKenna 1978; Kramarae 1986; Rakow 1987). West & Zimmermann expound the view that gender ‘is a routine, methodical, and recurring accomplishment’ and that it is ‘the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one’s sex category’. (1987:126–7). Therefore people are doing gender (Rakow 1987; West & Zimmermann, 1983, 1987) through gendered activity (Uchida 1998:260).

Therefore, in the last decade of gender studies, it has been made apparent that gender is a complex category, the unifying theme of which is the idea that ‘gender, unlike sex, is a continuous variable’ (Graddol & Swann 1988:8). Therefore, an individual can be more or less ‘feminine’ or more or less ‘masculine’, depending on the context in which they are ‘doing’ gender. The important point here is gender is seen as being fluid, thus a male can display some aspects of behaviour, traditionally seen as being ‘feminine’ just as a female can exhibit traditional ‘masculine’ traits.

In summary, the theoretical framework for this study is Sinclair & Coulthard’s (1975) IRF model, which is used as the overall framework to study the classroom discourse of male and female teachers. This discourse is then analysed, bearing in mind that gender is not a fixed entity but a performative social construct, thus allowing the analysis to discover the different degrees of masculine and feminine behaviours exhibited by teacher discourse in the ESL classroom. This is based on findings in language and gender studies which indicate that a ‘feminine’ speech style is collaborative and supportive while ‘masculine’ speech styles are more direct and competitive. Investigating the extent to which the participants in this study adopt a cooperative or competitive speech style would enable some conclusions to be drawn about the notions of gendered teaching identities.

#### **1.4 LIMITATIONS**

This study was limited to studying teacher discourse in only one Western Australian ESL institution. While the institution does reflect in a sense the culture of the wider

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ESL teaching community, the findings might have been more representative with a larger sample in a number of institutions. This would allow for comparisons to be made across institutions. However, for reasons explained later in this thesis, such a study could not be undertaken. Consequently, a more thorough study of one institution was decided upon.

A second limitation was that the study only investigated three aspects of classroom interaction; giving instructions, questioning and feedback strategies. For example, student uptake of teacher feedback was not considered. In addition, paralinguistic features were also not a focus of the investigation. It was decided to focus only on the three areas of classroom interaction as mentioned earlier, in order to produce a thorough study of teacher discourse in the selected areas. Therefore, other aspects such as student uptake, turn-taking of students and teacher interruptions were not investigated. The decision to concentrate only on these three areas was also due to practical considerations such as time constraints. Furthermore, the nature of the project and the decision to employ a case study model were strong determinants in the selection of the three fundamental aspects of teacher discourse.

Finally, the selection of only six participants affects the generalisability of the findings. While it is conceded that the findings cannot be generalised to the population of ESL teachers, the dominant patterns which emerge from this study would allow for further, larger scale studies to be conducted to determine the relevance of gender to teacher discourse.

## **1.5 ORGANISATION OF THESIS**

The thesis is organized into seven chapters. This introductory chapter provides the background to the study, the research questions and the theoretical framework.

The next chapter, Chapter Two is the Literature review, which is organised according to the two main strands of the study, gender and discourse, and classroom interactions and provides details of the theoretical basis for this study. The first section provides detailed definitions of sex and gender, into which are fused the definitions of masculinity and femininity. In addition, a chronology of the history of

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gender studies is provided in order to derive at the most current theories of gender. The Literature Review also provides definitions of conversation and discourse analysis. The section on classroom interactions identifies the nature of classroom interactions, which leads to the identification of three key aspects of teacher talk: giving instructions, questioning strategies and providing feedback, each of which is explained in detail with current classifications and identification of different strategies, including some aspects of grammatical structures. The chapter concludes with an outline of the theoretical framework of this study.

Chapter Three provides the methodological rationale for this study and explains the background for the research methodology adopted. This chapter also describes the site and participants, as well as the data gathering and analysis process. It concludes with a discussion of quality issues and ethical considerations.

As the data obtained from the transcripts was voluminous, it became necessary to confine the data to the initial areas of research questions as outlined in this chapter. These were the sections of language used in classroom management, specifically language used by teachers in giving explicit instructions to their students, questioning and feedback strategies. The findings of these three aspects of teacher behaviour are detailed and discussed in Chapters Four, Five and Six. In each of these chapters, the participants are referred to as Female Participant A (FA), Female Participant B (FB), Female Participant C (FC), Male Participant A (MA), Male Participant B (MB) and Male Participant C (MC).

In Chapter Four, the framework for the analysis of language used in giving explicit instructions is detailed, following which, the findings from the transcripts are presented. These are discussed according to the selected sub-categories of analysis, where the quantitative analysis is supplemented by qualitative, textual analysis of the transcripts. From the analysis of the sub-categories, the dominant patterns of interactions of female versus male participants are drawn to determine gendered identities, in order to test the hypothesis that male and female teachers operate along a continuum of masculinity and femininity.

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Chapter Five analyses and discusses the questioning strategies utilised by the participants in the study, following a format similar to the presentation of the findings of explicit instructions in Chapter Four. In this chapter, teacher's choice of specific discourse patterns is identified in order to evaluate the influence of gender on these discourse choices.

Chapter Six provides details on the last category of findings; feedback strategies used by the participants. As in Chapter Four and Chapter Five, sub-categories of feedback strategies are analysed, based on quantitative and textual analysis from the transcripts. The dominant patterns of discourse are then identified in order to make conclusions about gendered identities.

Conclusions and implications for further study are made in Chapter Seven. A brief summary of the findings is provided, including ways in which future studies in the same area can be improved.

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## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER**

This chapter focuses on the literature that has contributed to the conceptualisation of the major research questions underlying the study reported in this thesis. The two major strands of the study as indicated in the research questions outlined in the introductory chapter are those of language and gender, and classroom interaction, according to which the review of the literature is organised.

Each of the above two categories is further divided into subcategories. The language and gender section reviews the definitions of ‘gender’, ‘sex’, ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’. The second part consists of a historical overview of the dominant constructs of language and gender literature, concentrating on the development of the literature from the deficit/dominance model to the social constructivist era of post-modernism in order to provide a context for recent developments in language and gender theories. In reviewing the literature in this area, studies on power will also be briefly reviewed in order to explore the interrelationship of gendered language and power.

Being a classroom-based study, studies on classroom interaction are also reviewed. In particular, three aspects of ‘teacher talk’, giving instructions, questioning strategies and feedback strategies are reviewed. These further incorporate studies on pronominals, modality and imperatives in addition to teacher questioning and feedback strategies.

#### **2.1 DEFINITIONS**

In this section, definitions of gender and discourse will be provided based on current interpretations as described in the literature. In defining ‘gender’, the concept of sex, male and female with their accompanying notions of masculinity and femininity are examined. Given the current thinking that gender is a performance and that ‘we do gender, rather than have gender’ (Uchida 1998:289), it is necessary to examine the

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discourse strategies employed by males and females in conducting such performances.

Gender, being a major construct of social organisation is pervasive in that it involves every single human being who 'cannot escape being categorised as either male or female' (Uchida 1998:291). These sex categorisations, determined at birth based on biological evidence, lead to the construction of differences between men and women, thus reinforcing the social construction of gender, where it appears that 'the appropriate doing of gender means the reproduction of 'the institutional arrangements that are based on sex category' (West & Zimmermann 1987:146).

This then leads to the question of what makes sex distinct from gender. Eckert & McConnell-Ginet argue that 'sex is a biological categorisation based primarily on reproductive potential, whereas gender is the social elaboration of biological sex' (2003:10). This distinction however is not as clear-cut as it appears to be, as gender 'exaggerates biological difference and carries it into domains which are completely irrelevant' (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003:10). The authors further argue that there is no obvious point at which one can say with certainty that sex has stopped and gender has begun. In their view, 'the definition of males and females, people's understanding of themselves and others as male and female is ultimately social' (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003:10).

Therefore, sex refers to biological and cultural aspects of reproductive status; it is a biological determinant, while gender describes culture and identity carrying with it psychological and sociological implications. According to Graddol & Swann (1989), Simone de Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex* captures the essential characteristic of gender: 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman'. Graddol & Swann also argue that gender is a socially rather than a biologically constructed attribute – people are not born with but rather learn the behaviours and attitudes appropriate to their sex (1989:3).

Some (Lakoff, 1975; Tannen, 1990) have seen gender as a universal given, a fixed category of attributes providing a clear definition of what an individual has or is. This view has come under scrutiny (Fishman, 1980; O'Barr & Atkins, 1980;

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Cameron, McAlister & O'Leary, 1989; Uchida, 1992; Troemel-Plotz, 1991), and notions of 'gender' have shifted from being fixed to being viewed as fluid, a social performative construct.

Criticism of the early approaches to language and gender is based on two perspectives. Firstly the traditional approach has been criticised for not using a scientific method of data collection. In addition, the multifunctionality of linguistic forms and devices were neglected while devices used by subordinate groups were identified as such. Secondly, as highlighted earlier it has been argued that gender is not fixed. Lakoff (1975) and Tannen (1990) accept male as a norm and woman as either deficient in relation to or different from the male norm. Lakoff (1975) and Tannen (1990) overvalue the single variable of gender, and study it in isolation from other variables. Their description of gender and the relationship between the two genders is rather static – as if they were not subject to changes. Finally, they endorse 'cultural imperialism', i.e. accept the model of white, Protestant, heterosexual woman as the epitome of femininity; and most important, they sell the apolitical and ignore power as an element which determines all social relationships, including the relationship between females and males (Marković 2003).

West & Zimmermann expound the view that gender 'is a routine, methodical, and recurring accomplishment' and that it is 'the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category'. (1987:126–7). Therefore people are doing gender (Rakow 1987; West & Zimmermann, 1983, 1987) through gendered activity (Uchida 1998). West & Zimmermann further explain that '[a] person's gender is not simply an aspect of what one is, but more fundamentally, it is something that one does, and does recurrently, in interaction with others' (West & Zimmermann 1987:140).

This idea of doing gender is also maintained by Coates (1998) who explains that doing/performing gender is presenting oneself as a 'gendered being'. Coates then goes on to substantiate this view by providing an example of how being a woman is not necessarily a unified and unitary experience, where the woman one performs is not the same woman in all circumstances. For example, the woman that looks after the domestic needs of her children prior to sending them off to school is not the same

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woman who later that day chairs a corporate board meeting. In Coates' view, it is the 'audience' that determine the 'performance', because she states 'we change because different audiences require different performances – and also because we sometimes feel like playing a different role.' Therefore, different kinds of 'self' are possible but all these 'ways of being are gendered' (Coates 1998:296) because as Cameron argues, 'anatomy is not destiny' (1998:220). A point to consider here is that Coates (1998; 2004) offers a more fluid view of gender, which is different to Coates' (1988) earlier position of gender as a 'simple binary opposition' (Coates 1986:4).

The early 1990s brought a radical change to the perception of gender with Judith's book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999). Butler's definition and approach to gender is fundamentally different to that of Lakoff (1975) and Tannen (1990). While the latter understood gender as 'having', Butler (1999) defines it as 'doing'. Taking over Austin's term 'performativity' from philosophy of language, Butler expands its meaning from speech acts to all social acts performed by men and women. She defines gender as:

... the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts within a rigid regulatory frame which congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance of a "natural" kind of being (Butler 1999:33).

Understood in this way, gender is to be constructed over and over again at different times in different situations through the subject's acts but never in isolation – always in relation with other characteristics of a subject. Butler argues that:

gender is [...] always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts' and gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. (1999:6).

Butler's argument points to the importance of variables which interact with gender, thus emphasising the argument that gender should not be studied in isolation but investigated in how it interacts with other variables.

The most current interpretations of gender have been put forward by Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2003) who argue strongly in favour of gender as a social construct rather than as a biological differentiation. In their view, however, the distinction between sex and gender is not a clear-cut one, as they view gender as an elaboration or an exaggeration of sex. In addition, they also put forward four fundamental

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principles of gender development. Firstly, they argue that gender is a ‘learned behaviour’ which is both taught and enforced (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003:30). This leads to the second principle that gender is collaborative. It is more common to think of gender in terms of individual attributes and then fulfilling male and female roles. However, the authors point out that gender cannot be accomplished by individuals alone. It is collaborative in that it connects individuals to the social order. The collaborative nature of discourse is brought out as gender is built into the ways males and females do things as simple actions/interactions call forward gendered responses. According to the authors, this leads to the third principle that ‘gender is not something we have but that we do’ (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003:32), similar to Butler’s (1999) theory of gender performativity. The fourth principle identified by Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2003) is that gender is ‘asymmetrical.’ This refers to male and female not being two equal sides of a coin as inequality is built into gender at the very basic level. Ortner offers a more complex view of gender and observes that:

...generally different axes of social value/prestige operative in a given society, with men ahead on some and women on others, but that some axes are more deeply embedded in social thought than others (1996:32).

This view is demonstrated in this study, where the male and female participants both share a similar power relationship of positional authority.

In summary, in the last decade of gender studies, it has been made apparent that gender is a complex category, the unifying theme of which is the idea that gender, unlike sex, is a continuous variable (Graddol & Swann 1989:8). Therefore, an individual can be more or less ‘feminine’ or more or less ‘masculine’, depending on the context in which they are ‘doing’ gender. The important point here is gender is seen as being fluid, thus a male can display some aspects of behaviour, traditionally seen as being ‘feminine’ just as a female can exhibit traditional ‘masculine’ traits. In the teaching situation, it is apparent that teachers are constantly renegotiating/reconstructing their roles in the context of the classroom through their teaching activities and discourse, performing their roles through particular discourse features. To take Coates (1998) example of women who ‘perform’ various types of femininity, the current study looks at the specific context of the classroom and the

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teaching activity in particular, to determine the negotiation and performance of ‘selves’ through discourse.

## **2.2 HISTORY OF LANGUAGE AND GENDER STUDIES**

There is no doubt that differences between the language used by men and the language used by women have been extensively observed and that ‘male and female conversational styles are quite distinct’ (O’Loughlin 2000:2) What has been less clear is what the reasons for these differences might be. In the following discussion, the development of language and gender studies is traced, beginning with the sixteenth century to provide the historical context for studies in this area. Much of the information in this overview is based on information compiled by Clive Grey (2000).

### **2.2.1 Early References to Gender and Language**

Language and gender literature is commonly thought to have begun only in the 1970s. However, a study of the early literature indicates that while this area of studies received most impetus in the 1970s, references to language and gender issues were made from the sixteenth century evidenced by comments being made about the appropriate forms of language for young women during the Tudor period. In addition, Vives (1523) also made observations on the appropriate forms of language for young women in ‘De Institutione Christianae Feminae’ (On the Instruction of a Christian Woman). ‘The Young Ladies Accidence’, published in 1785 offers similar advice for young women in the eighteenth century (Bingham 1785). Davis (1801) in his ‘Accidence, or First Rudiments of English Grammar designed for the use of Young Ladies’ and Marechal (1801) also make references to how women can make ‘improvements’ in their linguistic behaviour. These ‘handbooks’ written by men not only made specific references to women but also contained suggestions on how women could improve. This demonstrates that language and gender thought in the early years seemed to reflect a deficit model of thinking. This point is made by Coates’ (1986:25) references to the writings of Philip Stanhope, also known as Lord Chesterfield, whose comments reflected an overtly masculine bias towards what counts as good language usage.

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In the last years of the nineteenth century several issues of concern developed with publications by 1900 falling into two categories – instructional advice for women wishing to improve their written and spoken English and the study of grammatical gender, in particular pronoun usage. The issue of pronoun usage questioned the appropriateness of using ‘he’ to refer to both individual males and females. Grammatical gender then began to assume significance as a research topic (Wheeler 1899; Frazer 1900; Knutson 1905). E.C Stanton’s ‘Woman’s Bible’ (1891) is the most significant publication in this period on gender and language variation from which other work on women’s language took off. An example is James’ (1906) article ‘*The Speech of American Women*’ and Stopes (1908) who wrote on the problematic usage of the word ‘man’.

Gauchat’s (1905) study of a Swiss village community can be considered to be the first sociolinguistic study of its kind, where the author provides evidence of divergent male and female use of language. The ideas of this study were reasserted by Labov (1972). The issue of gender differences across different cultures began with Chamberlain (1912) from which early information about sex-exclusive differences was obtained which concluded that there are situations where men appear to speak an entirely different language to women. Classic cases are Gros, Ventre (Flannery 1946), Chukchi, Yana (Sapir 1961) and the Carib Indians.

The Danish linguist, Otto Jespersen also presented ideas on language and gender in his books, ‘*Language*’ (1922) and ‘*Philosophy of Grammar*’ (1924), which seemed to represent ideas prevalent in the 1920s. Articles on gender-linked variation began to appear in the *Journal of American Speech*, where Svartengren (1927) discusses the issue of ‘feminine gender’, an idea taken up again in 1954. Meredith (1930) also discusses the issue, looking at the possibility of using words such as ‘doctress’ and ‘authoress’.

Another issue of concern for language and gender researchers was sexist use of pronouns. For example, the use of ‘she’ to refer to countries and boats was discussed by Svartengren in 1928. This discussion resumed in the 1950s with Hall (1951) and Langenfelt (1951). The use of sex specification language, particularly the use of ‘-ess’ was discussed by Dike (1937) and Withington (1937). The connotative

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difference between a ‘lady’ and ‘woman’ was also taken up by Ackerman (1962), Hancock (1963), Moe (1963) and Lakoff (1975). The most specific piece of work on gender differences in language during this century, appeared in 1944 with Furfey’s *Men’s and Women’s Language*, published in the *Catholic Sociological Review*.

Specific work on gender-linked variation in the 1940s were few although some observations on this issue are recorded in the dialect atlas of western Flanders (Pee 1946). The limitations of studies in this period, however, were as pointed out by dialectologists, the use of only women as informants (Petyt 1980).

### **2.2.2 Studies in the 1970’s – Lexical Analysis & Deficit Theory**

The studies in this period developed from an initial concentration on gender and lexical analysis to what is now known as the deficit/dominance model. Tracing this development is necessary to indicate the change of focus from discrete items of analysis to considering the question of agency.

As indicated in the chronology earlier, studies in the late sixties and early seventies began to concentrate on sexist language, primarily as some feminists (Lakoff 1975) argued that sexist language was a consequence of societal inequalities. The study of language and gender as we know it today received the greatest impetus in 1975 with the publication of *Male/Female Language* by Mary Ritchie Key, *Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance* by Barrie Thorne and Nancy Henley (eds) and the one most cited, *Language and Woman’s Place* by Robin Lakoff (1975). The primary aim of these studies was to eliminate women’s social disadvantage. This was based on the belief that the eradication of sexist forms of language could only occur when social inequalities between men and women were addressed. Other feminists, however, argue that the use of non-sexist language is a definite step towards redressing societal inequalities (Freeman & McElhinny 1996).

These works led to the ‘dominance approach’ that provides a traditional, negative evaluation of women’s speech, which the authors contend is a direct consequence of women’s political and cultural subordination to men. Thus, women’s linguistic inadequacies are attributed to societal inequalities between men and women, where

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men's conversational dominance appears to reflect the wider political and cultural domination of men over women (Freeman & McElhinny 1996). Lakoff (1975) therefore argues that women's manner of speaking, which is different to men, reflects their subordinate status in society. Thus, women's language is marked by powerlessness and tentativeness, expressed through the use of mitigators and inessential qualifiers, which effectively disqualifies women from positions of power and authority. Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2003) provide a concise view of Lakoff's (1975) contention and claim that it is 'a tool of oppression – it is learned as part of learning to be a woman, imposed on women by societal norms, and in turn it keeps women in their place' (2003:1).

In particular, Lakoff (1975) argues that women's language style is deficient, lacking in authority and assertiveness. Lakoff (1975) also makes the interesting observation that women face a 'double bind' where they are criticised, ostracised or scolded for not speaking like a lady but at the same time, speaking like a lady systematically denies the female speaker access to power on the grounds that she is not capable of holding the ground based on her linguistic behaviour (Lakoff 1975:43).

Freeman & McElhinny (1996) divide Lakoff's (1975) ideas on women's language into three categories, the first which refers to the lack of resources that would enable women to express themselves strongly; secondly, language that encourages women to talk about trivial subjects and finally, language that requires women to speak tentatively. The authors also provide a comprehensive list of Lakoff's (1975) claims as provided below which has been reproduced as it relates to some of the choices of linguistic items for analysis in the current study:

- Use of expletives – men use stronger expletives while women use weaker ones
- Women's speech is more polite than men's
- Trivial, unimportant topics are considered to be women's domain
- Women use empty adjectives
- Women use tag questions more often than men
- Women express uncertainty through the use of the question intonation pattern
- Women tend to speak in 'italics' (women use more intensifiers)

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- Hedges are used more often by women
  - Hyper-correct grammar is a feature of women's speech
  - Women don't tell jokes (Freeman & McElhinny 1996:232)

The above features have been critically studied empirically by other researchers to determine the accuracy of Lakoff's (1975) claims. This resulted in many of the claims being rebutted. Zimmermann & West (1975) who focused on male dominance in interaction added the feature of interruptions and silence to the list above. They argued that interruptions are used to silence others and that men tend to interrupt women more than women interrupt men (Zimmermann & West 1983). The study of interruptions also proved to be more complex than originally thought of by West & Zimmermann who argued that interruptions are 'a device for exercising power and control in conversation' (1983:103) but as Tannen points out 'to claim that a speaker interrupts another is an interpretive, not a descriptive act' (1989:268).

Lakoff's (1975) postulations of the direct relationship between women and the use of linguistic forms was challenged by O'Barr & Atkins (1980) when they studied the believability of witnesses giving courtroom testimony. Their findings indicated that regardless of sex, professional witnesses manifested few features of Lakoff's (1975) women's language while witnesses of lower-status seemed to have more manifestations of such language features.

Hedges, which were initially identified by Lakoff (1975) were also studied by Holmes. In her study of the hedge 'you know' Holmes (1986) concluded that while men use 'you know' slightly more often with the intention of expressing linguistic imprecision, women use the same phrase in order to emphasise a point or attribute knowledge to another speaker. However, men and women tend to use the phrase to express appeals and conjoint knowledge at the same rates.

As indicated earlier, the dominance approach to the study of gender is not without its limitations. The inherent problem with the difference approach is that the theory is almost entirely based on men's dominant position in society, with women being portrayed as 'weak, helpless victims of a patriarchy that forces them to act in weak, passive, irrational or ineffective ways' (Freeman & McElhinny 1996:236). In fact,

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dominance is seen to be in the same category as ‘weakness’, ‘passivity’ and ‘deficiency’ (Uchida 1998:286), effectively portraying women as disempowered members of society. This can be seen as a distortion of reality, ‘depreciating the amount of power women have succeeded in winning and minimises the chances of further resistance’ (Jaggar, 1983:115).

Another limitation is that Lakoff’s (1975) work is non-empirical, based primarily on her intuitions. However, her description of ‘women’s language’ can be understood as a bridge between stereotypes about women’s speech and empirical studies conducted on these stereotypes, in addition to other aspects of interactional discourse (Freeman & McElhinny 1996). Due to these limitations, another very influential strand of feminist research emerged where linguistic differences between men and women were seen to be positive. However, the significance of Lakoff’s (1975) theories in stimulating discussions on language and gender issues cannot be understated.

### **2.2.3 Difference Theory**

This theory developed as a reaction primarily to Lakoff’s (1975) dominance theories. In essence, researchers who subscribe to this theory claim that the reason for the different forms of language used by men and women is due to their early socialisation. The key features of the difference or cultural difference approach as explained in the following sections relate to biological/psychological differences, socialisation and differences in social power.

An innate biological difference is cited by some as explanation of the differences in male/female language. Under this theory, biological differences lead to different rates of language acquisition in addition to causing psychological differences (e.g. Buffery & Gray, 1972; McGlone, 1980). These psychological differences play an important role in causing gender differences. For example, women tend to place more value on making connections, seeking involvement, and concentrate on interdependencies between people (e.g. Chodorow 1974; Gilligan 1982; Boe 1987). On the other hand, men value autonomy and detachment and seek independence, focussing on hierarchical relationships. These psychological differences are then manifested in the linguistic choices men and women make, with men choosing

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language which shows assertion of control while women use linguistic devices that 'involve others and emphasise the interpersonal nature of talk' (Holmes 1995:7). Many, however, would attribute such differences to socialisation rather than biology.

A second factor, cited by many researchers is that of socialisation. This is based on Gumperz' (1982) work on interethnic communities, where the purpose of the researcher was to study problems in interethnic communication. Maltz and Borker (1982:201-202) used this framework to study men and women, who they claim come from similar communities to the interethnic ones studied by Gumperz. Members of different communities bring with them their own assumptions and rules of communication when interacting with members of other communities, which can cause problems due to differences in assumptions. Maltz & Borker (1982) further claim that men and women come from different communities in their early years where they socialise primarily with members of their own sex. Thus, they carry with them into adulthood the patterns of language that they learned in their childhood. As these are different to that of the opposite sex, it causes a breakdown in communication. Therefore cross-sex communication problems occur due to cross-cultural misunderstandings (1982:201).

A third reason to explain differences in male/female linguistic behaviour is that of social power. According to this view, men's greater degree of social power leads to their domination of interactions (West & Zimmerman 1987). Deuchar (1988) suggests that the powerless members of society must also be more polite. Thus in communities where women are the powerless members, their speech would contain more elements of linguistic politeness.

The inadequacies of the views outlined above were counteracted by another strand in linguistic research, effectively initiated by Maltz & Borker (1982). This view places value on women's interactional styles without condemning men's styles (as the dominance theory did), thereby providing a 'dual-culture model' of cross-sex communication. These researchers suggest less emphasis on power and gender psychology and more on:

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Cultural differences between men and women in their conceptions of friendly conversation, their rules for engaging in it, and probably most important, their rules for interpreting it (1982:200).

Maltz & Borker also argue that 'each sex interprets the responses of the other in light of their own cultural roles' and when communication breakdowns occur each sex interprets the other's actions in terms of personality clashes or gender stereotypes (1982:200; 1998:421). An example they provide is that of minimal responses, which in all-female groups is interpreted to mean 'I'm listening' means 'I agree' in all-male groups. In cross-sex communication, this poses a problem as women interpret men's lack of use of minimal responses as a lack of attention while men are confused that women's use of minimal responses does not signal agreement (Freeman & McElhinny 1996:239).

Those who adhere to the difference approach claim that men's conversational style is based on competitiveness while women have a more co-operative conversational style (Coates & Cameron, 1988). Coates (1982) argues that in her study the claims made by Maltz & Borker (1982) were borne out in the speech styles of her female subjects. These women were found to have made characteristic use of gradual topic development, frequent and well placed minimal responses, which women tend to use more frequently than men (Hirschman 1974; Fishman 1980). Coates concluded that overlapping speech and linguistic forms that tone down what the speaker is saying are features of cooperative talk. Coates makes the further argument that women aim to maintain social relationships, thus their goal of consolidating friendships is reflected in how they talk.

Cooperative interactional styles were also studied by Troemel-Plotz (1991) who believes that women's talk is characterised by collaboration, cooperation, balancing of speaking rights, symmetry and mutual support. She also claims that women handle power differently to men as they undo hierarchies rather than affirm them. Kalcik (1975) who studied the interactional practices of consciousness-raising groups had also developed the idea of cooperative speech styles by claiming that women are more nurturing, supportive and cooperative than men are. She found that women in the groups she studied 'elicited participation from marginalised members, didn't interrupt each other, and presented themselves as sympathetic with facial

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expressions, gestures and back-channelling devices while others were telling stories' (1975:8). Studies by Goodwin (1980) on African American boys and girls in Philadelphia, Abrahams' (1978) work on African American women in the US and Wodak's (1981; 1998) work on working-class adults in Vienna suggests that female cooperative speech styles may be a widespread phenomenon, although the hypothesis remains to be tested. Tannen further expanded on the 'dual-culture' model and argues that:

Conversations are negotiations in which people try to achieve and maintain the upper hand if they can, and protect themselves from other's attempts to put them down and push them around. (1990:24-25)

Tannen's (1990) examination of a range of speech actions from advice-giving, story-telling, reactions to another's account of problems, asking for and giving information, compliments and gossip led her to conclude that while men approach the world as individuals in a hierarchical social order in which they are either one up or one down, women approach the world as individuals in a network of connections.

Essentially theorists of the dual-culture approach believe that differences are forged in childhood where boys and girls tend to play in sex-segregated groups with different sets of rules. Girls play almost exclusively in small, cooperative groups while boys play almost exclusively in larger, more hierarchically organised groups (Freeman & McElhinny 1996:240). Therefore, dual theorists argue that gender differences are created in similar ways to regional and social differences in language use through physical and social separation (Rickford 1996).

There are inherent problems with the difference/dual-culture model as there were with the dominance model. Firstly, it seems rather simplistic to assume that boys and girls socialise in almost exclusive single-sex groups. There are other variables to take into consideration, among which is exposure to family members of the opposite sex, parental relations and speech, which ensure that there is no complete sexual segregation. In addition the model also ignores the interaction of race, class, age and sexual orientation with sex (Henley & Kramarae, 1991; Kramarae 1990). As Uchida says, 'women and men belong to many interconnected social groups in addition to that of their own sex, and an individual is more than a 'woman' when interacting with others' (1998:285). In addition, the world of adults is different to that of boys

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and girls, thus the assumption that the same rules apply in these different contexts is simplistic.

Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (1992), (1996) and Henley & Kramarae (1991) find the difference approach lacking in that it does not consider power/dominance relations as a significant factor in understanding men's and women's interactional styles. For example, the 'dual-culture' model attributes breakdown in communications between men and women to cross-cultural misunderstandings rather than to men being more powerful than women. It appears to be a 'no-fault' linguistic model where the negative effects of communication are attributed to cross-cultural differences. Eckert & McConnell-Ginet believe that 'to deny agency and assume interactional difficulties' may 'preclude the possibility that people sometimes use differences (and beliefs about differences) strategically in constructing their social relations' (1992:467).

Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2003) identify further limitations of the difference/dominance paradigm. Firstly, the difference/dominance paradigm adopts extreme stances, where power and male dominance is emphasised in one while the other places emphasis on gender separation and difference. Secondly, adopting a single approach is too simplistic as this can cause omission of important details, thus distorting the overall picture. Finally, a focus on difference downplays dominance and structures of male privileges while a focus on dominance does not take into consideration the importance of differences in experience and beliefs.

Henley & Kramarae (1991) further examine the issue of power, which is at the forefront of any communication or miscommunication. Uchida's (1998) view that abuse of women is an extreme example of miscommunication is a valid one, which forces researchers to take into consideration factors such as 'who gets what they want, who is punished, who is forgiven, and in what ways – both on the individual level and on the societal level – after the miscommunication' (Uchida 1998:289).

It is also important to note that the difference framework cannot be used in situations where status is involved, for example, patient-doctor interactions and classroom interactions. Approaches that dismiss the power variable in addition to the complexities of interactions, and focus only on differences have the 'danger of being

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used to legitimise blatantly misogynist behaviour on the ground that it is a case of innocent miscommunication caused by cultural differences' (Uchida 1998:290).

Another limitation is that empirical studies conducted to determine prevalence of gender differences in language have been collections of male and female interactions from which generalisations were made based on gender differences which arise. These generalisations were then attributed to all boys and men and all girls and women. The inherent problem with this is that not every single male will be different to every single female.

#### **2.2.4 Social Constructivist Theory**

The literature in this section provides the overall theoretical framework for the current study. In discussing the social constructivist theory of language and gender, it is necessary to firstly identify the reasons which led to the adoption of this theory. Secondly, the views of the main proponents of this theoretical framework will be discussed, in which the issue of 'Communities of Practice' will be particularly examined, to state the relevance of this notion to the current study, in addition to examining the two main tenets of language and gender in the 1990s – that of gender as a social construct and as a performance.

In the 1990s, theories were put forward to provide further sophistication to language and gender studies and as a reaction against the 'difference theory', which was viewed to be too simplistic. Freeman & McElhinny (1996) identify two common assumptions of language and gender studies, which are addressed by the new theoretical framework. These assumptions are that gender is always relevant and that it is best studied when it is maximally contrastive. These limitations identified a key problem with the difference/dominance paradigm, as it assumed 'gender to be most relevant when men and women were together, not when separate' (Thorne 1990:279). Coates' (1988) study, which looked at same-sex interactions also failed to question the assumption that gender, is always relevant. However, Coates (1998; 2004) provides a view of femininity as being fluid, negotiated by context.

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While Brown & Levinson (1987) critique the assumption that gender is always relevant, they do not question the assumption of gender being most salient in heterosexually oriented cross-sex interactions or asexual same-sex interactions. The authors suggest that gender, because of its salience, is best studied in ‘cross-sex interactions between potentially sexually accessible interlocutors or same-sex interactions in gender-specific tasks’ (Brown & Levinson 1987:53). Freeman & McElhinny claim that the ‘challenge for gender theorists is how to determine situations/interactions where gender is relevant, without reinscribing heterosexist assumptions about gender in ever-smaller domains’ (1996:245).

Due to the limitations of the difference/dominance paradigm, it was felt that there was a need to rethink the theories of language and gender. Gradually the study of language began to move towards understanding gender as a constitutive factor in building social identities. Freeman & McElhinny view ‘language use as shaping understanding of the social world’ (1996:219) and the role it plays in the relationships formed in the social world in addition to the construction of social identities (Davies & Harre 1990; Fairclough 1989, 1992; Ochs 1993; Swann 1993). Ochs (1992) makes the argument that it is only a small set of linguistic features that referentially index gender. In fact, Ochs (1992) further argues that because language is used dialogically, social identities are not so much created by language use as they are negotiated and constructed during the process of interaction. Cameron argues that:

linguists interested in analysing the constitution of gender identities/gender relations need to look beyond lexical choice to analyse who is represented as doing what, to whom and under what circumstances and with what consequences (1990:16).

Thus, the main principles of social constructivist gender theory are that gender is a social construct/construction which is performative in nature.

These ideas were theorised by Goodwin(1988) and Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2003). Goodwin conducted an ethnographic study of language and gender in a single community and argues that rather than analysing individual entities such as cultures /genders/groups/individuals, the basic unit of analysis should be the activity. Levinson defines activity as follows:

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... an activity type [refers] to a fuzzy category whose focal members are goal-defined, socially constituted, bounded events with constraints on participants, settings and so on, but above all on the kinds of allowable contributions. Paradigm examples would be teaching, a job interview, a jural interrogation, a football game, a task in a workshop, a dinner party and so on. (1992:69)

To further substantiate her view, Goodwin points out that scholars across a variety of disciplines (anthropology, psychology, sociology) have independently arrived at the conclusion that activities should be the basic unit of analysis as ‘the [social and cognitive] structures members of a society use to build appropriate events change in different activities’ (1990:38-39). Therefore this emphasises the fact that individuals can access not only different cultures but also different social identities. Goodwin (1990) also argues that:

stereotypes of women’s speech ....fall apart when talk in a range of activities is examined; in order to construct social personae appropriate to the events of the moment, the same individuals articulate talk and gender differently as they move from one activity to another (1990:39).

The important point to note here is that the variation occurs not only in types of talk but also in the type of gender identity portrayed by the individual.

Goodwin’s conclusions are based on a study of African-American boys and girls in a range of activities, during which the researcher found that while at times both boys and girls were building different social organisations through their language, at other times they built similar structures. These conclusions seem to reflect Edelsky’s (1981) findings on interactions/conversations of men and women in mixed-gender committee meetings. Edelsky found that in collaborative interactions, men talked less than they did in single-speaker interactions and sometimes less than women. Women’s contribution to certain speech acts (telling jokes, arguing, eliciting, suggesting) was found to be more than that of the men participants (1981:391).

Therefore the debate about whether language should be studied as a separate, distinct entity, according to Freeman & McElhinny (1996), can be resolved if the notion of activity is adopted as it would allow for the understanding of language as constituting reality, reflecting modifications and development. Research now needs to move from identifying differences between men and women to instances where there are both similarities and differences in the speech of men and women. This would move

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research in the field of language and gender studies from understanding how sex and/or gender shapes language use to understanding how and when language use constructs gender differences as a social category. This provides the overall rationale for the current study which examines language use and function, investigating both similarities and differences.

Goodwin's view was further expanded on by Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (1992) who emphasise the importance of studying gender with other aspects of social identity. The authors suggest that gender studies should concentrate on how gender is constructed in communities of practice, a term originally coined by Jean Lave & Etienne Wenger who define communities of practice as:

the level of social organisation at which people experience the social order on a personal and day-to-day basis. An individual constructs himself/herself in a community of practice – some activities may be central to this construction while others are peripheral; the [individual] identity is forged in the process of balancing the self [one] is constructing across these communities of practice (1991:58).

This illustrates the point that the individual's identity is not separate from the community of practice and each of these communities of practice can only be defined in terms of the interplay of the identities being constructed within it. Therefore, in this study, classrooms are viewed as communities of practice where teacher discourse enables the construction of teaching identities.

The advantages of a community of practice according to Freeman & McElhinny is that it focuses on mutual construction, contestation and reinforcement of social meanings rather than social identity as something fixed and given. Secondly, it identifies a larger domain than an activity – it points to a mediating region between local and global analysis. Finally, it allows an investigation into how gender interacts with other aspects of identity (1996:246).

Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (1995) argue that gender constructs are embedded in other aspects of social life, for example significant categories like those involving class, race or ethnicity. This is an indication that the idea of gender polarisation has now been discarded in favour of what has been termed by Butler (1993) as 'gender as a performative, social construct', a view subscribed to by other feminist researchers

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like Bergvall (1996), Freed (1996, 1999), Cameron (1995, 1996, 1997) and Sunderland (2004). The key to understanding how gender is performed is to look at one of the tools used, namely that of discourse. Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (1995) also state that 'language is the primary tool in constituting identities'. Similarly, Sunderland endorses the theoretical shift from 'social learning' to 'social constructionism' which emphasises that gender is in part produced by language and discourse (2004:17). Bucholtz views discourse as being instrumental in the construction of identities, as a 'speaker's identity emerges from discourse' (1999:4).

The importance of discourse in the construction of gendered identities is further elaborated by Sunderland (2004) who argues that gender can be constructed by language, both in texts and discourse. Therefore language use can be seen as a construction and as constructive (Potter 1996:98). Both masculinity and femininity can be seen as both contingent and fluid (e.g. Stapleton & Wilson, 2002) which results in a potential multiplicity of gender identity for a given individual, meaning that gender/sexual identities, masculinities and femininities (Hollway 1984; 1995; Livia & Hall, 1997) can now refer to individuals or as well as to men and women more widely. Thus, this points to the role of discourse as an important tool in achieving and constructing these identities.

The idea of the interrelationship between discourse and gender is described by Coates (1998) where she provides examples of speech from a range of situations, involving female speakers in a single-sex interaction. Coates argues that a range of femininities is available to women and 'access to these different modes of being is provided by discourse because language plays a crucial part in structuring [our] experiences' (1998:301).

A corollary to discourse is that of power which was the focus of a study by Fishman (1983) who examined how pairs of professional heterosexual couples used and responded to language in the home. The study found that women used two and a half times as many questions as men while men used twice as many statements as women (1983:94-96). The significance of this finding lies in the functions of questions and statements in dialogues. Questions tend to demand responses, thus ensuring at the very least a minimal interaction of a question and answer sequence. On the other

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hand, statements tend to close interactions. However, both questions and statements are related to power in general.

The question of agency (Butler 1993; Collins 1990) is another important aspect of gender studies. Davies (1990) describes an agentive individual as one who speaks for himself/herself and accepts responsibility for his/her thoughts, speech and actions and is recognisably separate from any particular collective (Freeman & McElhinny 1996: 229). Davies (1990) argues that agency is contingent upon discursive practices made available to the individual rather than assuming that these are automatically attributed to all human beings as traditional sociological theories seem to indicate (eg Parsons 1937 cited by Davies 1990:4). Sunderland (2004) points out that performing gender requires an agency where speakers/writers can perform publicly who they temporarily are. In the context of the classroom, the teacher can be seen as the agentive individual whose discourse is defined by the teaching situation rather than by the teacher's gender.

A relevant study to the question of agency is that of Freeman (1996) which provides an example of competing representations of agency and power at the clause level, based on bilingual schools' discursive practices. Although the study is not explicitly based on gender, the ideas can be used in gender studies as it illustrates how the language minority of adult and child can be represented as agents who choose and cause acts in the world. To illustrate this further, Freeman's (1996:560-564) study can be used to understand that men and women have linguistic control and are responsible for their thought processes in both written and spoken texts. A study of the discourse community within its cultural context combined with a sociological analysis of situated activities might reveal issues of gender relations and issues of domination and resistance within these discourse communities (Freeman & McElhinny 1996). This provides an example of how differences in the speech of men and women are influenced by cultural ideologies, where instances of situated interactions are intrinsically intertwined, as such providing a transition from the discussion of naming and representative practices to the study of women and men in interaction.

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While the social constructivist theory of language and gender provides a much better framework for the study of gender than the difference/dominance paradigm, Sunderland identifies a series of questions which still need to be answered, namely that of construction and its relationship to gender. In other words, what guarantees are there that the construction goes ‘beyond words spoken and written’ (2004:172). Sunderland goes on to identify six questions which need to be addressed, the most relevant to the current study of which are the following two:

- How do we know that gender is being constructed? On what linguistic (or other) basis can we claim gender construction (what warrants can be drawn upon)?
- How do we know when gender is being constructed, as opposed to ethnicity, or sexuality or another identity? (2004:172)

The relevance of the language and gender literature to the current study is in how it has informed the underlying principles and the framework, particularly with respect to the analysis of a teaching activity within the community of practice (in this case, the ESL classroom) to analyse the gendered discourse of male and female teachers. As suggested in the social constructivist theory, the investigation sought to examine the use of discourse in the creation of a teaching identity, from which both similarities and differences were highlighted with the intention of illustrating the point that both males and females move along the continuum of masculinity and femininity, constantly negotiating their identities, thus illustrating that gender is not a given, a fixed entity. Placing gender as performative at the crux of the current study adds a new dimension to language and gender research in the context of the ESL classroom.

## **2.3 CLASSROOM INTERACTION**

### **2.3.1 General Views on Classroom Interaction**

In this section, the literature on classroom interaction and its relevance to the current study will be examined. According to Tsui (2001:120), the term ‘classroom interaction’ refers to the interaction between the teacher and the students, as well as interactions between the students. It is important to mention at the outset that different researchers adopt differing views of classroom interaction. This influences

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the type of study that is conducted. For example, Allwright (1980) views classroom interaction in terms of turns, topics and tasks, while Van Lier (1982; 1988) observes that there are two dimensions to classroom interaction; the first dimension being the teacher's control of the topic (i.e. what is being talked about) and the second referring to the activity (i.e. the way the topic is talked about). Based on these dimensions, Van Lier further identifies four basic types of classroom interaction. The first type is where the teacher does not control the topic or the activity. The second type is when the teacher controls the topic but not the activity, therefore providing information or explaining issues. The third type is where the teacher controls both the topic and the activity and finally where the teacher controls the activity but not the topic (teacher sets up small discussion groups with students able to nominate the topic for discussion) (1988:17).

A more complex description of classroom interaction is provided by Fanselow (1977) who identified five dimensions of classroom discourse as follows:

- Source (who communicates)
- Move type (structuring, soliciting, responding, reacting)
- Medium (linguistic, non-linguistic, para-linguistic)
- Content (language, life, procedure or subject matter)
- Use (how the mediums are used to communicate content) (1977:590)

The above views indicate the differing views one can adopt with regard to classroom interaction. The point of similarity, however, is that the interaction is primarily initiated by the teacher and often concluded by the teacher, through different strategies. Ellis (1985) argues that successful learning depends more on the type of interaction than the method used. The importance of the interaction between teachers and learners is further stressed by Allwright (1984) who points that interaction is a 'co-production', thus emphasising the joint responsibility that teacher and learners have in the interaction process.

While the above views of classroom interactions were considered, in the context of this study classroom interaction is defined as the communication between the teacher and the students. This study aims to examine the strategies used by teachers to

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promote the process of interaction. While interaction amongst learners is a vital issue, this area is not the focus of the current study. However, based on the literature, the study also goes beyond merely observing the observable features of teacher talk (language, patterns & structures of classroom interaction) to examining the functions of the talk. These observations were made in order to make comparisons of male and female teacher discourse within the community of practice of the ESL classroom, where the teachers are the agentive individuals whose discursive practices are determined by the context.

### **2.3.2 Discourse Analysis (DA) and Conversational Analysis (CA)**

Classroom interaction has been a focus of studies from the 1960s, with studies attempting to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching methods in the classroom. Levinson identifies two major approaches to the study of ‘naturally occurring speech’ (1983:286), that of Discourse Analysis (DA) and Conversational Analysis (CA). These two broad research approaches underlie substantially different perspectives to the study of conversation. DA (Discourse Analysis) is based on linguistics while CA (Conversational Analysis) has a sociological orientation. DA utilises descriptive apparatus of traditional linguistics (adapted from Halliday’s systemic grammar) to analyse talk while CA studies conversation as part of everyday practice (McCarthy 1991:19).

CA originated with Harvey Sacks who viewed it as a sociological ‘naturalistic observational discipline that could deal with the details of social action rigorously, empirically and formally’ (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973:289-290). The use of CA in the second language classroom is advocated by Levinson (1983), Seedhouse (2004) and Markee (2000). These authors argue that CA, which originated as a sociological approach more than thirty years ago, has a place in the second language classroom as it offers Second Language Acquisition (SLA) researchers a tool which will enable them to gain further insights into language learning and language teaching.

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Seedhouse goes further to suggest that a hybrid of DA and CA should be used to study second language classroom interactions, as a:

CA institutional-discourse approach to L2 classroom interaction is very much founded on and compatible with the many studies of L2 classrooms undertaken in a DA paradigm (2004:66).

Seedhouse then identifies four principles of CA methodology which emphasise the 'social action orientation of CA' (2004:13-16).

However, it must be stressed that CA is not without its limitations. Markee (2000) argues that researchers interested in using this approach need to do at least one year of coursework, with an apprenticeship with an 'established CA practitioner'. In CA, the basic unit of analysis is the turn (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974) where all aspects of naturalistic talk, such as overlaps, gaps, pauses and laughter are all taken into account. It is also an approach that requires strong institutional support due to the complexity of gathering and transcribing the data.

Discourse analysis is the examination of language used by members of a speech community (Douglas, 2000), where both language form and language function are studied from spoken and written texts, unlike CA which studies mainly spoken texts. 'Discourse' refers to language 'beyond the sentence', with meaningful combinations of language units which serve various communicative purposes and perform various acts in various contexts (Georgakopoulou & Goutsos 1988:65). The study of discourse is interdisciplinary, having been used in sociolinguistics, sociology, education and psychology. The main principle of DA is that it views language as social interaction, using principles and methodology typical of linguistics. The interaction aspect of DA is stated clearly by Stubbs where he defines DA as 'naturally occurring connected speech or written discourse' which attempts to study 'larger linguistic units', such as conversational exchanges or written texts and is primarily concerned with 'language use in social contexts' in particular with 'interaction' or dialogue between speakers (1983:1). This definition covers three key aspects of DA. Firstly, it is concerned with language use beyond the boundaries of a sentence or utterance. Secondly, it is concerned with the interrelationships between language and society and finally it is concerned with the dialogic or interactive properties of everyday communication.

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DA, as a classroom research tradition, grew from a variety of disciplines and provided a foundation for research in applied linguistics and language pedagogy. It is important to note that this tradition began in L1 classroom settings, which then was adapted for use in the second language classroom. Bellack et al (1966) is believed to be the pioneer of the DA approach where a simple description of classroom discourse, in a four-part framework consisting of structure, solicit, respond and react was provided.

The most comprehensive discourse analytical study was done by Sinclair & Coulthard in 1975, which was later slightly revised in 1992 (Coulthard 1992). This was a study done in L1 upper primary classrooms in Birmingham, U.K where the researchers developed a grammatical model for discourse. Following the principles of Halliday's (1961) systemic/functional grammar, they developed a hierarchical ranking system with the 'lesson' as the highest rank and the 'act' as the lowest rank. In between the 'lesson' and the 'act', there are three other ranks, namely that of 'transaction', 'exchange' and 'move'. These are related in a 'consists of' relationship (Willis 1992:112). 'Exchange' is the minimum unit of interaction, where the three-part exchange sequence was developed. This is the Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) structure where the teacher *initiates*, the student *responds* and the teacher provides *feedback* and the exchanges are expressed in terms of moves. Therefore:

A typical exchange in the classroom consists of an initiation by the teacher, followed by a response from the student, followed by feedback to the student's response from the teacher. (Coulthard 1992:3).

Sinclair and Coulthard also identified twenty-two different classes of 'act' which when combined make five classes of 'move'. These consist of *framing* and *focusing* moves, which when combined make boundary exchanges and opening, responding and follow up moves, thus making the teaching exchange. A number of these exchanges contribute to make transactions, which combine to make the lesson. The difference between Sinclair & Coulthard's (1975) discourse structure and speech-act theory is in relation to intention. Acts and moves in Sinclair & Coulthard's model are not based on intention, which can lead to an infinite number of speech acts, but were fixed by their position in the discourse, thus making a boundary.

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In Sinclair & Coulthard's model, there are two types of exchanges – 'Boundary' and 'Teaching'. Boundary exchanges mark either the end or beginning of a stage in the lesson, which can be implemented by either framing or focusing moves. Words such as 'OK', 'right', 'well', 'good' and 'now' are seen as a small set of words which perform the function of indicating boundaries – 'the end of one stage and the beginning of the next' (Coulthard 1992:3). In addition to the set of words mentioned earlier, teachers can also indicate ends and beginnings of stages in the lesson through extended pauses and or comments.

Sinclair & Coulthard have also identified eleven subcategories of teaching exchanges, of which six are free exchanges and five are bound (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975; Coulthard 1992). The bound exchanges do not have an initiating move or the initiating move is without a head. The free exchanges are defined by their function into four groups, of which there is further subdivision in two of the groups, depending on whether it is the student or teacher who initiates. The four main functions of the exchanges are those of 'informing, directing, eliciting and checking' (Coulthard 1992:25).

The 'inform' function is when the teacher provides students with new information, either through facts or personal opinions. In this exchange, the students may not make a response to the teacher, thus the exchange is I (R) with no feedback. The second function highlighted by Sinclair & Coulthard is that of 'teacher direct', which covers all exchanges which are designed to get the students to do something but not necessarily to say something. The nature of the classroom determines that 'Response' is a compulsory element, although 'Feedback' is not essential. Here the structure is that of IR ( F ). When the teacher 'elicits', the intention of the teacher is to obtain verbal responses from the students. Due to the questioning nature of this move, where the teacher is supposed to have the answers to the questions, feedback is an essential element of this structure. This is because once a student has provided a response, the teacher is expected to respond to the contribution (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975; Coulthard 1992:27).

This is different to the next function highlighted by Sinclair & Coulthard which is a 'pupil elicit'. In this exchange, as the initiation is from the student, there is a

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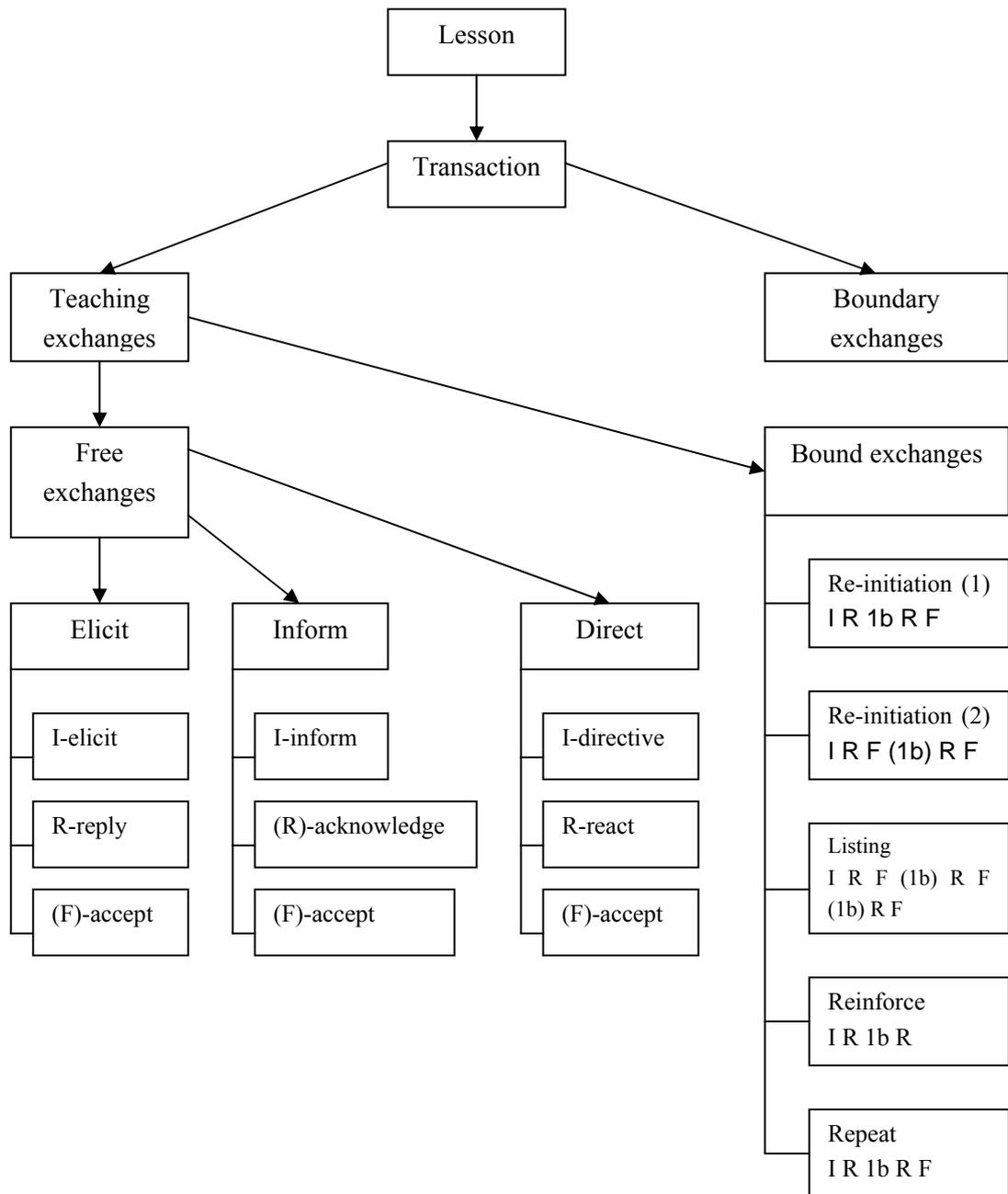
response from the teacher but no feedback from the student, primarily because of the difference in status between the teacher and the students where the students are not in a position to evaluate the teacher's response. The structure in this situation is IR. The fifth function identified is that of 'pupil inform' where the student might provide some additional information of their own volition and the teacher provides feedback. However in this exchange, there is no response, thus the structure is that of IF not I (R) which is the structure when the teacher informs Sinclair & Coulthard 1975; Coulthard 1992:27).

The final function is that of 'check', which Sinclair & Coulthard suggest is a subcategory of the elicit function, except in this exchange, feedback is not essential. These are genuine situations, where the teacher does not know the answer as the function is to check on students' progress, among other things. Thus the structure is IR (F) Sinclair & Coulthard 1975; Coulthard 1992:28).

The five types of bound exchanges consist of four which are 'teacher elicit' while the last is a 'teacher direct'. The first of these is 'Re-initiation (i)', where the teacher re-initiates the question, either through repetition, rephrasing, prompts or clues when there has been no response to an elicitation. The second type of 'Re-Initiation (ii)' is when the teacher gets a wrong answer. The teacher can either redirect the question to another member of the class or continue questioning the initial respondent, but provide some form of guidance to enable the student to derive the answer. In this case, unlike the previous re-initiation, there is feedback from the teacher. The third type of bound exchange occurs when the teacher withholds evaluation until more answers are given by different class members. In the fourth bound exchange, 'reinforce', the teacher directs a student who might have either misunderstood or not fully understood a directive. The last bound exchange is that of 'repeat', where the teacher repeats because a student/students have not heard the teacher.

A diagrammatic representation of the Sinclair & Coulthard model is set out in Figure 2.3.1:

**Figure 2.3.1: Sinclair & Coulthard's IRF Model**



(Adapted from Farooq 1999:31)

The DA model has been widely accepted as a research basis for interactions between teachers and students in a classroom setting, in particular the language classroom. McCarthy claims that it 'is very useful for analysing patterns of interaction where talk is relatively tightly structured' (1991:22), for example in doctor-patient interactions and teacher talk.

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Brazil also provides support for the use of the DA model in language classrooms, when he argues that the structured nature of classroom discourse is such that:

...the teacher knows what he or she wants to tell the class but chooses to do it by setting up situations in which they are steered – more or less into telling it themselves (1995:22).

In addition, another proponent of the DA model, Willis expands on the advantage of the DA model who argues that ‘descriptions which are based on the same structural criteria are directly comparable’ (1992:112).

Although the use of the DA model in the classroom setting has been extensive, the model is not without its limitations, as pointed out by its critics who refer to its rigidity, immediacy and lack of attention to para-linguistic features.

One of the problems with the Sinclair & Coulthard (1975) model of discourse lies in its immediacy. Francis & Hunston argue that speech acts in the DA model are labelled as they relate to the following and previous utterances ‘on a moment-by-moment basis’ (1992:151), rather than evaluating the overall contribution of the utterance to the discourse as a whole. As the analysis seems to be primarily concerned with the final product of the discourse, rather than the interaction and negotiation of meaning between the participants, the analysis is not complete. Francis and Hunston (1992) also point out that non-verbal signals, such as gestures and eye-gaze which form an important part of the discourse, do not seem to have a place in Sinclair & Coulthard’s (1975) DA model.

The DA model has also been criticised on theoretical grounds. Levinson (1983) makes criticisms of the DA model, which are similar to the problems identified by Francis & Hunston (1992). Levinson argues that the DA model translates a single utterance into a single speech act although a single utterance can, in fact, perform multiple speech acts. He also states that the perlocutionary force of utterances is not taken into consideration in the DA model, as responses are only addressed to the illocutionary force. In Levinson’s view, other aspects of interaction are also not considered in the DA model, e.g. laughter and silence can also function as responses. He further claims that no straightforward correlation exists between form and function and that utterance function can also be determined by both sequential and

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extra linguistic context. Levinson also argues that it is not possible to specify a set of rules which show how the units fit together to form a coherent discourse, as it is in syntax; cases of impossible or ill-formed discourses are hard, if not impossible, to find. Thus in Levinson's view, the DA approach yields disappointing and superficial data which involves an intuitive mapping of unmotivated categories onto a restricted range of data (Levinson 1983:290).

Seedhouse (2004) provides a comprehensive comparison of a spoken discourse extract, analysed using both the CA and DA approaches, to make the point that the DA model, if used in isolation, is not equipped to cater to the richness of the discourse data. He argues that while at first sight, a classroom discourse extract may appear to follow the traditional, lock-step sequence described in Sinclair & Coulthard's (1975) IRE/IRF cycle, in actual fact the interaction is 'dynamic, fluid, and locally managed on a turn by-turn basis to a considerable extent' (Seedhouse 2004:62) with the teacher attempting to balance a multiplicity of roles and varied demands. As Edmondson explains, 'the complexity of the classroom is such that several things may be going on publicly through talk at the same time' (1985:162).

One of the criticisms that Seedhouse (2004) levels at the DA approach is that the approach misses the point that the 'IRE/IRF cycles perform different interactional and pedagogical work according to the context in which they are operating', as the approach is 'largely acontextual...unable to portray the different contexts and the different focuses of the interaction.' Thus, Seedhouse argues that while the DA approach is integral from the perspective of 'form-function' mapping, it is CA that is able to 'portray the reflexive relationship between pedagogy and interaction' which necessitates that classroom interaction is studied through a combination of both the CA and DA approaches (2004:64-66).

While the criticisms and limitations pointed out by the critics of the DA model are certainly valid, it needs to be pointed out that the DA model itself has undergone revision since its inception in 1975. For example, the rigidity of the approach has been somewhat modified by researchers such as Coulthard & Brazil (1992), Coulthard (1992), Francis & Hunston (1992) and Tsui (1992) to enable its use in more casual conversations in addition to rigid speech structures. The most important

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relevance of the DA model to the current study however is that the study is classroom-based in an ESL setting, which by virtue of being a second language class, of necessity is rigid, where the traditional IRF/IRE cycle tends to be favoured by the students. In addition, it cannot be denied that the DA approach provides a fundamental basis from which the researcher can launch the study, with the flexibility to modify as the data necessitates. That this is possible is demonstrated by studies on questioning conducted by Tsui (1992) and Francis & Hunston (1992).

While the IRF/IRE structure (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975; Mehan 1979), has been the source of extensive discussion, leading to criticisms of teaching patterns as being limiting of students' speech, in more recent times, some researchers (Wells 1993, 1999; van Lier 1996, 2000 & Mercer 2001) have begun to advocate the need to analyse the total patterns of talk in which the IRF/IRE pattern occurs. Christie (2002:5) suggests that instead of rejecting the IRF/IRE pattern as being needlessly constraining of students, there is a need to look at the total sequences of classroom talk in order to make judgments about the relative values of patterns of discourse.

This study proposes to use the umbrella framework as provided by the DA model, with the qualification that the context is determined in order to analyse the functions of the discourse. Seedhouse's (2004) contention that the DA approach is 'acontextual' needs to be examined in light of the fact that the DA approach also studies the functions of the utterances, thus the context is still important. This is further illustrated by the different variations of the functions as highlighted by the eleven subcategories of teaching exchanges, which indicate that these functions can only be determined by the context in which they occur. As Nunan argues, the aim of discourse analysts is to study the purposes and functions of text-forming devices in the context that it occurs 'with the ultimate aim of show[ing] how the linguistic elements enable language users to communicate in context' (1993:20). Thus the integrated approach of CA and DA, as suggested by Seedhouse (2004) in order to capture the dynamism and fluidity of interactions may already be present in the DA approach.

It is also acknowledged that there are many facets and dimensions to classroom interaction which tend to be diverse both linguistically and culturally. However, for

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the purposes of this study, three main elements of classroom interaction will be examined, namely the discourse of teachers in providing students with explicit instructions, the questioning strategies utilised by the teachers and their feedback strategies. The rationale for choosing these discourse strategies was explained in Chapter 1. The discourse of the teachers will be studied in the context in which they occur to determine the functions of their discourse. The literature on the three aspects of instructions giving, questioning and feedback will be reviewed in the following sections.

### **2.3.3 Giving Instructions**

In language classrooms, language serves a dual purpose – it is the medium of instruction but at the same time, it also provides the content/subject matter for the lesson. This makes the task of analysing language classrooms much more complex than content-based classrooms. Willis (1992) claims that the structure of discourse first developed by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) and later revised by Sinclair & Brazil (1982) seems to reflect the nature of discourse in content classrooms but in language classrooms, this model was found to be somewhat inadequate. However, as explained earlier the use of the IRF/IRE model as an overall framework is valuable, within which modifications can be made.

The modifications are necessary primarily because in language classrooms, language has a two-level structure which is not reflected in the traditional IRF model. Willis, in an attempt to separate out the two purposes of language in the classroom developed the terms ‘Inner’ and ‘Outer’. This is particularly relevant to this section of the study as it embodies the placing of instruction giving in the language classroom. As described in Sinclair & Brazil:

The ‘Outer’ structure is a mechanism for controlling and stimulating utterances in the ‘Inner’ structure which gives formal practice in the foreign language. (1982:23)

Therefore the ‘Outer’ provides the framework for the lesson. The language used here is for purposes of clarification and checking, evaluating, socialising, explaining and generally to conduct pedagogic activities. On the other hand, the ‘Inner’ language consists of the target forms of the language that the teacher has selected as learning

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goals. In essence, the discrete language items chosen by the teacher in the Inner discourse bear little or no resemblance to their uses in ‘normal’ discourse but are emphasised as being samples of language and language use within the wider community.

Using the above definition, the language of classroom management in teachers’ discourse can be seen as constituting the ‘Outer’ structure, also known as ‘regulative discourse’, an element of pedagogic discourse as defined by Bernstein (1990:183). Therefore while the IRF framework can be adopted as a primary basis, the ‘Inner’ and ‘Outer’ theories explain the framework further. In addition to this structure, other views of classroom discourse analysis have also been put forward with emphasis on curriculum macrogenres with Christie (2002:5) proposing that curriculum activity be seen in larger units as either curriculum genres or curriculum macrogenres. By focussing on a larger pedagogical unit, researchers will be able to determine the emergence, development and changes in patterns of classroom discourse thus achieving a form of logogenesis or growth or development in the text (Halliday 1993:18).

Christie (2002) further provides a model of the curriculum macrogenre which comprises the three stages of Curriculum Initiation, Curriculum Collaboration/Negotiation and Curriculum Closure. In the first stage, Curriculum Initiation, the teacher ‘initiates the activity, establishes goals, crucially predisposes the students to work and think in particular ways, defines the ultimate task or tasks normally in general terms, and indicates the evaluation principles that will apply’ (Christie, 2002:101).

In addition to providing a curriculum macrogenre, Christie (2002) also identifies the following elements of the first stage (Curriculum Initiation) – Task Orientation, Task Specification and Task Conference. Generally, task orientation begins with a teacher monologue, as in the following example:

TR: “*Right, OK now we are going to start our theme next week, but we are actually starting a bit earlier because of it. So we’ve got to do a lot of concentrating so a bit of concentration*” (2002:16)

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The italicised words indicate the regulative register, fairly typical of teacher talk, where the discourse features of modality and the use of pronouns are indicated in addition to the small set of words (OK, now, right), identified by Sinclair & Coulthard (1975) as framing words, which have the function of indicating boundaries. According to Christie, it is the regulative register which determines the pacing, sequencing and overall management of the pedagogic activity, while also establishing the eventual criteria for the evaluation of learning. In this stage, which can also be seen as the phase of giving instructions, the teacher defines the pace of activities, establishes spatial dimensions that apply in adopting work practices, while also defining periods of time in which the activities are to be undertaken (2002:106). Christie goes on to argue that the language during the identified phases moves from teacher monologue in the beginning to dialogue in the classic IRF/IRE pattern.

Therefore in Christie's view, classroom texts comprise two registers or set of language choices (2002:14). These are the 'first order' known as the *regulative* register, which is to do with types of behaviours in the classroom, similar to Willis' (1992) 'Outer' structure. The *instructional* discourse which constitutes the second order refers to the content of the classroom, in the vein of Willis' (1992) 'Inner' structure. Christie argues that the regulative register is an important aspect of classroom discourse in the realisation of content objectives as it 'brings the classroom text into being ...and determines the directions, sequencing, pacing and evaluation of an activity' (2002:162). Therefore the regulative register is not only appropriate but also speaks through the instructional register, indicating the importance of studying the discourse of teachers in giving explicit instructions.

The importance of studying teachers' regulative register is further highlighted by the fact that both students and teachers take up different roles vis-à-vis each other in classroom texts. Identifying their speech roles provides an indication of their relative roles and responsibilities. In practice, the teacher-student relationship is an asymmetric one, which is made apparent through the teacher's power. This power is manifested most obviously in the teacher's direction of the activity, which as Christie argues is 'very marked in the operation of the regulative register' (2002:16).

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Therefore, the discourse used by teachers in setting up tasks, specifically in providing the students with instructions on the nature of the tasks needs to be examined. In fact, teacher instructions, as part of the regulative register described by Christie (2002) can also be seen as part of the ‘Outer’ language, its occurrence being more natural, spontaneous and interactive than ‘Inner’ language.

Instructions also highlight the organising role of the teacher. According to Harmer (1991), organisation occurs in three parts. The first stage is the ‘lead-in’ where the teacher and students have brief discussions about the topic for discussion, an introduction to the subject. The second part is where the teacher gives explicit instructions so that the students are clear about exactly what they are to do. For example, this can be a situation where the teacher tells the students to work in pairs or small groups. The final stage is where the teacher ‘initiates’ the task by checking that students have comprehended the task before allowing them to embark on the task (Harmer 1991:240).

In giving instructions and organising the classroom activities, the regulative register of the teachers consists of both modality and pronouns. Christie provides a few examples of instruction giving by teachers which involves the use of different levels of modality in addition to the person system. High modality, would for example, be used to emphasise the importance of a course of action to be pursued as in the following example, ‘So we’ve *got* to do a lot of concentrating’ (Christie 2002:16).

On the other hand, the teachers’ may make use of low or median modality to make the directions to behaviour more oblique as in the example below:

Now a lot of work [[that you *may* have to do]] *may* be with a partner. Some you’ll do by yourself. So you’re *probably* best to sit next to somebody [[that you will work with]] (Christie 2002:16)

The use of modality in discourse plays a role in revealing the speaker’s attitude as well as indicating the speaker’s or writer’s authority (Fairclough 1989:126). In the context of classroom discourse, this is especially relevant in that it can be an indication of the teacher’s attitude toward the students. Lyons suggests that a reasonable definition of modality would ‘concern the opinion and attitude’

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(1977:452) of the speaker. Palmer (1990:7) identifies three kinds of modality, namely ‘epistemic modality’, ‘deontic modality’ and ‘dynamic modality.’

The main issue with regard to modality is with reference to the difference between ‘deontic’ and ‘epistemic’ modality (e.g Lyons, 1977; Palmer, 1986, 1994; Sweetser 1990). Palmer defines ‘deontic’ modality where ‘modal verbs are used to express what is obligatory, permitted or forbidden’ (1990:7). Therefore, ‘deontic’ modality is concerned with ‘obligation’ and ‘permission’ (Krug 2000:41) also known as ‘root’ modals of volition, permission and obligation (McCarthy 1991:85). Epistemic modality, on the other hand, is concerned with degrees of certainty and possibility, where the speaker is committed to ‘statements about the truth of a proposition’ (Krug 2000:41). Palmer (1990) notes that epistemic modality ‘makes a judgement about the truth of a proposition’ while deontic modality is more ‘concerned with influencing actions, states or events’, in the vein of Searle’s ‘directives’ (1983:166).

In the context of the classroom, instructions given by the teacher can be classified as directives, where the students have the obligation of carrying out these directives. This obligation or necessity to carry out instructions can be seen as examples of deontic modality, conveyed through the use of ‘want to’, ‘need to’ and ‘must’. In other words, deontic modality is oriented towards performing speech acts – doing things with words, as Austin (1962:4-7) says. This type of modality is used to express what is obligatory, permitted or forbidden (Palmer 1990:7) and it is the speaker who obliges, permits or forbids. Similarly, ‘need to’ also expresses an obligation, emphasising the necessity of completing the task. ‘Need to’ can be seen as a marginal modal similar in meaning to ‘ought to’ (Krug, 2000:235; Palmer 1990:3) in that it does not have the ‘necessity’ meaning of ‘must’ (Palmer 1990:129) but seems to be more an indication of what is required for specific purposes.

The use of ‘want to’ also needs to be examined. Verplaetse refers to such use as the ‘commonest and most relevant pattern with this form in discourse dynamics’ (2003:151). There has been some argument as to the place of ‘want to’ in the modality continuum, with Palmer (1990) claiming that ‘want’ is not formally a modal verb while Verplaetse (2003) and Krug (2000) argue in favour of situating ‘want to’ as an ‘incipient modal auxiliary’ (Verplaetse 2003:151) given its behaviour

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in the context of volitional projections. Volition is used in order to express willingness, wish, intention or insistence (Leech & Svartvik 1973:141) where the strength of volition becomes stronger to the extent that the person asserts his will, or imposes it on others. In this continuum, 'want to' according to Leech & Svartvik (1973) expresses neutral volition, in the vein of conveying a desire or a wish which then is the choice of the addressee whether or not to carry out. Although admittedly 'want to' does not carry the same degree of compulsion as 'must', in the context of the classroom it carries the same force of meaning in that it conveys the message that the teachers desire has to be carried out, through the illocutionary force apparent, especially in the giving of instructions.

McCarthy summarises succinctly the relevance of modality to the analysis of discourse when he says that 'modality is fundamental in the creation of discourse; all messages choose some degree of modality' (McCarthy 1991:85). Although modality is present in most discourse texts, in classroom interactions, modality seems most often to be expressed when teachers give instructions to their students, which necessitates a study of this feature. As explained earlier, when teachers are giving directions/instructions to their students, they tend to make use of modality to lay an obligation, to make something necessary. Based on Searle's explanation of epistemic and deontic modality, it appears that deontic modality is more often used in discourse associated with giving instructions as it signals 'directives' (where we get them to do things) while epistemic modals signal 'assertives' (where we tell our hearers (truly or falsely) how things are) (1983:166).

Another aspect of discourse which is significant in the giving of instructions is the use of pronominals as highlighted earlier in this section. Pronominals can be seen as 'involvement strategies' (Tannen 1994:87) by which teachers display varying degrees of authority. According to Christie, teachers generally use the first person plural when attempting to build solidarity with their students as in the following example, 'Well today we've got another simple story...'. The use of the inclusive 'we' can also be seen as an implicit authority claim (Fairclough 1989:127-8). However, teachers might use the first person singular as a means of conveying their expectations of the students' as in the following example, 'I want you to listen to this tiny story like the one we had yesterday' (2002:16-17).

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The example below is identified by Christie (2002) as a teacher's use of the second person in order overtly direct students' behaviour:

“*You* really do need something to write with so if *you* don't have your own pens and pencils would *you* collect those please?”

According to Christie, the use of ‘we’ builds solidarity in a joint enterprise, indicates a consistent use of positive polarity, building a sense of asserting direction’ (2002:113), a view also shared by Wales (1996:60). The significance of pronouns is that the ‘referents are readily identifiable in the context of communication’ and on the basis of the hearer’s and speaker’s mutual knowledge (Gee 1999:101). Pronouns are also open to negotiation of meaning in different discourse structures, with references to pragmatic aspects of power, subjectivity or politeness (Wales 1996:84). In the classroom context, *we* is primarily used ‘inclusively’, implying joint activity or involvement or intimacy as in ‘you and me together’. *We* can also be used in directives where the speaker’s intention might be to speak modestly, by not using *I*. However, the use of *we* in a directive can often assert an egocentric ‘meaning’ (1996:63). It has also been suggested that women use ‘inclusive’ *we* more often than men, reflecting cooperative speech styles (Holmes 1995:187) but as Wales (1996) argues, this needs to be empirically tested, providing justification for studying this feature in the current study. In summary, *we* is not only a ‘useful linguistic mediator’ but also in sociolinguistic terms, it is also useful as a politeness strategy where benefits to ‘self’ are minimised by maximising benefits to the addressee (Wales 1996:68). Most importantly, it is a strong suggestion of the authority of the speaker.

Another aspect of pronouns which needs to be examined is the use of the second person *you*, which can be seen to be in binary opposition to the use of the first person (*I/we* versus *you*). The use of *I* can be seen as a direct reference to the speaker; in other words it refers or points to the ‘one who is speaking, while the use of *you* points to ‘the one who is listening/reading’ (Wales 1996:3).

In reality, when teachers are giving instructions, they are issuing commands with the aim of getting the students to do something. A command is usually a sentence with an imperative verb (Leech & Svartvik 1973:216). Fairclough explains that imperatives place the speaker/writer in a position of asking something of the

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addressee (action on the latter's part) while the addressee is a compliant actor (1989:126). The variation in obligation arises from the use of pronouns. For example, a direct command like 'Write this down now' which can sound rather brusque is mitigated when the same command is issued with a second person subject as in 'You can write this down now'. In the second example, the verb forms expressing obligation are similar but the effect of the second command on the listener is however, lessened in its brusqueness. In addition the use of the second person also specifies the group of people who need to obey the command (Leech & Svartvik, 1973:145-6).

The analysis of commands and directives was also studied by Goodwin in her observations of a group of boys and girls in a Philadelphia street (1980; 1990; 1998). In the analysis, Goodwin examined both pronouns and modality and found that while the boys preferred explicit directives to establish status differences, girls used more mitigating directives. Goodwin also argues that the linguistic forms used reflect the social organisation of the group, for example hierarchical organisations with strong directives to demonstrate control (1998:141). The finding of males using more directives was also substantiated by Engle's (1980) study of parents which found that fathers tend to give more directions than mothers. In West's (1980) study of doctors, it was also found that male doctors tend to use more imperatives than female doctors. Female doctors used more mitigated directions, using the pronoun 'we' more often than 'you'. When the latter pronoun was used, it was used with other modal forms such as 'can' and 'could'. Holmes also argues that modal verbs like 'would' and 'could' generally soften directives (1995:9). From her study on patient-doctor relationships, West concludes that:

...women physicians employed directives that minimised status differences between their patients and themselves provided for more symmetrical arrangements of their relationships (1998:343).

Instructions, an instrumental aspect of the teacher's role as an organiser, for the purposes of this study, are defined as the language used by teachers in setting up tasks and in telling students what they are going to be doing during the lesson. These can also be seen as 'directives' or speech actions that try to get another to do something (Goodwin 1998:121). The relevance of the study of commands and directives to this study lies in research indicating that gender differences prevail in

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this speech act which can be seen as politeness strategies. According to Holmes, there is evidence that ‘mitigated directives which reflect concern for the addressee’s concerns tend to occur more in female speech than in male speech’ (1995:187). With this in mind, the study aims to investigate teacher’s regulative register, which consists of modality and pronouns in order to determine if differences exist between male and female teachers. In examining these discourse features, imperatives and statements of obligation and necessity will also be discussed.

### **2.3.4 Questioning Strategies**

Questioning, as a teaching strategy, is usually traced to Socrates. The primary advantage of the Socratic method of questioning is that it enables assumptions to be challenged, contradictions to be exposed, eventually leading to new knowledge and wisdom (Cotton 2001). Within Speech Act taxonomies (e.g. Searle & Searle) questions are classified as directives as the act of asking questions invokes power relationships.

Questioning is a prevalent teaching technique, second only to lecturing, with teachers spending between thirty-five to eighty percent of their instructional time on this aspect of teaching behaviour (Cotton 2001; Borich 2004; Holland & Shortall 1998). The questioning aspect of teacher behaviour has remained consistent throughout with contemporary research indicating that teachers ask between 300 and 400 questions each day (Leven & Long 1981). Teachers’ questioning behaviour in the ESL classroom is further complicated by the increasing prevalence of diverse linguistic backgrounds and levels or types of cultural literacy.

Recent studies on ESL teaching have also pointed out the need for questioning as in second language classrooms, where learners often do not have a great number of tools, ‘[teacher’s] questions provide necessary stepping stones to communication’ (Brown 1994:65). Questioning forms an important aspect in the analysis of teacher discourse primarily because the teacher spends a substantial amount of talking time on this behaviour. It is also noteworthy that the sequence of questioning generally tends to follow Sinclair & Couthard’s (1975) IRF sequence where the question sequence involves structuring, soliciting and reacting (Borich 2004:258).

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Generally, a question is any grammatical statement which has an interrogative form or function. In classroom settings these are instructional cues or stimuli, signalling to students the content elements which need to be learned, directions for what they are to do and how to do it (Cotton 2001). Effective questions can also be defined as ‘ones for which students actively compose a response and thereby become engaged in the learning process’ (Chuska 1995; Wilen 1991), where the effectiveness is further dependent on voice inflection, voice emphasis, word choice and the context in which the question is raised (Borich 2004:258). Tsui (1992) claims that the term ‘question’ has never been clearly defined with some using it as a semantic category (Quirk et al., 1972, 1985) while others like Lyons (1977, 1981) and Huddleston (1984) view it as an illocutionary act. It is also seen as a ‘request’ or ‘directive’ (Katz, 1977; Katz and Postal, 1964; Gordon and Lakoff, 1975; Labov & Fanshel, 1977; Burton, 1980).

The prevalence of questioning as a teaching strategy has led to many classifications being developed, most often revolving around the distinction between lower-order questions (those that involve recall of information) and higher-order questions (requiring clarification, expansion, generalisation and inference). However, prior to examining the dominant classification systems, it is necessary to discuss the purposes for which questions are asked by teachers in the classroom. According to Borich (2004), teacher questions are used for the purposes of stimulating interest, to obtain attention in addition to serving the purpose of diagnosis and checking. Another purpose of questions is to obtain student recall of specific facts or information. Teacher questions also serve a managerial purpose and encourage higher-level thought processes. Finally questions also structure and redirect learning while also allowing expressions of affect (Borich 2004:259).

The purpose and form of questions however differs from teacher to teacher. One of the most important purposes of questions is to allow learners to keep participating in the discourse and even modify it so that the language used becomes more comprehensible and personally relevant (Richards & Lockhart 1996:185). Questioning also provides the students with the opportunity to openly express their ideas and thoughts in addition to enabling different students to hear a variety of explanations from their peers. From the teacher’s perspective, questioning allows

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teachers to pace their lessons and more importantly to evaluate student learning. Questions also play an important role in stimulating and motivating discussions in addition to providing encouragement, clarifying and checking understanding (Richards & Lockhart 1996:185).

In the discussion on the definition of questioning, one has to take into consideration the salience of questions in addition to their functions in an interactive classroom. ‘Careful framing of questions’ sets a ‘learning climate for interactive teaching’ (Brown 2001:169). In Brown’s view, questioning strategies are one of the most important teaching behaviours for teachers to master.

Any discussion on questioning must by necessity include the classification of questions. While many different classifications exist, some of the most common classifications will be briefly explained here with the purpose of explaining the question classification scheme adopted in this study.

The first is the distinction made between display and referential questions as identified by prevailing studies on classroom research (Holland & Shortall 1997:65; Chaudron 199:127). Display questions are those to which the answers are known, designed with the purpose of eliciting or displaying particular structures. Referential questions, on the other hand, are ones to which the teachers do not usually know the answer (Richards & Lockhart 1996). In other words, while display questions encourage lower-level thinking, referential questions tend to stimulate higher-order thinking skills, in turn producing more complex language forms. In their analysis of six teachers, as well as the speech of thirty-six native speakers (NSs) in informal conversations with Non Native Speakers (NNSs), Long & Sato (1983) found that significant differences existed in the proportion of display and referential questions asked. Long and Sato found that the ESL teachers in the classroom asked a significantly higher proportion of display questions while in the informal speech between NSs and NNSs, the NSs asked a majority (76%) of referential and no display questions (1983:270). Thus, this led to the conclusion ‘that in naturalistic discourse referential questions are more frequent than display questions, whereas display questions are much more frequent in whole-class teaching in ESL classrooms’ (Richards and Lockhart 1996:187).

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This demonstrates the view that the display/referential distinction in question types is widely used. In addition, it also indicates that ESL teachers should attempt to ask more referential questions as a way of simulating natural discourse in the world outside the classroom. However, the qualification which needs to be made is that the purposes of questioning in the ESL classroom are substantially different to that of questions asked by NSs in their informal conversations with NNSs. The classification of questions into either display or referential is also very limiting, implying that questions either have to be recalling information or of a higher-order thinking skill. The function of questions, especially in the classroom is far more complex, thus this classification does not capture the entire range of purposes for which questions are asked in the context of the classroom. Long & Sato's (1983) study has in fact pointed to the importance of context in the analysis of questions.

Quirk et al. (1972, 1985) propose three major classes of 'question' according to the answers the questions seem to expect. This classification is based on the definition of questions as a semantic category where the purpose is to seek information on a specific point. This is indicated by the classification of YES/NO Questions, WH-questions and alternative questions where one of two or more options are provided (Quirk et al., 1985:806).

The above classification has inherent weaknesses; firstly because defining questions only as a 'semantic category' does not encompass the full range of purposes for which questions are asked in the classroom, thus the functional aspect of questions seems to be ignored. Specifically, YES-NO questions tend to have a positive or negative bias as pointed out by Quirk et al. Thus, the questioned need not go beyond providing a one-word answer. In addition, as Tsui (1992) points out, Quirk et al.'s interpretation of WH-questions as being primarily information seeking is problematic as this category of questions can have varying functions, raising doubts as to whether they can be constituted as a single class. The third class of questions in Quirk et al.'s classification is that of alternative questions, which are of two types: the first resembling a YES/NO question and the second being similar to a WH-question. Tsui provides comparative evidence to show that 'in terms of expected answer, alternative questions do not constitute a separate category but rather belong to the category of information-seeking questions' (1992:98).

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Another common distinction made in classifying questions is that of open and closed questions. Open-ended questions can be defined as those questions that will solicit additional information. These are sometimes called infinite response or unsaturated type questions. By definition, they are broad and require more than one or two word responses. Open-ended questions develop trust, are perceived as less threatening, allow an unrestrained or free response, and may be more useful with articulate users. On the other hand, they can be time-consuming, may result in unnecessary information, and may require more effort on the part of the user. Close-ended questions are those questions, which can be answered finitely by either “yes” or “no.” These are also known as dichotomous or saturated type questions. Close-ended questions can include presuming, probing, or leading questions. By definition, these questions are restrictive and can be answered in a few words.

Richards and Lockhart (1996:185-187) divide questions into three categories, procedural, convergent and divergent. The first, procedural questions are related to classroom procedures such as “Do you know what to do?” Convergent questions require a short answer around a specific theme such as “Do children have part-time jobs in your country?” while divergent questions are rather similar to referential questions as in “Yumiko, what do you think?” Their categories differ from the simple display/referential variety in that convergent questions include those to which a teacher may not know the answer but which narrow the range of possible responses, most notably closed questions demanding a yes or no answer. While this system of classification can be adapted to the questioning strategies employed by the teachers in this study, there are certain limits to this classification. In essence, the basic distinction here is also that of display and referential questions, which by itself is unsatisfactory due to its simplistic nature. Questioning is a cognitive activity which in turn encourages the questioned to exercise different levels of thinking in order to arrive at an appropriate answer. In a skills- based course, this aspect of thinking is fundamental to the eventual success of the student. The focus is not so much on how much content the student can master as much as on the skills they utilise at deriving the answer. Whether it be a reading or writing skills lesson, the questions the teachers ask have a fundamental purpose – that of enabling the students to acquire relevant skills. While Richards and Lockhart’s classification of questions has been found to be lacking in capturing the full range of cognitive questions asked by

teachers, the category of questions which relate to procedural functions is relevant to this study.

Therefore, the classifications described earlier were not found to be as suitable as Bloom's Taxonomy in the analysis of questioning strategies in the English language classroom. Borich refers to Bloom's Taxonomy as 'one of the best known systems for classifying questions' (2004:266). Bloom in fact developed three domains of learning; cognitive, affective and psychomotor. Within each domain, particular aspects of learning are examined. In relation to this study, Bloom's Taxonomy of questions in the cognitive area will be considered. Table 2.3.1 provides a description of the different categories of questions:

**Table 2.3.1: Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Questions**

| <b>Category</b> | <b>Definition</b>   | <b>Type of Thinking Expected</b>  |
|-----------------|---|---|
| Knowledge       | Knowledge is defined as the remembering of previously learned material. This may involve the recall of a wide range of material, from specific facts to complete theories, but all that is required is the bringing to mind of the appropriate information. Knowledge represents the lowest level of learning outcomes in the cognitive domain.   | Recalling or recognising information as learned   |
| Comprehension   | Comprehension is defined as the ability to grasp the meaning of material. This may be shown by translating material from one form to another (words to numbers), by interpreting material (explaining or summarising), and by estimating future trends (predicting consequences or effects). These learning outcomes go one step beyond the simple remembering of material, and represent the lowest level of understanding.  | Demonstrating understanding of the material; transforming, reorganising or interpreting   |
| Application     | Application refers to the ability to use learned material in new and concrete situations. This may include the application of such things as rules, methods, concepts, principles, laws and theories. Learning outcomes in this area require a higher level of understanding than those under comprehension.  | Using information to solve a problem with a single correct answer   |
| Analysis        | Analysis refers to the ability to break down material into its component parts so that its organisational structure may be understood. This may include the identification of the parts, analysis of the relationships between parts, and recognition of the organisational principles involved. Learning outcomes here represent a higher intellectual level than comprehension and application because they require an understanding of both the content and structural form of the material. | Critical thinking; identifying reasons and motives; making inferences based on specific data; analysing conclusions to see if supported by evidence |
| Synthesis       | Synthesis refers to the ability to put parts together to form a new whole. This may involve the production of a unique communication (theme or speech), a plan of operations (research proposal), or a set of abstract relations (scheme for classifying information). Learning outcomes in this area stress creative behaviours, with major emphasis on the formulation of new patterns or structures.   | Divergent, original thinking; original plan, proposal, design or story  |

| Category   | Definition   | Type of Thinking Expected  |
|------------|--|--|
| Evaluation | Evaluation is concerned with the ability to judge the value of material (statement, novel, poem, research report) for a given purpose. The judgements are to be based on definite criteria. These may be internal criteria (organisation) or external criteria (relevance to the purpose) and the students may determine the criteria or be given them. Learning outcomes in this area are highest in the cognitive hierarchy because they contain elements of all the other categories, plus conscious value judgments based on clearly defined criteria. | Judging the merits of ideas, offering opinions, applying standards |

(Adapted from Sadker, M. & Sadker, D. (1986) in J.Cooper (ed) 1990:143-160)

As stated in Table 2.3.1, there are six levels of behavioural complexity in Bloom's cognitive-domain taxonomy, each of which will now be briefly explained. The first, knowledge, requires students to recall, describe or define information which is already committed to memory while comprehension questions require students to have some level of understanding of facts the student has committed to memory. This level of questioning tests if students can explain, summarise or elaborate on the facts that have been taught. According to Borich, the third level of questioning; application questions go beyond memorisation and translation of facts and require students to 'apply facts to a problem, context or environment that is different from the one in which the information was learned' (2004:269). At the analysis level, questions require students to break down a problem into its component parts and draw relationships among the parts. The purpose of questions here are to identify logical errors, to differentiate among facts, opinions and assumptions; to derive conclusions and to find generalisations or inferences (Borich 2004:270). At the synthesis level, students are required to produce something original or unique where students design a solution, compose a response or predict an outcome to a problem for which they have never seen, heard or read a response. Finally, at the evaluation level, questions are at the highest level of cognitive complexity requiring students to form judgments and make decisions using stated criteria. Borich (2004:267) provides the following summary of this classification scheme:

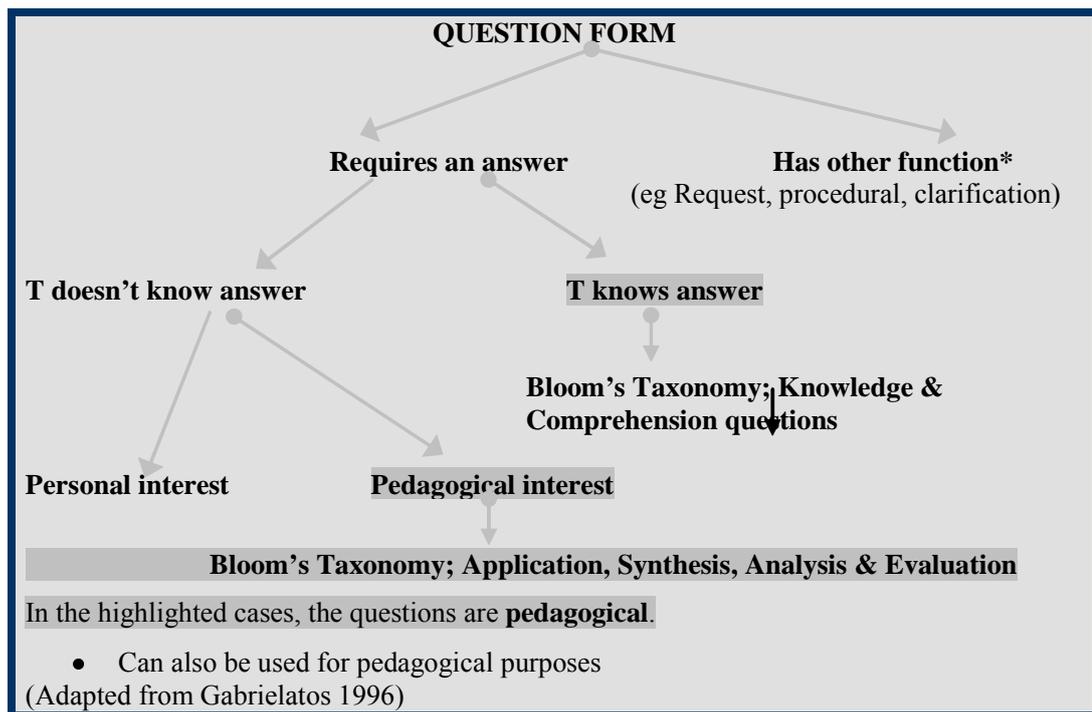
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**Table 2.3.2: A Question Classification Scheme**

| <b>Level of Behavioural Complexity</b> | <b>Expected Student Behaviour</b>  | <b>Instructional Processes</b> | <b>Key Words</b>                       |
|--|--|--------------------------------|--|
| Knowledge (remembering)                | Student is able to remember or recall information and recognise facts, terminology and rules                                     | Repetition<br>Memorisation     | Define<br>Describe<br>Identify         |
| Comprehension (understanding)          | Student is able to change the form of a communication by translating or rephrasing what has been read or spoken                  | Explanation<br>Illustration    | Summarise<br>Paraphrase<br>Rephrase    |
| Application (transferring)             | Student is able to apply the information learned to a context different than the one in which it was learned                     | Practice<br>Transfer           | Apply<br>Use<br>Employ                 |
| Analysis (relating)                    | Student is able to break a problem down into its component parts and draw relationships among the parts                          | Induction<br>Deduction         | Relate<br>Distinguish<br>Differentiate |
| Synthesis (creating)                   | Student is able to combine parts to form a unique or novel solution to a problem   | Divergence<br>Generalisation   | Formulate<br>Compose<br>Produce        |
| Evaluation (judging)                   | Student is able to make decisions about the value or worth of methods, ideas, people or products according to expressed criteria | Discrimination<br>Inference    | Appraise<br>Decide<br>Justify          |

Based on the preceding discussion, the purposes and functions of questions are presented diagrammatically below which shows the general typology of teacher questions in English language teaching adapted from Gabrielatos (1996).

**Figure 2.3.2: A Typology of Teacher Questions in ELT**



In summary, the classification systems described earlier, which have their merits, were not found to be appropriate to the current study as they were unable to capture the range of purposes for which questions are asked by teacher in the classroom. The advantage of Bloom's Taxonomy is that it goes beyond the 'simple recall-versus-thought dichotomy' (Borich 2004:266) as cited earlier. The inherent weakness of the display versus referential paradigm is that it assumes that all information/learning belongs either to a category of simple recall (lower-order thinking skills) or higher-order thinking questions which tests higher levels of learning. However, the process of learning and teaching is far more complex requiring that a continuum be adopted. Bloom's Taxonomy provides this continuum of question complexity which fills the space between the ends of the scales determined by the display-referential school of thought (Borich 2004) in addition to which specific linguistic forms can be identified.

The relevance of studying questions as an aspect of gender discourse is made apparent by evidence indicating that differences exist in the questioning behaviour of males and females generally. Fishman (1998:255) claims that 'women ask more questions of any kind' while Coates suggests that women's use of more interrogative forms is a reflection of their 'relative weakness in interactive situations' (1993:123).

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Cameron et al's (1989) research demonstrates that questions tend to be used by powerful participants. In asymmetrical discourse such as that in doctor-patient (Todd 1983; West 1984) and teacher-student (Barnes 1971; Stubbs 1983) interactions, questions are overwhelmingly used by powerful participants. Coates explains that this leads to the conclusion that it is occupational status, rather than gender that determines the frequency of questions (1993:123). As questions are powerful linguistic forms, providing the speaker with the power to elicit responses from the addressee, this aspect of discourse needs to be examined in the context of teaching.

### **2.3.5 Feedback Strategies**

The complexity of the issue of feedback is made apparent by the fact that many different explanations have been offered to explain this aspect of teacher behaviour. Feedback has been defined as 'information about the gap between the actual level and the reference level of a system parameter which is used to alter the gap in some way' (Ramaprasad 1983:4). In education, this leads to what Clarke refers to as 'possess(ing) a concept of the standard (or goal or reference level) being aimed for, comparisons of the actual (or current) level of performance with the standard and engagement in appropriate action which leads to the closure of the gap' (2000:3). Askew and Lodge adopt a broader definition of feedback which they see as being inclusive of 'all dialogue to support learning in both formal and informal situations' (2000:1). Carlson argues that feedback is

authoritative information students receive that will reinforce or modify responses to instruction and guide them more efficiently in attaining the goals of the course (1979:4).

One of the primary aims of feedback is related to the overall objective of enabling students to improve. For students to improve, Gipps (1994) suggests that students should have a notion of the desired standard in order to make a comparison between actual performance and desired performance. Therefore, feedback functions as a bridge between actual and desired performance. According to Sadler, teacher feedback is important to teachers as they use it 'to monitor the strengths and weaknesses of their performances' with the aim of recognising and reinforcing positive learning and to modify or improve unsatisfactory aspects (1989:120).

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Chaudron argues that error correction is implicit in the notion of feedback, particularly as a primary role of language teachers is often considered to be ‘the provision of both error correction a form of negative feedback and positive sanctions/approval of learner’s production’ (1988:132). A unique aspect of classroom feedback relates to the position of the teacher. As Chaudron says, ‘the special circumstances of the teacher having superior knowledge and status results in an imbalance in expectations as to who provides feedback and when it is provided’ and ‘teachers are expected to execute their vested instructional authority to evaluate any and all student behaviour, nonverbal and verbal’ (1988:132). Chaudron (1988) concludes that role of feedback is vital and an ‘inevitable constituent of classroom interaction, for no matter what the teacher does, learners’ derive information about their behaviour from the teacher’s reaction or lack of one, to their behaviour’ (1988:132-3). It has been argued that error correction is ineffective and damaging to students’ development, however, Willing (1988) argues through his study that error correction by the teacher was one of the most highly valued and desired classroom activities.

Sinclair & Coulthard (1975) identified the ‘F-move’ which refers to the ‘Follow-up’ or ‘Feedback’ move in their analysis of classroom discourse. This represents the third move in the IRF exchange structure which, as explained in the earlier parts of this chapter, forms the overall structure of analysis for this study. In addition to providing general content instruction, a vital role of language teachers has often been considered to be the provision of error correction. The feedback component of classroom discourse is what distinguishes classroom talk most obviously from speech events which take place outside of the classroom. Chaudron explains that the teacher’s ‘differential right to the floor’ represents the ‘final step of the classic exchange cycle of teacher initiation/solicitation – student response – teacher feedback/evaluation, where the evaluation step is the most unusual in comparison with natural conversation’ (1988:40). Hewings argues that the acceptability of a response is a necessary part of the IRF exchange, where the teacher has three options. Firstly, the teacher can provide a negative assessment – reject the response, indicating that it was unacceptable or withhold the negative assessment until a later stage or give partial acceptance. The final option is for the teacher to provide a positive assessment – indicate that the response was acceptable (1992:183).

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Therefore, the tripartite function of feedback can be seen as that of providing reinforcement, information and motivation (Zamel 1981; Annett 1969). Allwright & Bailey (1991: 107-108) lists the following feedback strategies:

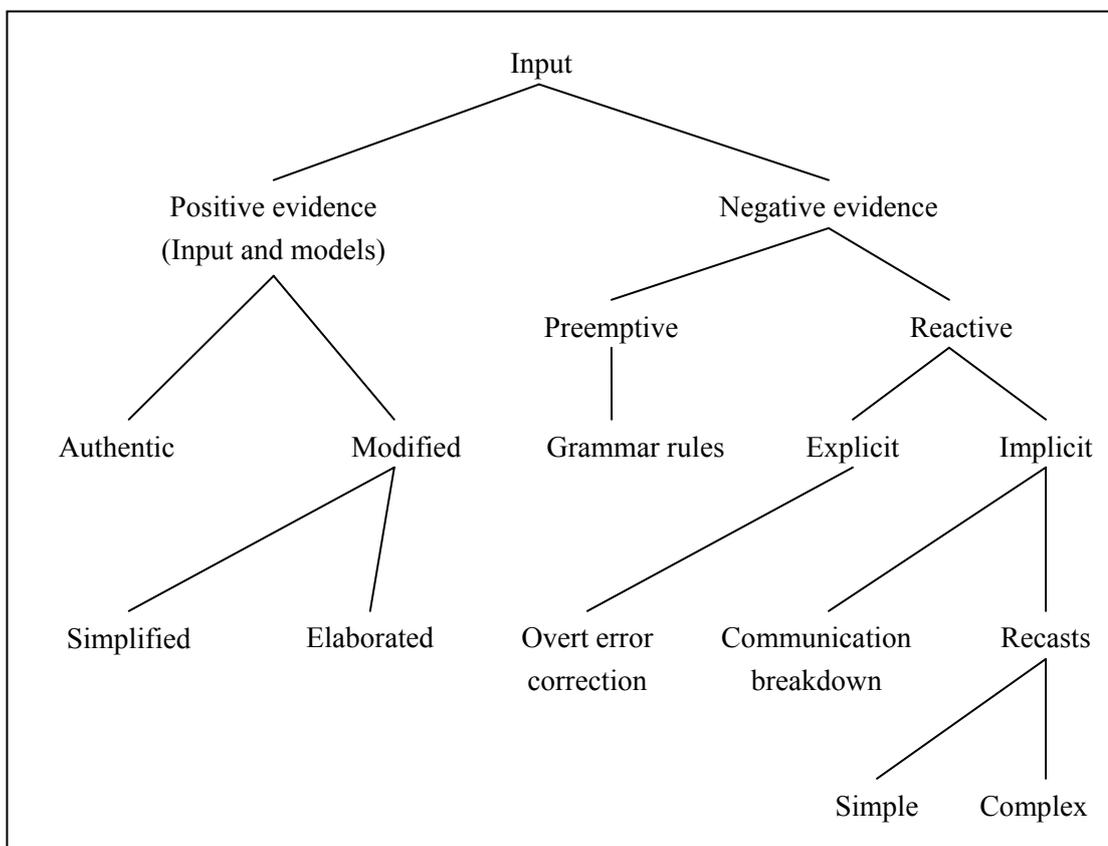
- Fact of error indicated
- Blame indicated
- Location indicated
- Model provided
- Error type indicated
- Remedy indicated
- Improvement indicated
- Praise indicated
- Opportunity for new attempt given

However as pointed out by Kristmanson (2000), learning a language effectively requires a supportive environment. Thus, some of the strategies identified by Allwright (1991) may not always be appropriate. Instead, the teachers' strategies in providing feedback should enable the creation of a supportive emotional climate. Choosing error correction strategies which make students comfortable enough to take risks are of great importance. For example, Terrell (1985) argues that direct correction of errors has the undesired consequence of frustrating students in addition to making them focus on form rather than meaning. Schrum & Glisan also conclude that 'the research generally indicates that overt error correction by the teacher is ineffective and may actually impede students' progress' (1994:188). Virgil & Oller (1976) stress that teachers must provide learners with appropriate cognitive and affective feedback. From research conducted on learner errors, it appears that teachers do not correct all learner errors (Allwright, 1975; Chaudron, 1977, 1986, 1987, 1988; Fanselow, 1977; Long, 1977; Nystrom, 1983).

Long (1998) offered the following framework incorporating the different types of positive and negative evidence in relation to the linguistic environment, i.e., input. According to the classification below, negative evidence and positive evidence constitute the only two types of evidence available to the language learner. Each type is further divided into subtypes. Thus, error correction should be seen as one aspect

of feedback, which more broadly encompasses the more ‘natural approaches’ of asking clarifying questions, rephrasing the students’ answer and creating environments where students can negotiate meaning. Long (1977) also notes that teachers have three choices in deciding what to treat. They can inform the learner that an error has been made and indicate the location and identity of the error. Long’s (1998) framework of analysis, incorporating positive and negative evidence in relation to the linguistic environment embodies some of the feedback strategies identified above. This is incorporated in the diagram below taken from Long & Robinson (1998:30):

**Figure 2.3.3: Long & Robinson’s Data for SLA**



The above diagram indicates that feedback strategies have two main aims, that of positive and negative reinforcement, in accordance with learning theories. Nunan (1995) agrees with the simple, yet frequently made distinction between negative and positive feedback, although he argues that positive feedback is more effective than negative feedback in changing student behaviour. Nunan (1995:197) also identifies two functions of positive feedback, the first of which is to inform students that they

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have performed correctly and secondly to increase motivation through praise. While positive feedback can consist of short interjections of ‘Good’, ‘OK’ and ‘Alright’, negative feedback is made apparent generally through a repetition of the student response with a rising intonation pattern.

Feedback was the exclusive concern of Carroll & Swain (1993) who investigated the different types of feedback on the learning of the dative alternation rule in English while other studies have attempted to study form-focussed instructional materials and feedback on error (Spada & Lightbrown, 1993; White, 1991; White, Spada, Lightbrown & Ranta, 1991). In their study on corrective feedback, Lyster & Ranta (1997) identified the following different types of feedback utilised by the teachers in their study:

- Explicit correction – refers to the explicit provision of the correct form, with the teacher clearly indicating what the student had said was incorrect
- Recasts – this involves the teacher’s reformulation of all or part of the student’s utterance, without the error. These generally tend to be implicit although some are more salient than others.
- Clarification requests – these indicate to the students’ that the teacher has misunderstood their utterance or that the utterance is ill formed in some way and that a repetition or a reformulation is required. This feedback strategy can refer to either problems in comprehensibility or accuracy or both.
- Metalinguistic feedback – contains either comments, information, or questions related to the well-formedness of the student’s utterance without explicitly providing the correct form.
- Elicitation – these can be of three types: first, teachers elicit completion of their own utterance by strategically pausing to allow students’ to ‘fill in the blank’. Second, teachers use questions to elicit the correct form and third, teachers occasionally ask students to reformulate their utterance.
- Repetitions – these refer to the teacher’s repetition, in isolation of the student’s erroneous utterance, usually signified by an adjustment in the teacher’s intonation. (Lyster & Ranta 1997:55)

The researchers concluded that the above six types of feedback strategies were most often used by the teachers in their study, with recasts being the most dominant. In

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terms of learner uptake, recasts were the least likely to lead to uptake while elicitation led to 100% uptake. Lyster & Ranta (1997) also concluded that the feedback types that allow for negotiation of form are elicitation, metalinguistic feedback, clarification requests and repetition.

In providing feedback, teachers are evaluating student responses through both implicit and explicit strategies. As the powerful members, teachers can choose to provide feedback to the students through politeness strategies as the attention paid to the addressee's face is affected by the relative power of the speaker over the addressee. Brown & Levinson describe two aspects of face; negative and positive face (1978:66). Negative face involves the desire for freedom of action and freedom from imposition, while positive face involves the desire for approval where power is relative (1978:82). Talbot points out that in many empirical studies, women were found to use more politeness strategies than men (1998:91). It is hypothesised that politeness strategies influence the feedback strategy chosen by the teacher, in terms of whether it is implicit (recasts/reformulations) or explicit (repetitions) as the face of the addressee (students) is threatened. A study of the similarities and differences in the choice of feedback strategies where teachers provide both implicit and explicit feedback, would allow conclusions to be made about male/female politeness strategies.

## **2.4 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER**

From the literature surveyed, it can be concluded that gender is not a fixed category, rather it is dynamic and is negotiated according to the event/activity/context, thus males and females negotiate a continuum of femininity and masculinity which is determined by its linguistic marking and the role they have in a particular activity. The investigation in this study is on the teaching activity, a position which accords the teachers' with status, authority and power, particularly in the second language classroom, making the teachers somewhat equal, despite their biological sex. How the male and female teachers operate on this continuum of femininity and masculinity is investigated through their discourse in three key aspects of the teaching activity, that of giving explicit instructions, questioning and providing feedback based on studies on gender differences indicating that differences exist in

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male/female discourse with regard to directives, frequency of questioning and females adopting a cooperative speech style while males adopt a competitive speech style.

In the next chapter, the research methodology adopted in this study is described.

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## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

#### **3.0 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER**

The substantive objective of this study is to investigate the prevalence of gender differences in the discourse features used by ESL teachers in the setting of a classroom. This chapter will detail the research methodology and principles underpinning the study with the rationale provided for the choice of data-gathering and data analysis methods.

#### **3.1 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH METHODS**

This section provides a brief outline of the key aspects of the research process adopted in this study, the details of which will be provided in later sections of this chapter.

##### **3.1.1 Single-Site Study**

This is a single-site study based on the ESL department of a WA tertiary institution. A few considerations led to the choice of a single-site for the study. Firstly, fewer samples studied in depth tend to generate more useful data in a qualitative study as opposed to larger samples which can only be studied superficially. Secondly, financial and time constraints were also taken into consideration. With a single-site, less travel was required which reduced both the time and financial resources required. Finally, ease of access to both equipment and participants was also considered. This was especially important as the observations were video-recorded, which necessitated the use of a tripod stand. In addition, the containment of the study to a single-site also meant that the participants were much more accessible.

##### **3.1.2 Qualitative Research**

In broad terms, this is a qualitative study with elements of quantitative analysis, the detailed reasons for which are provided in Section 3.3. The main objective here is to provide a brief outline of the rationale for the adoption of this research paradigm which is based on the aims of the study. Creswell defines qualitative research as:-

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an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. (1998:18 )

One of the determining factors governing the choice of any research methodology is the research question. The aim of the research question in this study was to discover patterns of language discourse in the naturalistic setting of a classroom, thus it is a process of inquiry, an exploration, the goal of which is to understand the bigger social issue of gender differentiated discourse. As the aim of the research question was to describe ‘what is going on’ in the classroom, the adoption of a qualitative approach which focussed on describing the patterns observed, seemed to be in keeping with the research question. As Marshall & Rossman (1989:42) advice, ‘Researchers should design the study according to the research question they seek to answer.’

Secondly, the aim of the study was not to present a panoramic view, but to describe in detail the patterns that emerged. Thus a small sample was chosen to be studied in a single-site which also contributed to depth of understanding. Thirdly, the aim of the study was to determine the discourse patterns of ESL teachers in their natural setting, the classroom, which was the primary source of data. The aim of the researcher was simply to observe and record what was happening in the natural environment of a classroom, without administering any tests or asking any questions. Finally, the role of the researcher in this study was not to pass judgments as an ‘expert’ but that of an ‘active learner’, engaged both in the teaching and learning process as well as the research process. Thus, the researcher did not aim to make sweeping generalisations but to provide contextual findings, which forms the philosophical underpinning of qualitative research methodologies.

### **3.1.3 Non-Participant Observation**

The use of classroom observations as a research method is well documented. Allwright says that ‘classroom observation is central to our data collection procedures’ (1983:10). Hopkins (1993) describes observations as a ‘pivotal activity’

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with a crucial role to play in classroom research. McDonough & McDonough divide the world of classroom observation into three schemes:-

- Wallace (1991) refers to system-based/ethnographic/ ad hoc procedures
- Hopkins (1993) has a more detailed breakdown into systematic/structured/focussed/open observations
- Seliger & Shohamy (1989) encapsulate the same spectrum in a binary structured/open distinction

(Adapted from McDonough & McDonough 1997:101)

This research conforms to the principles of Wallace (1991) and Hopkins (1993) in that the observations were open, from which categories of discourse patterns were derived.

Non-participant observation, the method adopted in this study, occurs when the participant does not interact with the person(s) or events being observed. This method of observation was adopted for three reasons. Firstly, being disengaged from the process allowed the researcher to be more objective than being a participant would have allowed for. Secondly, as the researcher did not interact with the subjects of the observation, it allowed time to take field notes which were used for reflections on the observations and issues raised. Finally, the researcher desired to be as unobtrusive as possible that the impact on the data collected would be minimal. The engagement of the researcher in the process of teaching and learning was firstly felt to be disruptive to both the teachers and the students and secondly would not enable the researcher to fulfil the aim of allowing the data to present itself as naturally as possible. The researcher, however, acknowledges the presence of any third party in the 'intimate' environment of the classroom would cause some nervous tension. The strategies by which such issues were minimised will be elaborated in Section 3.4.

### **3.1.4 Triangulation**

Data triangulation was achieved through a combination of non-participant observations during which field notes were made and the detailed transcribing of the recorded material, ensuring methodological triangulation. In addition, further

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triangulation was ensured by the researcher observing the participants on different occasions. These principles of triangulation follow the definition of Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000) who say that triangulation can either make use of the same method on different occasions or different methods on the same object of study.

### **3.1.5 Procedure**

The research procedures consisted of the following steps:-

#### Step 1: Selection of Participants

Participants were selected according to a set of criteria developed with the purpose of eliminating intervening variables. Firstly, the participants had to be teachers of an academic ELICOS class. Secondly, the participants had to be first language speakers of English with qualifications that specialised in the teaching of English as a Second Language. Finally, to determine gender differentiations, three males and three females were selected.

#### Step 2: Briefing of Participants

The aims and objectives of the study were outlined to the participants in broad terms to ensure that they had an understanding of the research. However, the researcher was careful not to provide too much information, particularly about the gender variable so as not to influence the participants' classroom discourse. Participants were also asked to provide their signed consent with the assurance that they were free to withdraw from the study at any stage. Finally, the participants were given a written explanation of the broad aims of the study to reflect on to allow time for them to withdraw if they so wished. An information sheet for the students in the class to be observed was also given to the participants so that the students could be informed. Participants were also asked for their willingness to be video-recorded to which they gave their signed consent.

#### Step 3: Classroom Observations

An observation schedule was drawn up for the two sets of observations. Each of the six participants was observed for three hours in two different classes. These observations were video-recorded, to allow the researcher access to both verbal and

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non-verbal elements. The latter was not for the purpose of analysis but to contextualise the lesson. The video recording equipment was placed at the back of the class and was trained on the participant at all times, both when speaking to the whole class and to capture the participants' interactions with small groups.

A digital video-recorder was used to ensure electronic access to information, once it was converted to a CD format which allowed for ease of storage and ensured accuracy of data.

#### Step 4: Field Notes

During the observations, the researcher proceeded to write field notes which were then used for two purposes. Firstly, these provided a context for the lesson and secondly served to supplement the transcripts. The field notes consisted of the time, date, aims and focus of the lesson, in addition to the researcher's reflections on the events observed.

#### Step 5: Transcription

Transcription for research purposes is always a function of the aims of the research to which it belongs. Given this, the transcription procedure adopted in this study focussed primarily on utterances in the teacher's discourse, which examined a range of features such as rising and falling intonation and emphasis according to transcription notations outlined in the Appendix. These were then openly coded to allow for analysis.

#### Step 6: Data Analysis

The transcriptions and the field notes were used as a basis for identifying the main categories of participants' discourse behaviour while questioning, giving instructions and providing verbal feedback to the students. The process of analysis involved examining and re-examining of the data to discover the emergence of recurrent patterns of discourse. As the data that came up from the transcripts was varied and dense, it was necessary to identify the most noticeable categories to allow for in-depth, thorough analysis.

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### 3.2 SELECTION OF SITE AND PARTICIPANTS

As mentioned earlier, this is a single-site study based on the ESL department of a WA tertiary institution. The decision to focus on one site took a few issues into consideration. Firstly it was decided that fewer samples studied in more depth would generate more useful data than larger samples analysed superficially. This is in keeping with the aim of the study which was to explore the phenomenon of gender-differentiated discourse in order to provide a thorough description. The second factor concerned time and financial constraints. Working from a single-site meant that limited financial resources were required as little travel was involved. In addition, a single-site also reduced pressures on time, which was an instrumental factor given that each of the six participants was observed on two different occasions. Thirdly, transporting the researcher's video-recording equipment which included a heavy tripod stand was also a consideration. With a single, familiar site, the researcher was able to store the equipment safely. Lastly, as the participants were contained in one area, they were much more accessible to the researcher. A thorough understanding of the background and systems of the site, it was felt, would also assist in developing greater sensitivity to the data.

One of the reasons for the choice of the study site was its large ESL student and teaching population. Data supplied from the department indicates that at any given time, there are approximately 300-350 students and 44 teachers, across the programs run by the ESL department. More importantly, it also has a well developed ESL teaching area with a long history (the department began in the early 1980's), specialising in the teaching of English as a second language at varying levels, ranging from beginners to advanced. In addition, the syllabus also extends students from learning English for general purposes to having a more academic focus, where NESB students are prepared for entry to other pathway programs, such as the English Language Bridging Course and Foundation Studies programs. At the higher levels, ELICOS students are prepared for entry into mainstream university programs. In summary, with such an extensive, dynamic student/teacher population, combined with a range of syllabi, it seemed reasonable and logistically sound to focus the study on this site.

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As the focus of the study was on teachers, a set of criteria was developed to ensure consistency of findings which would provide the study with a greater degree of credibility and dependability through the elimination of intervening variables. One of the criteria was that the participants had to be practising ESL teachers, teaching in an academic preparatory program which would lead the students into either a pathway program or mainstream university program, thus ensuring course uniformity among the participants. Secondly, the participants had to be first language speakers of English, thereby eliminating the possibility of first language interference. They also had to be qualified ESL teachers which ensured consistency of their teaching ability in the ESL field. Finally, to determine a valid comparison, equal numbers of male and female teachers were observed (3 males, 3 females), thus the biological sex of the participant was also a criterion.

### **3.3 METHODOLOGICAL RATIONALE**

This section provides the theoretical framework of this study. It begins by looking at the interpretive research paradigm, then looks at the principles of second language classroom research and concludes with discourse analysis, a research tradition broadly adopted in the data analysis of this study.

The research question for this study is to investigate a linguistic phenomenon based on the gender variable, which can be done quantitatively by using systematic coding systems. However, the researcher has chosen a primarily qualitative approach with elements of quantitative analysis which serve to identify certain patterns of linguistic use for the reason that this allows the release of ‘thick’ data, allowing for a ‘thick description’ which can occur through observations as described by Lincoln & Guba (1985).

#### **3.3.1 Interpretive Research Paradigm**

The nature of research inquiry can be from two perspectives, *normative* and *interpretive*. Of relevance to the current study is the interpretive paradigm, which according to Cohen, Manion & Morrison, is characterised by a ‘concern for the individual’ (2000:22). The aim in such studies is to understand the ‘subjective world of human experience by focussing on action which may be thought of as ‘behaviour-

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with-meaning' (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000:23) which is intentional behaviour and is future-oriented. For example, a learner who raises his hand in the classroom performs an action which is understandable to all, leading the teacher to question the reason for the learner's action or interpreting the action as signifying a readiness to answer the teacher's question. The interpretive researcher therefore begins with the individual and attempts to make sense of the individual's interpretations of the world around him. This makes it essential for the data to be generated by the research act where theory follows the research rather than precedes it.

Some elements of the interpretive framework that were taken into consideration in the current study involve firstly a focus on the individual characterised by a small-scale research. Secondly the interpretive framework adopts the perspective that human actions continuously recreate social life. Thirdly, the interpretive study is largely non-statistical and understands action/meanings rather than causes (Cohen & Manion 1989:40) Therefore, the research involves a small sample of six teachers (three males, three females), does not make use of systematic quantitative coding systems, and seeks to understand the meanings of the participants in their discourse during the conduct of an ESL lesson.

### **3.3.2 Ontological and Epistemological Concerns**

The classroom being a social entity reveals aspects of social reality which researchers interpret in different ways. This necessitates the adoption of certain principles aligned with social science, in particular the fact that the social world can be approached in different ways. The implicit and explicit assumptions underpinning the social world are of four different kinds according to Burrell & Morgan (1979). Of relevance to this study are the ontological and epistemological assumptions.

The first set of assumptions are *ontological* in nature, concerning the essence of the phenomena being investigated (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000). It looks at the relationship between the social reality and the individual and examines if one is dependent or independent of the other. In this study, the relationship of the social reality of the participant's gender and its relationship to discourse in the classroom

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setting are being examined to determine if the discourse features noted are a product of gender or independent of the social variable.

The second set of assumptions are epistemological in nature, concerning ‘the very bases of knowledge – its nature and forms, how it can be acquired, and how communicated to other human beings’ (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000:6). The relevance of these set of assumptions to the current study lies in the fundamental question of whether knowledge is something which can be acquired or is it to be personally experienced. The answer to this question is vital to the position adopted by researchers whose aim is to uncover knowledge of social behaviour. Those who adopt an anti-positivist stance interpret knowledge as being personal, subjective and unique, thus imposing on the researcher ‘an involvement with his subjects’ (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000:7). This is the stance adopted in this study, which is different to a positivist one, which sees knowledge as ‘hard, subjective and tangible’, thereby imposing on the researcher the role of an observer, which underlie the methods adopted in natural science. (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000).

### **3.3.3 Principles of Second Language Classroom Research**

A range of theoretical perspectives on the conduct of second language classroom research exist which has led to varied and diverse methodological approaches. In the first instance, second language (L2) methodology mirrored methods adopted by researchers in first language (L1) settings or other sociological and sociolinguistic studies of communicative interaction. According to Chaudron (1988), the study of L2 research has arisen through the influence of researchers from different disciplines (education, sociology, linguistics, applied linguistics) with research developments in each of these areas contributing separately to procedures for investigation. This is also made clear by Seliger & Shohamy (1989) who state the study of the phenomena associated with second language learning must of necessity be multifaceted and multidisciplinary, taking account of knowledge and research methodologies from areas such as linguistics, anthropology, sociology and education to name a few.

Seliger & Shohamy (1989) have identified four parameters of second language (SL) research which provides the metatheoretical basis for the research methods. They

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make the point that second language classrooms are complex entities and therefore cannot be investigated from a single perspective, a point also made by Gaies (1983).

Research in the area of SL teaching and learning varies according to three considerations. Firstly, the circumstances under which the research is conducted which varies according to the context (e.g naturalistic environment versus classroom), whether it is taught as a second or foreign language and depending on the age and characteristics of the learners. Secondly, the methodology used in the research which also varies according to the philosophy of the researcher, the theory/theories motivating the research, conditions under which the research is conducted and the questions being investigated. Finally, the tools used to study second language which can be gathered either through observation, testing, interviews or instrumentation.

From the above considerations, Seliger & Shohamy (1989: 35-36) identified four parameters of SL research which are:-

- Parameter 1: Synthetic & Analytic
- Parameter 2: Heuristic & Deductive
- Parameter 3: Control and Manipulation of the Research Context
- Parameter 4: Data and Data Collection

The parameter generally adopted in this study is the second one which relates to heuristic research where the hypothesis is derived inductively. The aim of 'Inductivism' is to derive general principles or 'truths' from an investigation of single instances (Nunan 1992:134). Heuristic research is where there is a discovery or description of the patterns or relationships yet to be identified in some aspect(s) of SL. As the study aims to investigate and describe the discourse patterns of ESL teachers in a comparative manner, an area in ESL not yet studied, this study can be classified as heuristic research.

When the aim of the researcher is heuristic, recording and observation of some aspect of SL takes place as in direct observation of classroom events followed by detailed transcripts. Heuristic research is data-driven, has no preconceptions and can

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generate a hypothesis with the product being a description or hypotheses (Seliger & Shohamy 1989:37). The four main factors which need to be taken into consideration by the heuristic researcher are restriction of scope/focus, control of variables, attention to subject/form awareness and researcher subjectivity. These factors were considered as the focus of the research was limited to only academic ESL classes, the variables controlled again by this selection. In addition, the participants chosen were all first language speakers of English with ESL qualifications. Researcher subjectivity was also considered with the researcher being aware and making concerted attempts to not judge or be biased but to allow the data to work in a spontaneous manner. Although not all the factors mentioned were taken into account in the same degree, this is justified as 'there are intermediate continuums in research which allow for the researcher to assume varying positions on each of the above factors' (Seliger & Shohamy 1989:37).

A further description of classroom process research and the principles that govern it is provided by Gaies (1983). He identifies three basic principles which are firstly that classroom process research rejects as simplistic any univariate classification of the second language instructional experience. Secondly, the emphasis on classroom process research is on describing as fully as possible the complexity of the second language instructional environment, with the key term being description. Thus, as has often been stated by Long 1980, Gaies 1983 and Bailey 1984, the immediate goal of such research is the identification of variables of second language instruction with the purpose of generating hypotheses rather than testing out a hypothesis. Finally, an aspect that unifies classroom process research is the priority of direct observation of the classroom activity. 'Classroom process research seeks to inform our understanding of how teachers and learners 'accomplish classroom lessons', a term coined by Mehan (1974) and this can be done, it is argued only through direct examination of the process.'(Gaies 1983:45).

Having identified the three basic precepts of the classroom research process, it is necessary to discuss how these principles were adopted by the researcher. The term 'univariate' implies a one-dimensional approach to the classification of the second language teaching and learning experience. As this research takes into consideration both the linguistic and sociological variable, it is rejecting a one-dimensional

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approach. Secondly, the study is primarily a qualitative investigation, thus adhering to the second principle of describing as fully as possible the second language instructional environment. The hypotheses is not tested but derived from the data, thus implying an ethnographic approach as the governing principle is not to test or validate the hypotheses but to understand better the nature of the second language classroom environment. The third principle of direct observation was also factored in through the process of non-participant observation during which field notes were made, followed up by close transcription of the lessons which were then analysed.

### **3.3.4 Discourse Analysis**

This study also makes use of certain traditions in the research of applied linguistics, particularly as identified by Chaudron (1988). He argues that there are four traditions which are the psychometric tradition, interaction analysis, discourse analysis and ethnography. While the psychometric tradition makes use essentially of the 'experimental method', where language gains are determined from different methods and materials, the interaction analysis method is situated in the classroom. This method developed in the mid 1960s eventually led to the development of systems and analysis of classroom interaction in terms of social meanings and an inferred classroom climate.

The third tradition, the discourse analysis method, owes its rise to the linguistic perspective. The attempt in this tradition is to fully analyse the discourse of classroom interaction in structural-functional linguistic terms. Bellack et al (1966) who worked on Wittgenstein's (1953) notion of languages as a 'game', analysed classroom interaction as a sequence of 'moves', each with its own rules for form and context of use. They identified the four moves of 'structure', 'solicit', 'respond' and 'react' in their analysis. Fanselow (1977) adopted this approach and developed an analytical system to analyse classroom interaction which includes not only a dimension for pedagogical function but also dimensions for content, speaker and others.

The most systematic analysis of the entire range of classroom discourse was developed by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) for first language classrooms (L1). This

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however has not resulted in a similar system being developed for the second language (L2) classroom. Researchers who adopt this model adapt it to the L2 classroom with variations to suit the purpose of the study. Similarly, in the analysis section which will be outlined later in this chapter, the study takes one aspect of the Sinclair & Coulthard model, the IRF (Initiation, Feedback, Response) structure, which was later modified by Mehan (1979) to IRE (Initiation, Response, Evaluation) as the basis of the data analysis, as this structure appears to embody the nature of the classroom interaction patterns.

The approach developed by Sinclair & Coulthard has the potential of being employed in a quantitative fashion. However, this does not negate its use in qualitative research where the researcher can redefine the categories used to describe discourse.

### **3.3.5 Rationale for a Qualitative Approach**

Based on the researcher adopting an epistemological stance, which necessitated the adoption of an observer position, it follows that the study is primarily a qualitative one as this provides the underlying rationale for this approach. It is the view of this researcher that research methodologies exist along a wide continuum which allows for the adoption of intermediate positions, allowing for hybridisation of methodologies. In the view of Reichardt & Cook (cited in Chaudron 1988), qualitative and quantitative research are in many ways indistinguishable. They also state that 'researchers in no way follow the principles of a supposed paradigm without simultaneously assuming methods and values of the alternative paradigms (Reichardt & Cook 1979:232).

Qualitative research makes the assumption that all knowledge is relative, that there is a subjective element to all knowledge and research, and that holistic, ungeneralisable studies are justifiable (Nunan 1992:3). The researcher acknowledges that the degree of 'face validity' in quantitative studies is higher than in qualitative studies but agrees with the qualification made by Nunan (1992) that even with the testing of hypotheses quantitatively, these are derived from qualitative, conceptual

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considerations. After all, before counting, one needs to decide on the categories which need to be counted.

With the choice of a broad qualitative approach, the researcher, while aware of coding systems, made the informed choice that such instruments would not accurately reflect the classroom discourse patterns which were being investigated. For example, some coding systems in the Interaction Analysis approach are those developed by Moskowitz (1968, 1970, 1971) who used the FLINT system for coding. Fanselow (1977) also developed a variation of Moskowitz's system, known as FOCUS (Foci for Observing Communications Used in Settings).

The view that a researcher must adopt either a purely qualitative or quantitative approach is gradually becoming much less of a concern. Reichardt and Cook (1979) argue that qualitative and quantitative research methodologies are mutually dependent. This is apparent especially when one considers how researchers can approach data, which as defined by Seliger and Shohamy is 'all behaviours observable by the researcher in a second language event such as a language lesson (1989:38). Essentially, all data can be quantified, as when the observer counts the frequency of certain behaviours in however rudimentary a fashion.

Allwright & Bailey (1991) provide different approaches to transcripts. Firstly, the researcher can count any number of discourse features, ranging from the amount of teacher-talk to the frequency of use of certain words/phrases. Alternatively, the authors suggest a close textual analysis, which need not involve any form of counting. The third possibility is a combination of both the qualitative and quantitative approaches. Allwright (1980) counted the number of turn-getting moves found in transcripts of ESL classes. This is essentially a quantitative analysis of data that was originally qualitative in form. In fact, this indicates that even a numerical analysis has to be treated qualitatively at some stage as the researcher will have to make the decision on how best to interpret the figures. Bailey (1984) for example, successfully combined both approaches in what is now termed 'hybrid research' (Allwright & Bailey 1991). In recent times, language classroom researchers are calling for combined approaches rather than an adherence to one approach over the other (E.g Ocshner, 1979; Long 1980a; Ellis 1984; van Lier 1984, 1988). This study,

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though primarily qualitative, also makes use of rudimentary numerical analysis, as recommended by Allwright and Bailey (1991) so that patterns of behaviour and speech could be identified.

### **3.4 DATA GATHERING METHODS**

The main form of data gathering in this study is that of non-participant classroom observation in a naturalistic setting. According to Taylor & Bogdan (1984) and Walker (1985), observation can be defined as a method. According to McDonough & McDonough (1997), observation can be ‘coded’ in some way, as well as being carried out by different people with different methods and all methods can interact. This section highlights the classroom observation method, followed by field notes and transcribing.

#### **3.4.1 Classroom Observation**

After briefing the participants, the next step in the study was non-participant observation of ESL classroom interactions through video-recording. Two of the classes of the six teachers were observed for a period of three hours. The two lessons were over different semesters. In addition, they were ‘naturalistic’ in that the database constituted the everyday lesson with its usual participants in real time rather than a class constructed for the purposes of research (McDonough & McDonough 1997).

The willingness of the participants to be video-recorded proved to be advantageous for a number of reasons. Firstly, video-recording as a method of data-collection is in keeping with language and communication research which recommends access to as much contextual information as possible in order to understand and interpret a communicative event (Cameron, 1992; Fraser, 1989, 1992; Threadgold & Cranny-Francis, 1990). In addition, the advantage of video information over audio is that it allows the researcher to access both verbal and non-verbal elements in making meaning, given that all human communication comprise both these elements (Mayo-Henley, 1981; McLaughlin, 1984). Finally, the procedure used digital video recording which allowed for information to be accessed electronically, enabling ease of transcribing, accuracy of data and storage, once converted into a CD form.

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In the non-participant approach, there is no hypothesis at the outset, only a research question. The researcher also observes the activities without being involved in them directly. A typical feature of such studies as identified by Larsen-Freeman & Long (1991) is that there are few subjects and the period of the study is relatively long. As the observations took place over the period of a year to ensure that the teachers were observed with different classes, teaching different language skills, this criterion was fulfilled.

Larsen-Freeman and Long further espouse the positive attributes of such research methodologies as providing a detailed and comprehensive description of subject second language acquisition (SLA) behaviour. In addition, such research methodologies are psycholinguistically coherent in that they deal with a single subject or few subjects (as in the case of this research) over time. Finally, not having a priori hypotheses allows researchers to discover any potential factors which could influence the SLA process (1991:16). The key advantage of such research methodologies is that they are hypotheses-generating as the scope of the researcher is not limited. The researcher is then able to look for patterns in naturally occurring data and from that generate hypotheses that might account for such patterns.

However, the researcher also acknowledges that such research methodologies are not without limitations. The issue of 'observer's paradox', a term coined by Labov (1972), highlights the anxiety which makes participants or subjects highly aware of the presence of the observer, thus making them say things in a different way than they otherwise would were an observer not present (Larsen-Freeman & Long 1991, Allwright & Bailey 1991). Allwright & Bailey argue that this phenomenon can be overcome with patience and suggest familiarisation with the classroom subjects as a method to overcome this problem. The studies successfully conducted by Allwright and Bailey (1980; 1991) are examples of the minimisation of the observer effect in the ESL classroom. The researcher did not find this to be a great problem except with one observation of one of the six participants who was initially rather uncomfortable with the video-recording.

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One of the ways by which this problem was overcome was firstly by explaining the aims and purposes of the study to the participants, who were free to withdraw from the study at any stage. Secondly, as the researcher was observing teachers in a similar working environment to her own, this enabled the establishment of a friendly working relationship. As the researcher and the participants had mutual understanding on the needs of ESL students, it also helped to establish common ground. These factors ensured that the participants did not find the presence of the researcher in their classrooms uncomfortable.

In addition, the researcher attempted to be as unobtrusive as possible by sitting at the back of the classroom. The video-recorder was also placed at the back of the classroom, pointing at the participant and only changing directions when the participant engaged in group work. Then the camera was trained to capture the interactions of the participant with the group.

Although the focus of the study were the teachers, the fact that it was in a classroom setting made it imperative that the students in the classroom were also acknowledged and prepared to reduce anxiety levels. The researcher provided the participants with an explanation of the study, a copy of which was made for the students to enable ease of understanding. The participants explained the nature of the study to their students in the researcher's absence at least two lessons prior to the recording so that they could make the decision as to whether they wanted to be part of the study. It must be noted that no students were uncomfortable with the recording. In addition, the participants also explained to the students that the teaching member was the focus of the observations and not them.

McDonough & McDonough (1997) also explain that three key parameters of classroom observation need to be clarified. These are identified as the role of the observer within a continuum of subjectivity/objectivity, the goals of the observation which can be to increase knowledge, understand a phenomenon or create new knowledge and finally the procedures for observation. This research considered the role of the observer in quite a detailed fashion. While the first step was for the researcher to be aware of issues of bias, to put this into practice, the researcher had to constantly remind herself of the goals of the observation which were to increase

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knowledge. In addition, the researcher valued the observations as a learning experience to discover the patterns of ESL teaching adopted by other teachers. Being an ESL teacher, such an attitude was important so that the researcher was not judgemental but understood the professional development perspective of the observations, which was an advantage not initially considered by the researcher. Being a practising ESL teacher, the researcher was then able to translate such knowledge into her own teaching.

### **3.4.2 Field Notes**

During the observations, the researcher took field notes, firstly to ensure triangulation of data and secondly to enable comparison with the transcripts to allow for the defining of categories for analysis. The concurrence of these data collection activities also ensured that the language and context of the classroom would be correlated. The advantage of this type of methodology is espoused by McDonough & McDonough who say that transcribing using field notes at the time of recording 'represents a move away from reductionist observation methods toward elaborative description' (1997:112). Field notes also provide a clear link between the videoed material and the progress of the activity being reported on. The field notes were on the context of the lesson, for example the skills being taught such as listening or writing, duration of the lesson, time, place and date. This information was felt to be necessary to allow for contextualisation as there is a link between the content of the lesson and the language used to teach that content.

### **3.4.3 Transcripts of Observations**

Following the observations, the researcher proceeded to transcribe the lessons. As highlighted earlier, the field notes were used to enable triangulation of data. The transcripts are a vital aspect of the qualitative research methodology, verbatim records of speech which show how classroom interaction develops as a dynamic phenomenon (Allwright & Bailey 1991).

Allwright & Bailey (1991) suggest different ways in which transcripts can be used. For example, the transcript which is collected in a qualitative manner can be analysed in a quantitative manner with the counting of all sorts of things - the amount

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of teacher talk, frequency of use of certain words/phrases etc. The second method recommended by the authors is to treat the transcript as a literary text, where understanding would be by close textual analysis with no counting at all. The third way in which transcripts can be used is to combine both qualitative and quantitative approaches as in Allwright (1980) where the number of turn-getting moves in ESL classes were counted (quantitative), with an in-depth interpretation of one segment of the transcript (qualitative analysis). The transcripts from the observations in this study were treated in a quantitative manner with categories of discourse features counted to investigate the prevalence of patterns of speech to determine their relationship to gender.

### **3.5 DATA ANALYSIS**

Being an interpretivist study, there was on-going data analysis of the transcripts of classroom discourse. These transcripts were openly coded to allow for the data to be categorised. The transcripts proved to be voluminous, which resulted in the identification of three categories for further analysis as mentioned earlier. These are as follows:-

- Language used in giving explicit instructions
- Questioning strategies
- Feedback strategies

Within the framework of the above categories, the researcher also looked at the strategies used by the teachers to maintain student involvement.

While these categories were generated primarily by the data, the literature also indicates that these are typical categories in ESL teacher discourse. For example, Chaudron (1988) suggests that verbal interaction in any classroom includes a subset of behaviours which include questioning behaviour, explanations and feedback. The advantage of a category system is that it has the potential to identify every behavioural event that occurs which the researcher can then choose to focus on.

As this study is primarily the analysis of transcripts of classroom discourse, it was felt that elements of discourse analysis should be used which refers to the procedures

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used for examining chunks of written and spoken language (Allwright & Bailey 1991) Being a classroom research, this study involves the analysis of the teachers' spoken language. According to Van Lier (1988:122), it is 'an analysis of the processes of interaction by means of close examination of audiovisual records of interaction'. It is important to bear in mind, however, that discourse analysis is a very broad term and covers many analytic processes, from coding and quantification to more qualitative interpretations. The latter is the procedure adopted in this study. Certain behavioural features of questioning and feedback were counted to allow for a qualitative interpretation of patterns.

In order to understand the rationale for using a category system in this research, it is necessary to identify some of the disadvantages of systematic coding systems. Firstly, being a qualitative, interpretive study, it was not necessary to predetermine categories. This does not negate the use of systematic coding systems which are very effective in that the categories are predetermined. The disadvantage of the hypothetico-deductive process, however is that categories not predetermined are not looked at. In fact, McDonough and McDonough (1997) argue that in reality these coding systems are little more than an 'elaborate checklist' with the tendency to reduce the raw data, thus restricting the emergence of interesting events not covered in the checklist. The authors go on to further provide other disadvantages of such coding systems (e.g FLINT, COLT, FOCUS), one of which is the reduction of data, for example, taking a time base or segment of a lesson, anything that occurs outside that unit does not count directly in the analysis. This means that outside the 30 seconds or any other time stipulated by the system, whatever occurs outside of it is discarded. Secondly, as the categories are predetermined, they may not always be relevant to the lessons observed.

Taking these considerations into account and being aware of the anti-positivist, interpretive paradigm, the researcher chose to develop categories which arose from the data. According to McDonough and McDonough, 'a researcher can develop his or her own categories for some particular research purpose' (1997:108). This is the stand adopted by this researcher as the purpose is to investigate patterns of discourse which can only emerge from the data rather than being pre-determined.

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The method of analysis in this study is the examining and re-examining of the data until recurrent patterns begin to emerge such as linguistic patterning or questioning styles (McDonough & McDonough 1997). This type of pattern analysis is discussed by Walker as a formal technique, based on audio and video recording, then ‘looking for patterns...regularities of behaviour, forms of interaction which occur over and over again.’ (1985:140).As the observations were made over a year, the researcher was able to make comparisons between the discourse patterns which emerged in the different observations. The ‘thick description’ from these kinds of observations is in Lincoln & Guba’s (1985) terms inductive, generative and constructive.

### **3.6 QUALITY CRITERIA**

In the context of a qualitative research or ‘naturalistic inquiry’, Guba & Lincoln (1982) argue that the concept of internal validity should be replaced by credibility, external validity by transferability, reliability by dependability and objectivity by confirmability. This is further confirmed by Denzin & Lincoln (1998) and Guba & Lincoln (1989) who argue that post-positivist research paradigms requiring validity and reliability are not relevant for an interpretive study. For this study, the trustworthiness criteria considered are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the methodology (Denzin & Lincoln 1994; Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

#### **3.6.1 Credibility**

Guba & Lincoln define credibility as ‘a match between constructed realities represented by the evaluator and attributed to the various stakeholders’ (1989:237). The authors further identified five methodological procedures to establish credibility. These are prolonged engagement, persistent observation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis and member checks (Guba & Lincoln 1989; Merriam 1990).

These features of credibility were achieved in a number of ways. For example, prolonged engagement can refer to the researcher being on site for a period of time and being immersed in the research setting long enough to make sense of the context. With reference to the current study, prolonged engagement was achieved by the researcher spending time with the participants outside the observation in order to explain the procedure, aims and goals of the study. After each observation, informal

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discussions were also held to discuss their perceptions of the teaching and learning environment. In addition, the researcher understood the context under which the participants were operating by becoming familiar with the systems of operation at the site. The researcher's extensive engagement with the data also qualifies as prolonged engagement.

Another way by which credibility was ensured was through methodological triangulation, as mentioned earlier. Further triangulation was achieved by supplementing field notes with open coded transcripts.

### **3.6.2 Transferability**

Transferability is a process performed by readers of research. Essentially, transferability refers to the ability to generalise about the study and the extent to which the research findings can be applied to other contexts (AORN Online: Journal, Mar 2001). Strategies to ensure transferability include 'thick descriptions' (Guba & Lincoln 1989) that provide sufficient information to judge the themes, constructs or categories of a study.

### **3.6.3 Confirmability**

This refers to the confirmability of the research process which can be achieved by an audit trail as suggested by Lincoln & Guba (1982) in a constructivist-oriented study. Confirmability is conducted to ensure that the data, interpretations and outcomes of the inquiry are rooted in some context apart from that of the researcher (Guba & Lincoln 1989) which refers to the necessity of ensuring that evidence external to the researcher needs to be made available. Thus, the audit trail in this study consists of videotapes of the observations, field notes, transcriptions which comprise the original data. In addition, record has been kept of the early data analysis which resulted in the identification of the research categories.

### **3.6.4 Dependability**

This refers to the reliability of the findings to ensure that if the research were replicated with similar respondents, the findings would be repeated. Through the

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audit trail highlighted above and the careful consideration and documentation of the research process, the structure of this study can be replicated.

### **3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Given the fact that this study is of human beings in a social setting, it was necessary to obtain ethics approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee prior to the commencement of the research and which was renewed annually during the course of the study. Participants were briefed prior to their signed consent being obtained with the written assurance that they were free to withdraw at any stage. In this study, the participants are de-identified as participant A, B and C to ensure confidentiality and as a mark of respect for their privacy.

### **3.8 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER**

This chapter has attempted to provide a methodological rationale for the current study, with the site and participants described. This was followed by the data gathering and analysis process and concluded with the ethical considerations, prior to which issues relating to quality were discussed.

The next chapter presents the findings and discussion of one major aspect of the analysis, participants' language of explicit instructions.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION 1: INSTRUCTIONAL DISCOURSE (LANGUAGE OF EXPLICIT INSTRUCTIONS)

#### 4.0 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER

In this chapter, the first category of analysis, the participants' discourse in giving explicit instructions will be discussed. Section 4.1 describes how the key language items were selected for analysis. This is followed by an analysis of the dominant sub-categories of participants' discourse in giving instructions based on frequency of use and textual analysis in Section 4.2. Section 4.3 provides a general overview of the dominant discourse patterns from which similarities and differences between male and female teacher discourse is discussed in relation to instruction giving. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of the main points.

#### 4.1 OVERALL FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

In order to explore the gender variable, three main sub-categories of teachers' classroom discourse were examined qualitatively, through textual analysis and quantitatively through calculation of frequency of use. These sub-categories which were examined individually were as follows:

- use of pronouns in conjunction with modals as in the following constructions:
  1. *First person + verb*
  2. *Second person + verb*
  3. *First person + verb + Second Person + verb*
- use of directives (imperatives and hortatives)
- duration/detail of instructions

As noted in the literature review, 'feminine' language has traditionally been seen as inclusive and sharing while 'masculine' language expresses dominance and prioritises the individual over the group (Holmes 1995:187). For this study, the use of pronouns was chosen as a means of analysing the truth of this claim in the discourse of ESL teachers. The use of the traditionally inclusive (and therefore 'feminine') *we* with the traditionally exclusive (and therefore 'masculine') *I* were

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compared. At the same time, the use of *you* was examined separately from the use of *I* as when the former was not used with the '*I*'. For example, in a sentence like '*You need to write this down*' (second person + verb) it can be seen to indicate a student centred, rather than a teacher centred approach to teaching, i.e. the speaker is focussed on the students' task, not on the importance of the teacher. However, when the teacher uses *I* in conjunction with *you* as in the sentence '*I want/would like you to write this down,*' (first person + verb + second person + verb) there is emphasis on the speaker, while also clearly delineating the addressee.

The rationale for investigating pronouns is that use of each of these person verbs implies a subtle shift in roles, relationships and expectations; in addition to which statements of obligations and necessity can also be determined through the use of modals. The use of the first person plural *we*, according to the principles of deixis, generally indicates common ground, building solidarity between teachers and students (Wales 1996:60) while the use of the second person *you* serves to distance or separate the teacher from the students (Wales 1996:3). In other contexts, the use of *you* can also be used to express teachers' expectations. For this study, it has been proposed that gender differences can be manifested in teachers' use of modality and pronouns, integral aspects of the teachers' regulative register, as these also relate directly to the teachers' authority position which carries with it power. Thus, the researcher could then determine if the gender variable is overridden by male and female teachers' equal manifestation of power in the ESL classroom.

Traditionally 'feminine' language is seen as tentative, including more examples of face saving politeness strategies and as avoiding expressions of personal authority; the converse is true of 'masculine' language, which is seen as more direct and containing more face threatening acts that are bald on record (West 1998:343). In order to test this linguistically, the use of directives (imperatives and hortatives), modals which indicate external compulsion on the speaker and modals which indicate internal compulsion or compulsion by a force outside that of the speaker were compared. Therefore, the analysis investigates teachers' use of 'direct imperatives/hortatives' versus their use of 'want', 'would like' versus 'need', 'must' and 'have to/have got to'.

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Finally, as the literature has demonstrated, ‘feminine’ language has traditionally been seen to be more expansive with females using more hedges than males. In contrast, ‘masculine’ language has traditionally been seen as more concise and direct. In order to test this linguistically, the overall length and content of the instructions, in terms of setting up tasks are also examined.

As stated in the literature review, in language classrooms, language not only serves a dual purpose (it is the medium of instruction and also provides the content/subject matter for the lesson) but it also has a two-level structure. The analysis in this section uses the previously explained ‘outer’ and ‘inner’ structure proposed by Sinclair and Brazil (1982:23; Willis 1992) where the ‘outer’ structure describes language used for general pedagogic activities. Thus, the language of explicit instructions can be seen as constituting the ‘Outer’ structure, also known as ‘regulative discourse’ (Bernstein 1990:183).

Instructions, which are an instrumental aspect of the teacher’s role as an organiser, are defined for the purposes of this study as the language used by teachers in setting up tasks and in telling students what they will be doing during the course of the lesson. This combines those definitions of ‘instructions’ as produced by Sinclair and Coulthard’s (1975) IRF structure, Sinclair and Brazil’s (1982) ‘Outer’ discourse and Christie’s (2002) instructional discourse.

## **4.2 ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPANTS’ INSTRUCTIONAL DISCOURSE**

As highlighted earlier, three main sub-categories have been identified as being dominant in the instructional discourse of the six participants in this study. For the purposes of the analysis, these will be discussed according to functions of the statements used in the instructional discourse of the participants.

### **4.2.1 Use of First Person Pronouns with Modals (First person + verb)**

In this section, the participants’ use of the first person singular *I* and first person plural *we* is examined together with the modals ‘want to’ and ‘would like’ (first person + verb ). This is done through frequency of use throughout the entire corpus of data which is supported through textual examples from the transcripts.

The summary table (Table 4.2.1) provides a quantitative overview of the frequency of first person singular use with the modals identified earlier including examples from the transcripts.

**Table 4.2.1: Overview of First Person Singular use with modals**

| <b>Participant</b> | <b>Want To</b> | <b>Would Like</b> | <b>Examples</b>  |
|--------------------|----------------|-------------------|--|
| Female A           | Not Observed   | 11                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OK what <b>I'd like you</b> and your partner to do is to look at this advert</li> <li>• And <b>I'd like you</b> to find all the ways in which they explain their product is good</li> <li>• <b>I'd like you</b> to do Practice 1</li> </ul> |
| Female B           | 11             | Not Observed      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>I want you to</b> do just a very short section</li> <li>• <b>I want you to</b> discuss the questions in groups</li> <li>• <b>I want you to</b> listen for</li> </ul>   |
| Female C           | 10             | 4                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>I want you to</b> look at Number 1</li> <li>• <b>I want you to</b> contribute three words</li> <li>• <b>I'd like you to</b> start writing</li> </ul>   |
| Male A             | 6              | 5                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>I'd like you to</b> read it</li> <li>• <b>I would like you to</b> work in groups of three</li> <li>• <b>I want you</b> to decide what it's about</li> <li>• <b>I want you to</b> look at the paragraph in a little more depth</li> </ul> |
| Male B             | 3              | 6                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>I'd like you to</b> act out your role play</li> <li>• <b>I want you to</b> demonstrate the role play</li> <li>• <b>I'd like you to</b> think about that</li> </ul>   |
| Male C             | 9              | 2                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>I want you</b> to decide what it's about</li> <li>• <b>I want you</b> to discuss in groups</li> <li>• <b>I want you to</b> tell your partner your ideas</li> </ul>   |

From Table 4.2.1, two main points that require discussion are use of the modals 'want to' and 'would like' of which comparisons will be made. The second point that requires discussion is the use of pronouns, namely in the *I + verb + you + verb* construction, which shows a combination of first person singular and second person plural use.

As highlighted earlier, the use of modality is an integral aspect of issuing directives in the classroom, especially when used in conjunction with pronouns. Modality can

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be either deontic or epistemic as explained in the literature review. In the context of the classroom, the directives issued by the teacher oblige the students to carry out these instructions. This obligation or necessity is an example of deontic modality, conveyed mainly through the use of ‘want to’, ‘need to’ and ‘must’ where it is the speaker who obliges. The data from the transcripts illustrates mainly the use of deontic modality with participants using ‘want’ and ‘must’ which have a high level of modality, often used by teachers to ‘indicate the importance of a course of action to be pursued’ (Christie 2002:16). In addition, the participants also used ‘need to’, ‘would’ and ‘got to’. Therefore the participants demonstrated use of modals of necessity (have to, need to, must, got to) and modals of obligation (want to). Modals of necessity which occurred in the participants’ discourse with the second person plural will be discussed in the latter half of this section.

A dominant pattern of discourse, as stated earlier in giving instructions involves the use of both the first and second person pronouns separated by a modal auxiliary in the order of **‘I (first person singular) want (modal) you (second person) to + verb’** followed by specific directions to the students. This pattern was noticed to be dominant in the discourse of four of the six participants (FB, FC, MA, MC). ‘Want to’ according to Leech and Svartvik (1975) expresses neutral volition, in the vein of conveying a desire or a wish which is then the choice of the hearer whether or not to carry out. Therefore the use of ‘want’ and ‘would’ in these statements can be seen to convey requests (*want to; would like*). In many other contexts, the addressee would be allowed the freedom to either accede to the request or refuse it. However, in the context of the classroom, the teacher’s authority makes the request an implicit directive. In addition, the understanding and acceptance of the roles of the students and teachers also obliges the student to carry out the teacher’s request. Therefore, ‘want to’ cannot be viewed as being of neutral volition in the context of giving directions. This is because the use of ‘want’ in issuing directives in the classroom conveys the message that the teachers’ desire has to be carried out through the illocutionary force apparent, especially in the giving of instructions as highlighted in the extracts (Table 4.2.1).

Table 4.2.1 indicates clearly that ‘want to’ was used more often than ‘would like’ by three of the six participants, namely FB, FC and MC while FA and MB had a

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tendency to use 'would like'. It is a noteworthy finding that FA and FB seem to use only one of the two types of modals with first person singular use. Both '*I want you to + verb*' and '*I would like you to + verb*' can be seen as statements of the teacher's desire, where the teacher is making a request for the students to act in a specified manner. However, while the first construction is a strong statement of the teacher's desire, the second pattern is a soft statement of the teacher's desire.

An interesting finding in relation to MA's discourse is that he uses both constructions to the same extent. However, it was noticed that while he favoured the '*I would like you to + verb*' pattern in the first lesson, in the second lesson he had a greater tendency to use '*I want you to + verb*'. The important point however, is that the first person singular is a significant aspect of the participants' discourse in giving directions. Deictically, the *I* refers to the speaker and *you* to the one who is listening. The use of the first person singular also indicates the speaker orientation of the discourse where the *I* (nearly) always refers to the 'ego' who speaks, thus illustrating the authority of the speaker (Wales 1996:3-4). The *I + verb + You + verb* construction can also be seen as being symbolic of a stable environment and relationships in the classroom where both the roles of the teachers and students are clearly defined; therefore the focus on the teacher as the main speaker (shown by use of *I*) and the addressee (shown by use of *you*).

Another modal observed in the discourse of the participants, as indicated in Table 4.2.2 was 'would', predominant particularly in the discourse of FA in giving directions. The construction of 'would' in directives was primarily '*I (first person singular) would like (modal auxiliary) you (second person plural) to + verb*', which can be seen as a soft statement of the teacher's desire in contrast to '*I want you to + verb*.' (strong statement of teacher's desire). Extract 1 below highlights dominant patterns in FA's discourse which illustrates the use of '*I'd like you to + verb*' when giving instructions. In spite of the fact that the use of 'would like' is considered to be softer than 'want', in this context the illocutionary force is the same; the teacher is expressing her desire for the students to complete a particular task. This illustrates the point that in the classroom, it is acceptable for the teacher to express a wish but it is also very clear that there is an obligation on the students to carry out this wish. This is a result of firstly the students' role in the classroom, which is to act in ways

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specified by the teacher as learning is most often facilitated through students carrying out tasks set by the teacher. Secondly, it also demonstrates the authority position of the teacher, as it demonstrates the teacher's right to dictate to the students. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the positional authority of the teacher allows both male and female teachers to adopt more masculine features of speech.

**Extract 1: Female Participant A: 'I would like you to + verb'**

FA: what **I'd** like **you** to do now guys\ is to get straight into practice.ok remember work with a friend\..if you're more comfortable working ahead and then conferring with your friend then that's fine. ..if you're more comfortable working with a partner straight away you can do that\..it's up to you.. so what **I'd** like **you** to do is Practice 1

The first person singular is predominantly used in directives in order to indicate the distance between the participants and students, mainly in the context of defining roles. The dominant discourse structure used by FA and to a lesser extent MA, as identified earlier, serves to accentuate the role of the teacher as the task-giver, the one with the authority to tell the students what to do in addition to making the teachers' expectations explicit. Another point to note is that *I* is generally followed by *you*, clearly defining the students' role as the doers of the task set by the participants.

The use of the *I + verb + you + verb* construction is also significant in indicating the tasks that the students have to perform. It illustrates that when it comes to carrying out tasks, the participants distance themselves from the students signified mainly by the use of *I* and *you*. This is made apparent in Extract 2 where FC is giving a set of instructions which she is not very comfortable with. Therefore the justification for the task is made clear through the *I + verb + you + verb* construction and the use of the modal 'want to'.

**Extract 2: Female Participant C: I want you to + verb**

FC: Now everyone because we started on a Monday in the first part of our term meant that we missed one reading class.. because / it was Australia Day we missed / that class and also because / we. started on a Wednesday You need to do / complete another critical reading which is why I asked you to read this at home.. and because we've been a little bit short on time because this course is a little bit shorter than normal. I want us to do it together in class but you **MUST** do it as a normal critical reading the readings we've been doing in class and the **FIRST** thing **I want you to do** is look at question number one ok / so **AFTER** you have read it. Ok / **I want you to** look at number one

Another point of discussion is the use of *first person + going to*, which functions as a directive in the instructional discourse of the participants. Krug's finding that 'want to' is used more often than 'going to' in recent years (2000:168-169) is supported by the frequency in which the participants use these modals in their instructional discourse, where 'want to' is used more frequently than 'going to'. However, as 'going to' functions as a referent to future events based on present causatives (Leech 1973:71), it cannot function as a directive in the same way as 'want to'. Its function seems to be that of providing information about the speaker's intention on what is to follow as indicated by the participant saying, 'I'm going to give you ten minutes'. This statement specifies the exact time frame that will be provided for the students to complete the task. Therefore, the use of 'going to' in the participants instructional discourse functions to reveal the speaker's intention of the time allocated to the students for completing their tasks. A more interesting use of 'going to' by the participants is with the first person plural, where 'we' refers to both the students and the teacher as a group. The frequency with which this feature was used in the participants' instructional discourse is provided in Table 4.2.2.

**Table 4.2.2: Use of First Person + modals 'going to' and 'will'**

| Participant | I + Going To | We + Going to | We + Will    | Examples  |
|-------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|---|
| Female A    | Not observed | 5             | 2            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>We're going to</b> be identifying topic sentences</li> <li>• <b>We're going to</b> look at the first one</li> <li>• <b>We will</b> do the questions together</li> </ul> |
| Female B    | Not observed | 15            | 3            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>We're going to</b> do a Listening</li> <li>• <b>We're going to</b> some vocabulary</li> <li>• <b>We'll</b> have some feedback</li> </ul>                                |
| Female C    | 2            | 6             | Not observed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>We're going to</b> compare answers</li> <li>• <b>We're going to</b> read it</li> <li>• <b>I'm going to</b> discuss it with the class</li> </ul>                         |
| Male A      | 6            | 3             | 1            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>We're going to</b> start with</li> <li>• <b>We'll</b> look at the last part later</li> <li>• <b>I'm going to</b> give you half an hour</li> </ul>                       |
| Male B      | 2            | 5             | Not observed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>We're going to</b> have to work out what <b>we're going to</b> say</li> <li>• <b>I am going to</b> have to stop</li> </ul>  |

| Participant | I + Going To | We + Going to | We + Will    | Examples  |
|-------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|---|
|             |              |               |              | <b>you there</b>  |
| Male C      | 4            | 2             | Not observed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>We're going to</b> discuss</li> <li>• <b>I'm going to</b> give you ten minutes</li> </ul> |

The use of the first person plural was noticed to occur primarily with the modals 'going to' and 'will'. As highlighted earlier, 'going to' performs the function of informing the addressee of the speaker's future intention. In the context of teachers' instructional discourse, it is the immediate future that is being referred to. Combined with the use of the first person plural, it informs the students of the activities the whole group, including those the teacher will be engaging in. A similar function is also performed by 'will' which also indicates future time in the context of the participants' use indicating a definite fulfilment of the speaker's intention. A contrast can also be made between the use of *first person singular + going to* and *first person plural + going to*. In the first instance, the role of the teacher is made explicit while the second focuses on the group, including the teacher, working together.

From Table 4.2.2, it is evident that 'going to' is used more frequently than 'will' as only three participants were noticed to use 'will' in their instructional discourse. In particular, it is interesting that FB uses 'going to' frequently. It appears from this that FB's implicit teaching belief is that the students need to be informed of the different parts of the lesson so as to be mentally prepared for what is to follow. Another conclusion that can be drawn from the table is that 'will' features more in the discourse of the female teachers than the male teachers. In addition, 'going to' with the first person plural is not as frequently used by the male participants as the female participants. This can be interpreted as the female participants placing more importance on expressing their intentions to the students. The contrast between the 'going to' and 'will' is a complex issue but for the purposes of analysis in this section, only a brief comparison is made.

In addition to being used with 'will' and 'going to', the first person plural was also used for other purposes. For example, the use of the inclusive *we*, similar to the first person singular, identifies the speaker in addition to presupposing that the speaker has primacy/authority over the addressee (*I* mainly) or the right to be the

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spokesperson for the group (*we* only). The use of the inclusive *we*, when used to refer to both the speaker and the addressee, in Wales' terminology consists of [+ego (centric) + voc (ative)] features (1996:58). Thus, the speaker is able to speak on behalf of the group. While the first person plural can also be used for other purposes, its main uses in the classroom are firstly in the context of the teacher being the spokesperson, secondly to define roles and finally to build solidarity and encourage team work. These purposes have been identified in the participants' use of the first person plural which can perform the function of defining roles. Extract 3 indicates that both the teacher and the students are in the same group during the discussion phase of the lesson, the process of 'talking about' an issue. However, the roles and expectations are quite different when it is time to write, which is a task that only the students have to perform. The following extract is an example of role delineations made explicit through language:

**Extract 3: Female Participant A**

FA: 'this is what **we're** talking about and what **you're** writing about'

The use of *we* in Extract 3 is not only an example of inclusive language but in this context it goes beyond including the group to specifying tasks and roles of both the speaker and the addressee. The direction to the students is clearly indicated by the use of *you* which is followed by an implicit direction on the precise nature of the students' task.

Similar purposes were noticed in the discourse of FB who has a number of instances of using 'we', indicating the importance she places on building solidarity with the students. An example of such usage is '*this morning we're going to + verb*', where it is explicit that both the speaker and the addressee belong to the same group. The following extracts provide further examples of such usage:

**Extract 4: Female Participant B**

**Extract 4a:**

FB: .... **we'll** go through it later

**Extract 4b:**

FB: OK **we** are going to start by hearing the short section in the beginning. And what **I** want **you** to do is just a very short section

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The use of *we* in Extract 4a appears to be inclusive but it is also a clear indication that the teacher is determining the activity of the group. In other words, it is a demonstration of the teacher's authority. The same purpose can be seen in Extract 4b where the teacher again determines that the group as a whole will be doing a listening activity. The use of the first person singular then serves to separate the teacher from the students, in addition to allowing the teacher to express her expectations of what the students should do (*I want you to + verb*), thus the use of pronouns as a whole performs the function of explicitly identifying roles. The use of the first person plural in the above contexts indicates that in classroom teaching, an inclusive pronoun can also be used in an authoritative manner with the purpose of conveying decisions.

MA's use of the first person plural is quite frequent, similar to FB and appears to be for the purpose of building solidarity with the students. This can be seen in the following extracts which illustrate the participant's use of the first person plural:

**Extract 5: Male Participant A**

**Extract 5a:**

MA: 'so **we're** starting with..'

**Extract 5b:**

MA: '**we** were looking at .trying to identify major and minor details and that's what **we're** looking at today'

However, despite the solidarity building purpose of the first person plural, in the above contexts *we* is also used in an authoritative manner. This is similar to the purposes of *we* in FB's discourse indicative of the 'lecturing *we*', where the general context of discussion or joint enterprise is referred to (Wales 1996:66).

**4.2.2 Use of Second Person Pronoun with Modals of Necessity (Second Person + Verb)**

In this section, the use of the second person pronoun (plural) will be examined in the context of '*You need/have got to/must (modal auxiliary + verb)*'. The three modals of necessity most frequently observed in the discourse of the participants were 'need to', 'have to/have got to' and 'must'. The identified discourse patterns are significant in illustrating that while the participants generally tend to envision themselves as

being part of the student group through the use of *we*, this distinction is not maintained when students need to perform specific learning tasks. In other words, participants use the second person more often when overtly directing students' behaviour as the second person pronoun is used when pointing 'to the one who is being addressed' (Wales 1996:51). This direction to behaviour can be seen in the following table which illustrates both the frequency of use and the context in which it occurs:

**Table 4.2.3: Use of Second Person Plural + Modals of Necessity**

| Participant | Need to      | Have to/have got to | Must         | Examples  |
|-------------|--------------|---------------------|--------------|---|
| Female A    | 5            | 10                  | 5            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>You need to</b> know the advantages</li> <li>• <b>You must</b> read the question very carefully</li> <li>• <b>You've got to</b> work out are these good topic sentences or not</li> </ul> |
| Female B    | Not observed | 17                  | Not observed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>You'll have to</b> say in your groups what you think</li> <li>• <b>You've got to</b> match it up</li> <li>• <b>You've got to</b> do this exercise</li> </ul>                              |
| Female C    | 7            | 12                  | 13           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>You have to</b> do the critical reading</li> <li>• <b>You need to</b> write it like the other critical reading</li> <li>• <b>You must</b> add every single point</li> </ul>               |
| Male A      | Not observed | 5                   | 3            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>You have to</b> work out the answers to the vocabulary exercise</li> <li>• <b>You must</b> read the passage</li> </ul>  |
| Male B      | 10           | 18                  | 23           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>You must</b> sit in pairs</li> <li>• <b>You have to</b> make up your own sentences</li> <li>• <b>You need to</b> solve your problem</li> </ul>  |
| Male C      | 2            | 14                  | 6            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>You've got to</b> put the sentences in order</li> <li>• <b>You must</b> brainstorm first</li> </ul>   |

Of the three constructions using the second person plural pronoun and modals of necessity, the most frequent pattern is that of *second person + verb* as in '*you have to/have got to + verb*'. This construction was used quite frequently by all the six participants with the exception of MA. In fact, MA's use of the second person pronoun was less frequent than that of the other participants. This could be due to his more frequent use of the first person singular and hortative statements (which will be discussed later).

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Another interesting finding from Table 4.2.3 is the discourse of FB which clearly indicates a preference for ‘have got to/have to’, as ‘need to’ and ‘must’ were not observed in her instructional discourse. The following extracts of MB and MC indicate the use of these modals:

**Extract 6: Male Participant B: ‘Have to’**

**Extract 6a:**

MB: you **have to** explain to YOUR group the MAIN information from your documents

**Male Participant C : ‘Have got to’**

**Extract 6b:**

MC: Right you **have got** to put the sentences.these aren’t in order...so what you **got** to do now is think. what you think would be the logical order

Extracts 6a and 6b are examples of the use of ‘have to’, with the clear meaning of necessity similar to ‘must’. The use of ‘you [have] got to’ is similar in its modal obligatory sense as ‘must’ and ‘have to’. Leech and Svartvik (1986:130) identify the ‘have got to’ pattern as ‘expressing certainty or logical necessity’. The use of ‘have got to’ is also a more colloquial style as compared to ‘have to’. The argument that ‘must’ and ‘have got to’ can be used interchangeably because in terms of meaning, there is little distinction between the two, according to Palmer (1990) is dependent on the context. Based on the context of giving instructions, it seems reasonable to assume that ‘must’ and ‘have got to’ are not substantially different in meaning, since both imply that the addressee is obliged to obey the instruction.

As indicated earlier, FB uses the second person the most in comparison to the other participants with the modal ‘have to/have got to’. The predominance of this linguistic feature in her discourse is illustrated in the following extract:

**Extract 7a: Female Participant B: Second person + verb**

FB: Just over the page, **you’ve got** to match it up

**Extract 7b:**

FB: You **have to** say in your groups how you feel about these statements

Extracts 7a and 7b are examples of how the second person is used by FB when giving instructions and directing student behaviour. In general, FB’s consistent use of the second person plural indicates that the students role is firstly to understand the

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task and then to progress with the task. The detailed instructions also serve to clearly delineate the role of the students as being the ones to carry out the instructions of the teacher. It can be concluded from the data that the participants use the second person pronoun frequently for the purpose of directing and organising student behaviour. As it is the role of the students to carry out the tasks, the *second person plural + verb* (Extracts 7a and 7b) serves to identify clearly the role of students as the task-doers and the teachers as the task-givers.

The extracts in Table 4.2.3 were selected as they are typical of the participants' speech patterns in using the second person plural + modals of necessity. As can be seen from the phrases in bold, the students are being directed to act in specific ways particularly in how they should proceed with carrying out the tasks set by the participants. The use of the second person plural indicates the precise nature of the directive issued by the participants, who as dominant members of the group have the authority to issue such directions with the expectation that these directions will be followed. While other elements of the discourse also play a role in the explicitness of the directive, the use of the second person is instrumental in delineating the role and responsibility of the addressee. Therefore, the use of the second person in the context of directions is an example of authoritative language, making explicit the role of the teacher as director and organiser of activities in the classroom in addition to illustrating the teacher's power to tell students what they are required to do.

The use of the necessity modals, 'need to' and 'must' also needs to be examined as these were used by some of the participants frequently. In particular, MB used the pattern of *second person plural + need to + verb*, which indicates the instruction to action. The use of this marginal modal auxiliary is interesting in that it was not used by the other participants to the same extent that MB used it. 'Need to' expresses 'obligation that is internally motivated' (Facchinetti, Palmer & Krug 2003:244), that is, it carries with it the implication that it is in the interest of the students to carry out the teachers' instructions. However, while this modal auxiliary can be interpreted as a recommendation that the students perform the task, it can also be seen as an indirect instruction. The following extract illustrates the use of 'need' and 'need to' by MB:

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**Extract 8: Male Participant B: ‘Need to’**

MB: Because **you’ll need to** tell them about the will, you need your two letters

This was also apparent in the discourse of FC whose use of ‘must’ was in order to impose a necessity as can be seen in the following extract:

**Extract 9: Female Participant C: Necessity Modals**

FC: Now everyone because we started on a Monday in the first part of our term meant that we missed one reading class.. because / it was Australia Day we missed / that class and also because / we. started on a Wednesday You **need** to do / complete anoTHER critical reading which is why I asked you to read this at home.. and because we’ve been a little bit short on time because this course is a little bit shorter than normal. I **want** us to do it together in class but you **MUST** do it as a normal critical reading the readings we’ve been doing in class

Extract 9 indicates a high level of modality, conveyed in different stages of the discourse through ‘need to’, ‘must’ and ‘want’. The use of these modals places emphasis on the necessity of the students having to complete the task. Thus, even though it can be argued that ‘need to’ does not have the same meaning of necessity as ‘must’, in the context of the extract the three modal auxiliaries work together to convey the meaning of absolute necessity. Therefore, in the context of FC’s discourse, the use of ‘must’ is in order to impose a necessity, the necessity of completing the critical reading where the teacher takes the responsibility of imposing these conditions. Similarly, ‘need to’ also expresses an obligation, emphasising the necessity of completing the task. ‘Need to’ can be seen as a marginal modal similar in meaning to ‘ought to’ (Krug, 2000:235; Palmer 1990:3) in that it does not have the ‘necessity’ meaning of ‘must’ (Palmer 1990:129) but seems to be more an indication of what is required for specific purposes. In the context of this lesson, the critical reading has to be completed by the students due to a lesson having been missed, the message conveyed through the use of ‘need to’.

Another type of statement used by the participants was hortative in nature, and involved the use of the expression ‘let’s’. This implies a sharing of power with the students unlike imperatives (which will be discussed later) and statements of obligation, necessity and request which tend to make the power of the teacher quite explicit. Table 4.2.4 highlights the use of hortative statements by the participants:

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**Table 4.2.4: Hortative Statements**

| <b>Participant</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Examples</b>  |
|--------------------|------------------|--|
| Female A           | 11               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Let's look back onto our sheet</li><li>• Let's look at the next one</li></ul>  |
| Female B           | 7                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Let's have a look together</li></ul>   |
| Female C           | Not observed     |  |
| Male A             | 8                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Let's stop and have a look</li><li>• Let's read this paragraph again</li></ul> |
| Male B             | Not observed     |  |
| Male C             | 6                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Let's discuss your ideas</li></ul>   |

Of the six participants, hortative statements were used by four of the participants. The function of 'let's' in the context of the extracts in Table 4.2.4 is that of a first person command where the speaker is expressing a desire. To all intents and purposes, the phrase 'let's' was in fact used as a softer alternative to a direct imperative, and did not offer the students any kind of genuine choice of participation. Interestingly, two of the six participants were not observed to use this linguistic structure at all.

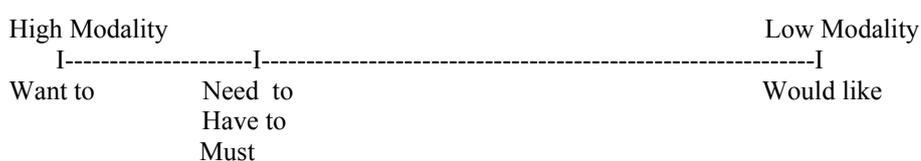
In summary, the data from the transcripts indicates that the second person is used by the participants in the study for the purposes of providing overt directions to the students. In addition, when the second person is used in the *I + verb + you + verb* construction, it performs the function of clearly delineating the roles of the speaker and addressee. The use of the first person plural is however slightly different in that it is used for the purpose of building solidarity but as shown in the extracts, the authority and decision-making function implicit in its use is also strong.

The use of pronouns might appear to be straightforward in that it refers to either the speaker through the use of the first person (*I, we*) or the addressee through the use of the second person plural (*you*). However, as shown by the frequency of use and textual examples, the speech situation, even in a limited context is not as simple as it seems. Each discourse feature carries with it political and social implications which are made apparent through not only the use of the pronouns in isolation but also and more importantly in conjunction with each other as in the *I + verb + you + verb* constructions. Furthermore as indicated earlier, the approaches of FA, FB, MB and MC in using 'want to' are similar. The difference, however, is that MA uses both discourse patterns of 'I want you to + verb' and 'I would like you to + verb', the first

which is the dominant pattern of FB while the second is the dominant pattern of FA. This seems to indicate that perhaps both male and female teachers work across the continuum of modality, with ‘would like’ at one end of the continuum with a lower tone of certainty and ‘want to’ on the opposite end with a higher degree of certainty, and obligation. The qualification here, as was made earlier is that the ultimate meaning of both ‘would’ and ‘want’, as interpreted by the students is the same in the obligatory sense.

Finally, the use of the necessity modals (must, have to, need to) can be seen to be obligatory as well. Thus these modals would belong closer to ‘want to’ on the continuum. This continuum, based on the modals most frequently used by the participants in this study is presented diagrammatically below:

**Figure 4.2.1: Modality Continuum of Participants’ Discourse**



The important point to note is that the participants’ use of modals in their instructional discourse may seem to vary in tone, with ‘would like’ in particular appearing as a polite request. While this is conceded, the illocutionary force inherent in all directions and instruction giving is such that despite the type or strength of the modal auxiliary, the impact on the addressee is similar in that the students (the addressees) have to act on the speaker’s (teacher’s) direction. The importance of analysing the linguistic forms of these requests/directions is to investigate the strategies used by the participants to obtain their students’ cooperation.

### **4.2.3 Imperatives**

In addition to statements of request, obligation and necessity and hortatives, the participants in this study also made use of imperatives in their instructional discourse. As defined in the literature review, imperatives are verbs used to give firm commands, directions and instructions. It is important to mention at this juncture that the study of imperatives in this study is limited to their inclusion in the teachers’ discourse as it is beyond the scope of this study to examine the position of ‘imperatives’ in discourse.

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As indicated in Table 4.2.5, imperatives were used by all the six participants. However, individual participants used imperatives in varying frequencies. For example, FA's frequency of use is similar to FC and MB. The use of imperatives can be linked to the general teaching style of these participants which was primarily teacher-centred, in that the lessons consisted of more teacher monologue and less involvement of the students. As these participants also used the *first person singular + verb* construction frequently (Table 4.2.1), these linguistic features can be seen as an assertion of the teacher's authority.

Imperatives can also be seen as face threatening acts, thus the teacher's tendency to use these frequently indicates a more 'masculine' speech style, based on Goodwin's (1980) work which found that boys tend to use more imperatives than girls. A more reasonable explanation is offered by Coates who argues that the dominant members of society tend to use imperatives (1986:160). In the classroom, the teacher is the most dominant member of the group. As such the teacher's frequent use of imperatives is an illustration of this domination.

While FB, MA and MC also use imperatives, these are not as frequent in their discourse as the other three participants. FB's use of imperatives generally focuses on what 'we' as a class are going to do. This is different to FA, who tends to use direct imperatives, which carry with them a sense of certainty as in 'do this', although this is softened by the use of 'would' in some contexts. As pointed out earlier, directives are commands which can be face-threatening acts to the addressee. Thus, such directness tends to be mitigated by use of modality as a form of respect to the addressee's negative face. It has been claimed that women tend to be indirect (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003:188). However, in the context of this study, all three female participants used imperatives in their discourse. Imperatives were not as apparent in MA's and MC's discourse, thus again bringing into question the claim that men are more direct and women indirect. Both of MA's lessons were primarily student-centred, in addition to which the teacher seemed to prefer giving directions through the use of pronouns and modality. This is similar to MC's discourse as he also preferred to provide instructions through modal auxiliaries. Table 4.2.5 provides the usage frequency of imperatives as used by the participants, including some examples.

**Table 4.2.5: Use of Imperatives**

| <b>Participant</b> | <b>Imperatives</b> | <b>Examples from transcripts</b>  |
|--------------------|--------------------|---|
| Female A           | 26                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• remember work with a friend\</li> <li>• underline the topic</li> <li>• circle the controlling idea</li> <li>• DON'T rush ahead.</li> <li>• OK off you go</li> </ul>  |
| Female B           | 19                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• just have a quick look at it</li> <li>• don't use dictionaries now</li> <li>• just look at it</li> <li>• see if you know any of those words</li> <li>• tell the others</li> <li>• see how many of those words you recognise</li> </ul> |
| Female C           | 32                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• just stop for a moment</li> <li>• look at the text</li> <li>• try to work out a bit like we did this morning</li> <li>• look at the key points</li> <li>• see if you can tell what's really different</li> <li>• tell me</li> </ul>    |
| Male A             | 7                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read it yourself</li> <li>• see if you can find any problems</li> </ul>  |
| Male B             | 18                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell them about the will</li> <li>• Explain the main points</li> <li>• Ask questions from your main document</li> <li>• OK go</li> <li>• Read it out for me</li> <li>• Work out what you are going to say to Sam</li> </ul>            |
| Male C             | 10                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First of all brainstorm...'</li> <li>• Make your outline</li> <li>• You can start with your introduction</li> <li>• Think what you think would be the logical order</li> </ul>   |

Table 4.2.5 shows that imperatives were frequently used by four of the six participants. The two male participants (MA & MC) used imperatives but not to the same degree as the others. This shows that the 'feminine' features of indirect language with face-saving strategies were used by the male participants (MA & MC) while the 'masculine' feature of directness was apparent in the discourse of the three female participants and MB.

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It is also noteworthy that FA and FB used imperatives more frequently than the other participants. As stated earlier, these participants also used hortative statements frequently.

#### **4.2.4 Duration/Detail of Instructions**

As stated earlier in this chapter, the view that ‘feminine’ language is more expansive and ‘masculine’ language more direct is tested in this study by examining the overall content and duration of the instructions given by the participants in this study.

In terms of the time taken to set up tasks, FA is detailed, spending on average between ten and thirty seconds performing this function. Extract 10 is an example of the detailed manner in which the teacher gives instructions. The details of the instructions concern the mode of performing the task which can be done in two ways. The first is where the students can work individually initially and then discuss with others. The second option is to get into discussions immediately. From this, it can be said that FA is attempting to cater to different learning styles, hence the rationale for the detailed instructions which were approximately thirty seconds.

#### **Extract 10: Female Participant A**

FA: ...what I'd like you to do now \ guys \ is to get straight into practice..ok remember / work with a friend \ ..if you're more comfortable working ahead and then conferring with your friend then that's fine..if you're more comfortable working with a partner straight away / you can do that \..it's up to you..so what I'd like you to do is Practice 1 where it says identifying topics and controlling ideas..SO with each sentence underline the topic and CIRCLE the controlling idea \ OK \ there's only five of them..DON'T \rush ahead..just finish that and the check with a friend..OK off you go \

A similar attention to detail was also noticed in the instructional discourse of FB as can be seen in Extract 11:

#### **Extract 11: Female Participant B**

FB: What I'm going to do now is .I'm gonna give you a questionnaire and I want you to discuss the questions in groups and then report back the findings to the class [hands out sheets] and you can see from the title that our reading is about child labour.it's actually about child labour./ ok so you've got number one.is it NORMAL for children in your country who ARE under sixteen years of age to work either full time or part time / so what's the age when children start working / is it normal for children to have a part time job / you know in many countries / I mean ENGLAND and Australia . / a lot of children.or school students / .when they get to about fourteen. They get another job.have a job to earn some pocket money and to teach them to handle money and have responsibility \ Number two is / did you have a job while you were at school or college / or do YOU have a job NOW / is anyone working now [softer voice] NUMBER three is important / do you think

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/ it's a good thing for children work / do YOU think . it's a good thing that children work \ by children .we probably mean. sixteen and under \ probably anyone over sixteen wouldn't count as a child [softer voice] what jobs are suitable for children and why? Are there some jobs which are just suitable for children to do \ Number five / how many hours a week do you think is a suitable amount for children to work? So if a CHILD is at school / and they want to do an extra job to earn some extra money / how many hours / a week do you think is OK / Umm.Number six is also important / do children have any responsibility to help their family financially? Why or why not? When you talk about this one.don't just think about rich countries where. / the children don't need to do much. \ think about some of the poor countries\. I mean if someone was living in a part of Africa where the family is almost starving / do the children have a responsibility to work instead of going to school ..OK what are the advantages and disadvantages of children working \ what are good things\ what are the bad things \ Number eight / can you name any countries in the world / where full time child labour is common? . Are.there any. any countries you know of .where children often work / full time and number nine what can be done to stop this? This of course means to stop children working full time / and Number ten / what's your definition of a slave? So I want you together / to try and write what's the definition of a slave [faster pace of speech] what you could also consider is . what's a slave [writes on board] and also what's a servant [writing on board] and what's a worker \ I mean there's a difference there \ OK for about.you've got about ten minutes / to go through those things in your group / and then we'll have some feedback

Extract 11 is from the beginning stages of the lesson where the teacher spent a considerable amount of time setting up the task (about 2 minutes of talk). This can be interpreted to mean that it is important to the teacher not only that the students understand the task thoroughly but also that the students are given some guidelines as to how they can progress with the discussion based on the questions she wanted them to consider in their discussions. This is done through FB offering suggestions and further prodding questions as indicated in the underlined section. Generally, it is believed that setting up a task effectively sets the appropriate tone for meaningful discussions to take place. Given FB's discourse and detailed instruction giving, this would seem to an implicit belief held by the teacher. On the other hand, it can also be seen as a remedial action by the teacher, who might have wanted to submit the text and go through the relevant vocabulary prior to issuing the instructions.

Similar to FA and FB, FC also provides detailed, lengthy instructions which average between thirty seconds and one minute of talk time. In Extract 12, FC provides justification for the task in addition to describing the stages in which the task will be done, concluding with an imperative as to the importance of the task to the students' overall grade.

#### **Extract 12: Female Participant C**

FC: Now everyone because we started on a Monday in the first part of our term meant that we missed one reading class.. because / it was Australia day we missed / that class

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and also because / we. started on a Wednesday you need to do / complete another critical reading which is why I asked you to read this at home.. and because we've been a little bit short on time because this course is a little bit shorter than normal. I want us to do it together in class but you must do it as a normal critical reading the readings we've been doing in class and the first thing I want you to do is look at question number one ok / so after you have read it. ok / I want you to look at number one and then we're going to go around and see if you can answer number one by writing the answer / and I'm going to come around and chat with you and see if we both agree on the answer \ ok / and then we're going to compare our answers and move on to question two ok.. and remember as i said to you this is part of your participation mark for the end of term and it's we're doing it in class because we missed the Monday holiday and we haven't had a chance to complete it so first thing we're going to read it.

MA, unlike the female participants was very brief in giving explicit instructions as can be seen in Extracts 13a and 13b:

**Extract 13: Male Participant A**

**Extract 13a:**

MA:..and I'm going to give you half an hour just to get that done –

**Male Participant A**

**Extract 13b:**

MA: OK.I'd like you to read it – see if you can find any problems – anything that can be changed..or anything that you think might need changing – or if you think it's really gross

The explicit instructions given by MA were on average between two and ten seconds. Thus, it is apparent that directness is a feature of his instructional discourse. Similarly MB's instructions were also direct and succinct, averaging between two and ten seconds as in the following extracts:

**Male Participant B**

**Extract 14a:**

MB: We're nearly going to shift folks

**Extract 14b:**

MB: OK would you please move to the places THAT I asked you to before

Finally, MC's explicit instructions are also direct, lasting between three and six seconds. This is similar to the other male participants in the study, who, as pointed out earlier, are very direct while the female participants tend to be more 'wordy' and detailed in their language of instruction. The following extract provides an example of MC's directness:

**Male Participant C**

**Extract 15:**

TR: OK please get into pairs and discuss your ideas

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Traditionally, directness in discourse is seen as a ‘masculine’ feature which seems to be supported by the findings in this context where the female participants are more detailed and the male participants more direct. Therefore, this is one context in which clear gender differences have been noticed in the discourse of the participants.

### **4.3 OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANTS DISCOURSE PATTERNS**

From the information provided in the earlier sections, it can be concluded that pronouns are used by the participants for the purpose of defining roles and providing overt directions. This was made more specific through the use of modals of necessity such as ‘must’, ‘need to’, ‘have to/have got to’, ‘want’ and ‘would’. Therefore, the participants had a tendency of using both modals of obligation and of necessity with one participant, in particular, favouring the use of ‘would like’.

Direct imperatives were also used by all the participants but in differing degrees. The participants who used it most often were FA, FB, FC and MB while MA and MC did not use it as frequently. In fact, of the four participants who use imperatives frequently, FB uses it the least. Her discourse often consisted of explicit statements of desire as in ‘I want you to + verb’.

Finally differences were noticed in the overall content and duration of instruction giving with male participants being more direct and female participants more expansive. The overall duration of the instructions given by the male participants took between two seconds and ten seconds while the female participants spent between ten seconds and two minutes.

Based on the above findings, a comparison of the male and female participants discourse in giving explicit instructions shows that there are similarities and differences in their discourse. It also illustrates that a discourse continuum exists with male and female participants adopting discourse features particular to the context. In the context of the ESL classroom, it can be assumed that the teachers’ power and authority also play a vital role in the discourse they choose to adopt. The table below summarises these patterns, according to gender, based on the frequency with which participants used these discourse features:

**Table 4.3.1: Summary of Instructional Discourse Patterns**

| <b>Participant/<br/>Discourse Pattern</b>     | <b>Female<br/>A</b> | <b>Female<br/>B</b> | <b>Female<br/>C</b> | <b>Male<br/>A</b> | <b>Male<br/>B</b> | <b>Male<br/>C</b> |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| <b><i>First Person Singular + Modals:</i></b> |                     |                     |                     |                   |                   |                   |
| I want you to                                 |                     | √                   | √                   | √                 | √                 | √                 |
| I would like you to                           | √                   |                     |                     | √                 | √                 |                   |
| I'm going to                                  |                     |                     |                     | √                 |                   | √                 |
| <b><i>First Person Plural + Modals</i></b>    |                     |                     |                     |                   |                   |                   |
| We're going to                                | √                   | √                   | √                   | √                 | √                 | √                 |
| We'll   | √                   | √                   |                     | √                 |                   |                   |
| <b><i>Second Person + modals</i></b>          |                     |                     |                     |                   |                   |                   |
| Need to                                       |                     |                     | √                   |                   | √                 |                   |
| Have to/Have got to                           | √                   | √                   | √                   | √                 | √                 | √                 |
| Must  |                     |                     | √                   |                   | √                 |                   |
| Use of Let's                                  | √                   | √                   |                     | √                 |                   | √                 |
| <b><i>Imperatives</i></b>                     | √                   | √                   | √                   |                   | √                 |                   |
| <b><i>Detailed/Lenghther Instructions</i></b> | √                   | √                   | √                   |                   |                   |                   |
| <b><i>Shorter Instructions</i></b>            |                     |                     |                     | √                 | √                 | √                 |

From Table 4.3.1, it can be deduced that both male and female participants tend to use the first person singular + verb for the purposes of making requests through statements of desire, making this a gender similarity. The use of 'want to' in directives can be seen as being direct and to some extent informal. Its use by all the participants indicates that in giving directions, both male and female teachers have no hesitation in being direct. However, FA's preference for 'would like' which was discussed earlier is different to the preferences of the other participants for 'want to'. Essentially, 'would like' is a more polite form of request than 'want to' and its use primarily by FA but also to a limited extent by MA and MB illustrates that politeness strategies are used by both the male and female participants.

Another similarity between the male and female participants is their use of deontic modal auxiliaries with the meaning of obligating the students to perform tasks, with 'have to' and 'have got to' being used consistently by the participants. A point to bear in mind here is that no matter which modal auxiliary is used the impact on the addressee (the student) is the same, as the context of the classroom obliges students to act on the wishes, stated explicitly, implicitly or softly by the participants. Thus,

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‘would like’, which generally indicates a soft desire has the same impact as ‘must’, a necessity modal.

In her work on ‘women’s talk’, Lakoff (1975) claimed that women make frequent use of a range of varied phenomena such as tag questions and modal auxiliaries in comparison to men. This section of the findings demonstrates that the notion of masculinity and femininity is a fluid concept, through which both males and females move along a continuum, adopting behavioural and linguistic behaviours appropriate to the context of the situation. Thus the use of modality and the person system is an example of these sorts of behaviour.

Yet another point of similarity is the use of imperatives by the participants. It has been claimed that women tend to use more politeness strategies, making use of hedges, boosters and compliments (Talbot 1998:90). Direct imperatives can be seen as threatening to the negative face of the addressee, thus being a negative politeness strategy. Modal verbs such as ‘would’ generally soften directives and were used to some extent by the participants. However, the frequency with which imperatives were used by four of the six participants indicates that their discourse makes use of both modality and direct instructions. Furthermore, in the role of teacher it can be concluded that females are not hesitant to make use of direct commands to tell students explicitly what they need to do. Thus, the important variable here is that of both occupation and relationship as the teachers are the dominant members of the group, thus their speech patterns contain elements of dominant discourse.

The data in this section indicates that detailed, lengthy instructions are a context where clear differences might exist in male/female teacher discourse. The traditional view that a masculine pattern of speech is more direct seems to be borne out in this section of the study as the male participants are very laconic about what they want the students to do. While the instructions given by the female participants are generally clear, the difference is the detailed manner in which they are given.

Although the evidence in this section of the study seems to indicate that gender differences are possible in the directness of explicit instructions, it must be

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remembered that gender is only one variable. Other factors such as age, teaching experience and teaching personality must also be taken into consideration.

In conclusion, the ‘direct, assertive style of speech, commonly associated with masculinity’ (Mills 2003:168) which Mills argues is appropriate for the public domain is not confined to male speakers. The discourse features of the ‘masculine’ speech style are also adopted by females in the context of the classroom, where teachers have a high level of status and authority. However, as has been pointed out earlier, features typical of ‘feminine’ speech also play an important role in the classroom, where both male and female teachers attempt to build solidarity with their students and use positive politeness strategies. This illustrates that male and female teachers operate on a continuum of masculinity and femininity, adopting discourse features appropriate to the attainment of their objectives.

#### **4.4 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER**

This chapter examined the participants’ discourse in giving explicit instructions in the ESL classroom. The framework used in the analysis was explained, including the definition of instructions, which refers to teacher discourse, primarily in setting up tasks. In analysing the discourse in this area the use of pronouns in conjunction with modality, imperatives and the detail and duration of instructions were examined. Modality was conveyed in different ways through the use of auxiliaries such as ‘want’ and ‘would’ with first person singular, although the obligation on the student to carry out the participants instructions was implicit. In addition, it was also noticed that the second person plural was used predominantly with ‘need to’, ‘must’ and ‘have to/have got to’. Imperatives were used frequently by four of the six participants, indicating that the status of the teacher plays a role in participants adopting a discourse of direct commands. Overall, the data provided support for gender as a performative construct, where the discourse chosen by the participants is determined by the context/event. In the teaching situation, the occupational variable which invests the teacher with authority and power allows both female and male teachers to adopt different features of masculine and feminine discourse.

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The next chapter examines another aspect of the participants' classroom discourse by investigating the discourse of questioning with the purpose of investigating the role of gender in discourse.

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## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION 2: QUESTIONING STRATEGIES**

#### **5.0 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER**

This chapter of the study will analyse the discourse of another teaching activity, that of questioning. Section 5.1 provides the overall framework of analysis, following which the dominant patterns of participants' questioning discourse is discussed in Section 5.2. An overview of the key features of the participants' questioning strategies is presented in Section 5.3 in order to draw conclusions on possible aspects of gender similarities and differences. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of the main points.

#### **5.1 OVERALL FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS**

In order to explore the gender variable, two broad types of questions were considered; cognitive and procedural. The importance of the cognitive level of questions lies in the relationship questions have to the subject matter, students' and teachers' intents. Investigating these aspects allows the researcher to draw meaningful conclusions from the data. The question classification systems described in Chapter 2 had some limitations (as also explained in Chapter 2) making it necessary for the researcher to move beyond the simplistic categorisation of referential and display questions or open/closed questions. The key aspect of these classifications is dependent on the knowledge of the questioner with the definite assumption made that either the questioner knows or does not know the answer. Van Lier (1988:224) challenges the distinction between display and referential questions from an ethnographic perspective suggesting that the most significant feature of instructional questions is their eliciting function.

Language research in classrooms which are more skills-based than content based has to develop a classification system of questions that allows for cognitive aspects to be considered. This then led to the selection of Bloom's Taxonomy, detailed in Chapter 2, which allowed for an analysis that took into consideration, the different levels of thinking required by different questions.

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Any analysis of questioning behaviour must also look both at the purposes of the teacher as well as the nature of the task. With some tasks, knowledge questions would better serve the teacher's objective than would application questions and vice versa. The following analysis will attempt therefore to look at the types of questions and how they relate to the teacher's objectives based on the teacher's discourse. In this analysis, a distinction will also be made between the function of cognitive questions and procedural questions which are related to classroom procedures such as "Do you know what to do?" (Richards and Lockhart 1996:185-187)

Thus, the analysis framework for this chapter consists of an adaptation of Bloom's Taxonomy (outlined in Table 2.3.1) with Richards and Lockhart's (1996) classification. This is based on the rationale that this adapted model will allow a more comprehensive analysis to be made firstly because it will embrace the cognitive aspect of questions enabling the researcher to categorise the questions asked by the participants. Secondly, it would also enable the coverage of a different function of questions, that of classroom management which Richards & Lockhart (1996) have defined as procedural questions. Table 5.1.1 provides a brief outline of the functions of these questions:

**Table 5.1.1: Types of Questions and Functions**

| <b>Type of Question</b> | <b>Function</b>                          |
|-------------------------|--|
| Knowledge               | To test recall and memory                |
| Comprehension           | To test understanding                    |
| Application             | To test information transfer             |
| Procedural              | For clarification, organisation of class |

As noted in the literature review, questioning is an instrumental aspect of teacher behaviour in the classroom, with teachers spending between thirty-five to eighty percent of their instructional time on questions (Cotton 2001; Borich 2004; Holland & Shortall 1998). This emphasises the need to examine both the frequency and type of questions that teachers ask in the ESL classroom. In the analysis of the discourse used in questioning one has to consider the type of thinking implicit in teacher questions and the cognitive challenges offered to the students through various questioning strategies. This in turn cannot be isolated from the task objectives. Thus

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the importance of questioning is how it helps the task to progress in addition to its intimate relationship with the objectives of the task or lesson.

In addition, gender differences have been noted in male and female discourse in relation to questioning behaviour as explained in the literature review. For example, Fishman notes that ‘women ask more questions of any kind’ (1998:255) while Holmes claims that females ask more ‘facilitative’ or ‘supportive’ questions and males tend to use more ‘organising’ questions. Coates argues that in asymmetrical discourse, it is the powerful speakers that ask more questions (1993:123). Therefore the frequency and type of questioning strategies adopted by the participants in this study is examined to determine similarities and differences in male and female teacher discourse in relation to questioning.

## **5.2 ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPANTS QUESTIONING STRATEGIES**

As highlighted earlier, two main categories of questions are considered in the analysis; cognitive and procedural. The cognitive questions are analysed from the perspective of their purposes, linguistic structure and wait-time of teachers. The purpose and frequency of procedural questions are discussed separately.

### **5.2.1 Cognitive Questions**

In analysing the entire corpus of data, it was found that the participants used mainly three types of cognitive questions based on Bloom’s Taxonomy; knowledge, comprehension and application. The researcher acknowledges the limitations of categorising questions as there are cases of overlap between the categories identified. In these situations, the researcher chose to place such questions in the category where it seemed to fall into most dominantly.

Knowledge questions were observed in the questioning discourse of all six participants but in different ways and with different levels of frequency. Table 5.2.1 provides the frequency with which knowledge questions were observed in the participants’ discourse:

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**Table 5.2.1: Frequency and Examples of Knowledge Questions**

| <b>Participant</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Examples of Questions Asked</b>  |
|--------------------|------------------|---|
| Female A           | 75               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ok what is the controlling idea</li><li>• what about the next one</li><li>• does everyone agree with Ray</li><li>• OK now do ALL the sentences that follow relate to the topic sentence</li><li>• What sorts of questions do you expect to see in the reading test?</li><li>• What is the first thing you do when writing an essay?</li></ul> |
| Female B           | 40               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do you know what it was called</li><li>• Where did the people come from</li><li>• What parts of Africa</li><li>• Where were they taken to</li></ul>   |
| Female C           | 21               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What were the important features in creating a learning city</li><li>• Does everyone here in this article have a project</li><li>• OK so what kinds of people are we talking about</li><li>• What's the key word</li></ul>  |
| Male A             | 13               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Which country are we talking about</li><li>• what's the idea here</li><li>• what kind of language do we use</li><li>• What does grandeur mean?</li><li>• What is the main idea of the paragraph?</li></ul>  |
| Male B             | 16               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Whose will was it</li><li>• Who wrote it</li><li>• What does that mean? What is gain?</li><li>• They need a compromise. What does that mean?</li></ul>  |
| Male C             | 19               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What's a hard job? Define hard job.</li><li>• What's another word for power?</li><li>• What's the third one?</li><li>• What's recover?</li></ul>  |

From Table 5.2.1, it is apparent that FA's frequency of asking knowledge questions is the highest among the participants while MA had the lowest frequency. FB and FC also asked knowledge questions frequently, though their questioning discourse did not feature this category of questions as often as FA. Among the male participants, MC had the highest frequency of knowledge questions. However, the frequency of his knowledge questions was slightly lower than FC who had the lowest frequency of knowledge questions among the female teachers (MC:19; FC:21). In brief, the table indicates that the female participants ask knowledge questions more frequently than the male participants.

The examples from the transcripts provided in Table 5.2.1 are typical of the knowledge questions asked by the participants. These questions serve different purposes, dependent on the teacher's objectives in the lesson. From the examples, it

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has been noted that the knowledge questions asked by the participants served firstly the purposes of testing students' recall of previously learned information, in relation to writing skills, vocabulary and textual comprehension (factual recall of present information). Secondly, knowledge questions were also used for the purposes of scaffolding. This can be seen from further textual analysis of some extracts.

FA, who asked knowledge questions most frequently, can be seen to be using these questions for the purpose of recall of previously learned information in relation to writing skills. This is shown in the extracts below:

### **Extract 1: Female Participant A**

#### **Extract 1a**

FA: **what is the topic** –

ST: (chorus answer) holidays

FA: OK holidays ..OK **what is the controlling idea**

#### **Extract 1b**

FA: **what about the next one** .. planning a good fourth of July party requires five specific steps ..**what is my topic** ..yeah fourth of July party..that's right ..**what's my controlling idea**

The bold statements indicate the knowledge questions asked by FA. In the extracts above, the teacher is testing students' recall of information on topic sentences and controlling ideas, having already taught about them about these features. This pattern of questioning allowed the participant to keep the students involved. In addition, FA's focus in this lesson was the identification of only two key aspects of writing paragraphs (topic sentences and controlling ideas). Thus her questioning style allowed her to achieve her objective which can be seen from both the students' active involvement in the task and the number of correct responses. This therefore leads to the conclusion that it is not so much the type of question asked that is important but the extent to which the questions allow the teachers to achieve their objectives. Korst (1997: 280-282) substantiates this view when he implies that the display of a correct answer is the main objective of a teacher's question: 'If the students answer correctly, the teacher has achieved her objective and then can proceed' (Korst 1997: 281).

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While it is conceded that asking knowledge questions does not allow for much language production, given the task and the teacher's objectives, such questions seem to have a place in the ESL classroom.

As highlighted earlier, it is apparent from Table 5.2.1 that MA has the lowest frequency of knowledge questions. In his use of knowledge questions, MA tends to focus on vocabulary items as do MB and MC. Therefore the purpose of the knowledge questions used by these teachers is for the purpose of testing recall of previously learned vocabulary information as indicated in the following extracts:

**Extract 2: Male Participants' Knowledge Questions**

**Extract 2a: Male Participant A**

MA: What does grandeur mean?

**Extract 2b: Male Participant B**

MB: What does that mean? What is gain?

**Extract 2c: Male Participant C**

MC: What's recover?

Extract 2a-c show the use of knowledge questions by the male teachers which were primarily for the purposes of checking vocabulary. While the participants also made use of knowledge questions for other purposes, recall of vocabulary understanding appeared to be their main objective.

FC had a slightly different purpose for using knowledge questions. Essentially, it was also to test recall of information but based on the reading text, being discussed in the current lesson. This is illustrated in the following extract:

**Extract 3: Female Participant C**

FC: does everyone here in this article have a project

FC: OK so what kinds of people are we talking about / What's the key word / what's different /

Extract 3 shows FC asking recall questions based on the text, as the students are required to provide answers from their reading of the text. This is evidenced by the preciseness of the questions in the extracts, for example 'What's the key word?', 'What kinds of people are we talking about?' These knowledge questions assist the

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teacher in meeting her objective of testing students' recall of textual information. Thus the purpose of knowledge questions in the two female participants' questioning discourse was observed to be different to the questioning strategies of the male teachers who concentrated primarily on vocabulary recall. Therefore, the purpose of questioning is directly related to the task objectives. As the male participants' objective was to test vocabulary, knowledge questions enabled the fulfilment of the objective.

As demonstrated in the preceding discussion, it was observed that the primary function of knowledge questions is the recall of information. However, FB used the same type of question for the purpose of scaffolding. After asking a series of procedural questions (which will be discussed later), FB introduced the topic of the lesson (a reading lesson) where the first part of the activity was a prediction exercise. To enable the activity to progress, FB used mainly knowledge questions as can be seen from the following extract:

**Extract 4: Female Participant B**

**Extract 4a:**

TR: OK just in the groups that you're in/ just discuss for a minute **WHAT do you think it's going to be about / what do you come up with suggestions** PREdicTING what our reading's going to be about / it's called AN AWFUL HUMAN trade

**Extract 4b:**

TR: OK c'mon let's have let's have some .some THEOries **what it's going to be about**

**Extract 4c:**

TR: no ideas at all / **what kind of TRADE could be awful** / umm.look at the word human trade so humans are involved

**Extract 4d:**

TR: OK people don't be too long..**what suggestions have we got?** You've got the word TRADE / to trade which means to buy and sell \ you've got awful which means terrible / and you know that it involves humans \ **any suggestions?**

As FB's purpose was to provide students with the opportunity to think about the title of the reading passage, the type of questions asked can be for the purposes of providing scaffolding. This can be seen in FB's discourse which indicates that the reading task is rather challenging for the students therefore requiring some scaffolding. For example, after dividing the students into two groups, FB guides each group into coming up with suggestions when she says 'no ideas at all / *what kind of*

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*TRADE could be awful* / umm.look at the word human trade / so humans are involved \.' These are prodding questions which are instrumental in encouraging students to derive at the most appropriate answers. Therefore, these knowledge questions serve the purpose of providing guidance for the students.

After the group discussion, the teacher brings the class together to discuss the ideas brought forward by the students. The following extracts illustrate the use of knowledge questions in this context.

**Extract 5: Female Participant B**

FB: Yeah *do you know what it was called?* Yeah It was actually called the slave trade that's the slave trade *..where did the people come from? What parts of Africa?* (long pause) I think they maybe. I think maybe they came from the North East.places like the Ivory coast .Uganda.places like that / *wh.where were they taken to/*

Student: Europe

FB: Europe/ yeah A lot of them were taken to North America.to the United states. *Why? Why did they want these people?.yeah they were slave workers – to work doing what /*

Student: grow cotton . plantation

FB: yeah cotton . a lot of them worked on ah . cotton plantations ..[writes cotton plantations on the board] now cotton plantations are places where they grow .plant cotton – so lots of them worked in cotton plantations *do you know when that trade stopped?*

As can be seen from the above interaction, FB is not only providing information for the current lesson but also allowing students the opportunity to express and expand on their world knowledge. Thus the questioning here is largely that of knowledge but the purpose is twofold – to introduce the topic of discussion and to make reading a focus for the extension of general knowledge. The interaction also shows FB encouraging the students to think about the topic as thoroughly as possible. This feature was not observed in the questioning discourse of FA, primarily because the tasks were different. The important point is that although the category of questions are similar, the strategies used are different, thus indicating that questions are dependent on the nature of the task and thus cannot be seen in isolation.

Based on the preceding discussion, it can be concluded that knowledge questions can be used for recall of information. FA uses these questions to test students' memory of what they had been taught in a previous lesson while the male participants and FC use knowledge questions for the purpose of vocabulary and textual recall of

information. FB uses it for an entirely different purpose which is that of scaffolding. This indicates that questions are determined by the objectives the teacher sets out to achieve in the lesson. Another observation made is that while the male participants seemed to have one primary purpose in asking knowledge questions (vocabulary recall), the female participants had varied purposes. Thus the differences between the male and female participants in the category of knowledge questions is firstly that of frequency (females ask more knowledge questions) and secondly the teachers' purposes. However, Fishman's (1983) finding that women in general tend to ask more questions seems to be supported by the findings in this context of the study.

The second category of questions noticed in the discourse of the participants was comprehension questions. As indicated earlier, comprehension questions are used for the purposes of enabling the teacher to test students' comprehension of information. The key characteristic of this group of questions is that the addressee (student) is expected to rephrase the information so that the questioner (teacher) can verify the understanding of the students. This is different to knowledge questions which only require recall of information, thus rephrasing is not expected.

Table 5.2.2 provides an overview of the frequency of participants' comprehension questions. It is apparent from the table that comprehension questions were asked most frequently by FC (33), followed by MB (27) and FB (25). MA and MC had a similar frequency with seventeen questions each while FA asked the fewest number of comprehension questions. Unlike knowledge questions, which were more frequently asked by the female participants, comprehension questions were asked frequently by five of the six participants.

**Table 5.2.2: Frequency and Examples of Comprehension Questions**

| <b>Participant</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Examples of Questions Asked</b>  |
|--------------------|------------------|---|
| FA                 | 10               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the purpose of the text?</li> <li>• What are they (advertisers) trying to do?</li> </ul>   |
| FB                 | 25               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think it's going to be about</li> <li>• OK this would be children working not as SLAVES but as doing part-time jobs so what do you think are the advantages and disadvantages</li> <li>• so children shouldn't work</li> </ul> |

| Participant | Frequency | Examples of Questions Asked   |
|-------------|-----------|---|
| FC          | 33        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why did they create a learning city</li> <li>• What made them do it and how did they do it</li> <li>• How did they make people ..more motivated and more interested</li> <li>• What makes the class really successful remember it's about English</li> </ul>   |
| MA          | 17        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• so what should the rest be</li> <li>• what about the first supporting idea</li> <li>• how do we know it's Taiwan</li> <li>• If something challenges your imagination, what does it do?</li> </ul>  |
| MB          | 27        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was there anything special about it that you noticed</li> <li>• Was there anything unusual about the will</li> <li>• What did this saying../ the pot calling the kettle black mean../what does that mean./</li> </ul>  |
| MC          | 17        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What's the question asking you to do?</li> <li>• You're carrying heavy things. What could happen to your body? What can happen to your back?</li> <li>• Which followed the same sales trend?</li> <li>• Which dramatically increased in the first quarter?</li> <li>• Which ones describe horizontal?</li> </ul> |

From the extracts it was observed that the dominant purpose of the comprehension questions asked by the participants was for the purpose of testing students understanding, most clearly evident in FC's discourse. A sample of her questioning pattern is illustrated in Extract 6:

#### Extract 6: Female Participant C:

FC: OK everyone just stop for a moment cos I know that you've ..you should have read this at home **what were / the important features in creating \ a learning city**  
(Students start sharing their answers while teacher walks around)

FC: **Why did they create a learning city / What made them do it and how did they do it /**

ST: Motivation

TR: Sorry

ST: Motivation

TR: Motivation to make people more motivated MAKE them interested **How did they MAKE people ..more motivated and more interested what did they do to make it a little bit different it IS a little bit different isn't it do you think it's a little bit different Why what IS different about THIS classroom to Glasgow what do you THINK .. you look at the things that they do in Glasgow and see if you can tell me what's really different**

The questions in bold were classified as comprehension questions as they are directly related to the text and can only be answered by students examining the text as FC says quite often in different parts of the lesson. This emphasises the purposes of the

question which in this context is a focus on textual comprehension. This can be seen as FC begins by asking a general comprehension question on ‘the important features in creating a learning city’. FC then elicits more information from the reading text by asking more specific questions on the reasons for ‘creating a learning city’ and the reasons why it was done in addition to the method in which it was done. In the last part of the extract, the teacher elicits further specific information based on the answers the student has provided. It is interesting to note that these questions become more directed and specific as FC attempts to encourage the students to think about the text in a broader manner. For example, after asking specific comprehension questions, FC moves to asking application questions as in ‘What is different about this classroom to Glasgow’. By asking this application question, FC is attempting to assist the students’ comprehension of the reading text. This shows the teacher moving from one level of questioning to another, based on the objective of assisting the students’ comprehension. Therefore these questions, largely comprehension in nature allow the teacher to achieve her objectives, as can be seen by the students’ ability to comprehend the passage and answer questions accurately.

The final category of questions asked frequently by the participants in this study was application questions, cognitive questions which fall at the midpoint of Bloom’s 1956 Taxonomy. These questions were predominant in the questioning discourse of five of the six participants as indicated in Table 5.2.3.

**Table 5.2.3: Frequency and Examples of Application Questions**

| <b>Participant</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Examples of Questions Asked</b>  |
|--------------------|------------------|---|
| FA                 | 8                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you do when planning?</li> <li>• How do you plan?</li> </ul>   |
| FB                 | 79               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What kind of trade could be awful?</li> <li>• OK now eight / do you know of any countries.in the world where child labour is is.common/’</li> </ul>  |
| FC                 | 35               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why / what IS different about THIS classroom to Glasgow / what do you THINK ../</li> <li>• Tell me what is the attitude of the writer</li> <li>• Has anybody picked up the bigGEST thing about education in most countries</li> </ul>  |
| MA                 | 34               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OK I’d like you to read it – see if you can find any problems – anything that can be changed..or anything that you think might need changing</li> <li>• Is there any problem with the sentence</li> <li>• What about this next sentence is that clear</li> <li>• How can we make it clearer</li> </ul> |

| Participant | Frequency | Examples of Questions Asked   |
|-------------|-----------|---|
| MB          | 38        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you found out any other family scandals.by talking . have you found out any other bad things the family did by seeing the other papers?</li> <li>• What other things have you have learned from the text?</li> <li>• Anything else you found out that you didn't know before</li> <li>• How are you feeling?</li> </ul> |
| MC          | 31        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you agree or disagree with some aspects?</li> <li>• Why do you say Yahoo continued to rise slowly?</li> <li>• Why would it be bad for them?</li> <li>• Why else would a labour intensive job be bad for you?</li> <li>• Why would it cause psychological damage?</li> </ul>   |

Table 5.2.3 shows that application questions were frequent in the questioning discourse of the participants, with the exception of FA who was not observed to ask as many application questions. The focus of application questions is to test students' ability to transfer information and apply previously acquired information to different situations. Therefore, responses to these questions require students to go beyond rephrasing (comprehension) to expressing how information acquired in certain contexts can be applied to different contexts. Of the six participants, FB asked application questions most frequently (79) while FC, MA, MB and MC had a similar frequency of asking application questions.

As highlighted earlier, application questions can be used to encourage students to use their prior experiences and information to help them comprehend different aspects of learning tasks set by the teacher. For example, FB used application questions for the purpose of providing a familiar context for the students to engage in the reading task. This is illustrated when FC explains the pre-reading task which consists of a series of questions that students have to discuss in order to prepare for the reading text. Each of the questions is explained in detail by the teacher as she provides them with sub-topics to discuss in case they run into difficulty.

#### **Extract 7: Female Participant B**

FC: ..you can see from the title that our reading is about child labour.it's actually about child labour./ ok so you've got number one.*is it NORMAL for children in your country who ARE under sixteen years of age to work either full time or part time / so what's the age when children start working / is it normal for children to have a part time job / you know in many countries / I mean ENGLand and Australia . / a lot of children.or school students / .when they get to about fourteen..they get another job.have a job to earn some pocket money and to teach them to handle money and have responsibility \ **Number two is / did you have a job while you were at school or college / or do YOU have a job NOW / is anyone working now [softer voice] NUMBER three is important / do you think / it's a good thing for children work / do YOU think . it's a good thing that children work \***

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by children .we probably mean. sixteen and under \ probably anyone over sixteen wouldn't count as a child [softer voice] ***what jobs are suitable for children and why? Are there some jobs which are just suitable for children to do \ Number five / how many hours a week do you think is a suitable amount for children to work? So if a CHILD is at school / and they want to do an extra job to earn some extra money / how many hours / a week do you think is OK / Umm.Number six is also important / do children have any responsibility to help their family financially? Why or why not?*** When you talk about this one.don't just think about rich countries where. / the children don't need to do much. \ think about some of the poor countries\ ***I mean if someone was living in a part of Africa where the family is almost starving / do the children have a responsibility to work instead of going to school ..OK what are the advantages and disadvantages of children working \ what are good things\ what are the bad things \ Number eight / can you name any countries in the world / where full time child labour is common? . Are.there any. any countries you know of .where children often work / full time and number nine what can be done to stop this? This of course means to stop children working full time / and Number ten / what's your definition of a slave?*** So I want you together / to try and write what's the definition of a slave [faster pace of speech] ***what you could also consider is . what's a slave [writes on board] and also what's a servant [writing on board] and what's a worker \***

The bold, italicised statements are from the discussion sheet given to the students, as read out by the teacher. Most of the questions here are application in nature as they are based on the students world knowledge, for example the focus is what the students think and know (Teacher says 'do you think'). The category of application was chosen as the students need to make use of their knowledge to apply it to the situation at hand.

A point to note here is that these questions are necessary for FB to achieve her objective of preparing the students for the reading text. As the text is on 'Child Labour', the prediction questions are designed with the purpose of getting the students to relate their own experiences and knowledge to what they would encounter in the reading text. This will aid in text comprehension. In fact a recent approach to reading in EFL/ESL is the Interactive Model, proposed by Eskey (1988). In this model, 'interaction' has been handled from two perspectives; one is the interaction between the reader and the text, and the other is the interaction between the lower and higher levels of reading process. Teachers make use of different tools to initiate interaction in the classroom, and research shows that the most commonly used one is asking questions (Long and Sato 1983; Johnson 1990 (cited in Ellis 1994) Cross 1994) as stated earlier. Through asking questions, teachers help learners to develop lower and higher skills and to use their background knowledge to interact with the text. Thus the purposes for which the questions were asked seem to assume more significance than the question type.

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FC also adopts a similar approach to FB but there are fewer higher order thinking questions both in the task set and in the questioning style of the teacher. As highlighted earlier, FC, like FB favours asking more comprehension (33) and application (35) questions. However, the quantitative difference between the two is not as wide as FB who uses application questions seventy nine times and comprehension questions twenty five times. Therefore, like FB, FC also tends to use questions for the purpose of expanding on students' knowledge and to stimulate their thinking processes. Borich (2004) recommends that an appropriate question ratio between convergent and divergent questions is 70:30 due to the need for more instructional time in order to achieve higher levels of behaviours. This can also be applied to the current taxonomy adopted in this study as application questions can be seen as the lowest type of higher order questions, where due to constraints on instructional time, can begin to encourage higher levels of thinking in students. The remaining range of questions in Bloom's Taxonomy, those of analysis, synthesis and evaluation cannot be effectively used in the classroom. These questions, however, were observed to be part of the homework tasks. Thus the questions in the classroom during the lesson began the process of higher order thinking which was then continued through the homework tasks. In addition to using more comprehension and application questions, FC is similar to FB in asking questions which require students to provide their opinions. This feature was not observed in the discourse of FA, who even when she used the question phrase 'do you agree', was with limited responses of yes/no type of questions.

As indicated in Tables 5.3.1, 5.3.2. and 5.3.3, MA, similar to both FB and FC, favours asking application questions, with a ratio similar to FB. The difference, however, is that MA's questions seem to be more reflective, encouraging students to apply what they had learned about cohesive writing to the paragraph being analysed during the present lesson. These type of questions, according to Morgan & Saxton 'shape understanding' (1992:41). They further elaborate that these questions enable students and teachers 'to fill in what lies between the facts in order to sort out, express and elaborate how they are thinking and feeling about the material'. Therefore such questions recognise that students 'have the right to be participators in their education' while also acknowledging the collective nature of the classroom. By using questions which encourage students to understand the nature of the issues,

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students are able to build 'joint frames of reference which enable them to participate in learning as a social and cultural process' (Morgan & Saxton 1992: 41).

From Table 5.2.3, it is apparent that MB asks application questions frequently, with the ratio between comprehension and application questions, being similar to that of FB. This could be due to the teacher's objectives in the reading and speaking lesson, where the focus was on comprehending the texts sufficiently in order to exchange the information. In the first instance, it was to solve a mystery through the jigsaw reading exercise and in the second situation, it was in order to perform a role-play, during which students had to play the relevant parts, exhibiting the necessary emotions to convey the meanings effectively. Thus, it is not so much the type of questions that are important as much as how the questions fit into the overall context of the lesson. For example, in the second lesson observed, the teacher's objective was to enable students to play the role of either the host or the home stay student, where the problem was that the home stay student had upset the other students in the household through his inconsiderateness. To play the roles convincingly, in addition to using the appropriate language, the students also had to think about their emotions. In order to encourage this aspect of the role-play, the teacher asked the students constantly 'How are you feeling'. The following exchange demonstrates this more clearly:

**Extract 8: Male Participant B**

MB: OK guys, you are Bob, you are the boss. How are you going to handle it../Are you going to be tough / Are you going to be aggressive/

MB: You are Sam / how are you feeling / Sam here is feeling nervous \ How is the Sam here feeling /

From Extract 8, it is clear that the relationship between the questioning strategy and the task objective is very close. As different students are playing the roles of either Sam or Bob, the teacher makes use of application type questions to stimulate students thinking to apply the knowledge they have to the situation indicated by the lesson.

Based on the earlier discussion, the Table 5.2.4 summarises the type and frequency of cognitive questions asked by the participants:

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**Table 5.2.4: Overview of Question Types**

| <b>Participant</b> | <b>Knowledge</b> | <b>Comprehension</b> | <b>Application</b> | <b>Total No. of Questions Asked</b> |
|--------------------|------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Female A</b>    | 75               | 10                   | 8                  | 93                                  |
| <b>Female B</b>    | 40               | 25                   | 79                 | 144                                 |
| <b>Female C</b>    | 21               | 33                   | 35                 | 89                                  |
| <b>Male A</b>      | 13               | 17                   | 34                 | 64                                  |
| <b>Male B</b>      | 16               | 27                   | 38                 | 81                                  |
| <b>Male C</b>      | 19               | 17                   | 31                 | 67                                  |
| <b>Total</b>       | 184              | 129                  | 225                | 538                                 |

Table 5.2.4 shows that the largest proportion of questions asked by the participants falls into the third category of questions (225), application followed by knowledge questions (184). In Bloom's taxonomy, knowledge questions constitute the 'lowest level of outcomes in the cognitive domain'. The overall picture shows that application questions dominate the observed lessons while the comprehension and knowledge type questions are fewer in number, constituting a larger difference in percentage as well. Knowledge questions form 34.2% while comprehension questions form 23.9% and application questions, 41.9%.

While the general picture indicates a heavy reliance on application questions, the individual profiles of each of the teachers is quite different as explained earlier. While FA asked mainly knowledge questions, all the other participants asked questions covering the three levels of questions. This might be due to the nature of FA's objectives which seem to determine the style of questioning that a teacher would adopt.

FB has quite an interesting profile with application questions forming the bulk (79) which constitutes nearly half of the total number of questions (144) she asked in the two recorded lessons. This figure also represents the highest number of application type questions asked by all the participants in the study. The frequency of knowledge questions in her discourse are fewer in number (25) with comprehension questions forming the lowest (4), a profile which is similar to MC.

Intra-gender and inter-gender differences were observed in the profiles of the male teachers. MA, like all the other participants (except FA) asked more application questions (34) in comparison to knowledge (13) and comprehension (17) questions.

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MB also asked more application questions, similar to MA. However, between comprehension and knowledge questions, MB was observed to have asked more comprehension than knowledge questions.

Based on the above data, one can come to certain conclusions. Firstly, there is an indication that few gender differences exist in the questioning styles of the teachers since both the male and female teachers tend to ask more application type questions than knowledge and comprehension questions, with the exception of FA.

Secondly, it is the nature of the task which seems to determine the prevalence of certain question types/forms, rather than gender. This has to be seen with specific reference to the nature of activities and the skills taught in each of the lessons. For example, FA asked mainly knowledge questions but as her aim in the lesson was to enable students to understand the mechanics of writing topic sentences, these questions served her purpose. In fact, as Table 5.2.4 indicates, she asked twice as many questions in the same period of time as the other teachers. However, as the questions were lower-order thinking questions, there was virtually no wait-time with the students providing an answer immediately after the question was asked. One dominant question was ‘What’s the controlling idea?’ This was related to the task which required students to read a paragraph and identify its component parts, such as the topic sentence. As the students were given a few minutes to read and discuss the answers in small groups, there was no necessity during the class discussion to have a longer wait-time.

MC, in addition to asking application questions more frequently, a feature which is similar to all the other teachers except FA, also asked knowledge questions quite frequently. This is an interesting feature as all the other teachers tend to ask fewer knowledge questions and more comprehension questions while MC and FB tend to ask more knowledge questions than comprehension questions. However, the same participants also asked application questions quite often. It appears as if these teachers have moved from the lowest level of the taxonomy to the middle level without emphasising too much on the second level. This is significant when seen in light of providing students with scaffolding. The tasks set by these teachers was initially quite challenging for the students, thus in order to enable students to

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comprehend the material sufficiently to progress through the tasks, it was necessary to provide additional scaffolding which was accomplished through the use of knowledge questions. This is different to application questions which tend to be more challenging in that they demand students to use the information provided in a new context to solve a problem or form an opinion. While it is acknowledged that it is the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy that encourage more complex thinking, in an ESL class, the language in addition to the questions asked has to be simplified in order to enable students to be successful. Thus, the lack of such questions in the ESL classes observed is a reflection of the sensitivity of the teachers to the issue of second language acquisition. In addition, as argued earlier, homework tasks set by the teachers seem to indicate that more complex thinking is encouraged when the students have more time to process their thinking. The purpose in the classroom is to provide the more basic levels of understanding.

An interesting comparison can be made between MA and FA who were both teaching topic sentences to the same level of classes but adopted totally different methods. While one was product-oriented (FA), the other was process-oriented (MA). This is apparent from their questioning strategies with MA asking more application type questions (14), relating to the various aspects of writing paragraphs such as cohesion and logic in addition to developing topic sentences. The wait-time of this teacher was also the longest (between 1 minute – 3 minutes), indicating the awareness of the teacher that higher order thinking questions needed more time for the students to process their answers. This seems to support the view that it is the nature of the task that determines the questioning strategy, thus no one strategy is better than the other. More important is the relationship of the questions to the task and how the questions enable the teachers to achieve their objectives.

The 'three-part sequence of teacher initiation, student response, teacher evaluation (IRE/IRF) is the most common pattern of classroom discourse at all grade levels', (Cazden :29) with the teacher usually initiating the interaction using question forms. This pattern of questioning has implications for both lesson content and classroom structure. According to Joseph Lukinsky and Lifsa Schachter in 'Questions in Human and Classroom Discourse', the IRE/IRF structure 'establishes a power relationship with the teacher on top and secondly is the reinforcement of the idea that

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there must be an answer to every question.’ This seems to be borne out in the data of the participants’ transcripts as each teacher was the powerful, dominant speaker, indicating clearly who gets to speak next even with group discussions. In addition the data reinforces the view that every question not only has an answer but also a correct or inaccurate response. In the classroom, and in this case the ESL classroom, questioning reinforces the power relationships that teachers have in their interactions with students.

In terms of the linguistic structure of the cognitive questions, it was observed that the participants used the ‘wh’ construction predominantly. However, individual differences were noticed in the use of specific verbs, such as ‘think’ in addition to some teachers favouring the ‘why’ question. For example similar to the other participants, FB’s questions were primarily ‘wh’ questions with interrogative words, with variation in the linguistic structure. This is apparent as some of her questions began with ‘do you know’ and ‘do you agree’, thus focussing on students’ knowledge and opinions. According to Leech & Svartvik (1973:), ‘wh’ questions provoke unlimited responses, in that the answer is not merely positive or negative. The focus of such questions is on providing the information required by the ‘wh’ word. However, FA’s use of such questions provided a limited range of responses in comparison to FB, whose questions seemed to encourage more responses. This could be due to the nature of the task.

The linguistic structure of FC’s questions was also similar to the other female participants, who prefaced their questions with the discourse marker ‘OK’. The other similarity is that like the other teachers, FC also made use of ‘wh’ questions, in addition to having statement questions. Similar to the female teachers, MA also made use of ‘wh’ questions, sometimes prefacing the questions with ‘OK’. One of the key linguistic features of MA’s questions is the use of ‘think’ (similar to FB), where asking students for their opinions is a genuine request to invite them to think thoroughly about the writing process.

In particular is the importance of the ‘why’ questions, a feature quite prevalent in MA’s and MC’s questioning discourse. Morgan & Saxton note that many educators and most psychologists suggest that ‘why’ questions should be avoided ‘like the

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plague’, seeing these questions as destroying confidence and suggesting disapproval, objections or criticisms. However, ‘why’ questions can also be seen as a great educational question as the way in which it is asked can ‘change it from a perceived personal interrogation of the respondent to being seen as a genuine need to know on the part of the questioner’ (1991:69). It is in this context that it appears MA’s ‘why’ questions are genuine in requesting students to examine the concepts of writing.

As indicated earlier, ‘why’ questions were a frequent feature of MC’s questioning discourse. This is significant as it conveys a challenge and indicates that the teacher requires more information. For example, in the following extract, MC wanted the students to explain their answer further, thus the use of ‘why’ acts as a probe for further information.

**Extract 9: Male Participant C**

**Extract 9a**

MC: Why would you say that Yahoo continued to rise slowly?

**Extract 9b**

MC: What would it cause you?

ST: psychological harm

MC: Why would it cause psychological damage?

The above extracts illustrate slightly different purposes of the ‘why’ questions. In the first extract, ‘why’ serves as an indication that the teacher requires more information. However, in the second extract, it is part of the questioning interaction process, encouraging students to think about other aspects of the issue.

Finally, the wait-time of the teachers was on average similar with the exception of one male teacher who had a prolonged wait-time in comparison to the other teachers. This difference could again be due to teaching styles, teaching personalities and different task objectives. For example, MB has a rather short wait-time (5 seconds – 30 seconds), similar to the three female participants. A dominant feature was that of self-repetition of questions, which was not so apparent in the discourse of the other teachers.

In contrast, MA’s wait time was quite long, in fact far longer than that of all the other participants in the study. This can be seen in Extract 11, where the teacher’s focus is

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to allow students the opportunity to openly express their views. Due to the reflective nature of the questions, the teacher's wait-time necessarily had to be longer in order to allow students to process their thinking. While it is conceded that long wait times can be detrimental to the instructional process, in this context, the long wait time is appropriate in order to allow students to weigh alternative responses, especially as this teacher adopted an indirect approach to instruction. In fact, Morgan & Saxton view wait-time more as thinking time in a classroom which is built on the principles of active participation. This view seems appropriate in the case of Male Participant A as students were asked to consider carefully before providing an answer, the emphasis on the thinking process made clear through the frequent use of 'think' in the questions.

#### **Extract 10: Male Participant A**

MA: TR: OK I'd like you to read it – see if you can find any problems – anything that can be changed..or anything that you think might need changing – or if you think it's really gross...(N)

On the other hand, Female Participant A had a very short wait time which can also be seen as appropriate given that she expected correct, quick and firm answers in her direct instruction approach.

Thus, it appears that wait-time of teachers is dependent on the questioning style. This can be seen from the data as knowledge questions were observed to have shorter wait times than application questions. In addition, the variation observed in the participants' wait-time seemed to be a consequence of the questioning strategy rather than an impact of gender.

#### **5.2.2 Procedural Questions**

In addition to asking cognitive questions, teachers also ask questions for clarification and organisational purposes. These, as explained earlier have been identified as procedural questions by Richards and Lockhart (1996:185). This type of questions may also be asked to check that meanings get across correctly or to facilitate the progress of the lesson, with an emphasis on the structure of classroom interaction. Table 5.2.5 provides an overview of the procedural questions noticed in the participants' questioning discourse:

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**Table 5.2.5: Frequency & Examples of Procedural Questions**

| <b>Category</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Examples of Questions Asked</b>  |
|-----------------|------------------|---|
| Female A        | 7                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• OK has everyone done the second question?</li></ul>   |
| Female B        | 27               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Did you all bring that?</li><li>• Any problems?</li><li>• Ready to go?</li><li>• How did you go?</li><li>• Have you got a mixture of nationalities? (speaking to individual groups)</li></ul> |
| Female C        | 28               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Has everyone got their worksheet?</li><li>• Any problems?</li><li>• Are you finished with that?</li><li>• How you going?</li></ul>  |
| Male A          | 11               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are you almost finished with that?</li><li>• Do you remember why we read that?</li></ul>  |
| Male B          | 28               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Which one?</li><li>• Now have you swapped your documents?</li><li>• OK how we doing?</li><li>• Have you changed over yet?</li><li>• Are you all reading different documents?</li></ul>        |
| Male C          | 26               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What other ideas?</li><li>• What did you three have?</li><li>• How is number four going?</li><li>• Any other questions about those?</li><li>• How are you going?</li></ul>                    |

With the exception of FA and MA, the participants in this study used procedural questions frequently as indicated in Table 5.2.5. For example, FA asked a total of seven procedural questions in the course of the two lessons observed while MA was observed to have asked eleven procedural questions. The table also shows that FB asks procedural questions frequently, mainly for clarification and organisational purposes. These questions were also observed in the discourse of FA, though not quite as frequently. This type of question is important to maintain the pace of the lesson and to enable students to progress through the different tasks. As stated earlier, teachers have different purposes for asking questions at different points in the lesson. For example, FB also asks a series of questions at the beginning of the lesson which are procedural in nature. Here her purpose in asking the questions was to empathise with the students and to set up a conducive environment for the students to openly express their views. Extract 11 from the transcript illustrates this:

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**Extract 11: Female Participant B**

FB: did you all bring that yeah / . and *how are the presentations going / how did it go yesterday* [students murmur] who presented yesterday / [pointing at some students] you did? Was it good? [excited tone] [students laugh] was\ it um better than you thought? [Teacher laughs] Everybody's looking very nervous /who's on Thursday / *who's presenting on Thursday /*

The bold italic questions do not belong to the lesson proper but still play an important role as they provide both students and teacher with the opportunity to warm to each other, thus creating a friendly atmosphere for the lesson to progress in. In addition, the teacher asking about other activities in the learning experience of the students indicates a personal interest in the students which might make them feel more valued members of the class. Thus, the purpose of the questions has been achieved.

From table 5.2.5, it is apparent that MA does not make use of procedural questions as much as FB and FC who asked procedural questions frequently with the purpose of checking on students' progress. In this respect, MA seems to have more in common with FA, whose use of procedural questions is not as frequent (7). As stated earlier, procedural questions are important in enabling teachers to both monitor the students' learning and to check on individual progress. However, both FA and MA did not need to use these questions frequently as their task objectives were different. For example in the lessons observed, FA seemed to subscribe to the direct instruction method, which led to her asking questions requiring students to provide recall information. Thus, the lesson was punctuated with short, direct activities which did not require complex thinking. As a result of this approach, there was little need to check on students' progress as this was apparent through the chorus answers provided by the students. On the other hand, MA did not have time to check or monitor students progress as the activity was a complex writing activity, during which students were engaged in the task. From this, one can conclude that the task objectives are more important than the questions itself.

MB, similar to FB and FC, also used procedural questions frequently. The purposes of such questions were for clarification purposes (response to students question), to check on the progress of the students while at the same time inviting them to share any problems they may be encountering. Finally, these questions also served to

check that the participant's instructions were being carried out, which was a purpose not so apparent in the discourse of the other teachers. This could be due to the more authoritarian approach adopted by MB, where his power is overtly shown, despite the use of communicative teaching methodologies.

MC, similar to the other teachers in the study used procedural questions for the purpose of classroom management, ranging from general questions such as 'Have you got your worksheets?' to checking that instructions had been followed. In addition, the function of such questions is also to check on the progress of the activity. The examples in the above table illustrate this clearly as the teacher asks 'How is number four going'. Such questions, in addition to 'How are you going?' were frequently asked to check on the progress of the lesson.

In summary, Holmes (1988) claim that women tend to use more 'facilitative', 'supportive' questions and men more 'organising' questions does not seem to be supported by the finding in this section of the study. This is because both male and female participants were observed to have used procedural questions, which are both facilitative and organisational as often as each other. Thus, in the context of classroom discourse, the roles of the teacher govern the frequency and purpose of these questions rather than gender.

### 5.3 OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANTS' DISCOURSE PATTERNS

The participants' use of questioning types is summarised in Table 5.3.1:

**Table 5.3.1: Summary of Questioning Discourse**

| Participant/<br>Dominant Questioning<br>Pattern | Female A | Female B | Female C | Male A | Male B | Male C |
|---|----------|----------|----------|--------|--------|--------|
| Knowledge Questions                             | √        |          |          |        |        |        |
| Comprehension Questions                         |          |          |          |        |        |        |
| Application Questions                           |          | √        | √        | √      | √      | √      |
| Procedural Questions                            |          | √        | √        |        | √      | √      |
| Wait Time                                       |          |          |          |        |        |        |
| ➤ 5 – 10 secs                                   | √        |          |          |        |        |        |
| ➤ 10 – 30 secs                                  |          | √        | √        |        | √      |        |
| ➤ 30 secs – 2 mins                              |          |          |          | √      |        | √      |
| 'wh' questions                                  | √        | √        | √        | √      | √      | √      |
| Why question                                    |          | √        |          | √      |        | √      |

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From Table 5.3.1, it can be concluded that there are no clear gender differences in the questioning discourse of the male and female teachers. The third category of application questions is used by five of the six participants, thus indicating a general similarity. The difference with the one female teacher can be seen to be a result of teaching style in addition to the task objectives of the teacher which dictated the adoption of different questioning strategies. However, as pointed out earlier, the overall frequency of knowledge questions was higher in the female participant's discourse in comparison to the male participants (Table 5.2.1). Thus, while no gender differences were observed in the use of application questions, it is possible that there might be gender differences in the use of knowledge questions.

A second area of discussion is in the use of procedural questions which was favoured by four of the six teachers. However, as it was one male and one female teacher who did not make frequent use of procedural questions, it seems quite clear that this not an area where gender differences seem to prevail. Again, the difference is due to other variables such as teaching styles and task objectives rather than gender.

In terms of linguistic structure of questions, it was observed that both male and female participants predominantly used the 'wh' question. The 'why' question was used mainly by FB, MA and MC. The linguistic structure of the questions, therefore indicates more gender similarities than differences.

Finally, based on Table 5.3.1, it can also be concluded that no clear differences have emerged between the male and female participants in terms of wait-time, with some having a short wait time while others had a longer wait time. As discussed earlier, wait-time is related to the type of question as knowledge questions would not require as much time to process answers as would application questions. Therefore, it appears that wait-time is highly dependent on the questioning style, thus the impact of gender on this aspect of teacher discourse appears to be minimal.

In conclusion, the findings in this section of the study support the view that men and women are capable of 'psychological androgyny', in that both male and female teachers have the capacity and in this study have illustrated the ability to utilise what is now known as traditional 'feminine' and 'masculine speech styles. This is made

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apparent by the fact that few differences were observed in the male and female teachers questioning discourse as certain types of cognitive questions were used as frequently by male participants as they were by the female participants (application and comprehension). In addition, no differences were noticed in the linguistic structure, wait-time and use of procedural questions. Where differences occurred, it seemed to be a result of individual teaching styles and more importantly determined by the relationship of task objectives to questioning style. It is important to remember that the classroom, as a community of practice, allows both male and female teachers to determine their discourse identity as required by the situation and the interactants in the community of practice.

#### **5.4 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER**

This chapter investigated the questioning discourse of the participants in the study from the cognitive, linguistic and organisational perspectives. Cognitive questions were classified according to Bloom's Taxonomy where it was found that the participants in this study frequently asked questions from the bottom half of the taxonomy (knowledge, comprehension, application). It was also found that application questions were predominantly used by five of the six participants. Specifically, knowledge questions were a more frequent feature of the female participants discourse than the males. In terms of the linguistic structure of questions, the participants favoured the 'wh' construction while the 'why' question seemed to be a dominant feature of one female participant and two male participants. Finally, procedural questions featured frequently in the questioning discourse of four of the six participants, including an equal number of male and females. Overall, the findings support the view that male and female teachers operate on a continuum of masculinity and femininity, adopting speech styles and discourse strategies appropriate to the context. Thus in the context of the classroom, teachers adopt strategies which will enable them to fulfil their objectives based on the needs of their students. In addition, the power differential is important in questioning as it is the dominant and powerful members of the group that exhibit the dominant discourse strategies.

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The next chapter provides the analysis and discussion for another teaching activity, that of feedback in order to determine the role of gender in teachers' choice of feedback strategies.

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## CHAPTER SIX

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION 3: FEEDBACK STRATEGIES

#### 6.0 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER

This chapter examines participants' feedback strategies, the third main aspect of teaching behaviour selected for analysis in this study. Section 6.1 provides the overall framework of analysis. This is followed by an analysis of the main feedback strategies observed in the participants' discourse in Section 6.2. Section 6.3 provides an overview of the participants' dominant feedback strategies in order to derive conclusions on gender similarities and differences. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of the main points.

#### 6.1 OVERALL FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

As indicated in the literature review, feedback strategies available to the teachers are varied, ranging from explicit error correction to more implicit strategies. The choice of the strategy seems dependent on the order of the difficulty of the question (according to Bloom's Taxonomy as identified in Chapter Two and Chapter Five). Therefore teacher feedback can range from a simple, straightforward explicit acknowledgement of the correctness of the student response to an elaborate, complex student-teacher interaction involving recasts or reformulations.

For the purpose of analysing feedback strategies in this study, a framework involving Sinclair & Coulthard's (1975) IRF structure was employed. As explained in Chapter Two, the 'F-move' which refers to the 'Follow-up' or 'Feedback' move represents the third move in the IRF exchange structure. The feedback component of classroom discourse is what distinguishes classroom talk most obviously from speech events which take place outside of the classroom. As stated by Chaudron (1988:132), the teacher's status and superior knowledge 'results in an imbalance in the expectations as to who provides feedback and when it is provided' (1988:132). Thus it is due to status and knowledge superiority that the teacher is able to dictate the type and amount of feedback.

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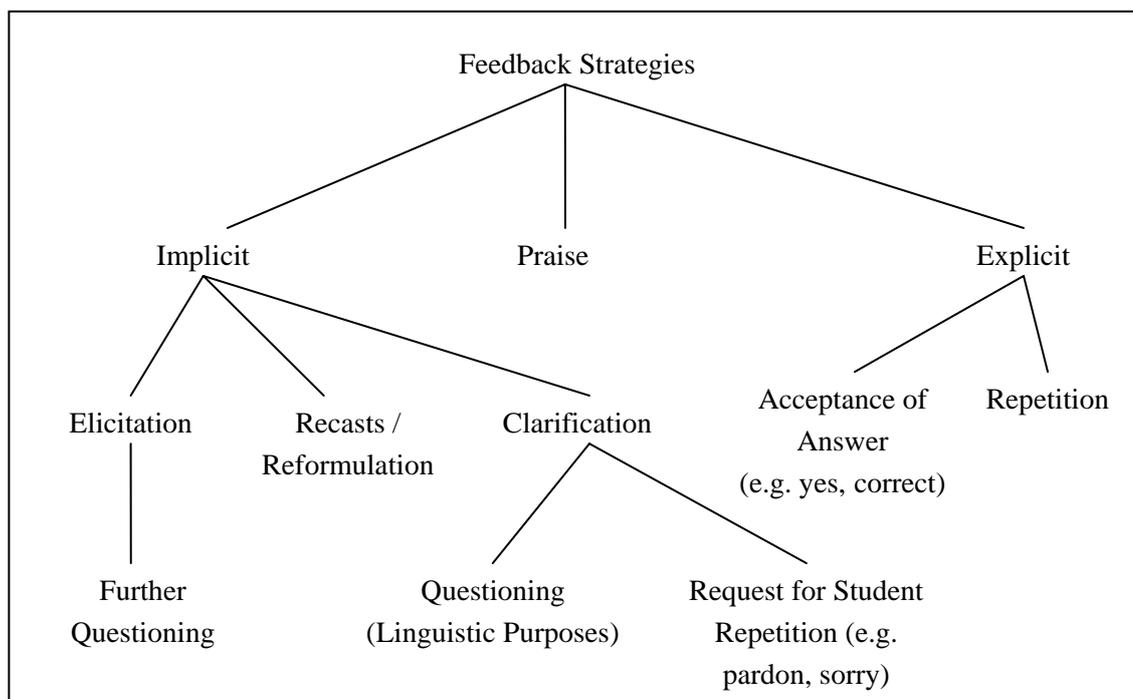
However as pointed out by Kristmanson (2000), learning a language effectively requires a conducive environment. Therefore teachers' strategies in providing feedback should enable the creation of a supportive emotional climate. Therefore the teachers' choice of error correction strategies which make students comfortable enough to take risks are of great importance.

Based on the literature on feedback and the strategies observed in the teacher discourse, the following feedback strategies were identified:

- Repetitions
- Recasts/Reformulations
- Praise
- Explicit positive acceptance of student response
- Explanations
- Explicit rejection of student response

These strategies are presented diagrammatically in Figure 6.2.1 to differentiate the three main types of feedback:

**Figure 6.1.1: Feedback Strategies**



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The definitions of the above terms in the context of this study will be discussed separately. Recasts have been defined according to Long (1996) and Nelson (1981) as target like reformulations of ungrammatical utterances that maintain the central meaning of the original utterance. The adoption of this definition has allowed for both recasts and reformulations to be seen synonymously.

Another feedback strategy which requires definition is repetition, a common strategy utilised by the participants. This can be seen as an imitation by the teacher of the same structures used by the learner in providing the answer. Therefore, the distinction between repetitions and recasts/reformulations is that while the former relates to similar structures, the latter involves the revision of structures while retaining the essential meaning.

Praise is another common classroom teaching strategy. In the context of the classroom, where there are time constraints, these are often general positive comments to student responses.

Other strategies used by the teachers in this study include explicit and implied acceptance of student answers. This is distinct from praise in that the discourse used in this context is less effusive and does not involve the use of superlatives. It refers to the teacher accepting a student response, primarily through 'yes'. This can be seen as explicit acceptance. On the other hand, student responses are not always accepted so explicitly. The teacher's discourse, however, implies correctness/incorrectness of the answer. Teacher explanations refer to the implicit or explicit ways in which teachers explain vocabulary, including paraphrase, definitions, exemplification and naming. Finally, explicit rejection of a student response refers to the participants' providing a negative evaluation of the student response.

For the purposes of analysis, the participants' dominant feedback strategies were further classed according to a continuum of feedback strategies implying correctness, incorrectness and partial correctness. This is presented in Figure 6.1.2:

**Figure 6.1.2: Framework of Analysis**

| <b>Correctness</b>                                   | <b>Partial Correctness</b>                            | <b>Incorrectness</b>                      |
|--|---|---|
| Praise<br>Explicit acceptance<br>of student response | Recasts/Reformulations<br>Repetitions<br>Explanations | Outright rejection of<br>student response |

The analysis which follows adopts the framework set out above in order to discuss the purposes of the different feedback strategies.

The rationale for examining teachers' feedback strategies is two-fold. Firstly, the role of the teacher in the classroom is to provide feedback to the students, thus making this a dominant discourse strategy. In addition, the researcher can also determine gender differences and similarities based on the view that females generally adopt a cooperative speech style and males a competitive, direct speech style. In particular, the claim that women exhibit positively polite behaviour with the purpose of supporting the speaker while men adopt a competitive speech style with the objective of dominating others and asserting their status is tested through a study of feedback strategies (Holmes 1995:67). Therefore, analysing feedback strategies which convey to the students correctness, incorrectness and partial correctness of their responses would indicate the extent to which participants' in this study adopt supportive or direct feedback strategies.

## **6.2 ANALYSIS OF THE PARTICIPANTS' FEEDBACK STRATEGIES**

For the purposes of analysis, each of the categories of feedback outlined earlier will be discussed separately.

### **6.2.1 Feedback Strategies of Correctness**

The strategies that will be discussed in this section are praise and explicit positive acceptance of student responses. These can be seen as positive, explicit strategies which are instrumental in creating a positive learning environment for students. The participants' recognition of the effects of positive feedback strategies is evident from Table 6.2.1 which illustrates the use of praise, an instrument of teacher control by all the participants in this study. Praise refers to explicit positive feedback,

encompassing participant's responses to students in the form of 'Terrific' or 'Good work'. As Richards and Lockhart (1994:188) point out, positively reinforcing feedback serves three purposes:

- to show the student's response to be correct,
- to praise (and therefore motivate) the respondent and
- to create an atmosphere conducive to learning

In the context of this study, it was found that the participants used praise as a deliberate strategy to create a positive emotional climate in the classroom and as a motivational strategy. The frequency with which these strategies were observed is presented in Table 6.2.1, including examples from the transcripts:

**Table 6.2.1: Frequency & Examples of Praise**

| <b>Participant</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Examples</b>  |
|--------------------|------------------|--|
| Female A           | 11               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well done</li> <li>• Brilliant</li> <li>• Good</li> </ul>   |
| Female B           | 5                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oh you're all such good students..</li> <li>• That's a good idea</li> </ul>   |
| Female C           | 15               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That's a good point to pick up</li> <li>• Well done</li> <li>• YES (excitedly) that is a really important point'</li> </ul> |
| Male A             | 6                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That's very good</li> <li>• Good that's what I'm thinking too</li> </ul>  |
| Male B             | 24               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well done</li> <li>• Good</li> <li>• Good suggestion</li> </ul>   |
| Male C             | 6                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good</li> <li>• Great idea</li> </ul>   |

Table 6.2.1 shows firstly that praise was a feedback strategy, common to all the participants in this study. However, the table also illustrates that the frequency with which this strategy was employed shows marked differences between the participants. For example, praise was observed most frequently in the discourse of FA, FC and MB (11, 15, 24). Of the three participants, the participant who used praise most frequently was MB (24 occurrences).

In the course of MB's two lessons, identical in duration to that of the other participants in the study, MB praised the students twenty-four times, which translates to 20% of teacher talking time. This is a considerable amount of talking time on this

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strategy. This could be due to the nature of the lessons he conducted. The first lesson was a jigsaw reading task while the second was a role-play. Both these activities utilised group work strategies and involved tasks which were challenging for the students. For example, in the first lesson where students had to piece together information from different sources in order to solve a mystery, some students seemed to require more assistance than others. As a result, when students had grasped understanding of the reading texts, the teacher expressed his satisfaction. The following extract shows this interaction:

**Extract 1: Male Participant B**

MB: No – that’s a special sentence – it means .. THAT . if you do something bad you CANNOT criticize someone else for doing the SAME thing

Student: You have to responsible for that

MB: Yes. Correct. Yes. Well done.

In the above interaction, it is apparent that negotiation of meaning is taking place but instead of the teacher reformulating a student expression it is the student who is recasting what the teacher says. This is interesting as it shows the student attempting to comprehend what the teacher says, using his limited linguistic knowledge. Despite the grammatical incorrectness of the student’s expression, the teacher appreciates the cognitive attempt, not only expressing his satisfaction once but three times, concluding with a ‘pat on the back’ (Well done). Thus, what is being rewarded is the attempt despite some inconsistencies in the expression. It may be argued that such feedback does not lead to student uptake, thus not assisting language acquisition. However, the objective of the teacher was not linguistic correctness as much as reading comprehension, thus providing feedback on this behaviour seems appropriate. It also leads to the conclusion that the teachers’ objectives play an important role in influencing specific aspects of feedback.

MB’s second lesson consisted of students being given a scenario to understand and then role-play. In order to carry out this activity, students’ were put into groups of three to initially work out the details of the roles they were playing and then to perform them to the class, with the teacher providing feedback after each group had completed the exercise. During the discussion phase, the teacher monitored the students’, providing assistance with comprehension of the task. It was in this context

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that the teacher conveyed the most praise. An example of this can be seen in Extract 2:

**Extract 2: Male Participant B**

MB: How would you carry on, Olivia? You have to do it without being angry. What would you say? How would you tell him that he's doing the wrong thing?

ST: Ask for help

MB: Ah that's a good one. I need your help rather than saying..I need your help.that's a good one.

In Extract 2, MB is pleased with the student's strategy in the role-play and conveys his satisfaction twice ('that's a good one' repeated). In this context, praise can be seen as a motivating factor especially as the task seemed quite challenging with application questions being asked. As students were asked to think about possible interpretations, the praise was also fairly detailed.

Both FA and FC were also observed to convey praise frequently though not to the same extent as MB. The nature of praise conveyed by these participants consisted mainly of phrases such as 'terrific', 'good', 'well done' (as per the examples provided in Table 6.2.1). While it can be argued that these are superficial and do not provide much feedback in terms of increasing students' understanding, these discourse items play an important role in enabling the lesson to progress. For example, in a question and answer interaction between students and teachers, the teachers' evaluation of the student response is significant in conveying the teacher's acceptance of the answer, thus allowing for the next question. It can be argued that a discourse maker such as 'OK' would serve the same function. While this might be so, the use of specific praise serves as a motivating strategy.

In addition to the phrases described above, FC who also used praise frequently had a tendency to be quite effusive. This is illustrated in Extract 3:

**Extract 3: Female Participant C**

FC: YES (excitedly) that is a really important point

Given the difficulty of the reading text (as indicated by the teacher's discourse at the beginning of the lesson), praising the students created a less threatening learning

environment. In addition the effusiveness of the praise can be seen in the teacher not only accepting the student answer positively (indicated by emphatic ‘yes’) but in expanding on the reason for her satisfaction (indicated by the teacher saying ‘that is a really important point’).

Finally, Table 6.2.1 indicates that praise was not as frequently used by FB, MA and MC as the other participants. In particular, FB had the tendency of being more elaborate in her praise compared to the other female participants. Instead of saying ‘Good’ for example, she would say ‘that’s a good idea’. This can be seen as being related to the questioning strategy. FB’s questioning style involved asking application questions primarily which led to students producing more language. As a result, when the student response was satisfactory, FB conveyed her satisfaction in a more elaborate manner.

As defined earlier, for the purposes of this study, explicit acceptance of student response is when the participant indicates that the response provided by the student is the correct/expected one. Essentially, in this context the participant’s acceptance is conveyed through ‘yes’, ‘correct’ or ‘OK’. The purpose of such feedback is to provide encouragement to the students. It is also different from praise in that it is not as elaborate or effusive. The frequency and context of this feedback strategy is provided in Table 6.2.2.

**Table 6.2.2: Frequency & Examples of Explicit Acceptance**

| <b>Participant</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Examples</b>  |
|--------------------|------------------|--|
| Female A           | 9                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• OK</li> </ul>  |
| Female B           | Not observed     |  |
| Female C           | 3                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes (primarily)</li> </ul>  |
| Male A             | 7                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Umm...Yes</li> <li>• OK</li> </ul>  |
| Male B             | 5                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correct</li> <li>• You’re on the right track</li> <li>• that’s right</li> </ul> |
| Male C             | 8                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yup</li> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• Right</li> </ul>                                  |

Table 6.2.2 shows that five of the six participants in this study used this feedback strategy with almost identical frequencies. In particular, FA, MA and MC seemed to

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have used this strategy most frequently while the other two participants did not use it as often.

As stated earlier, FA used praise quite frequently. In addition, she also utilised explicit acceptance of answers more frequently than the other participants in this study. For example, 'OK' was used quite frequently in FA's feedback discourse. This linguistic feature can be seen both as a discourse marker and an acceptance of a student answer as in 'OK..so taxes should be raised'. This strategy was used by the teacher quite frequently and in the context of the knowledge questions asked appears to be appropriate in conveying the participant's acceptance of the student answer. The consistent use of both these positive feedback strategies indicates FA is a strong believer of motivational strategies. In addition, the tasks set by FA required her to ask mainly knowledge questions (as indicated in Chapter 5, Section 5.2.1), thus her evaluations did not require too much elaboration.

In making a contrast between participants' frequency of use of praise and positive acceptance of student answer, a number of interesting points emerge. Firstly, it appears that participants who use praise frequently do not use explicit positive acceptance as frequently. For example as stated earlier, MB used praise frequently (24 occurrences), the highest frequency of all the participants but used explicit positive acceptance less frequently (5 occurrences). In addition, FC who also used praise frequently (15 occurrences) used explicit positive acceptance only three times. It appears from this that these participants have made a choice to provide positive evaluations of student responses. In contrast, MA and MC did not praise their students frequently (6 occurrences each) but had a higher frequency than the other participants in showing their explicit acceptance of student answers (MA: 7 occurrences; MC: 8 occurrences). This seems to indicate that these participants are more controlled in their use of positive feedback strategies.

Another interesting point that has emerged is the use of FB's positive feedback strategies. Not only did FB have a limited frequency in conveying praise but she was also not observed to use explicit positive acceptance frequently. Similar to FA, this could be due to her questioning strategy (primarily application questions) or her individual teaching beliefs/personality.

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In brief, positive feedback strategies can be seen to perform a social, affective function allowing for solidarity building, a discourse feature most often associated with ‘feminine’ language (Holmes 1995:118; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003:155). On the other hand, males have been observed not to use positive evaluations as often as women. However, the use of these strategies by both male and female participants in this study illustrates that the use of this ‘feminine’ discourse feature is not limited to females only. This finding needs to be qualified by the fact that of the three participants who use positive feedback strategies often, one is a male while the other two male participants have shown limited use of these strategies. On the other hand, two of the female participants have illustrated frequent use of positive feedback strategies while one female participant has very limited frequency of positive feedback strategies. Therefore, this illustrates a continuum of ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ feedback behaviours being adopted by the participants in this study.

### **6.2.2 Feedback Strategies of Partial Correctness**

In this category of feedback strategies, it was observed that recasts/reformulations, repetitions and teacher explanations were the predominant strategies used by the participants in this study. These strategies convey a teacher response which is neither explicitly positive nor negative. In other words, these strategies convey to some extent partial acceptance or partial rejection of a student response, depending on the context of its use. Of the feedback strategies identified in this category, it was found that recasts/reformulations were most frequently used. Table 6.2.3 illustrates the frequency and context of the use of this strategy.

**Table 6.2.3: Frequency & Examples of Recasts/Reformulations**

| <b>Participant</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Examples</b>   |
|--------------------|------------------|---|
| Female A           | 2                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OK so perhaps give the children a sense of belonging to school and if you're part of a school perhaps</li> <li>• Everyone is the same . no one can come to school wearing their Nike gear</li> </ul>   |
| Female B           | 45               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ahh/..Yeah...(N) Yes – you wh.what you're talking about / I think / is work experience -</li> </ul>  |
| Female C           | 12               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'so it was fair for everyone'</li> <li>• 'How wonderful so they used their hobbies to make them feel valuable'</li> <li>• 'Yeah they are not shy because everyone has some sort of problem ok/'</li> <li>• so you're talking about television advertising'</li> <li>• 'OK so imagine I'm talking I'm comparing and contrasting shopping between Thailand and Australia'</li> </ul> |
| Male A             | 17               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'so everyone recognises that there's something wrong'</li> <li>• 'so you think it's just it's logical'</li> <li>• 'so his ideas were open'</li> <li>• Yeah destiny . revealed his future..his role'</li> <li>• 'something special happened to him inside the pyramid'</li> </ul>   |
| Male B             | 14               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'so you know that she is Bourne's daughter..'</li> <li>• 'Peacefully.that means no fighting'</li> <li>• 'Every person feels they have got something out of it'</li> <li>• 'Tell their feelings..explain their feelings..not saying I hate you but saying I feel unhappy'</li> </ul>  |
| Male C             | 33               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'so you got to give your opinion'</li> <li>• 'so we could say a hard job is a full-time job'</li> <li>• 'so you could say labour intensive'</li> <li>• 'so negotiation and problem-solving'</li> <li>• 'can obtain world knowledge'</li> <li>• 'an underclass will develop'</li> </ul>   |

From Table 6.2.3 it can be seen that FB and MC used recasts/reformulations most frequently (FB: 45 occurrences; MC: 33 occurrences). FC, MA and MB also used this strategy frequently but with limited frequency (FC: 12 occurrences; MA: 17 occurrences; MB: 14 occurrences), compared to FB and MC. FA was observed to make minimal use of this strategy (2 occurrences).

FA's limited use of recasts/reformulations could be due to her questioning style. As indicated earlier, her questions were primarily testing literal comprehension/understanding. Therefore little opportunity existed for more than Yes/No type of feedback. In addition, some of the tasks involved multiple choice questions to which there was little necessity to respond other than accepting the

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answer (A, B or C). With these responses, there is limited language production from the students, therefore there was little language available for the teacher to recast or reformulate. The connection between the task objective, questioning style and feedback is made evident by the fact that the same participant employed different feedback strategies in the two lessons observed. In contrast to the first lesson where no recasts/reformulations were observed, in the second lesson two instances of recasts were used. It is possible that this is related to the questioning style as the second lesson involved a brainstorming activity thus requiring higher order thinking skills, involving primarily application skills. As language production in such instances is varied and more elaborate, it becomes necessary for the teacher to recast/reformulate responses for the purposes of clarity of expression and grammatical accuracy. It is conceded that even in these circumstances, FA made limited use of recasts/reformulations. However, the feedback pattern does indicate a subtle shift, which is important in illustrating the potential for a causative link between questioning and feedback.

The connection between feedback and questioning is also demonstrated in the questioning/feedback strategy of FB. As pointed out in the analysis of questioning behaviours (Chap 5, Section 5.2.1), FB used application questions most frequently. Thus in evaluating responses to these questions, FB seemed to have used reformulations/recasts predominantly, of which forty five occurrences were noticed. An example of such use can be seen in Extract 4:

**Extract 4: Female Participant B**

FB: Advantage? Yeah / what would the advantage be? Oh they get some money / [high intonation] they earn their money \ that gives them independence doesn't it? So they don't have to ask their parents for money / experience / work experience / it makes them learn responsibility

Student: They don't have enough time to play..

FB: Ahh..righttt so they don't have a social life to play with friends and enough time to be children yeah BUT then if they're fifteen sixteen they're older anyway so ..

In Extract 4, FB began by asking a question where students were required to consider the advantages and disadvantages of young children working while they were studying. As can be seen in the extract, the student expressed the view that there

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were more disadvantages than advantages in children working, and substantiated the view by explaining that such children have limited play time. This answer was then reformulated by the teacher to include aspects only implied by the student's answer. Thus while the reformulation is apparent by FB saying 'so they don't have a social life', she expanded on this with further explanations. In this context, the teacher is not only providing linguistic feedback by reformulating 'They don't have enough time to play', with 'so they don't have a social life' but also providing cognitive feedback, by implicitly suggesting to the student that the concept of not having enough time to play is a fairly complex one, where she suggests that perhaps such children do not have 'enough time to be children'. In this context, there seems to be negotiation of meaning taking place. According to Long (1996), negotiation of meaning facilitates ESL development as it provides students with opportunities to notice differences between input and output. The predominance of recasts as a feedback strategy is a reflection of other studies conducted in this area, which also concluded that recasts tend to be the most dominant strategy of ESL teachers (Lyster & Ranta 1997; Mackey & Philip 1998; Doughty & Varela 1998).

The above view can also be substantiated by analysing MC's feedback strategy which also shows the use of 'so' in recasts/reformulations. As Table 6.2.3 shows, recasts/reformulations were also used frequently by MC. As pointed out in Chapter 5, Section 5.2.1, MC also frequently asked application questions. Therefore, similar to FB, his evaluation of student responses consisted of recasts/reformulations. According to Lyster & Ranta's (1997) classification of feedback types, recasts involve reformulations of all or part of the student's utterance without the error. This is an implicit feedback strategy in that it is generally introduced by 'so', 'you mean' and 'you should say' indicating a rephrasing and implying that the response can be better expressed. In other words, in this type of feedback, the teacher would not indicate or point out directly the student error but merely provide the correct form. Similar to the other teachers, with the exception of FA (who did not make use of reformulations frequently) these reformulations/recasts were prefaced by 'so'. The following excerpts illustrate this:

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**Extract 5: Male Participant C**

- so you got to give your opinion
- so we could say a hard job is a full-time job
- so you could say labour intensive
- so negotiation and problem-solving

The above extracts were taken from the teacher's responses to students' answers. Each of the above was a reformulation of the student utterance, for example the student said that one of the distinction between full-time and part-time jobs is the level of difficulty, which the teacher reformulated into 'a hard job is a full-time job'.

The other two participants who also made frequent use of recasts/reformulations, although admittedly not to the same extent as FB and MC were FC and MA. However, the link between their feedback strategy and questioning discourse is also made apparent. For example, FC's second lesson focussed on writing a compare/contrast essay which involved more brainstorm activities, necessitating more application questions. This resulted in the teacher using more reformulations rather than repetitions, often prefaced by 'so'. This seems to support the view that the questioning strategy has a direct impact on the feedback strategy adopted by the teachers. This is made even more apparent by the same teachers' adopting different feedback strategies in different lessons, with different tasks.

As stated earlier, MA also has frequent occurrences of reformulations (17 occurrences). Recasts/reformulations allow the students to 'notice' the correction, in order to engage in 'self-repair'. Research studies indicate the advantages of such an approach to providing feedback (Chaudron 1988; Corder 1967; Allwright 1975; Hendrickson 1978; Vigil & Oller 1976) by stating that allowing students' time for self-repair benefits L2 development. More recent studies by Swain (1985), Pica (1988) and Holliday, Lewis and Morgenhaler (1989) also share this view, suggesting that corrective techniques such as recasts/reformulations are more likely to improve students' ability to monitor their output. The following extract from the transcript illustrates MA's use of recasts/reformulations:

**Extract 6: Male Participant A**

MA: How do we know its Taiwan?

MA: so you think that it's just it's logical / that.. Yeah . you thinking of linking this? Good that's what I'm thinking too.. 'There are many buses in Taiwan how do we do that? Yeah? 'where it's very convenient to take a bus

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Extract 6 shows an interesting aspect of feedback interaction. Prior to this extract, the student had provided an answer which MA attempted to clarify through an application question ('How do we know it's Taiwan?') to which the student provided a reply explaining the relationship of ideas in the text. The teacher then reformulated the student's answer by saying 'so you think that it's just logical'. This is a summary of what the student said which serves as a clarification check. Thus the purpose of the reformulation here is for the teacher to check that he has correctly understood the student. In addition, the other students also benefit from recognising the logical progression of ideas in paragraph writing as the teacher highlights this aspect. In addition, similar to the other participants, it was observed that MA's recasts/reformulations are generally prefaced by 'so'. This feature is apparent in the following extracts:

**Extract 7: Male Participant A**

MA: so what should the rest be?

MA: Look at these two for instance – [Students discuss] Yes! [excited tone] That's very good / **so everyone recognises that there's something wrong** \ there are several differences between the bus systems

In the above extract, the first 'so' signifies a clarification question, as a response to a student answer. It is noteworthy that MA uses elicitation in the form of questioning as a feedback technique, which provides students' with the opportunity to process their thinking, making them question the reasons for their answers, thus engaging them in a cognitive process of learning a second language. The student then goes on to provide the answer which the teacher not only accepts but is highly satisfied by (indicated by the excitement in his tone). He then summarises that all the students' are aware that 'there's something wrong' with the ideas in the text, which also acts as a reformulation.

Recasts/Reformulations were also frequently observed in the feedback discourse of MB (14 occurrences). This strategy, similar to FB and MA was generally prefaced with 'so'. The following extract indicates an aspect of FB's recasts/reformulations strategy:

**Extract 8: Male Participant B**

MB: Tell their feelings..explain their feelings..not saying I hate you but saying I feel unhappy

This feedback was provided to the students' after one group had rehearsed the role-play. The reformulations here are 'explain their feelings (referring to the role-play personalities) and 'I feel unhappy' instead of saying 'I hate you'. Through the reformulations, the teacher is providing a model for the students' to follow. As this was a role-play, the student uptake was obvious when they performed for the class later. This indicates that recasts/reformulations can be effective feedback strategies, leading to learner uptake.

Repetitions were another feedback strategy of partial correctness frequently observed in the feedback discourse of the participants. Repetitions were mainly used for three purposes by the participants in this study. Firstly, it was to indicate and reinforce positive acceptance. Secondly, it served a clarification function and finally repetitions were also used to show implied negative feedback. Table 6.2.4 illustrates the frequency and contexts in which repetitions were observed:

**Table 6.2.4: Frequency & Examples of Repetitions**

| <b>Participant</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Examples</b>  |
|--------------------|------------------|--|
| Female A           | 30               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TR: Tell me what is the topic</li> <li>ST: [Chorus ans] holidays</li> <li>TR: OK holidays</li> </ul>  |
| Female B           | 39               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ST: Europe</li> <li>TR: Europe</li> <li>• ST: about ten hour</li> <li>TR: you think about ten</li> </ul>  |
| Female C           | 14               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivation / to make people more motivated/ MAKE them interested\ 'From their interest'</li> <li>• 'Yeah unemployed people'</li> <li>• 'OK prices'</li> <li>• 'OK time, opening hours'</li> </ul> |
| Male A             | 15               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'in'</li> <li>• 'impressed.extremely impressed'</li> <li>• 'to share the information'</li> </ul>  |
| Male B             | 11               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OK so there's one thing special about the will'</li> <li>• 'Each person has gained'</li> </ul>  |
| Male C             | 20               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'under eighteen'</li> <li>• 'children'</li> <li>• 'injury..injuries'</li> </ul>   |

Table 6.2.4 shows that repetitions were observed most frequently in the discourse of FB, FA and to a lesser extent, MC (FB: 39; FA:30; MC: 20). FC, MA and MB also

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used this strategy but not as frequently as FB, FA and MC. All the participants used repetition to perform a range of functions, which can be seen in the discussion that follows.

From Table 6.2.4, it is apparent that FB had the most frequent number of repetitions in comparison to the other participants. FB's use of repetitions performed different functions as can be seen in the extracts that follow. The most common purpose was to provide positive feedback, in that the repetition indicates the acceptance of the student response. This can be seen in Extract 9 where the teacher repeats the answer provided by the student, her intonation patterns indicating the correctness of the answer.

**Extract 9: Female Participant B**

FB: Yumiko what about number six  
ST: B  
FB: B Yes

As can be seen from Extract 9, FB repeats the student answer with a positive evaluation. This shows the use of repetition to indicate acceptance of the student response.

A further function of repetitions can be to indicate an incorrect answer or unacceptable response. This can be seen in Extract 10 where FB is providing an evaluation of the student response to a question on how many hours children who have part-time jobs should work.

**Extract 10: Female Participant B**

Student: Fifteen  
TR: Fifteen / (rising intonation)

In Extract 10, FB does not seem to accept the student response readily. This is indicated through her questioning tone, reflected in a rising intonation pattern. This conveys the message to the student that the number of hours suggested might be too excessive.

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In addition to using repetitions for the purpose of indicating correctness/incorrectness of student responses, FB also used repetitions for the purpose of clarifications. Extracts 11 illustrates this repetition:

**Extract 11: Female Participant B**

Student: and North Korea

FB: North Korea / [rising intonation] yeah so it's common for children to work in North Korea?

Although it can be argued that the function of repetition in Extract 11 is to indicate the lack of FB's acceptance of the student answer, in the context of the complete discussion, repetition serves the purpose of self-clarification for the participant. This can be seen firstly from the fact that the student who provided the response was from North Korea and would therefore have knowledge about the country. Secondly, the teacher follows the repetition with a clarifying question, thus the purpose of repeating 'North Korea' was to seek clarification and indicate surprise.

As argued earlier, the questioning style and tasks of the participant seem to reflect the choice of feedback strategy. For example in FB's second lesson, it was observed that the participant used more repetitions. This could be due to the activity which involved a Multiple-Choice worksheet. Thus, repetition here could also serve to ensure that all students have heard the correct answer, thus providing further reinforcement. This is substantiated by FA's use of repetitions, which were also frequent. As pointed out earlier, FA's questioning style involved asking knowledge questions primarily. Thus, repetitions served the purpose of confirming the student answer. This is illustrated in Extract 12.

**Extract 12: Female Participant A**

FA: Tell me what is the topic

ST: [Chorus answer] holidays

FA: OK holidays

As can be seen from Extract 12, FA's repetition of the student's answer 'holidays' was to show acceptance of the chorus answer. This illustrates the purpose of repetition as confirmation of student answers. This pattern was apparent in the feedback discourse of FA. Repetitions were also used quite frequently by MC for

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similar purposes to those of the other participants, although there was an element of error correction in his repetition as can be seen from the following extract:

**Extract 13: Male Participant C**

ST: injury

TR: injury./ (rising intonation) .injuries

In the first instance, MC repeats the student's utterance and then provides the correct form, which in the context of the lesson needed to be a plural, thus indicating linguistic correction. The intonation of the teacher was slightly raised in order to highlight the error. It is possible that instead of overtly correcting the error, the teacher could have provided metalinguistic feedback which points to the nature of the error but elicits from the student the correct information. This generally happens when there are reformulations which are an implicit feedback strategy unlike repetitions which tend to be more explicit in nature.

Although FC also used repetitions frequently in general, specific analysis of the two lessons indicates some differences. For example, the second lesson observed had more instances of reformulations in comparison to the first lesson where there were more repetitions. This needs to be analysed in relation to the task set. In the first lesson, the students required more scaffolding in order to perform the critical reading exercise. In the first lesson, vocabulary items and comprehension of the passage content was the focus of the lesson. This generally involved knowledge and comprehension questions. Thus, FC tended to repeat the student response, both for positive and negative reinforcement.

Repetitions were also a fairly frequent feedback strategy utilised by MB and MA. The function of the repetitions similar to the other teachers was for the purpose of reinforcement although at times, repetition with a rising intonation did indicate an error in the student response. Therefore the purpose of repetitions in the feedback discourse of the participants was for positive reinforcement, error correction and clarification. The choice of the feedback strategy also seems linked to the tasks set and the questioning style of the participant.

The final feedback strategy indicating partial correctness of student responses observed in the participants' feedback discourse was teacher explanations. The frequency with which this strategy was used in addition to some examples is provided in Table 6.2.5:

**Table 6.2.5: Frequency & Examples of Explanations**

| Participant | Frequency    | Examples  |
|-------------|--------------|---|
| Female A    | 6            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Christina what do YOU think is the topic sentence..[student answers] OK does everyone agree with Christina?..yeah right..well done..ok..now do ALL the sentences that follow relate to the topic sentence?..yes\.. they do\ don't they/\..so ok they're talking about TWICE as many male nurses..they're talking about the telephone operators have doubled\..and male secretaries are 24% so \ OK everything relates ok ..</li> </ul>   |
| Female B    | Not Observed |   |
| Female C    | 7            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Buzz..OK that's a really interesting word that's a very typical Australian or English word .Buzz means something that has become a very popular phrase so buzz means say um Oh I listened to some very good music and and it means it's good but it's also very popular and buzz has two meanings like a bee would buzz.and make noise zzzz. and but also if we say a buzz phrase it means a common phrase. have you heard people in Australia say did you go to the Big Day out concert and someone might say yes/ it was a real buzz OK meaning it was good it was enjoyable but in another context like for example in this one it means it's also good but has something that has become very very popular so a buzz phrase in this context means very popular ..that's actually a good / point to pick up.</li> </ul> |
| Male A      | 3            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OK..can we improve it..this idea here.I'll underline that.this is the first time that we've had this idea/there's nowhere above that tells us that prices are cheap..so perhaps ..it's a little bit strange..to start this idea 'nevertheless because of cheap prices'..it assumes information that you already know which we don't actually have</li> <li>'Amazed can mean excited ..impressed../</li> </ul>  |
| Male B      | 1            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>you are the older person..older people..much older..you are older than the poor young student over there.</li> </ul>   |
| Male C      | Not Observed |   |

Table 6.2.5 shows that teacher explanations were observed in four of the participants (FA, FC, MA and MB) while FB and MC were not observed to use this feedback strategy at all. As defined earlier, teacher explanations consist of providing additional feedback to the student when the student response has been accepted. This strategy which appears to have been used most frequently by FA and FC seems to indicate

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that a possible gender difference might exist as the male participants did not use this strategy as frequently.

The use of explanations as a feedback strategy is illustrated in Extract 14:

**Extract 14: Female Participant A**

FA: OK..now do ALL the sentences that follow relate to the topic sentence?..yes.. they do don't they..so **OK they're talking about TWICE as many male nurses..they're talking about the telephone operators have doubled..and male secretaries are are 24%** so OK everything relates ok ..

The phrases in bold indicate the explanation provided by the teacher after accepting the student answer. The explanation serves the function of providing information to the students as to why the answer is correct. This information is important in assisting the students' overall understanding of topic sentences and supporting sentences, including the functions of each in a written paragraph. These instances were fairly frequent in the discourse of Female A.

FC also made frequent use of explanations to provide further information for students. This strategy is illustrated in Extract 15:

**Extract 15: Female Participant C**

FC: Buzz..OK that's a really interesting word that's a very typical Australian or English word .Buzz means something that has become a very popular phrase so buzz means say um Oh I listened to some very good music and I (unintelligible) and it means it's good but it's also very popular and buzz has two meanings like a bee would buzz..and make noise zzzz. and but also if we say a buzz phrase it means a common phrase. have you heard people in Australia say did you go to the Big Day out concert / and someone might say yes / it was a real buzz/ OK / meaning it was good it was enjoyable but in another context like for example in this one it means it's also good but has something that has become very very popular so a buzz phrase in this context means very popular ..that's actually a good / point to pick up. yeah

In responding to the student's query, FC not only provides the contextual meaning of the word 'buzz' but also provides additional information to assist in more thorough understanding for the students. This is an important strategy as teacher explanations need to be understood as vital aspects of feedback behaviour. As Chaudron says, this is an under researched area but one which is considered to be the 'epitome of the teacher's role' (1988:86). Chaudron (1982) also illustrated a variety of implicit and explicit ways by which teachers explain vocabulary, including paraphrase, definitions, exemplification and naming. The method used by the teacher in the above extract is one of exemplification.

In this section, primarily implicit feedback strategies were discussed. In particular, the contrast between participants' use of repetitions and recasts/reformulations is noteworthy as participants seem to favour one strategy over the other. For example, FA and FC seem to have used repetitions more frequently than recasts/reformulations in comparison to the other participants. FB presents an interesting profile as she uses repetitions frequently (more than FC) but makes more frequent use of recasts/reformulations. This also shows the favouring of one strategy over the other. Similar to FB, the three male participants also favoured recasts/reformulations over repetitions. The reason for this difference is important and seems to be dependent on the task objectives and questioning style of the teachers as explained earlier.

### 6.2.3 Feedback Strategies of Incorrectness

This strategy was observed mainly in the discourse of the male participants who explicitly conveyed their rejection of some of the student responses:

**Table 6.2.6: Frequency & Examples of Negative Feedback**

| Participant | Frequency | Examples  |
|-------------|-----------|---|
| Male A      | 5         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That's not really the same point</li> <li>• You should be looking at the whole passage not just that part</li> </ul> |
| Male B      | 5         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No</li> <li>• ..but that's NOT what is being suggested here.</li> </ul>  |
| Male C      | 3         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No that's not why it is increasing</li> </ul>  |

A major difference in the feedback strategies between the male and female participants was the provision of negative feedback. The following extracts illustrate MA's use of negative feedback which serves the function of outright rejection of student responses:

#### **Extract 16a: Male Participant A**

MA: That's **not** really the same point

#### **Extract 16b: Male Participant A**

MA: You should be looking at the whole passage, **not** just that part

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The use of 'not' is very explicit in indicating to the students' that the response is incorrect. Leech & Svartvik define the 'scope of negation' (1973:120) as the part of a sentence or clause which follows the negative word, thus in the above examples the phrase that follows the 'not' identifies to the student the part which is incorrect. This shows that explicit correction can be given without interrupting the flow of interaction. In the above instances, it is apparent that the negative feedback serves to draw students' attention to the area which needs to be worked on, thus making a step towards cognitive acquisition.

MB's discourse also involved conveying negative feedback in an explicit manner. The function of such negative feedback was to let students' know the incorrectness of their responses. For example, it was noticed that just as MB used 'yes' as an acknowledgement of a correct answer, he did not hesitate to use 'No' to indicate that the answers given by the students' were incorrect. This feature was noticed quite often and can be seen to be a variation of MA's use of 'not'. In addition to using 'No', MB also used 'not' to indicate negation as can be seen in the following extract:

**Extract 17: Male Participant B**

MB: Yes but that's **NOT** what is being suggested in here yes but that's **NOT** what the saying means the POT should **NOT** be calling the kettle black

The above was MB's response to a student answer. Similar to MA the 'scope of negation' is indicated by the phrase that follows 'not'. In addition, the emphasis placed on the word sends across the message that the student had not provided the teacher with the expected answer. To emphasise that alternative responses need to be investigated, the teacher places emphasis on the negative aspect by repeating his lack of acceptance with the student response.

A similar use of negative feedback was also noticed in the discourse of MC, as can be seen in the following extract:

**Extract 18: Male Participant C**

MC: No that's not why it is increasing

The use of explicit negative feedback by the male participants is interesting in that it indicates features of 'masculine' language, such as directness. It also shows that the

male participants are not hesitant in making their status and authority explicit. Although this was mitigated to a large extent by the use of other face saving feedback strategies, the use of explicit negative feedback is an indication that the male participants in this study appear to lack sensitivity towards the students' feelings, exhibiting aspects of traditional 'masculine' discourse.

Based on the preceding discussion, the main feedback strategies and the frequency with which these were used is summarised below to allow for broad comparisons:

**Table 6.2.7: Summary of Feedback Strategies**

| Participant/Strategy                    | Female          | Female          | Female          | Male | Male | Male | Total      |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------|------|------|------------|
|   | A               | B               | C               | A    | B    | C    |            |
| <b>Repetitions</b>                      | 30              | 39              | 14              | 15   | 11   | 20   | <b>129</b> |
| <b>Reformulations/<br/>Recasts</b>      | 2               | 45              | 12              | 17   | 14   | 33   | <b>123</b> |
| <b>Praise</b>                           | 11              | 5               | 15              | 6    | 24   | 6    | <b>67</b>  |
| <b>Explicit Positive<br/>Acceptance</b> | 9               | Not<br>Observed | 3               | 7    | 5    | 8    | <b>32</b>  |
| <b>Explanations</b>                     | 6               | Not<br>Observed | 7               | 3    | 1    | 1    | <b>18</b>  |
| <b>Explicit Negative<br/>Feedback</b>   | Not<br>Observed | Not<br>Observed | Not<br>Observed | 5    | 5    | 3    | <b>13</b>  |

As indicated in Table 6.2.7, the feedback strategies which all participants in this study make use of are repetitions (129), reformulations/recasts (123) and praise (67), thus these can be seen as the most dominant strategies. The individual teachers frequency of use of these strategies are however quite different as indicated in the preceding discussion.

From Table 6.2.7, it appears that the most common strategy is that of repetition, used most often overall (129 occurrences). This also seems to be the dominant feedback strategy of FA and FC as this strategy is used more frequently than the other strategies. While the other participants also use repetition as a strategy, it is not the most dominant strategy. For example, FB also uses repetitions frequently but uses recasts/reformulations more often. In a study by Lyster & Ranta (1997) in which

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corrective feedback was examined, analysis of the data revealed that the four teachers involved in the study used the following seven different types of feedback:

- Explicit correction
- Recasts
- Metalinguistic feedback
- Elicitation
- Repetition
- Multiple feedback (refers to combinations of more than one type of feedback)

This study also found that the most widely used form of feedback was recasts. There seems to be an implicit dividing line between repetitions and recasts/reformulations with teachers favouring one strategy over the other. In the current study, the analysis of the data seems to reflect Lyster & Ranta's finding that recasts are more commonly used. Of the six participants, four (FB, MA, MB and MC) prefer recasts/reformulations over repetitions. Therefore, this aspect of teacher feedback can be seen to be one which reflects a possible gender difference. This is because only one of the female teachers, similar to the male teachers, favoured recasts/reformulations while the other two female teachers favoured repetitions.

Praise, as a feedback strategy, was also used quite frequently by all the participants in this study. However the teachers who use it most frequently are FA, FC and MB. In fact, MB uses it more often than all the other participants in this study. This difference, in comparison to the other teachers is quite significant. Perhaps, this can be attributed to the nature of the lesson, which primarily involved a role-play situation. In order to boost students' confidence levels as well as a genuine expression of the teacher's satisfaction, praise could have been used as a frequent strategy by MB.

All the participants except FB provided students' with explicit acceptances of their responses. This is indicated in Table 6.2.7 as a dominant strategy, though not as frequently used as the other feedback strategies. Another dominant strategy is that of following up an acceptance of student response with further explanations. This

aspect of teacher behaviour, which was noticed in four of the six participants, appears to be a reflection of the need to provide students with more information as to why the responses were correct/acceptable.

### 6.3 OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANTS DOMINANT FEEDBACK STRATEGIES

Table 6.3.1 outlines the individual participants' dominant feedback strategies in order to determine prevalence of gender differences.

**Table 6.3.1: Overview of Dominant Feedback Strategies**

| <b>Participant/<br/>Feedback Strategy</b> | <b>Female<br/>A</b> | <b>Female<br/>B</b> | <b>Female<br/>C</b> | <b>Male<br/>A</b> | <b>Male<br/>B</b> | <b>Male<br/>C</b> |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Recasts/<br/>Reformulations</b>        |                     | √                   |                     | √                 | √                 | √                 |
| <b>Repetitions</b>                        | √                   | √                   |                     |                   |                   |                   |
| <b>Explicit acceptance<br/>of answers</b> | √                   |                     | √                   | √                 | √                 | √                 |
| <b>Explanations</b>                       | √                   |                     | √                   | √                 | √                 | √                 |
| <b>Negative Feedback</b>                  |                     |                     |                     | √                 | √                 | √                 |
| <b>Praise</b>                             | √                   | √                   | √                   | √                 | √                 | √                 |
| <b>Linguistic Features</b>                |                     |                     |                     |                   |                   |                   |
| ➤ <b>Use of 'OK'</b>                      | √                   | √                   | √                   | √                 | √                 | √                 |
| ➤ <b>Use of 'so'</b>                      |                     | √                   | √                   | √                 | √                 | √                 |

In this section, the extent to which the male and female participants in this study use a cooperative (feminine) speech style or competitive, direct (masculine) speech style is determined based on the similarities and differences in the use of the participants' feedback strategies.

The first category of comparison was in the use of feedback strategies indicating to the students the correctness/acceptability of their responses. In this context it was found that both male and female teachers used both praise (an effusive positive evaluation) and explicit positive acceptance of student responses (direct acceptance) in differing degrees, as indicated by Table 6.3.1. In particular, it was found that participants who used praise frequently did not use the more direct approach of explicit acceptance as frequently. On the other hand, the participants who used the direct approach of positive acceptance were found to have used praise less

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frequently. The only exception to this was FB who was less generous with both aspects of positive evaluation. Therefore, positive politeness strategies were used by all the participants, indicating that in general there is little difference between male and female teachers use of positive evaluations. However, in examining the specifics of positive evaluations, it is possible that a gender difference might exist as two of the male participants and one female participant preferred the more direct approach to the effusive praise observed in the discourse of one male and two female participants. This indicates that the participants' choice of positive feedback strategy exists on a continuum of masculinity and femininity, with the participants adopting the strategy which reflects both their objectives and individual teaching beliefs.

The second category of comparison was in regard to the choice of feedback strategies of recasts/reformulations, repetitions and teacher explanations. In this category, there was a definite favouring of either recasts/reformulations or repetitions. For example, as indicated in Table 6.3.1, repetitions were favoured by FA and FC while FB, MA, MB and MC preferred recasts/reformulations. As both these strategies can be seen to be implicit, the choice and frequency of these strategies by all the participants indicates the use of positive politeness features. As described earlier, women were found to use more solidarity building devices as compared to men. However the use of these strategies indicates the use of face saving strategies by both male and female participants, thus showing a gender similarity and the adoption of feminine features of discourse. As highlighted earlier, it is the classroom as a community of practice that leads to the choice of discourse features. Therefore, the role of the teacher as the provider of feedback calls for the use of implicit feedback strategies.

A point to note is that the choice of feedback strategy between reformulations/recasts and repetitions is not always clear-cut, with teachers using both strategies quite frequently. Generally a repetition is used when students provide single words or short phrases that require little rephrasing/re-expressing. In a repetition, positive acknowledgement is explicit where no correction is made and where correction is made, it is also explicit in nature. In a reformulation, the feedback is implicit in that the teacher does not accept the student response in its entirety. It was noticed that a reformulation is generally used when the student utterances were longer. From the

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data, it appears that reformulation is a very important feedback strategy for both metalinguistics and cognitive reasons.

The final category of comparison is the provision of explicit, negative feedback. This feedback strategy indicates a clear gender difference as negative feedback was only observed in the discourse of the male participants. The female participants' lack of use of this feature is consistent with positive politeness strategies which respect the face of the addressee. However, the use of direct, negative evaluations by the male participants while consistent with masculine speech styles might appear to be inconsistent to their use of other positive feedback strategies. This has to be analysed with respect to the overall position adopted in this thesis that gender is fluid and dynamic with individuals adopting both masculine and feminine discourse features. This is demonstrated in the discourse and choice of feedback strategies by the male participants.

In conclusion, the findings in this section provide evidence to support the notion that male and females adopt different discourse features as determined by their roles and the community of practice in which they operate.

#### **6.4 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER**

This chapter investigated the feedback strategies of the participants in the study in the areas of feedback strategies that convey to the students acceptance, partial acceptance and outright rejections of their responses. It was found that both implicit and explicit strategies were used by both the male and female participants, with explicit negative feedback being used by the male participants only. Overall, the findings support the view that male and female teachers operate on a continuum of masculinity and femininity, adopting feedback strategies appropriate to their community of practice.

The next chapter discusses the main conclusions of the study in relation to the significance of gender in participants adopting certain discourse practices.

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

#### 7.0 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER

This final chapter of the thesis provides a summary and conclusion to the study. It begins with an overview of the study, bringing the two main strands of the study, language and gender, and classroom interaction together, in addition to recapping the theoretical framework adopted in the study. The major findings of the study are then summarised, in an attempt to provide answers to the research questions posed in the introductory chapter, so that conclusions can be derived about gendered discourses in the ESL classroom. Implications for both theory and practical applications are then considered, with the chapter concluding with suggestions for further research.

#### 7.1 OVERVIEW OF STUDY

The aim of this study was to investigate the discourse of male and female teachers in the context of the ESL classroom using gender as the overall construct. In particular, the discourse of teachers in the areas of providing explicit instructions, questioning and feedback strategies were examined as these are the primary components of teacher talk as defined by Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) IRF framework of analysis, the overall framework adopted in this study. As stated in the introductory chapter, while there have been many studies on gender and language in the classroom, these have largely concentrated on materials and the learners. Where the teacher's role was examined, it was mainly from the perspective of how teachers distributed talking time to students based on the students' gender. Teacher talk, especially in the area of English language teaching needs to be studied in more depth. Thus, this study intends to complement existing language and gender research in the area of teaching English as a second language.

The rationale for this study was to determine the extent to which gender plays a role in the classroom discourse of teachers. The classroom, as a community of practice, operates on the interactants having definite roles vis-à-vis each other. Thus this is an interesting context for the study of gender as both male and female teachers, being

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the primary knowledge-givers and ultimate controllers of the pace and progress of the lesson, are the authority figures generally held in high esteem by the students in their classes. Analysing the discourse of teachers operating from equal platforms enables valid comparisons to be made, which in turn can lead to deeper levels of understanding of the construction of gendered teaching identities in the context of the classroom as a community of practice.

In summary, the aim of the research question in this study was to discover patterns of language discourse in the naturalistic setting of a classroom, making it a process of inquiry, an exploration, the goal of which was to understand the bigger social issue of gender differentiated discourse. As the aim of the research question was to describe ‘what is going on’ in the classroom, the adoption of a predominantly qualitative approach which focused on describing the patterns observed, seemed to be in keeping with the research question.

## **7.2 REVIEW OF MAJOR FINDINGS**

As stated earlier, the major aim of this study was to investigate the similarities and differences in the discourse of male and female teachers in the ESL classroom so that the influence of the gender variable on the adoption of discourse patterns by the participants could be determined. In order to make comparisons, three major areas of teacher discourse were examined. The investigation revealed that more similarities than differences exist in the teachers’ discourse. This supports the notion that the choice of discourse is dependent firstly on the context, the community of practice in which the discourse is being investigated. Secondly, it is also dependent on the role of the interactants vis-à-vis each other in the community of practice. Therefore, gender is fluid and dynamic rather than a fixed entity, where males and females adopt both ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ features of discourse. In order to examine the role of gender, this study examined the extent to which male and female teachers adopted cooperative, facilitative or direct, competitive speech styles.

The first category involved an investigation of male and female teacher discourse in giving explicit directions/instructions to their students, distinct from pedagogical instruction. Participants’ use of pronouns in conjunction with modals of obligation

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and necessity, the use of imperatives and detail and duration of giving instructions were examined. More similarities than differences emerged from the findings in this category.

In the first sub-category of analysing the use of the first person singular with modals of obligation, two dominant discourse patterns were observed; '*I would like you to + verb*' and '*I want you to + verb*'. Both these patterns were used by the participants but with different frequencies, with some clearly favouring one pattern over the other. For example, while the first pattern was more frequently used by one male and one female participant, the second was the predominant structure of the other participants in giving explicit instructions. The significance of this pattern of discourse lies in the clear delineation of roles expressed in the '*first person + verb + second person + verb*' construction with the modal auxiliary conveying a request. This linguistic construction identifies the role of the teacher as the 'task-giver' and that of the students as the 'task-doer'. This construction is also a clear illustration of asymmetrical discourse, which allows for males and females to adopt dominant speech styles.

In addition to the linguistic pattern, it was also observed that the dominant modal auxiliaries were 'want' and 'would'. Though these modals belong to the same family in that they convey to the addressee the obligation imposed by the speaker, one indicates a more polite request (would) than the other. Therefore, while '*I want you to + verb*' is a strong statement of the teacher's desire, '*I would like you to + verb*' is a softer request. The frequent use of 'want' by four participants (two males and two females) and the use of 'would' by the other two participants shows that politeness strategies were observed in both male and female discourse, indicating that masculine and feminine discourse features are present in male and female teacher discourse in giving instructions.

The second sub-category of analysis involved examining the use of the first person plural with 'going to'. As explained earlier (Chapter 4, Section 4.3.2), the function of 'going to' is to inform the addressee of the speaker's future intention which in the context of the classroom is immediate. This feature was observed in the discourse of all the participants. However, the frequency with which this linguistic feature was

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used revealed inter-gender differences, as the female participants demonstrated a more frequent usage than the male participants. The use of 'we', as highlighted earlier is inclusive with the purpose of solidarity-building. Thus, the use of this feature by both the male and female participants illustrates that solidarity-building is important to these participants. However, the male participants limited use of the construction '*We're going to + verb*' shows that solidarity-building may not be as important to the male participants as the female participants.

Another sub-category of analysis was the use of the second person plural with modals of necessity. The findings in this section indicate that the use of this authoritative language of instruction is common to all the participants. As explained earlier, '*you*' serves as a pointer, containing a direction to behaviour. The use of this personal pronoun is significant in that it indicates the teachers are distancing themselves from the students, in order to convey their expectations of a particular task which the students' have to do. In other words, in their role as 'task-givers', the teachers use of the second person pronoun serves to inform the students that it is their role to be the 'task-doers'.

The use of both the person system and modality is to a large extent determined by the perception of power that the speaker has over the hearer. It has been argued in this study that the use of modals in particular is governed by interpersonal power relations where the tacit power structure of the teacher over a class of students is accepted. Linguistic forms are one way of conveying/expressing that power. Therefore the use of 'must', preceded by the second person as in 'you must' is a clear indication of the obligation the student has to complete the task as set by the teacher. This is an indication of the power the teacher has over the student while at the same time demonstrating that the teacher has the power to effect a change in behaviour, mainly through linguistic means. This section of the findings demonstrated that both males and females adopt behavioural and linguistic behaviours appropriate to the context of the situation. Thus the use of modality and the person system is an example of these sorts of behaviour.

Two aspects of the participants' instructional discourse which seems to suggest differences in discourse between male and female teachers is in relation to the use of

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imperatives (favoured mainly by the female teachers) and the detailed manner in which instructions were given (also favoured by females). Firstly, it was observed that all three females and one male participant favoured the use of imperatives, suggesting that perhaps there is a gender difference. However, there are two issues to consider before making that conclusion. Firstly, giving orders and directions is traditionally viewed as masculine discourse thus suggesting that females have adopted this masculine behaviour, which is appropriate given the current pedagogy of gender research. Secondly, one male teacher was also noticed to favour imperatives, thus suggesting that this discourse feature is not peculiar to only the females. Therefore, rather than indicate gender difference, this example further substantiates the view of male and female teachers adopting discourse features based on context, where they are constantly negotiating their language along a continuum of masculinity and femininity. It also clearly indicates that in their role as teachers, females are comfortable with issuing directions as the dominant members of the group, thus indicating the importance of context in determining discourse.

The second aspect which seems to indicate gender difference is the duration and detailed nature of instruction giving. It was observed that the female participants tend to give very detailed instructions, while the male participants tend to be briefer. This seems to substantiate the view that ‘masculine’ language tends to be more direct than ‘feminine’ language. Therefore, this is one aspect of teacher discourse which shows the potential for gender difference.

The second main category of analysis set out to identify dominant patterns of teachers’ questioning discourse from the cognitive, linguistic and organisational perspectives.

Questions as a discourse feature were investigated firstly from the perspective that they comprise an important aspect of teacher talk; and secondly from the gender perspective, where differences have found to exist between male and female speakers in different settings. The widely accepted view that in asymmetrical discourse, it is the powerful speakers that ask the most questions was substantiated in this study. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that more similarities than differences exist in the questioning discourse of the male and female participants.

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The first set of findings in questioning discourse relate to the type of cognitive questions asked. It was found that the third category of application questions was used predominantly by five of the six participants, thus indicating a general similarity. The difference with the one female participant can be viewed as a result of teaching style in addition to the task objectives of the participant which dictated the adoption of different questioning strategies.

The second sub-category of findings relate to the linguistic structure of questions where another similarity emerged, as all participants in the study favoured the 'wh' question. Individual differences were noticed in the use of specific verbs, such as 'think' in addition to some favouring the 'why' question. Coates (1986) notes that research findings have suggested that 'women use interrogative forms more than men and that this may reflect women's relative weakness in interactive situations' but as pointed out earlier, this finding needs to be qualified by the occupational variable. As both male and female teachers are powerful speakers, due to their status and authority, it can be concluded that this variable plays a more important role than the gender variable. It is also an indication that despite research indicating that women ask more questions than men, in the context of teaching, males also adopt what has been seen as a feminine discourse feature, further substantiating the view that it is context that determines discourse rather than gender.

The third sub-category of findings investigated the prevalence of procedural questions, a strategy favoured by four of the six participants. However, as it was one male and one female participant who did not make frequent use of procedural questions, it seems quite clear that this not an area where gender differences seem to prevail. Again, the difference seems to be due to other variables such as teaching styles and task objectives rather than gender.

Finally, the wait-time of the participants was on average similar with the exception of one male participant who had a prolonged wait-time in comparison to the other participants. This difference is related teaching styles, teaching personalities and most importantly different task objectives. It must also be noted that teachers' questioning behaviour in the ESL classroom is further complicated by the prevalence of students' from diverse linguistic backgrounds and levels in addition to different

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levels of cultural literacy. The findings also indicate that the nature of the task determines the type of question as well as the wait-time. It can therefore be concluded that other variables seem to play a more important role than gender in determining the participants' questioning strategies.

Finally, the last main category of analysis investigated participants' feedback discourse and identified the dominant strategies employed by the participants in providing both implicit and explicit feedback, the third part of Sinclair & Coulthard's (1975) IRF sequence.

As with the other two research questions, the investigation of feedback discourse revealed that the ESL teachers in this study adopt contextual discourse patterns and strategies within the community of practice in which they are operating. Therefore, context appears to be more important than the gender variable. In the area of feedback discourse, more similarities than differences emerged between the male and female participants.

The first sub-category of findings examined implicit feedback strategies. In this study, it was found that majority of the participants' utilised recasts/reformulations predominantly. The dominant linguistic structures used in this context were 'OK' and 'so', with the latter being used as a cue to indicate that a recast/reformulation was to follow. It is noteworthy that participants who favoured this strategy did not use repetitions as much, thus indicating that majority of the participants prefer implicit methods of error correction, a line of thinking expressed by current pedagogy.

It is also noteworthy that of the three female participants, only one preferred an implicit feedback strategy while the other two female participants favoured repetition. While this can be claimed as indicating gender difference, considered analysis indicates that the task and questioning style of the participant are also influential in determining the choice of discourse and strategies. For example, it was noticed that a questioning style relating to literal information (knowledge questions) led to the participant repeating the students' answers. However, when the question demanded higher order thinking skills, feedback tended to be recasts/reformulations.

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This is due to language production of the students which tends to be more when higher-order questions are asked.

Another dominant feedback strategy noticed was following up an acceptance of student response with further explanations. This aspect of teacher behaviour was noticed in four of the six participants. Firstly, this supports the notion of context being more important than gender and secondly it is also an indication of the importance participants in this study place on students understanding not only why an answer is acceptable but also the reasons for its acceptance.

Praise, as a feedback strategy was also used quite frequently by all the participants in this study. Holmes asserts that this speech act belongs to the positive politeness paradigm, a feature of 'feminine' discourse where women as the powerless, utilised a cooperative discourse style in order to compensate for their lack of power. In the context of this study, where both men and women have equal power status, positive feedback strategies were used by all the participants regardless of gender, thus proving that the community of practice determines discourse, not gender. The argument here is not so much that gender is completely unimportant 'as hypothesised stereotypes of feminine and masculine behaviour obviously play a role in the production of what participants see as appropriate or inappropriate speech' (Mills 2003:235) but that decisions about appropriate speech choices are made in a strategic manner 'within the parameters of the community of practice and within the course of the interaction' (Mills 2003:235). In addition, a comparison was also made between praise, which was seen as being more effusive and explicit positive acceptance of answers which was direct, consisting of words such as 'OK', 'Yes' and 'Correct'. It was found that while two female participants and one male participant favoured praise, the other participants (one female and two males) preferred the more direct positive feedback strategy.

The argument made above with regard to gender and politeness also applies to the last category of findings in this section. This is the use of negative feedback, which was noticed to be prevalent among the three male participants, showing a direct approach to answers rejected by the participants. This is another area where gender differences exist within the context of this study. Negative feedback essentially refers

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to teachers not accepting a student answer by explicitly saying 'No' or 'Not correct'. It can be argued that this is a feature common to the language of the powerful, thus in this context male participants were making their power explicit through the use of direct language. The female participants however seemed to prefer implicit error correction strategies.

Therefore, the findings of this study indicate that male and female participants claim and exercise authority and power through their classroom discourse by using primarily similar strategies although some differences are also apparent. This is shown by the participants adopting features of both cooperative and direct speech styles. However, the differences indicate a pattern of difference. While it is conceded that the sample size is too small to make a conclusive finding, it cannot be denied that potential does exist for differences in male/female teacher discourse, which needs to be substantiated by further studies in this area. In addition, it has also been argued that some of these differences are not only related to gender but to other variables such as personality and including most importantly, the immediate classroom demands in relation to tasks set and teacher objectives.

The study has also attempted to substantiate the view that a study of male and female teacher discourse cannot be reduced to 'a simple cataloguing of the differences between men and women' (Cameron 1997a) and as argued by Cameron (1997a:62), studies in this area cannot continue to use models of gendered speech which imply that masculinity and femininity are monolithic constructs, which automatically give rise to predictable and utterly different patterns of verbal interaction. In the context of this view, this study examined spoken discourse within the wider social and material framework within which these texts were produced and delivered. Therefore, this study recognised that meanings reside not only in linguistic data but also in the discursive and social practices surrounding the teaching event (Fairclough, 1989, 1992).

The difference model advocated by Tannen (1990, 1994) where she argues that there are 'two cultures' at work in human society was challenged in this study which makes an argument for a more sophisticated, nuanced model where gendered discourse markers are an important element of the wider social and cultural context

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in which they occur. This study also recognised that language and gender are intertwined in any communicative event. Viewed as a communicative event, the teaching activity comprises numerous discourse elements, of which three aspects were chosen, namely that of directing students, questioning and feedback strategies in order to examine both similarities and differences in male and female discourse.

In addition, as the study examines the discourse of both males and females, the researcher has been able to make valid comparisons about male/female discourse in general which is different to studies which examine only women's discursive practices, that seem to reinforce the assumption that 'males and females are essentially different' (Bing & Bergvall, 1998:497). Thus, this study substantiates the complexity and multi-dimensionality of gender and discourse.

### **7.3 IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS**

The findings of the study have implications for both theory development and practical applications. In terms of theory development, much more needs to be done to build on language and gender research in the context of the ESL classroom. Knowledge gained from different settings with a larger population would provide a more comprehensive picture of the interactions between gender and language in the classroom. The findings also have implications for practical development in the area of teacher training, management of program and teaching. Both of these will be discussed in more detail below.

The study has found that teachers make discourse choices based on their communities of practice rather than because of gender. This study reported findings in an ESL setting, within WA. As ESL/EFL is offered in different institutions worldwide, the findings of this study can be built on by examining different ESL and EFL institutions with different populations of teachers. These ESL/EFL institutions can incorporate primary, secondary, adult education settings in different countries of the inner, outer and expanding circles of English speakers. The findings from studies in these different settings may further enlighten the relationship of gender to the language choices of teachers in these classrooms.

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Further theoretical input can be obtained from studying a range of classrooms, other than ESL/EFL. This can encompass subject specific classrooms, such as Science, Maths, Society and Environment, Physics to name a few. Examining teacher discourse in these classrooms would build on the findings of classroom interaction patterns reported in this study. This would lead to a more comprehensive theory being developed on the relationship between the teachers' gender and the classroom in general.

The findings of this study can also be built on by conducting interviews with the participants to obtain the teachers' perspective on their choice of strategy in providing feedback, asking questioning and giving instructions in addition to their choice of linguistic forms. This would enable a more comprehensive theory to be developed by investigating teachers' perceptions of masculine and feminine discourse patterns.

The findings from this study can also inform practice, in terms of teacher-training courses and management of ESL institutions. Teacher training courses such as the CELTA, DELTA, RSA Diploma and Graduate Diploma in TESOL contribute to subject matter knowledge of teachers but do not always examine issues of gender. Thus, this could be included in teacher training programs.

#### **7.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

It is suggested that gender and discourse be further studied in the ESL setting with a larger population to derive more conclusive findings. Another area of research could be the study of gender and discourse in different ESL settings in order to make more comparisons. In addition, gender and discourse can also be studied in ESL/EFL institutions worldwide to include the culture variable. Finally, studies on gender and discourse can be conducted in subject-specific classrooms from primary levels

#### **7.5 CONCLUSION**

The aim of the study was to provide a snapshot of gender and discourse in the ESL classroom. Although there are many facets of teacher discourse, for the purposes of analysis, the findings were categorised into three areas: giving explicit instructions,

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providing feedback and asking questions. However, the researcher acknowledges that this is a contrived separation as the three aspects of teacher discourse are interrelated. Generally, the findings substantiate that gender is a social, performative construct with males and females making discourse choices relevant and appropriate to the community of practice in which they are operating.

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