



Teachers' beliefs and the orchestration of classroom interaction

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Abstract

One may say that the way teachers orchestrate classroom talk in the foreign language classroom is one of the many actions and behaviours they carry out in their daily practice. It is simply part of what teachers 'do', among a myriad other things encapsulated within the complex process of teaching. But what are the underlying elements of such behaviours? Why do teachers do things the way they do? This paper attempts to shed some light on this and reports on the existing links between the beliefs of two teachers and the way they orchestrate classroom interaction—more specifically during teacher fronted activities. The findings strongly suggest that the participants' beliefs do permeate their actions and not only influence the decisions they make as they orchestrate interactions with their learners, but subsequently set particular patterns.

1. A historical perspective: Classroom Talk in EFL settings

Interest in the language of the classroom has grown steadily in the last thirty years. According to Ellis, in the particular case of the language classroom, one of the main reasons behind this interest found its origins in the rejection of the teaching method as the main determinant of successful learning (1985: 141). It was possible then that irrespective of the method, learners were being successful or not so successful at learning a second/foreign language independently of the teaching methodology. Perhaps the clue lay in the type of interactions taking place given that the various methods observed similar patterns of classroom communication. In Ellis' words, '*it was hypothesized that classroom interaction was the major variable affecting SLA in formal settings.*' (ibid).

Among the three different forms *Classroom process research* (see Gaies in Ellis 1985:145, for an explanation on the three forms) undertook for the purpose of analysing what took place in the classroom, is the IRF, a three phase-cycle that has served as a cornerstone for the analysis of teacher-learner interaction. In this,