How Teachers Can Build on Student-Proposed Intertextual Links to Facilitate Student Talk in the ESL Classroom

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Students learn through talking (Britton, 1990; Gambrell & Almassi, 1996; Goldenberg, 1992–1993; Palinscar, 1986; Rubin, 1990; Swain, 1994; Vygotsky, 1986; Wells, 1990) and there is a documented need for more student talk in the classroom (Ernst, 1994; Johnson, 1995; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991; Smagorinsky & Fly, 1993). Furthermore, the importance of student talk in the target language has been increasingly recognized in second language learning (Lantolf, 1994; Pica, 1987, 1991, 1994; Platt & Brooks, 1994; Swain, 1994). Through talk we learn not only the structural components of a language but also the communicative application of them. Swain (1994) proposed three functions of talk that promote second language learning: noticing of structural characteristics, practice in using them, and opportunities to reflect on them. However, not all talk exploits these potential functions.

In this chapter we focus on ways the classroom teacher can orchestrate and support a kind of classroom discourse that engenders active student talk that leads to second language learning. We examine the classroom discourse patterns of one sheltered English university language and culture class and show ways the default discourse pattern of U.S. classrooms (the teacher initiation, student response, and teacher evaluation [IRE]
sequence) is disrupted to promote exploratory epistemic student talk. Exploratory epistemic is student-directed talk that explores connections between what students know and what is being taught. We highlight teacher instructional practices that promote and sustain epistemic student talk by building on student-proposed connections with what is being studied or discussed (student intertextual links) and incorporating them into the classroom discourse and making them socially significant. We uncover the kinds of intertextual links the students propose and some ways the teacher explicitly builds on and extends what the students have introduced.

**RESEARCH ON CLASSROOM TALK AND LANGUAGE LEARNING**

The dominant pattern of classroom talk is the IRE sequence (Cazden, 1988; Ernst, 1994; Mehan, 1979; Wells, 1993). This discourse pattern can provide scaffolds to encourage structured one-word or limited participation in the target language in the classroom, particularly with beginning speakers of English. Furthermore, the teacher evaluation utterance may function as follow-up to, as opposed to evaluation of, the student utterance in teacher initiation, student response, teacher follow-up (IRF) sequence (Wells, 1993). However, most IRE or IRF sequences direct students into reproducing information in the response participation slots assigned. Such teacher-driven discourse socializes students into short, paradigmatic utterances that recite known information (Mosenthal, 1984) or choppy, tentative utterances (Gutierrez, 1994; Nystrand, 1997). As shown by some research (Gutierrez, 1994; Ernst, 1994; Johnson, 1995), a teacher-centered, sentence-level meaning, recitation, or IRE or IRF sequence of structures, which focuses on grammatical or content accuracy as students respond in the allocated participation slots, pervades most English as a second language (ESL) classrooms. This can be problematic for ESL students as such presentational talk provides few opportunities for developing communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980; Celce-Murcia, Dornyei, & Thurrell, 1995; Hymes, 1972) through exploratory, reflective or responsive-collaborative talk (Barnes, 1969/1990; Gutierrez, 1994; Palinscar, 1986; Rubin, 1990; Wells, 1990).

It is now generally accepted that proficiency in another language requires more than knowledge of a linguistic code (grammatical competence). It includes the ability to say the appropriate thing in a certain social situation (sociolinguistic competence); the ability to start, enter, contribute to, and end a conversation, and the ability to do this in a consistent and coherent manner (discourse competence); the ability to communicate effectively and repair problems caused by communication breakdowns (strategic competence); and the ability to convey and understand communicative intent (actional competence). Such a notion of communicative competence entails the ability to interpret and enact appropriate social behaviors and requires the active involvement of the learner in the production of the target language (Canale & Swain, 1980; Celce-Murcia et al., 1995; Hymes, 1972). However, for talk to build communicative competence the learner needs to do more than supply one-word answers in the target language or recite isolated sentences. The learner needs to be actively engaged in constructing and clarifying meaning. Students can learn through talk and students can learn about the target language and through the target language by producing it.

Extended discourse can provide opportunities for students to develop and practice elements of communicative competence. Students can practice what, when, and how to communicate. If the discourse focus is on negotiating meaning, the target language becomes the vehicle for communicating ideas rather than the content focus for instruction. Furthermore, if the talk builds on what is previously uttered, a discourse coherence is established (Carrell, 1982). The teacher can play a significant role in promoting discourse coherence.

Teachers can foster classroom conditions that encourage or restrict successful student participation (Bruner, 1986; Ernst, 1994; Gee & Green, 1998; Gutierrez, 1994; Johnson, 1995; Mehan, 1979; Mosenthal, 1984; Nystrand, 1997; Smagorinsky & Fly, 1993). Teacher instructional practices shape the extent of student engagement, and teacher ideology shapes what counts as knowledge or experience as manifest through selective privileging of particular student utterances (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993). When teachers take students seriously and validate their ideas by incorporating their responses into subsequent discourse, they allow students to direct and elaborate on the topic and scope of discussion (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991). In such classrooms the students are actively involved in classroom talk. Research demonstrates how student talk in classrooms can be increased by teachers acknowledging and building on what students know and providing opportunities for students to contribute to what is being discussed (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993; Goldenberg, 1992–1993). On the other hand, teachers can cut short student comments with a flat declarative (Bruner, 1986). The teacher can create explicit opportunities for students to actively participate in the classroom discourse by focusing on a topic that is of interest or relevance to students.
and can provide opportunities for extended student-directed discourse by encouraging students to make connections with what they know or what is of interest to them (Moll, 1992).

The importance of making connections with what is known is underscored by schema theorists. They stress the importance of the reader and the reader’s prior knowledge in reading a text (Carrell, 1984, 1987). This is of particular relevance when dealing with ESL students. Comprehension and retention are enhanced when new information is related to personal experience, especially when students do this in their own words (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991). As students articulate their own thinking, they are motivated to use their resources to communicate. Coherent meaningful interaction—when students are relating new information to what is known and applying it and transforming it by applying it from one schema domain to another—promotes communicative competency in its fullest sense. This epistemic mode of engagement “in which meaning is treated as tentative, provisional and open to alternative interpretations and to revision—fully exploits the potential of literacy to empower the thinking of those who use it” (Wells, 1990, p. 369). We make sense by relating things to what we know—by making intertextual links—and when teachers recognize student intertextual links and make them socially significant by acknowledging and building on them, we create an environment where students are encouraged to articulate their own thinking, often in extended utterances.

Potential of Literature to Engender Student Talk

Our experience suggests, narrative and reading response theorists claim (Britton, 1969/1990; Bruner, 1986; Rosenblatt, 1938/1995, 1978/1994; Scholes, 1989), and research confirms (Gambrell & Almasi, 1996; Langer, 1995; McGinley et al., 1997; Short, 1992; Wells, 1990) that literature has the potential to engender a kind of quality talk that is characterized by reflection and exploring intertextual connections. By introducing substantive issues through literature, and encouraging students to relate them to their experiences and perspectives, teachers can facilitate opportunities for students to compare and contrast, to make connections with other literary texts and other experiences of their lives. These potential epistemic connections can then become texts to which other class members respond.

Literature has the potential to engage students and provide creative interfaces for exchange. However, local classroom conditions can encourage or restrict this potential because they regulate opportunities for and accept types of student talk. Much first language research on literature-based instruction has focused on the role of small group discussion in promoting student talk (Eeds & Wells, 1989; Gambrell, 1996; McMahon & Raphael, 1997; Smagorinsky & Fly, 1993). Discussion is defined as “cognitive engagement to the extent that the participants are actively involved in a conversation with one another rather than passively reciting answers to questions that may not be personally meaningful” (Almasi, 1996, p. 2, italics added). However, the act of establishing small groups does not by itself engender student discussion (Nystrand, Gamoran, & Heck, 1993; Smagorinsky & Fly, 1993). By the same token, the presence of the IRE sequence does not preclude the presence of meaningful exchange. It is the function of the student utterance, not the structure in which it is embedded, that provides evidence of thinking and engagement (Wells, 1993). Likewise, language learning is not so much tied to the structure of an activity (e.g., pattern of discourse sequence or size of student groups), although particular structures predispose us to particular types of talk, but tied to the participant role enacted by the learner. Students need many and varied participant role experiences. They need to act as, for example, questioners, reflectors, and responders as opposed to the static role of mainly responding to teacher recall and display questions and offering what they perceive as acceptable to the teacher (Almasi, 1996; Britton, 1969/1990; Ernst, 1994; Gutierrez, 1994; Johnson, 1995; Rubin, 1990).

This study recognizes the documented need for “more extended discourse, more meaning-focused interactions and self-initiated participation in the ESL classroom” (Johnson, 1995, p. 17) and “a broad range of interactional and conversational roles and relationships that helped them [students] construct extended oral and written texts” (Gutierrez, 1994, p. 362) in the ESL classroom. Mindful of this, this study examines the classroom discourse in an ESL classroom and focuses on the role of the teacher in facilitating extended discourse. It uncovers what the students are talking about (the types of intertextual links the students are proposing) and the ways the teacher builds on and incorporates the proposed student intertextual links into the classroom discourse (the interactional roles and strategies the teacher adopts).

THE STUDY

The students in this study are international graduates and undergraduates studying at a large university in the southern United States. This 10-week course on American language and culture is an elective offered once a
year. Students are required to have met an English language proficiency (TOEFL) requirement to enter the university. The purpose of the course is to foster academic competence in English through a variety of listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities. This particular teacher's class was chosen because the teacher's focus and main objective was classroom participation. The session under examination occurred at the beginning of the course and was the group's first class discussion on literature. Prior to this, the teacher had focused on academic competency skills such as note-taking and had used articles about classroom expectations as a springboard for students to talk about their differing background experiences in school, and specifically the expectation of student talk in the classroom.

Methodology

This study builds on two earlier studies (Boyd, 1996; Miller, 1996) that examined discourse in this classroom. One study examined the amount of student and teacher talk and the use of five types of intertextual links in the class discussion. The other study identified the teacher's participant roles and patterns of word use in the class discussion. This study found that the teacher used the roles of clarifier, affirmer, and questioner most often and in these roles, the teacher adopted two student-initiated word choices: isolation and power. Building on these earlier findings we examine the same data with two questions: (a) What types of intertextual links were proposed by the students in this class, and (b) How does the teacher build on and incorporate the proposed student intertextual links?

Participants

Nine Asian students between the ages of 22 and 40 took this class, and all of them indicated that they did so to improve their spoken English. Six of the students were PhD students taking it for undergraduate credit, two were special status students, and one was an undergraduate (see Table 8.1 for a profile of the students).

Six of the nine students self-reported no exposure or very little exposure to the expectation of student talk in the classroom. Previously, class participation for these students had meant attending to the teacher and doing homework. Seven of the nine students had been in the United States for less than a year, five of them for a matter of weeks.

Data Collection

We used the same classroom discourse transcript that was used for the two previous studies. To capture the classroom discourse in the ESL class, we audiotaped a 90-minute class discussion on language and identity. The class discussion focused on three pieces of literature: “Theme for English B” by Langston Hughes, “Aria” by Richard Rodriguez, and “How to Tame a Wild Tongue” by Gloria Anzaldua.

For this study, only lesson talk was analyzed. Lesson talk is defined as talk related to the class lesson (in this case the literature pieces) as opposed to classroom management talk, defined as talk related to assignment deadlines, assignment clarifications, and classroom procedures. In this class, 82.5% of the talk was lesson talk.

Data Analysis

We based our methodology design on three guiding principles of classroom talk: (a) students make sense of things by relating them to what they know, (b) literature has the potential to engage students in talk, and (c) the teacher plays a significant role in providing opportunities for students to participate and talk. To best examine the various facets of our study, we utilized both qualitative and quantitative approaches and we followed a tiered process in which each finding led to a more detailed analysis of the questions. This tiered process enabled us to uncover what happened in the
classroom talk and also how it happened by examining the more discrete aspects of the talk.

**Question 1: What Types of Intertextual Links are Proposed by Students?** For Question 1, we identified the overall student talk but then looked more discretely at the content to identify types of student-proposed intertextual links and to uncover what connections the students had proposed to the literature, and what resources were accessed to make sense of the literature. To determine the types of intertextual links proposed by the students, we used constant comparative qualitative analysis (Lecompte & Preissle, 1993) to code the students’ talk. By constant comparative qualitative analysis we mean uncovering pattern, recurring cooccurrences or exclusive occurrences among variables. We used an individual’s turn at talk as the unit of analysis. Following the inductive categorization of intertextual links, we conducted a tally of the number and type of each intertextual link in each turn at talk. Finally we used descriptive statistics to tally the relation between the types of intertextual links and the specific literature piece discussed.

**Question 2: How Does the Teacher Build on and Incorporate the Student-Proposed Intertextual Links?** For Question 2, we identified the overall teacher roles, but then honed in only on the roles that immediately followed the student-proposed links. To better understand what was happening in the teacher roles in response to the student-proposed links, we analyzed the content and lexicon. First, to determine how the teacher built on and incorporated the proposed student intertextual links, we used turns at talk as the unit of analysis and coded the role or roles assumed by the teacher in each turn at talk. We used descriptive statistics to identify how often the teacher assumed each role. Identifying the teacher roles framed the subsequent analysis.

Second, to uncover the relation between the student-proposed intertextual links and the teacher’s assumed roles, we studied the sequence of the intertextual links and the roles by examining closely the teacher responses that occurred immediately following a student-proposed intertextual link. However, we did not examine the responses following literature-based links because literature-based connections were an explicit instructional focus and thus possibly more contrived. We tallied the kinds of roles assumed by the teacher following the student-proposed intertextual links.

Finally, to better understand what was happening in the sequence of responses between teacher and student, we examined qualitatively the use of two student-initiated words—*isolation* and *power*—by looking at when they were used and in what context. More specifically, we studied in which intertextual links and teacher roles the words were used.

**Findings**

**Question 1: What Types of Intertextual Links Were Proposed by the Students in This Class?** This literature-based, sheltered English class was characterized by a high percentage of student talk: 68% of lesson talk was student talk. This number is made more conservative by the fact that all the utterances made by one student were not figured in because his accent was so difficult to understand that none of his words could be transcribed.

We uncovered five categories of intertextual links:

1. Literature-based: These included facts, quotes, or questions about literary work; perceptions of authorial perspective or intent; opinions about the literary work; and links to other literary works.
2. Personal: These related to family, friends, self-experience, and identity.
3. Classroom community: These were utterances where the members of the class built on each other’s comments inviting or creating solidarity among them.
4. Language and culture: These were connections made to native, target, and other languages and cultures.
5. Universal: These were connections relating to the universal qualities of man and general concepts accepted by all.

An example of each type of link is provided in Table 8.2.

The intertextual links were tallied and Table 8.3 presents the results of our findings. The number of student-proposed intertextual links is displayed in relation to intertextual link categories and the literature piece under discussion.

We can note the following findings in this table. Ninety-seven intertextual links were proposed by students in this 90-minute class. The category of literature-based links is most represented. It has the highest number of student-proposed intertextual links overall (28), during the discussions of "Theme for English B" and "How to Tame a Wild Tongue," and was the second most frequent for "Aria." On 26 occasions, student talk was about language and culture. This was the second most frequent category overall; it was
TABLE 8.2
An Example of Each Category of Intertextual Link

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literature-based links</th>
<th>Personal links</th>
<th>Classroom community links</th>
<th>Language and culture links</th>
<th>Universal links</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fact, quote, or question about literary work</td>
<td>Relating to self-experience</td>
<td>Inviting connection among members of class</td>
<td>Relating to experiences in U.S. culture</td>
<td>Relating of universal qualities of man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of authorial perspective or intent</td>
<td>Relating to self-identity</td>
<td></td>
<td>Relating to native or other languages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinions about the literary work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Um, I feel that way with your idea a little bit so, um, ... I did not think he want to be a part of white society because here he says um, .. &quot;it is better to be white or black.&quot; But to me ... I think he really feels that he ... um, I think ...</td>
<td>I remember first time, um, I went into the () I plan to live in the dormitory and I the first time I went into the dorm, I feel that I am different from ... , than all people because they are all Americans and I think I am the only Asian there.</td>
<td>I wonder if like any of you find that or what do you think or what did you wonder? Or why did he write them?</td>
<td>I want to talk to many American. But first they ... they ... talk with me first. But I ... my speaking is very slow, and he, he hears sometimes up to one minutes or up to two minutes and she go away from me. Why? Why? I ... I don't know. I'm not ready ... I don't know. Many American people just have no patience.</td>
<td>I do not like () at this view from the society. When I was in Korea, I didn't have any power and have not much money so I have some isolation from the, the from the power, man who have power. I think, ah ...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the most frequent category for "Aria" and "How to Tame a Wild Tongue." Personal-based links were represented 22 times. They were the second most frequent category in "Theme for English B" and "Aria" and third in "How to Tame a Wild Tongue." These three categories make up 78% (76 of 97) of the student-proposed intertextual links. The categories of classroom community and universal were less frequent (12 and 9, respectively).

Question 2: How Does the Teacher Build on and Incorporate the Proposed Student Intertextual Links? In this class the teacher assumed the following roles: questioner, affirmer, clarifier, summarizer, reflector, sharer of personal experience, and answerer. The definitions of these roles are stated in Table 8.4.

The teacher assumed the role of questioner most often, followed by the roles of affirmer and clarifier. The teacher assumed one of these three roles in 70% of the situations (see Table 8.5).

The teacher assumed these same three roles in 71% of the responses to a student-proposed intertextual link throughout the class (see Table 8.6). The teacher employed the affirmer role 17 times, followed by the questioner and clarifier roles 12 times each. The other four roles were assumed less than 7 times each.

A closer examination of the sequenced talk uncovers two specific ways in which the teacher built on the student-proposed intertextual links: (a) adopting and incorporating the student-initiated word choices, and (b) extending and building on student-generated word choices. One example of the adoption of student-initiated word choices includes the use of the words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intertextual Links</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Aria</th>
<th>Tame</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literature-based</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom community</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language and culture</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 8.4
Teacher Role Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affirmer</td>
<td>Explicitly acknowledges students’ contributions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answerer</td>
<td>Responds to students’ questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarifier</td>
<td>Confirms topics and ideas through restatement or further questioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioner</td>
<td>Asks questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflector</td>
<td>Provides opinions and draws conclusions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharer of experience</td>
<td>Relates personal experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarizer</td>
<td>Synthesizes previous discussion points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 8.5
Total Teacher Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Instances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questioner</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affirmer</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarifier</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarizer</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflector</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharer of experience</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answerer</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 8.6
Teacher Roles After Intertextual Links

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Instances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affirmer</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioner</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarifier</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarizer</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflector</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharer of experience</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answerer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

isolation and power (see Excerpt A). After students initially proposed these words in the literature discussion, the teacher employed these words in her talk. The first student proposed the word isolation and the second student proposed the word power. However, the teacher adopted both of the student word choices immediately following the second student’s turn at talk.

Excerpt A: Adoption/Incorporation of Student-Initiated Word Choices

Lines 196–201

E: We, yes, we can feel there is some kind of isolation every time. And the students in the . . . in the . . . in the poem and he really describes is very . . . is very frankly for me...

B. STUDENT-PROPOSED INTERTEXTUAL LINKS

this feeling about this desire to be member and to uh, to share his kind of identity with the dominant culture.

Lines 308–324

C: I think it is it is not a mark over certain black people. All of the people . . . all the people have a same feeling, who . . . who don’t have the power and money.

T: Another important one . . . power. So maybe part . . you’ve identified a sense of isolation, is that what we’re saying within the poem? And part of that means identifying race as being significant is that sense of isolation the color of your skin. C. was saying it’s economic

C: Yeah.

T: Opportunities that you have based on that or that you do or do not have. Power. We talked about I think when we talked about the dominant culture . . M. talked about so . . what else is there? I’d like to read the poem again. Just think about what you said and then pull it together. I, I think it’s lovely. It’s a very powerful poem...

Another example (Excerpt B) shows how the teacher acknowledged and extended one student-generated phrase. The student speaking, TR, had been assigned to lead a class discussion on “Aria.” When he used the metaphor “cultural shadow” in his talk, the teacher interrupted to identify the source of this metaphor and to draw class attention to his use of it. In the process she acknowledged and affirmed his selection of this phrase, making it socially significant by incorporating it into the classroom discourse. However, she changed it from a “cultural shadow” to “sociocultural shadow.” The teacher then used this phrase as the focus for a lesson comparing metaphor and simile.

Excerpt B: How Teacher Extends and Builds on Student-Generated Word Phrase

Lines 594–627

TR: so I think this is because the . . the sociocultural influence and it could be viewed as a cultural shadow I think of.

T: I love that, where did you get that phrase? That’s beautiful. Sociocultural shadow. Does he use that phrase?

TR: Yeah.

T: Oh, I missed that when I read that. That is beautiful.

TR: Oh no, I . . .

T: You made that.

TR: Yeah . . . it’s not in . . . in the . . . in the paper.

T: I might borrow that. I like that.

K: We might fight over it. [laughing]
opportunities for exploratory epistemic talk. The number of connections to members of the classroom community and making generalizations about them is most surprising. The students were making sense of the text by relating it to what they knew. Not counting the 28 literature-based links, 50% of student-proposed links were personal links or language and culture links. Not counting the 28 literature-based links, 50% of student-proposed links were personal links or language and culture links. The other intertextual links proposed by students involved inviting connections to members of the classroom community and making generalizations beyond their experience. This affirms the potential of literature to engender opportunities for exploratory epistemic talk. The number of connections proposed by the students and the amount of overall student talk (68%) suggest that the literature engaged these students. Literature can provide a context for reflection and stimulate personal connections. These personal connections suggest that the students were indeed cognitively and actively engaged in the discussion. Students not only made personal connections but also invited comments from others providing evidence for active interaction about meaningful content. This talk among the students exemplifies Britton's (1969/1990) notion of talk as the action component of interaction.

The participant roles and the discourse of the teacher can restrict or encourage the student participation described here and the kinds of connections made (Bruner, 1986; Nystrand, 1997). In this study, the roles the teacher assumed most often were questioner, affirmer, and clarifier. In playing such roles the teacher encouraged students to extend their utterances and in doing so gave value to the connections the students proposed and the ideas they shared. The teacher privileged students' talk by questioning, affirming, and clarifying what they had said. Indeed, these three teacher discourse roles of affirmer, questioner, and clarifier constituted 70% of the teacher talk. Furthermore, after student-proposed intertextual links, the most frequent teacher discourse role was affirmer. As an affirmer, the teacher appeared to support and encourage student contributions to the classroom discourse. Furthermore, as affirmer the teacher was honoring different interpretations and validating more than one meaning. This connection between the affirmer role of the teacher and the student-proposed intertextual links reflects the potential importance of the teacher in encouraging students to use their personal resources to make meaning. By recognizing and building on the connections made by the students, the teacher, together with the students, coconstructs a range of meanings.

The example of the use of power and isolation illustrates how the teacher built on students' language, thus making socially significant their contributions. In the example of the phrase "sociocultural shadow" we have an example of how the teacher used student contributions as a vehicle for her teaching agenda. The teacher promoted language awareness in the context of what was being discussed. The student TR had created a metaphor; the teacher identified his phrase as a metaphor, explained the characteristics of a metaphor, and used the student-generated phrase as an example to teach and compare metaphor and simile, a concept important for one of the next day's readings in this unit. In this process the teacher not only fulfilled her predetermined teaching agenda; she affirmed the student's use of language. In effect, the teacher did more than affirm, she extended (or changed) the student's phrase from "cultural shadow" to "sociocultural shadow."
**IMPLICATIONS**

This literature-based class on language and culture provides evidence of the potential of literature to provide a springboard for student talk. This potential is best realized when the students are engaged (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991); the public act of literary response in the classroom allows for more than one meaning and focuses on reflection and activating intertextual links (Britton, 1969/1990; Bruner, 1986; Langer, 1995; Rosenblatt, 1938/1995, 1978/1994). However, the role of the teacher is consequential to enhancing or defeating this potential for student talk. Specifically, the teacher can orchestrate opportunities for student talk by providing a stimulus such as literature that is linguistically appropriate and substantively engaging. The teacher can then support student utterances by selectively acknowledging and incorporating student-proposed intertextual links and student-initiated words into the classroom discourse. The teacher roles of affirmer, clarifier, and questioner were key to supporting student utterances in this class.

By selectively affirming and incorporating student utterances, the teacher can negotiate class objectives while also allowing students the opportunity to direct and elaborate on the topic and scope of discussion. This epistemic mode of engagement (Wells, 1990)—when students are motivated to articulate connections between new information and their experiences and home culture—engenders the kind of extended talk that promotes communicative competence. Such exploratory transformative talk, when students are composing at the point of utterance, and applying and transforming information from one schema to another, is cognitively challenging (Cazden, 1988). Speech unites the cognitive and the social, and talk that relates to what is personal is the type of coherent meaningful interaction that is called for in ESL classes. These meaning-focused interactions (Johnson, 1995) engender “a broad range of interactional and conversational roles and relationships” (Gutierrez, 1994, p. 362) as students make sense together. However, before students can be expected to perform various discourse roles (such as reflector, questioner, responder, and affirmer), these roles must be first modeled in the classroom by the teacher. The teacher in turn must then orchestrate varied and frequent opportunities for student talk and support student utterances through teacher roles such as affirmer, clarifier, summarizer, and questioner. Teacher talk can model, probe, and extend student utterances. By selectively building on student utterances, teachers indicate what counts and what is expected in the classroom.

**CONCLUSION**

In this study of a classroom with a high amount of student talk we showed how there were a large number of student-proposed intertextual links—97 in a 90-minute class. There were five types of student-proposed intertextual links: literature based, language and culture, personal, universal, and classroom community. These links were acknowledged through the teacher roles of affirmer, questioner, and clarifier. In these roles the teacher incorporated the student-proposed intertextual links through adopting student-initiated words and building on a student-generated phrase and using it as a teaching tool.

Teacher talk can engender or defeat the potential for student talk in the classroom. By selectively acknowledging, incorporating, and building on student-initiated words or student-proposed intertextual links, the teacher privileges student knowledge and ways of talking. In doing so, she encourages students to relate what is being studied to what is known and by promoting this epistemic mode of engagement (Wells, 1990) motivates them to use their resources to communicate. The teacher thus shapes the classroom discourse and consequently the type of language learning that will occur.

This study examined classroom talk and the connections between the students' use of intertextual links and the teacher's particular roles in the class discussion. There is, however, a need to look further at these intertextual links. For example, although we have indicated that 68% of the classroom talk was student talk, it would be interesting to focus on the length and mode—narrative or paradigmatic (Bruner, 1986)—of student utterances. Turns of talk were lengthy and many were narratives that told stories of students' own experiences. In the case of one student, all of her intertextual links were told in the form of a story about a third person—"I have a friend who..." We noted that in many cases when the students were relating an anecdote, the turns of talk were not only longer, but conducted in what Bruner (1986) would call the narrative mode; that is, they were storytelling or entextualizing—making connections to the literature by telling a related anecdote.

A further examination of student talk could uncover any patterns that may exist as the teacher selectively acknowledges, incorporates, and builds on student utterances. For example, is there a specific type or particular student privileged? This study looked at one 90-minute class; there is a need to conduct a longitudinal study and examine changes across teacher–student interactions or uncover patterns across time.
It is important to focus attention on the growing competencies of language learners and instructional practices that promote exemplary student performance. An examination of the classroom discourse of an ESL class with a high amount of student talk may reveal those discourse conditions that engender active student talk. This research uncovered the types of student connections to the discourse and the ways the teacher plays a role. This study adds to the literature on classroom talk by reminding us that classroom instruction is more than providing a thorough comprehensive lesson; it also entails conscious planning regarding how the teacher will promote student talk, especially in a second language classroom where active student talk leads to second language learning.

REFERENCES


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How teachers use questions during whole-class instruction has generated myriad discussions on the nature and role of this fundamental discursive tool for engaging learners in instructional interactions, checking comprehension, and building understandings of complex concepts (Cazden, 1988; Chaudron, 1988; Hatch, 1992; Long, 1981; Mehan, 1979; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Wells, 1996). Previous classroom-based studies have identified various question types, for example, closed- and open-ended questions (Barnes, 1969), display and referential questions (Long & Sato, 1983), forced-choice questions (Long, 1981), assisting and assessing questions (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988), and clarification requests (Chaudron, 1988; Gass, 1997; Pica, 1987). If, as Postman (1979) stated, "all our knowledge results from questions...[and] question-asking is our most important intellectual tool" (p. 140), then continued research into this tool can potentially improve instruction.

While providing insight into the nature of questions itself, much second language (L2) research has focused on identifying question types and taxonomies (cf. Chaudron, 1988). More recently, based on input-oriented theories of second language acquisition (SLA), questions in the form of clarification requests have been investigated from the perspective of how they might promote the modification of interaction (Long, 1981) and negotiation of meaning. Thus, it is claimed that through the process of asking for clari-