

TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION – SKILLS IN DEMAND

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Abstract:

Skills in language teaching are a challenge in heterogeneous classes. The article aims to describe, analyze and interpret teaching based on classroom observations, activities and narrations. Combining the classroom activities and data collection, a range of observation method and non-observation methods were considered. The observation methods are observing, noting, recording. The non-observation methods are surveying, interviewing and journaling. Significant reflections and events were captured in Checklist, Content Parameters and Framework for classroom discourse analysis. The data collected from the personal contact programs of the post graduate English Language Teaching course were recorded, analyzed and reflected. The participants in the course are teachers in various schools and colleges across the state. Reflections on personal values, theoretical assumptions and gaps of knowledge are the focus of the study. To investigate the descriptions of teaching from the perspective of a participant observer, two reflection approaches, reflection –in-action and reflection-on-action were used for data analysis. Reflection-in-action is the spontaneous reflection on the needs of the teachers. These are discussions on the gaps between their current teaching and what they would like to see happening. The open ended relaxed conversations clarify what the teachers want to know, understand and do in a better way. Reflection-on-action is meta-thinking on what happened. This is reflecting on the decisions made by my learners and my own responses, reactions and thoughts and feelings about the lesson. For a period of three years, the method of the cyclical AR model of Plan-Action-Observe-Reflect was followed. The present study offers ideas and insights that teachers can develop as skills in the service of their students' needs and contributes to better understanding of teaching experiences and communication among teaching challenges. The findings establish that teacher-centered learning operates in reciprocal relationship binding the instructor and the teacher, both sharing resources and becoming resources themselves.

Introduction:

Every year fresh batches of post graduates, teaching in schools and colleges from all over the state come for the post graduate courses in ELT at NSOU. They come and explore teaching, mastering the latest techniques and methods. Focusing on the awareness of teaching, the class begins with personal connections to teaching. "Personal Connections to teaching allow teachers to relate anything in their life experiences to teaching, thus encouraging explorations well beyond the teaching act itself." (Gebhard and Oprandy 1999: 16). By developing skills in communication, and through experience as a continuing learner of ELT, personal connections to teaching can be explored. Personal connections makes one feel more confident as a leader, facilitator, provide feedback, suggest a new trend, and make teaching come alive in all contexts. The teachers in my class can connect to my processes as an attempt to progress in the process of studying language teaching. "As an individual passes from one situation to another, his world, his environment, expands or contracts. He does not find himself living in another world but in a different part or aspect of one and the same world. What he has learned in the way of knowledge and skill in one situation becomes an instrument of understanding and dealing effectively with the situations which follows. The process goes on as long as life and learning continue" (Dewey 1938: 48). From my eight years experience at NSOU as a teacher and teacher

educator, being a more self-critical person is helpful. This is not easily accomplished. Only varying kinds of communication contributes in building security and trust in the learning environment. These communications can be so designed such that the environment is conducive to learning rather than defending. According to Giffin “it is communication in which the speaker ““is describing what he sees, rather than passing judgment on it... is interested in solving a problem, rather than in controlling [someone] seems to be stating tentative rather than final conclusions [is seen by the other as being] spontaneous and sincere, not motivated by some concealed purpose ... is personally involved in the exchange, and not just an aloof observer”” (qtd. in Stevick 1976: 96, qtd. in Gebhard and Oprandy 1999: 141). Since the focus of the article is on L2 classroom events, observation sheets were prepared. Communicative Orientation for Language Teaching (Spada and Frohlich 1995) was followed to capture aspects of teaching, learning and classroom interaction.

Methods and Discussions

The ELT class is a community of language teachers that includes teachers from government and private organizations. The activities encourage exchange of dialogues between language teachers in order to share their excitement, goals, needs and fears. According to Wenger, McDermott and Snyder 2002, communities of practice (CoPs) ‘are groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis’. Lave and Wenger 1991, points out that ‘community of practice’ is a key term in Situated Learning. It is a theory that infers learning as a social process, which takes place by solving problems with the support of other learners. In the classroom, one of the teachers mentioned that for his students, he renders all instructions and meanings in the source language first, to maximize participation in the activities. This was strongly opposed by other teachers, who proposed adoption of strategies for introducing instructions in the target language. Another teacher, narrates that for a particular listening activity on story-telling, the listening comprehension had to be played four times, following which only 3-4 students out of 100 could attempt the analytic responses of the activities. Teaching the process for acquiring listening skills and inclusion of shorter versions of the story was suggested for overcoming student’s silence. Considering the complex and large scale classroom observation research, where the application is extended from the ELT classroom of postgraduates to the working environment of the individual teachers, a classroom observation checklist was developed. The checklist pictures the patterns of activities in a classroom relating to a particular approach. The observation period of the session varied from 29 - 32 minutes. The percentage of classroom time spent on the individual categories is represented in the horizontal bars.

Events Checklist 1 (prepared on Classroom Tape Script 1) [0-30minutes]

	Time								
IL	7.43	10.12	11.25	15.30	16.27	20.00	20.45	23.54	25.27
IQ	7.58	8.16	9.33	10.51	11.26	12.09	12.36	13.20	15.37
IQ	16.38	17.30	22.50	24.11					
IR	5.39	12.10	12.16	23.16					31.26
TA	0.39	8.06	9.11	11.13	11.35	11.49	12.00	12.31	12.39

TA	13.03	13.26	15.51						
TV	17.10	17.46	19.05	20.41	20.52	23.02	24.48		
IPR	9.32	11.39	11.54	13.37	16.03	16.44	18.43	19.28	
S	1.00								20.26
U		20.25	29.52						

To observe how listening skills were being taught in the post graduate class, the different interactions within the classroom at specific times are:

IL: Instructor describes, teaches, suggests, seeks information, extracts information, directs

IQ: Instructor questions, clarifies, explores

IR: Instructor responds to pupil

TA: Teacher responds to Instructor’s questions

TV: Teacher volunteers information, narratives, comments, needs, fears

IPR: Instructor reflects on pupils narratives

S: silence

U: unclassified

From the event checklist 1, in the first 30 minutes of the session, the total time for IL (Instructor describes, teaches, suggests, seeks information, extracts information, directs) is 9 minutes and 72 seconds. The total time for IQ (Instructor questions, clarifies, explores) is 5 minutes and 61 seconds. The total time for IPR (Instructor reflects on pupil narratives) is 3 minutes and 3 seconds and IR (Instructor responds to pupil) is 3 minutes and 6 seconds. From this data, it can be concluded that the total time for instructor talk in the session is 23 minutes and 32 seconds. Whereas, the total time for teacher talks (teacher volunteers and teacher answers) is 17 minutes and 82 seconds. In this session, 5 minutes and 5 seconds were spent on (S + U), silence and unclassified.

Communication	Time	Percentage
Instructor Talk	23m 32s	75.73 %
Teacher Talk	18m 22s	60.73 %

Combined Checklist (1-8) on Classroom Interaction [Durations 30, 29, 34, 20, 21, 32 and 31 mins]

	Time						
Interactions	CL 1	CL2	CL3	CL4	CL5	CL6	CL7 + CL8

IL (Instructor describes, teaches, suggests, seeks information, extracts information, directs)	10 mins 12 secs	8 mins 31 secs	13 mins 22 secs	5 mins 12 secs	6 mins 32 secs	5 mins 21 secs	4 min 23 secs
IQ (Instructor questions, clarifies, explores)	6mins 1 secs	3 mins 9 secs	2min 27 secs	5 mins 19 secs	3 mins 2 secs	13 mins 38 secs	11 mins 48 secs
IPR (Instructor reflects on pupil narratives)	3 mins 3 secs	5 mins 2 secs	1 min 47 secs	2 mins 5 secs	3 mins 14 secs	5 mins 53 secs	7 mins 2 secs
IR (Instructor responds to pupil)	3 mins 6 secs	2mins 58 secs	1 min 16 secs	4 mins 4 secs	1 min 25 secs	4 mins 3 secs	3 min 13 secs
TA (Teacher answers)	18 mins 22 secs	10 mins 1 sec	2 min 27 secs	8 mins 11 secs	9 mins 24 secs	2 mins 54 secs	5 min 49 secs
TV (Teacher volunteers)						4 mins 35 secs	10 mins 12 secs

Calculating the events from checklist for all the eight sessions, with an average class time of 28 minutes, it was found that 71% of the class time was dominated by instructor speech where as in the project report discussion it is 67 %. Thus, the sessions were more teacher-centered even though the learners have interacted a number of times (19, 27, 15, 35, 18, 22, 31 and 52) with an average of 31 times per session. Thus the approach is teacher centered with active participation of the learners. From the checklist, the teaching and direction time varies from 10-4 minutes; whereas the questioning time is 13-2 minutes. The structure of the discourse was more based on exploration than description. Instructor's reflection on pupil narrative is 7-1minutes, while the Instructor's response time is 4-1 minutes. The Teacher response time is 16-2 minutes. This confirms that even though content was self explanatory, the reflection time adds to half of the answering time. The active participation of the teachers had generated interesting narratives which were again reflected upon in the classroom. The silence is the time when teachers have attempted the class activities individually. Teachers, from tape script 2 discuss that in their class 40% of the students are interested to learn. The teacher needs to make efforts to teach the others from the beginning. This teacher-class negotiation begins with the students perceptions in

the nature of the activity. Even then 3-5 students need extra time remedial classes. For this the teacher suggested that the class teacher should be dedicated, cordial, with a clear-perception and helpful. Figure 1 summarizes the findings of this analysis.

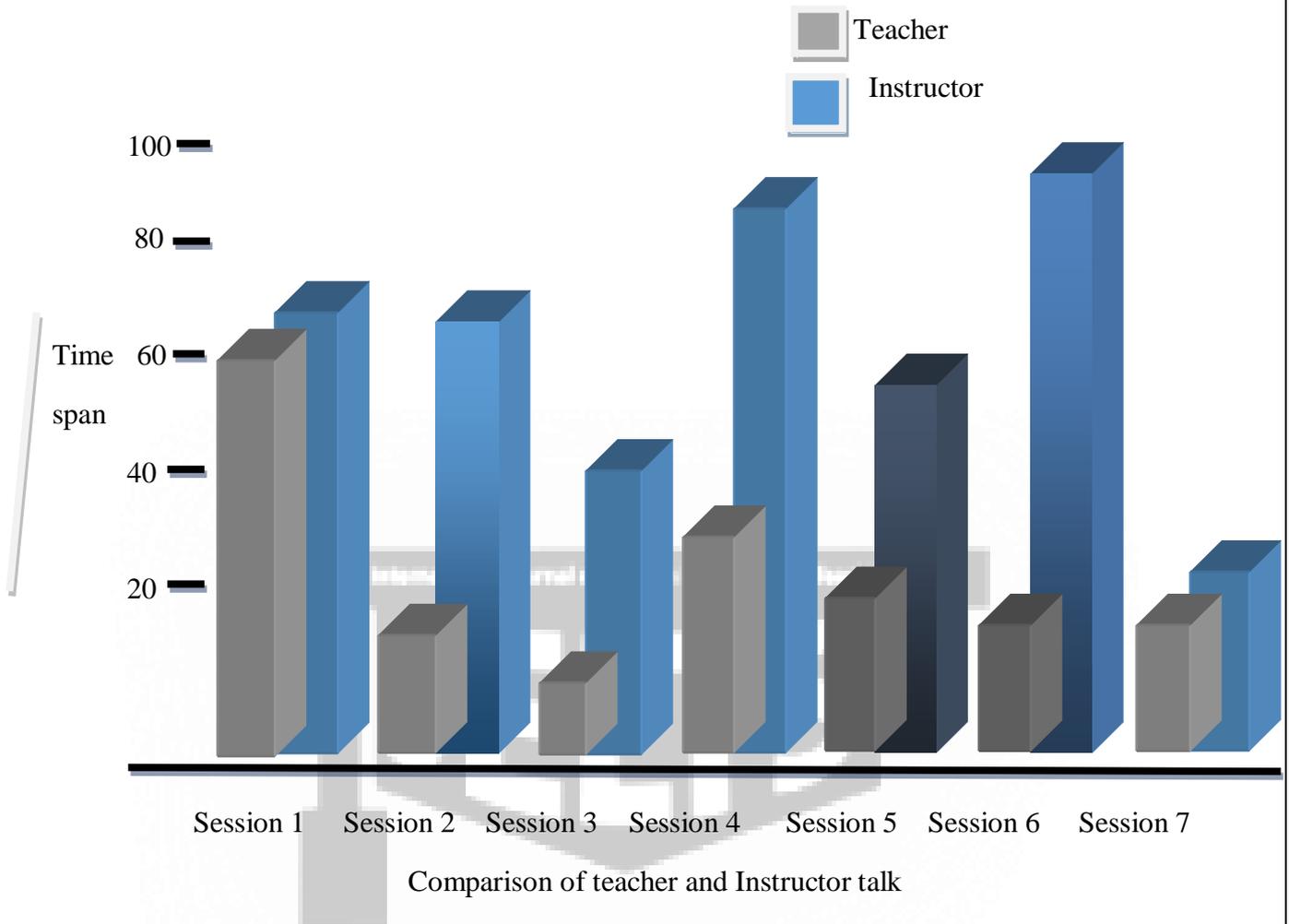


Figure 1

The figure with blue bars represents instructor talk, while the green bars are teacher talk. From the histograms, the teachers talk has considerable variations, within the classroom. This range is from 6.9 in the third session to 60.7 in the first session. When mapped against time span in percent, for instructor talk the range is from 33.8 in the seventh session to 87.96 in the sixth session. With an objective of analyzing the verbal interactions and the sequences of activities and tasks, in the six 30 minute sessions, I observed 15 teachers and audio-taped my class. I followed an unstructured class observation method to observe the class and kept a detailed record of observational notes with reflective and analytic observation. The audio was of great aid as I reviewed what I and my teachers were doing in the class, focusing the elements related to individual learning. In the following two topics, the content parameters 1, and the content parameters 2, the activities of two recordings are demonstrated. The first column is classroom management procedure, the sequence of actions initiated by the instructor. The second column is the broad range of topic, the discourse initiated by the teachers. This also includes the verbal interactions, and reactions of other teachers to the message. The third column is the analysis based on the first two columns.

Topic: The Content Parameters 1

Sequence of actions	Teacher responses	Analysis
Instructor asks teachers about what listening is, its importance as a language skill and how they teach listening.	Teachers show low interest in the class. They do not have the time and opportunity to teach (not test) listening skill in class.	Attitudes of class <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only 3 or 4 out of 100 participate • Lack of motivation • Lack of strategy
Teachers and instructor discuss on classroom language	Teachers respond individually. Some of them are in confrontation with the responses.	Engagement of class <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual • Active • Debate • Raising consciousness
Sumana 2015 Tape Script 1		

The following topic demonstrates the sequences of activities and tasks for session 7 and 8.

Topic: The Content Parameters 2

Sequence of actions	Teacher responses	Analysis
Instructor asks teachers to explain their effective strategies of teaching vocabulary and grammar.	Teachers discuss use of common sentences and synonyms. Students are not interested to learn. Only fifteen students participate actively.	Attitudes – teachers' narrative point out <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of word games • Teacher-class negotiation • Use of new activities
Teachers and instructor discuss on classroom language.	Teachers respond individually. Students are preposterous without the source language.	Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual/ in groups • Active • Raising consciousness.
Sumana 2018 Tape Script 2		

Teachers “should be encouraged to pursue a mode of inquiry which more closely complements the normal professional activity of classroom teachers” (Wallace 1996: 293). Teachers require special attention in classroom and rely on how the instructor deals with discovery and solutions to problems. For this interaction the instructor has to be a participant observer first. The questioning behaviour at every point offers chances to learn. Collecting and observing descriptions of teaching as a participant observer, allows the instructor to be accepted both as an observer and as a participant. Analyzing the communicative features of the verbal interactions in the classroom activities (Audio tape script 1 and 2), the following seven features and their categories were formulated. Suggestion of teaching strategy, exploring possible classroom learning context, clarification of individual responses, questioning responses, incorporating humour, reaction to messages and drawing information on teaching were used for coding instructor talk, with the exception of suggestion of teaching strategy and reaction to messages, which were used for coding instructor and teacher talk.

Communication strategy	Category
1. Suggestion of teaching strategy Skills	Listening
2. Exploring possible classroom learning context Language	Target
3. Clarification of individual responses from the class Method	Direct
4. Questioning responses for accurate answers theory	Teaching
5. Incorporating humour for arising curiosity attention	Drawing
6. Reaction to message initiation	Discourse
7. Drawing information on teaching Speech	Sustained

Table 1

Classifying them further into factual (who the teachers are and their experiences), behavioural (the teaching activities) or attitudinal (opinion, values, interests), two of these communication strategies are factual (1 and 2) three are behavioural (3, 4, 5 and 7) and two are attitudinal (1 and 6). For descriptions to teaching, Fanselow (1988) “encourages teachers to provide at least one interpretation that is seemingly outlandish or different in intent from the usual interpretations. For example, if an observer discovers that there is a lot of teacher praise, and this is thought to be a positive behaviour, interpretations about how praise is negative could be made” (Gebhard and Oprandy 1999: 53-54). “The goal is simply to try to remind us that each event we see can be interpreted in ways different from our usual ways of doing it because we are each limited by the ideas of reality we have” (Fanselow 1988: 122). Classroom interaction can provide as well as block opportunities for learning. When the instructor initiates a sustained discourse on common challenges with the teachers, which lead to debates, the individual teacher may refrain from the ongoing discussions, considering the varying teaching situations and context. For example, one of the teachers in the classroom mentions that dictation is a useful listening activity which includes writing and orthography. But another teacher has different views. All learners cannot be active participants for the activity. For the weaker learners, of his class, most of the dictation discourse information has to be provided in the worksheet. Only

then they are active and can score. Thus listening activity can be assessed better with multiple choice questions. Since teaching can provide or fail to provide opportunities for learning and there are differing, conceptions of language learning and teaching, there are certain skills which can be cultivated. According to Freeman (2002), teacher education teaches the skills of reflectivity. This is important for their sense of self-efficacy (Akbari 2007). These skills are represented in the following diagram:

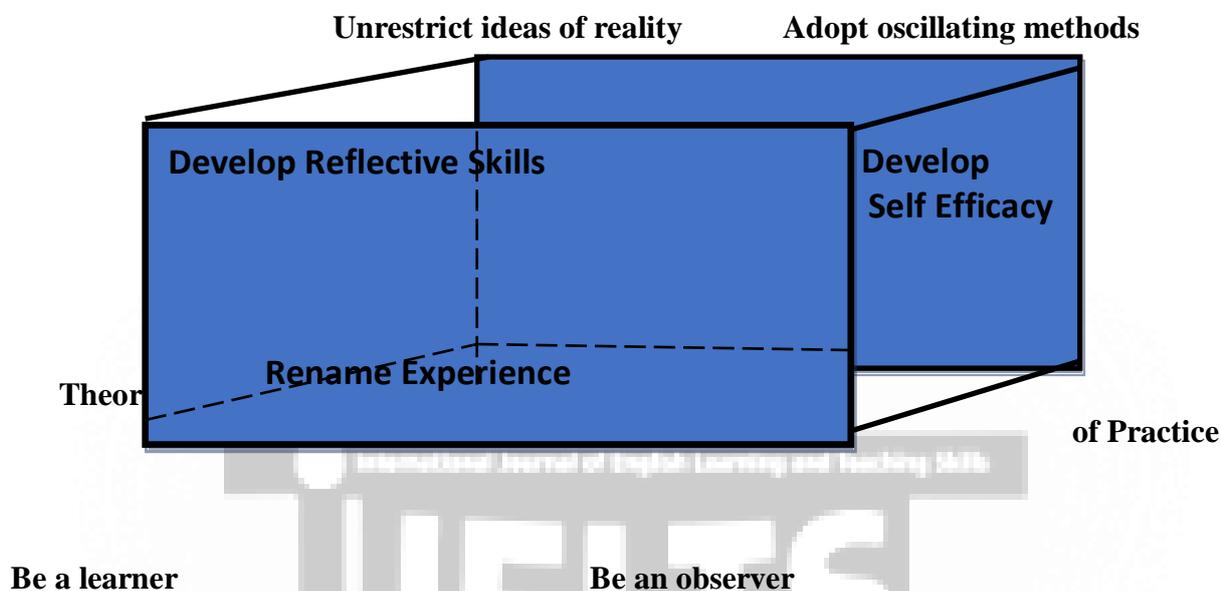


Diagram 1

Starting from the base of the rectangular cube, be a learner and be an observer are notions which have transformed language teacher learning. Theorization of practice is a recent view of teacher-learning (Richards 2008). Adoption of oscillating methods (from one method to another and vice versa) is a teaching skill which language teachers require to continuously modify their current practice. Renaming experience is ‘A study of methods is a ... means of socialization into professional thinking and discourse that language teachers require in order to ‘rename their experience’, to participate in their profession and to learn throughout their professional lives’ (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson 2016: xi). An unrestricted idea of reality is interpreting teaching event in a different way, so that we are not limited by our ideas. This can offer necessary alternative justifications to control our activities and contributes to make positive judgements on the students. Reflective skills and self efficacy are cultivated on the four base skills. Reflecting on the observations, the structural elements of the interactions are labeled for a general characterization of the classroom talk. These are represented in the following Framework.

Framework 1

Analysis of classroom discourse

Date: 2 February
 Tape script 1 - Duration 2hrs 49 minutes

Setting: classroom

Number of Participants: 15

Labels: (1-10)

1. Opening of a lesson by the instructor speaking to the whole class.
2. Instructor discussing theory and following teacher activities on listening skills.
3. Teacher discussing practical classroom contexts on teaching listening skills.
4. Instructor responding to individual queries related to the discussions.
5. Teachers working in groups/ individually to complete activities.
6. Teacher suggesting exploration of varying strategies for teaching listening skills.
7. Instructor organizing a debate arising from teacher's opinions.
8. Teachers participating in classroom discussions on teaching techniques.
9. Instructor mediating confrontations and quarrels.
10. Instructor guiding teachers on specific problematic teaching contexts

(Sumana 2015)

Addressing the concerns on what goes in my classroom, the labels in Framework 1 are the patterns of conspicuous events. Labels 6 and 7 create opportunity to discover strategies for teaching. Labels 8 and 9 function to explore disconcert, doubt, inspirations. Label 3 is a review of the teaching behaviour arising from Labels 1 and 2. Labels 4 and 10 are events which record the feelings on what went on in the activities.

Framework 2 is an interaction on the teachers' work on action research. Even though both the recordings are on teaching language skills, Framework 2 is more oriented on classroom teaching.

Exploring the effective strategies for teaching vocabulary, the teacher mentioned newspaper as a resource in classroom. However, this was debated by the other teacher, who pointed out that her students did not have access to the resource, and suggested that rhymes, fables and short stories were more effective for learning vocabulary in her situation. On a common consensus, they agreed that other than the text book, there are needs for creating new activities and word

games. This is recorded in Label 5. Sharing a technique of classroom management on encouraging vocabulary learning, the teacher discusses altering the sitting arrangement. The weaker students then can learn some of the vocabulary and can apply in contexts. This is patterned in Label 9. For grammar the teachers practised the inductive method. Label 4 patterns discussion on maximizing individual participation. However this was not well taken by the teachers. Label 7 focuses on the use of source language for bridging with the target language while teaching the exceptions to the grammatical rules.

Framework 2

Analysis of classroom discourse

Date: 19 June

Tape script 2 - Duration 30 minutes

Setting: conference room

Number of Participants: 3

Labels: (1-10)

1. Opening of a talk by the instructor speaking to the teachers on project report.
2. Instructor discussing on various aspects of teaching vocabulary and grammar.
3. Teacher discussing on pronunciation as a problematic area for teaching vocabulary.
4. Instructor suggesting cognitive tasks for vocabulary.
5. Teachers responding individually their techniques for teaching vocabulary.
6. Instructor initiating discussion on the techniques of teaching grammar.
7. Teachers participating in discussions on teaching grammar.
8. Instructor mediating talk, discussing on teaching skills.
9. Teachers responding from classroom experience.
10. Instructor discussing teaching contexts

(Sumana 2018)

Broadening the range of pedagogic choices, restructuring is an important phase in the shift from interlanguage to accuracy in learning pronunciation. The patterns of restructuring can be mapped from teacher reflections on the classroom discourse. These reflections stimulate teachers to understand the indirect relations between what is taught and what is learnt.

Conclusion:

The data show that communicative orientation is most beneficial in developing structure based approaches to second language education. The COLT scheme consulted for developing the observation schemes can be more effective, if further developed for teacher development and professionalism. The habit of reading, experimenting and collaborating enable teachers in professional development activities. The crucial question which cannot be answered is what can be the other kinds of communicative orientations, which are beneficial for developing other range of skills? For example, do classes which are teacher-centered and form focused explore the complexities and nuances of schooling? Similarly, do classes in which the learning is more student centered see schooling through the filter of teaching biases.

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