

EXPLORING FEEDBACK STRATEGIES IN THE TEACHERS' TALK: A GENDER-BASED STUDY

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Abstract

Female and male teachers use different communicative strategies in the classroom. This study is an attempt to explore the differences in feedback strategies used in the discourses of females and males through the IRF framework model of Sinclair and Coulthards. The sample of the study consists of six teachers' talks; three males and three females. Two lectures of each participant were recorded and transcribed. The analysis of the discourse reveals significant differences in feedback strategies. Female participants have used more praise and explicit acceptance strategies to create a more motivational and encouraging environment, whereas male teachers have used more direct rejection strategies. Further, it has also been observed that other variables like, classroom management, task objectives and teachers' personality have more impact on teachers' talk than gender differences.

Keywords: Communicative strategies, feedback, teachers' discourse, motivation, classroom management.

Introduction

Gender has surrounded every society so intractably that it seems to be natural now. As gender affects the interaction patterns in everyday life, it influences the classroom interactions and especially the teacher-student interactions (Butler, 2004). In other words, the gender of both students and teachers affects classroom strategies; the quality, the quantity of the interactions and students' learning. Therefore, to understand the classroom dynamics, the teachers must notice whether there is a balance or not between the teacher-talk and actual communication (McCarthy, 1991). As the teacher's discourse affects the students' learning, this study has been designed to explore the type of strategies male and female teachers used in the classroom as feedback strategies.

The relationship between language and gender gained momentum in the 1970s (Unger & Crawford, 1992). In recent years, the research turned the acceptance of women's position as disempowered to a more refined and practical model. The theorists have distinguished sex from gender; sex is biological whereas gender is a social construct (Spender, 1980; Rasool, 2020). To investigate the discourse choices, it is significant to locate situations in which the teachers use language as context plays an important role in choosing speech patterns.

Extensive researches have been done on language and gender (Sadker & Sadker, 1992; Tannen, 1991) but, unfortunately, a few studies have analyzed teachers' talk and the strategies the teachers employed in the classroom. Gender in the classrooms has been a focus of the researchers in the seventeenth century. Early studies were mostly carried out at elementary levels because it was assumed that, at this level, gender differences are manifested more vividly. In these studies, features that were explored included topic choice by the teacher, turn-taking and the use of materials. Later studies in 1980 focused on other dimensions of classroom interactions like total talk time, turn-taking, gaze time of teachers, nominations of students by the teachers (Spender, 1982; Swann & Graddol, 1988).

In second language teaching-learning, the researchers have explored gender stereotypes through an analysis of discourse in textbook dialogues. Thus teachers' roles, especially their discourses, need to be explored as teacher's discourse plays a vital role in the learning and managing of a classroom. A few pieces of research have been carried out in Pakistan to explore gender roles in textbooks like Farah and Shera (2007), Hussain and Afsar (2010) and Jafri (1994) but gender differences in teacher talk particularly in the Pakistani context have rarely been studied.

Purpose of the Study

This study has been designed to explore whether the teachers' gender identities affect their teaching styles or not, and also to what extent male and female teachers use gender-stereotypical speech patterns with a focus on feedback strategies.

The study looks at the discourse of the teachers teaching to students of postgraduate classes in the Department of English, University of Gujrat (Pakistan). However, it does not look at the issues about the English language teaching methodology. Though teachers, irrespective of their gender, are engaged in similar activities; for example, transmitting information, beginning and ending classes, asking questions, answering them and assigning work. They exhibit their gender identities to a lesser or greater extent in the classroom through their interaction patterns. Such a demonstration has significant consequences and affects the learners in constructing the concept of gender identity as students are intricate human beings who may easily be influenced by their teachers' attitudes and experiential factors.

Research Question

Speech differences in males and females have been investigated by many researchers (Holmes, 1986; Coates & Cameron, 1986). The objective of the study is to explore the extent of similarities and differences present in feedback strategies of the teachers' discourse. To this end, the main research question devised is: What are the differences or similarities between female and male teachers' talk in the use of feedback strategies at the university level?

Theoretical Framework

To study teachers' roles and attitudes, classroom research is necessary. They share their experiences, wants and desires. However, in classroom interactions, the most important is interaction patterns; precisely, the teachers' discourse due to which learning happens (Allwright & Bailey, 1991). Therefore, the focal point of this study is the discourse of teachers that is used in a class for giving instructions, commands, and doing tasks or evaluation which is referred to as teacher talk (ibid). Therefore, it is language of the teachers that makes a class a success.

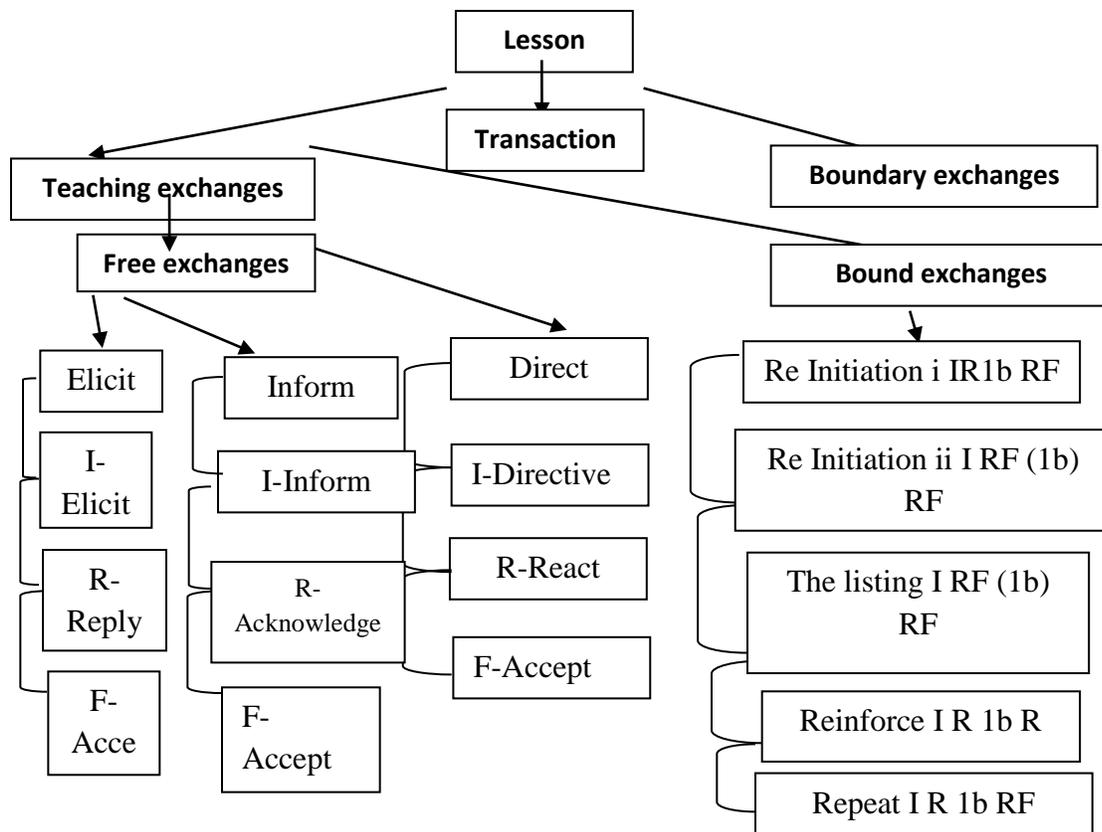
The theoretical framework employed in this study is the IRF model propounded by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). According to the model, the highest unit of classroom discourse is a lesson that comprises transactions and exchanges. IRF model describes the process by which the teachers organize their lessons which have been given in Figure 1.

It presents a typical classroom environment where teachers initiate a lecture, and the students respond to the teacher followed by teachers' feedback. Further, it supplies a structure for classroom observations and helps in investigating gender differences in teachers' talk when they use frames and moves for commanding and instructing students to carry out the tasks asking different questions and giving them feedback.

The strategies used by teachers to manage their class are the most important feature of classroom interaction. A teacher steers a verbal discussion with the help of asking relevant questions from the students and providing them with feedback. The charge of the classroom dynamics gives a teacher an eminent power which can, further, be investigated by looking into the discourse of the teachers which they employ to wield the subsequent command over the classroom interactions. Feedback is another important feature of teacher talk. It also includes an assessment made by a teacher. The strategies help in maintaining a healthy bond between a teacher and a student. The feedback strategies may include appreciation and correction.

Gender identity is manifested through one's speech and is dependent on a speaker's discourse. In recent years, gender has been declared a multifaceted phenomenon which, according to Graddol and Swann (1988) suggests that gender, contrary to sex, is a continuous variable which implies that context is important to make one feminine or masculine. By keeping in mind, the proven findings that female speech is more rapport-like whereas male speech is more report-like (Tannen, 1998), the classroom observations have been further analyzed by using the discourse analysis approach.

FIGURE 1: Model of Sinclair & Coulthard



(Adapted from Farooq, 1999, p. 31)

Literature Review

Language teaching is a multifaceted phenomenon having several interrelated aspects. Many studies have been carried out to find out the most effective method for language teaching. However, recently, researchers’ interests have shifted from teaching methods to classroom interactions and classroom discourse. Within the field, “classroom-centred research” has arisen as distinctive research in SLA intending to explore the strategies of interaction in a language classroom (Allwright, 1988; Richards, 1985). To make input more comprehensible, the researchers have tried to determine some formal and interactional elements of the language which is used for the second language learners. Such studies are a continuation to prior studies of “foreign talk” (Clyne, 1981; Ferguson, 1971; Freed, 1996, 1999) and “care-taker speech” (Snow, 1972) and then later termed as “teacher talk” (Ellis, 1985).

Teacher talk and classroom interaction

For learning any language, classrooms play an important role. It is the only platform where learners are exposed to a target language and sometimes teachers are the only input source the students get in the form of a target language. After the 1960s, the research on classroom interaction/s, instead of teaching methods, got the focus. The classroom interaction, according to Tsui (2001) is contact and relation between students and teachers, and contact among the students.

Allwright (1988) finds classroom interaction as a process of three stages i.e. turns, topics and tasks. Lier (1988) examines classroom interactions in two proportions: one teacher's control over the topic and the other classroom activity. The former relates to what the teacher talks about while the later to the way or the method the topic is discussed. A more detailed insight into classroom interaction by Fanselow (1977, p. 590) is given below:

- Source (communicator)
- Move type (structure)

- Medium (linguistic, nonlinguistic or para-linguistic)
- Content (subject matter or routine matters)
- Use (how the medium is used to communicate content)

It is the teacher talk and environment of the class that determines whether the class would succeed or not. However, importantly, learning is based on the type of interaction and content rather than the medium used. Classroom interaction is controlled by a teacher. A similar idea was floated by Ellis (1985). According to him, the success of a classroom largely depends on the nature of the interaction, not on the method employed by a teacher.

The foregoing discussion shows that classrooms are not only influenced by the talk of a teacher but also by the gender of a teacher. The researches that have been conducted on the issue of gender in the classroom focused on student-to-student interaction or student to teacher interaction but this research has focused only on the teacher talk. The researcher has observed different features of teacher talk to examine the functions of a talk. The observations were made on the assumptions that the discourse of male and female differs from each other and the differences may lead to distractions for the learners. This study has examined how the patterns of classroom interactions are affected by the gender of the teachers.

Feedback Strategies

Feedback is another important feature of teacher talk that is used to check the understanding of the students. It is defined as “actions taken by (an) external agent(s) to provide information regarding some aspect(s) of one’s task performance” (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). In a classroom, feedback strategies aim to improve students’ learning and help students in evaluating their desires and actual performance. Willing (1988) argues that the most important activity of the classroom is error correction which is done by the teachers.

According to Ramaprasad (1983), feedback bridges up the reference level and the actual level of a system parameter. Carlson avers that it 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, p. 4).

It is used by the teachers to keep an eye on students’ performance. Sadler (1989) avers that teachers use it with a purpose “to monitor the strengths and weaknesses of their performances to recognize and reinforce positive learning and to modify or improve unsatisfactory aspect” (1989, p. 120). Chaudron (1988) argues that feedback is an essential element of classroom interaction because the students learn to develop their attitudes behaviours according to the reaction of the teachers.

Primarily, it is used to correct the errors of the students by replying to their responses and by evaluating them which lead to language learning. For correction, both positive and negative feedbacks are important. According to Hewings (1992), an essential element of the IRF exchange is the accessibility of a response. In this case, a teacher either rejects the response which refers to a negative assessment or he/she withholds such response to be expressed at a later stage or he provides a positive response. Nunan (1993) is in line with the classification. He states that positive feedback is more important than negative one. He has, further, categorized positive feedback into two categories. First, that is used to tell that they have given a correct answer and, second, that is used to encourage students by using interjections like “ok” or “good” etc. Feedback by a teacher presents that the teacher is more knowledgeable than the students and shows that he/she has more power. In short, there are three functions of feedback including information, reinforcement and motivation (Zamel, 1981). Allwright and Bailey (1991) have given nine strategies of feedback: Fact of the location indicated, error indicated, the model provided, blame indicated, remedy indicated, error type indicated, praise indicated, improvement indicated and opportunity of making a new attempt. Learning needs a supportive environment which can be created with the help of the above-mentioned strategies, but not all of them are appropriate (Kristmanson, 2000).

Though feedback strategies of error correction are of greater importance, overemphasis on correction frustrates the students and obstructs learning (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). Virgil and Oller (1976) are also of the view that effective feedback by the teacher is very necessary. However, teachers cannot provide feedback to all students (Fanselow, 1977; Long, 1977; Nystrom, 1983).

Lyster and Ranta (1997) conducted a study on coercive feedback and identified the following six types which were employed by the teachers while providing feedback to the students: 1) Explicit correction – when a teacher tells a student that his answer is wrong; 2) Recasts – a teacher corrects the answer by reformulating it; 3) Clarification requests –this tells a student that he/she has to reform the answer as it requires accuracy; 4) Metalinguistic feedback – a teacher either provides comments which could be informative or its questions, but it lacks explicit correctness; 5) Elicitation – it includes pauses so that the students may fill the missing gaps; 6) Repetitions – it refers to the repeated questions of a teacher to get an appropriate answer.

The teachers evaluate the students by using these strategies either implicitly or explicitly. As mentioned earlier, these strategies are used by both genders. However, according to Talbot (1998), empirical studies on feedback reveal that women use politer feedback strategies than men (1998). The current study has explored the strategies of feedback which are used by males and females in their classroom interactions.

Research Methodology

This study can be termed as single-site research because it is done in the Department of English, University of Gujrat, Pakistan. Following are the few reasons for making it a single-site study. Firstly, only a few samples were taken because the researchers wanted to study these samples in-depth. Due to time constraints, only six teachers were selected and two lectures of each teacher were recorded. All the teachers were from the same department. As the research aimed to inquire about the linguistic features of teachers, it was necessary to take classroom observations in the form of tape recordings so that the researcher may transcribe. Nonparticipant observation methodology was opted so that the teacher or students may not get influenced. Moreover, the researchers desired to gather naturalistic data which was not possible otherwise.

Data analysis

A feedback strategy is an important feature of teacher talk as it is distinguished from daily routine interactions. Teachers use various feedback strategies to provide a follow up implicitly or explicitly depending on the nature of the asked questions and the responses of the students. Kristmanson (2000) states that language learning only takes place in a favourable environment. The feedback strategies help a teacher in making the environment of class friendly and encouraging. The distinguishable components of feedback are correction and assessment (Ur, 2000). Correction helps students in comprehending the meaning and the production of language. It depends on whether the correction is done rudely or supportively. Feedback could be of two types; negative or positive and can be given through commenting or praising or sometimes just by keeping silent (Richards & Lockhart, 2000). Children learn from the comments and praise they receive from their teachers.

Moreover, the strategies are used for evaluation and for knowing whether the students make out what is taught. Effective feedback highlights students' positives rather than negatives.

In the present study, the following strategies have been identified:

1. Correctness
2. Partial Correctness
3. Incorrectness

These strategies have been further subdivided into the following strategies:

- A. Praise
- B. Explicit positive acceptance of student response
- C. Recasts/Reformulations
- D. Repetitions
- E. Explicit rejection of student response
- F. Explanations

Praise is a very common teaching strategy. It involves the use of superlatives; explicit remarks by a teacher showing a positive acceptance of his/ her answer. Repetition is an imitation by a teacher of the structure as uttered by the learners whereas in recasts structures are revised in a way that meanings remain unchanged. Sometimes a teacher rejects a student's response explicitly. It negative feedback by the teacher when the answer is incorrect. To teach vocabulary or teaching paraphrasing, a teacher may use the strategy of explanation.

Analysis of the Participants' Feedback Strategies

In this section, an analysis of the feedback strategies has been given according to the categories made at the outset of this section.

Feedback Strategies of Correctness

Two subcategories, praise and explicit or direct acceptance of student's responses, have been analysed. They could be termed as positive feedback strategies as they create a supportive learning environment. According to Richards and Lockhart (1994, p. 188) reinforcing feedback help in achieving the following purposes:

1. for checking whether the response of students is correct or not,
2. for motivating the students through praise
3. for creating a supportive learning environment

Table 1 shows that the strategy "Praise" is used more than the Explicit Acceptance with the frequency of 66 and 44 respectively. Female teachers (46 times) have used more than male teachers (20). However, an explicit acceptance strategy was employed by female and male participants equally with the frequency of 23 and 21 respectively. The following extracts reveal the use of feedback strategies by the participants.

Extract 1:

Female Teacher: *"Excellent...Yes, this is what I was talking about ...a very valid point."*

This example of female discourse illustrates that the female teacher showed excitement and not only she accepted the answer but also gave a reason for accepting the answer by adding "a very valid point" which shows that when the student's answer is acceptable, the teacher praised him/her and used elaborative remarks to show her satisfaction and developed a more encouraging learning environment.

Extract 2:

Male Participant: *"That's good."*

In these extracts, the male teacher has accepted the student's answer and has praised just by saying *that's good* whereas a female teacher has not only praised but also added detail to encourage the student.

Comparison of both the extracts revealed that male teachers were very direct whereas female teachers tried to make their students at ease through their talking. Females' style of using more elaborative praise strategies encouraged the students in her classroom.

Table 1: Frequency and examples of praise and explicit acceptance strategies

| Strategy | Gender | Frequency | Examples |
|---------------------|--------|-----------|---|
| Praise | Male | 20 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Good 2. Great 3. Yes, right |
| | Female | 46 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Well done! this is also very important. 2. Great! You are on the right track. 3. Excellent! a very valid point. 4. Oh, you are such an intelligent student! |
| Explicit Acceptance | Male | 21 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ok 2. Yes 3. Right 4. Hmm...ok |
| | Female | 23 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yup 2. Ok 3. Fine... OK |

Table 1 also indicates that both the genders have used an almost equal amount of explicit acceptance strategy. They accepted the answers by using words like "OK", "Yes" or "Fine". This strategy is also used to motivate the students. "OK" was mostly used by the females as an explicit acceptance strategy. The use of "OK" in their teaching discourse serves two purposes, firstly, as an acceptance of the answer and secondly as a discourse marker.

As females were using more praise and explicit acceptance strategies it showed that they believe in more politeness and motivational strategies. And if at places, they were not giving elaboration with the praise strategy it was for the reason that they were asking knowledge-based questions which required only direct acceptance or rejection by the teacher.

Positive strategies pave the way to perform a social and effective function of solidarity building. (Holmes (1995) claims that this sort of discourse is often labeled "feminine" language". Whereas it was observed that, unlike females, male teachers were not using positive feedback strategy frequently.

Feedback Strategies of Partial Correctness

Partial correctness feedback strategies include recasts/reformulations, repetitions and teachers' explanations. Table 2 shows that these strategies were frequently used by the teachers which refer to partial rejection or partial acceptance of the learners' answers.

Table 2 indicates that males and females used recasts and repetitions almost equally. The use of this strategy mainly depends on the nature of the asked question. If questions require only "yes or "no" answers, a teacher recasts the students' responses. It was observed that the same teachers used different feedback strategies according to the

questions. These strategies were observed in, particularly, the lectures which involved students’ cognitive abilities; where variation in language takes place, it becomes the responsibility of the teacher to recast or reformulate students’ responses to make things more clear and accurate. The link between feedback and questioning was observed in all participants’ talks.

Extract 3: Female Teacher

FT: “. . . so what would be the disadvantage of the fixed syllabus?”

Student: Only the practitioners’ involvement in it.

FT: Ahh... so they don’t involve students’ opinions while making a syllabus or a curriculum. Thus, there is no variation in the contents.

In Extract 3, a female teacher asks a question related to the disadvantages of a fixed syllabus. A student replied that it involved only a practitioner’s views in it. This reply was reformulated by the teacher which added the basic point that students’ opinion is not given importance in it although syllabus is meant for students and fixed syllabus avoid their views. Along with reformulation, the teacher has further explained it. So the teacher has not only given linguistic feedback by recasting “**Only practitioner’s involvement in it**”, and “**so they don’t involve students’ opinion while making a syllabus**” but also provided cognitive feedback, by saying that “**thus there is no variation in the contents.**” Here another important aspect of meaning, that is, negotiation of meaning has taken place. Long (1996) is of the view that it helps learners in differentiation between input and output.

Table 2: Frequency and example of partial correctness strategies

| Strategy | Gender | Frequency | Examples |
|---------------------------|---------|-----------|---|
| Recasts or Reformulations | Females | 57 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Hamm...Yaa... Yes – what you’re saying is / I think... Yes, he was not afraid of it but he was more confident... so you're talking about structural syllabus...OK. |
| | Males | 64 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> so everyone identified that there is something wrong so you think it was rational to think like this. so his ideas were real but have imagination too Yes, fate but you should call it destiny... |
| Repetitions | Females | 83 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> TR: what is it called? SR: forensic TR: Yes, forensic OK. it is a curriculum Yes... metaphors. Right... |
| | Males | 46 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> SR: A language consists of a large number of words TR: of words... OK Aptitude test...yes that’s fine Word....words. OK |

Table 2 shows that the feedback strategy was also frequently used by male teachers. They ask more application questions and consequently, use recasts/reformulations. Lyster and Ranta (1997) are of the view that recasts include that part of students’ utterances which has no error in it. Usually, it involves the use of “so” or “you want to say” as they are used in the following extracts:

Extract 4: Male Teachers: “Everyone identified that there is something wrong.”

- So you think it was rational to think like this.
- So you mean his ideas were real but I tell you it has imagination too
- Yes, fate but you should call it destiny...

In these examples the use of “you should say”, “so”, or “you mean” shows that the part of the students’ utterance is correct but it can be expressed in a better way. While using this strategy, the teacher provides the correct answer and does not point out the error. In the fourth line when the teacher talked about the poet’s themes and the student called

it fate. This reply was partially correct. Thus, the teacher accepted the reply by changing the term fate into destiny. Extracts 3 and 4, illustrate that males and females have uses this strategy according to the type of questions they asked. Another frequent partial correctness feedback strategy that was observed is repetition in the teachers' discourse which served the purpose of indication and reinforcement, clarification and show indirect negative feedback.

Table 2 indicates that female teachers used this strategy more regularly than males. They use to give positive feedback. A rise in the intonation of a teacher while repeating the students' answers may indicate the correctness or incorrectness of the answer.

Extract 5: Female Teacher

FT: *"What is the poet's point of view or the poet's idea about death?"*

Student: *"Everyone has to die."*

FT: *"Everyone has to die... yes. ...so death is certain, Ok, means that death does not stop."*

In response to the teacher's question, a student answered that everyone has to die. The teacher accepted her answer by repeating the utterance and provided positive feedback. The teachers also use repetitions to express that the answer is not correct and needs correction. For example:

- S: *structural syllabus*
- FT: *Structural syllabus?* (with a rising tone)

In this example, the rising tone of the teacher along with the repetition strategy indicates that the answer of the student was incorrect. In female teachers' talk, it was observed that they use this strategy to provide positive feedback.

Extract 6: Male Teacher

MT: *It refers to what?*

SR: *word*

MT: *word.... words...ok*

In this Extract, in reply to the teacher's question, a student answers "word". The teacher repeated the utterance "word" in a high tone showing that it needs correction and then later corrected by himself and provided with the correct form. The basic function of the repetitions observed in this study was reinforcement. Although at times other functions were also observed they were not frequently used by the teachers.

The last feedback strategy for this category was the teacher's explanation. Table 3 demonstrates that "Explanation" was frequently used by female teachers. It implies that gender differences do exist in the use of this strategy as male teachers did not use it regularly. This strategy is mainly used where the response from the students is accepted and the teacher, further, adds some explanation to clarify the things more.

The frequency with which this strategy was used by both gender is given below:

Table 3: Frequency and examples of explanations

| Strategy | Gender | Frequency | Examples |
|-------------|---------|-----------|---|
| Explanation | Females | 17 | Yes, right. Let me explain this... Here there is relating to the certainty of death. Right, when death comes, it does not take a lot of time for a big thing or a small one. If a pine tree is there such a big tree when it blasted it ends very quickly, right. Similarly, the match stick is there when it burnt out it will take a second, right. So, this is related to the certainty of death. When death comes it does not take a lot of time. Right and then definitely the end day when there is a death. So death has to come |
| | Males | 5 | All right. So, the aptitude test has a predictive element. They predict the people's specific knowledge whether the student is capable enough to study a certain course or not. One of the major examples of an Aptitude test is NAT. National Aptitude Test. So, It is an authentic aptitude test which tries to predict whether you are capable enough of studying a certain course or not. |

Extract 7: Female Teacher

"Yes, right. Let me explain this ... Here it is related to the certainty of death. Right, when death comes, it does not take a lot of time for a big thing or a small one. If a pine tree is there such a big tree when it blasted it ends very quickly, right. Similarly, the match stick is there when it burnt out it will take a second, right. So, this is related to

the certainty of death. When death comes it does not take a lot of time. Right and then definitely the end day when there is a death. So death has to come."

In this extract, the teacher accepted the answer and then explained further why this answer is correct.

Extract 8: Female Teacher

FT: *"What makes us human?"*

Students: *"Language."*

FT: *"sure, it is language. The ability to communicate is the most important characteristic to be human. It helps us but we mostly take it for granted."*

The teacher gave positive feedback by accepting the answer and added details to the answer so that all the students may understand. The explanation provides more detailed information which is significant in supporting the students' understanding.

In this part, mainly feedback strategies were analyzed. The analysis showed that females used more explanation and repetition feedback strategies whereas males used more recasts/reformulations. The basic difference was the use of explanation strategy which was mainly observed in females while the males were not either using it or used it to a little extent. However, it also highlighted that use of the feedback strategy of this category mainly depended on the questioning styles of the teachers.

Feedback Strategies of Incorrectness

Correctness is the last strategy of this category which was observed mostly in male teachers' discourse. Male teachers used this strategy to convey an explicit rejection of the students' responses.

Males used the "Correctness" strategy more frequently whereas in females' teacher talk it was hardly observed. Males were more direct in giving negative feedback whereas females being politer and supportive did not use this strategy. The following extracts illustrate in detail how males use this feedback strategy to convey a complete rejection.

Table 4: Frequency and examples of negative feedback

| Gender | Frequency | Examples |
|--------|-----------|---|
| Males | 13 | 1. No 2. That's not what I am asking 3. You are not concentrating on this point |

Extract 9a: Male Teacher

MT: *That's not what I am asking*

Extract 9b: Male Teacher

MT: *No. That's NOT what I was talking about and the poet's point of view is also different here which does NOT coincide with your point of view.*

In the above extracts, "not" has been used very explicitly and the function of this negative feedback strategy is to indicate complete incorrectness of the answer. In the above-mentioned examples, the use of "not" indicates that this part of the response is incorrect.

Explicit negative feedback is used to indicate the incorrectness of the student's response. For example, in the above-mentioned examples, male teachers have frequently used "no" and "not" to convey that answer was not correct. The occurrence of this feature was observed only in male teachers' discourse. Besides conveying that answer was not correct, the tone of the teacher and further detail also tells the student that the teacher was not expecting such an answer and thus it needs more cognitive thinking.

Negative feedback is considered a face-threatening strategy which implies that males are less emotional and sensitive towards students' feelings as compared with females. Female teachers being politer and cooperative avoid this strategy as it does not exhibit aspects of their traditional feminine discourse features.

The frequency of the feedback strategies used by males and females is summarized in Table 5. As Table 5 indicates, the feedback strategy with the highest frequency is repetitions (129) while the lowest frequency is of explicit rejection (13) whereas this feedback strategy was not observed in the females. Other dominant feedback strategies include; reformulations/recasts (121) and praise (66). However, the frequency of the use of feedback strategies based on gender is different which has been described below.

Table 5: Summary of feedback strategies

| Strategy | Male | Female | Total |
|-----------------------|------|--------|-------|
| Praise | 20 | 46 | 66 |
| Explicit acceptance | 21 | 23 | 44 |
| Recasts/ reformations | 64 | 57 | 121 |

| | | | |
|--------------------|----|--------------|-----|
| Repetitions | 46 | 83 | 129 |
| Explanations | 5 | 17 | 22 |
| Explicit rejection | 13 | Not observed | 13 |

Conclusion

The analysis illustrates that gender differences exist in the use of feedback strategies. Females being politer and supportive did not use the strategies which were considered face-threatening whereas males were quite direct in giving an explicit rejection. Females provided more explanations and praised students whenever the answer was correct and if a part of the answer was incorrect they tried to elaborate the answer for students’ understanding and clarity. In general, the findings confirm that discourse choices are relevant and appropriate to the genders. A clear distinction in the use of repetitions, praise and recasts feedback strategies has been found. These feedback strategies were frequently used by females. However, in the use of explicit acceptance, both genders used this strategy equally. The females dominate the males’ in the use of explanation feedback strategy. An explicit rejection feedback strategy was only observed in the males’ discourse.

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