INTERPERSONAL AND PEDAGOGICAL COMMUNICATION: AN ARGUMENT FOR NATURAL COMMUNICATION PRACTICES IN THE ROMANIAN EFL CLASSROOM

Dana-Anca Cehan

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in Teaching degree at the School for International Training, Brattleboro, Vermont

September 2002

This project by Dana-Anca Cehan is accepted in its present form.

Date _____

Project Advisor _____

Project Reader _____

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The ideas in this paper represent a synthesis of my preoccupations over the last decade and show the influence of my instructors, colleagues, fellow ELT teachers and my students. I cannot adequately acknowledge all of the influences and people to whom I am indebted. Yet, I would like to thank all my instructors at S.I.T. for their inspirational program, Diane-Larsen Freeman who provided enormously useful comments on the earlier drafts of the paper and Pat Moran for his sustenance of extraordinary quality.

This paper cannot have been completed without sacrifices on the home front. My family have put up with my unavailability for longer than I would like to think. I thank them with all my heart for their patience and constant encouragement.

ABSTRACT

The paper explores aspects of EFL classroom discourse in the Romanian context and pleads for the use and cultivation of natural communication practices and relevant language behavior in the classroom.

Viewing classroom discourse not only in pedagogical terms but also as a social event, the paper provides a dual perspective on the varied EFL classroom discourse strategies. Some characteristic classroom discourse features, such as its micro-functions, language switching and typical turn-taking are examined and compared to the characteristics of natural encounters. It is argued that the language teachers who ascribe to interpersonal goals in classroom discourse can enhance their students' long term acquisition of interpersonal language skills. Based on the analysis of the data, the lack of interpersonal language in the classroom is identified as a problematic aspect of Romanian EFL classroom disocurse.

A few strategies are suggested that could be implemented to help students, directly or indirectly, to get more exposure to the interpersonal language they need to use receptively and productively outside the classroom: the cultivation of natural language behavior, self-analysis of teacher discourse and a diversification of classroom interaction formats.

English
Speech Communication
Code Switching (Language)
Teacher Improvement

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

For the last decade I have asked my students to audiotape EFL classroom sessions and to analyze these discourse samples, looking at them from various perspectives. As the data have been gathering, I realized that certain features were worth a closer examination and that the classroom teachers could benefit from the analysis of these features.

A general characteristic of EFL classroom communication is its ambivalence: it concomitantly plays an interpersonal and a pedagogical function. The paper examines the imbalance of these two functions, looks at several possible causes and suggests a few solutions.

Two basic beliefs lie behind this paper, seen as complementary rather than in conflict with each other. One focuses on the importance of the interactive, interpersonal aspect of classroom behavior and the other on the naturalness of classroom discourse.

One striking characteristic of EFL classroom communication in Romania is that students do not necessarily receive enough contact with the social, interpersonal dimension of the language. A useful remedy is to make Romanian EFL teachers more aware of this dimension, so that it may be addressed in the classroom, even if only implicitly.

The paper is structured in three chapters. Chapter One is a statement of the Romanian context, a statement of the problem – lack of interpersonal language in English – and a brief discussion of the methodology. Chapter Two consists of a discussion of the dual nature of classroom discourse, characterized by an unsteady balance between the pedagogical and the interpersonal function; it shows that classroom language mainly deals with the former and code-switching often deals with the latter. Chapter Three contains suggestions for the teachers of how to remedy the problem and help students get more exposure to the interpersonal language they need.

To support my analysis of the use of English in Romanian EFL classrooms, I present data that I collected through observation and audio recordings. I employed a qualitative approach that involves ecological, naturalistic, uncontrolled, subjective and process-oriented observation. The classroom samples used in the paper are based on primarily audiotape-recorded data collected by the English majors and minors at "Al. I. Cuza" University, Iaşi, between 1997 – 2000 as part of their discourse analysis lesson assignments. The recordings were done in Iaşi and other towns of Moldavia (Vaslui, Suceava, Piatra Neamţ, Roman, Bârlad, Bacău, Oneşti, Tecuci, and Rădăuți), Transylvania (Bistrița and Târgu Secuiesc), and Wallachia (Brăila). The data-collection procedure was not constrained by any specific research design or by reference to a particular hypothesis.

In the paper, I contend that many common classroom interactions and practices in Romanian EFL classrooms, specifically those that feature teacher-pupil exchanges, can be transformed into interactive conversational practices that feature more natural use of English. When teachers become aware of the importance of interpersonal communication and of the opportunities that exist in their classrooms, they can take steps to incorporate

this kind of language in their interactions with students. As such, the paper investigates a few aspects of classroom interaction and classroom practices, focusing on teacher – pupil talk in whole class situations, as a specific example of interactive conversational processes. It aims at raising the teachers' awareness of the importance of the interpersonal communication practices in the classroom and it can provide useful guidelines to pre- and in-service teachers concerning their work in class since it may give them a sense of perspective and direction. It can also equip EFL teachers with an understanding of the communication processes operating in the classroom and an awareness of how to cope with them pragmatically and linguistically through the medium of English.

TRANSCRIPTION SYMBOLS

The following symbols were used in transcribing the taped sessions:

+ was used for a short pause, ++ for a slightly longer one, etc.

{ a curly bracket shows that various learners responded to the same elicitation, directive, informative, clue, cue, etc, providing the same response.

@ various pupils provided a variety of responses concurrently

0 was used for a non-answer

& an ampersand shows that the teacher addressed the whole class

CHAPTER ONE

In this chapter I describe the Romanian ELT context with its characteristic features: non-native English teachers, student and teacher monolingualism and monoculturalism, limited use of English in the social environment, limited time of instruction, a variety of student age, motivation, needs, expectations, interests and purposes. I go on to identify a problematic feature of EFL classroom communication: the lack of interpersonal language in the English classroom, and then I offer a brief discussion of the methodology used in the paper.

EFL in the Romanian Context

Romania is a largely monolingual society. English is taught here as a foreign language at all levels. Even in the schools with (improperly) called 'bilingual classes', where some of the subjects are taught in English, sometimes by native speakers, English still has the status of a foreign language. Romanian and English, as languages and cultures, do not operate in the Romanian context side by side in different domains in

order to fulfill different purposes. The English used in school is usually devoid of any British or American cultural influences other than those provided by materials, the teacher and the entertainment industry. In such a context, learner motivation, needs, interests, expectations and purposes vary enormously. Also, most Romanians have few opportunities to practice using English outside the classroom since they seldom live, study, work or even travel to a host English-speaking country.

This language environment makes Romanian students examples of EFL rather than ESL learners. Unlike a second-language context, the Romanian EFL context offers limited opportunity for authentic language input and for communicating naturally in English outside the classroom. This makes the EFL classroom the most important social context that can provide authentic input and instances of natural communication and the EFL teacher the main source of such input.

Romanian EFL classroom interaction is structured by custom and rule, and largely planned in advance by the teacher. Communication is directed towards a specific purpose, and one person – the teacher – is in charge of the others. She is the initiator of speech, and the agent creating and monitoring coherence. In this role, she needs linguistic and communicative – social, interpersonal and organisational competence. She has to be sensitive to the way classroom interaction develops, able to follow the lesson through all its stages, and capable of organising her own behavior accordingly. She has to be aware of the rather formal and ritualistic character of classroom interaction, of the institutionalised power to direct classroom discourse invested in her, and also of the features of natural communication. She has to be aware of the success or appropriateness of the strategies that are employed, and of the reasons for possible misunderstandings.

Only endowed with all these awarenesses and skills, will the EFL teacher be a good planner of the development of classroom interaction and discourse.

However, the great majority of the Romanian EFL teachers are non-native English speakers. In most cases, they have learned English in a context quite similar to the one in which they teach. They may have never lived or traveled in a country where English functions as an L_1. Naturally, they have limitations as EFL users, and these have to be taken into account in discussing classroom communication.

In brief, the typical Romanian EFL classroom context permits relatively little freer communicative use of English with less emphasis on formal correctness. Also, the almost ubiquitous presence of a non-native English teacher and a monolingual student body create few opportunities for the natural use of English between teachers and students as well as among students. The teacher has to work hard to create natural verbal encounters, and even when one succeeds in this endeavour, English will remain a subject to be taught, and not the only means to communicate in the classroom.

Ambivalences of EFL Classroom Discourse

Classroom interaction and discourse derive from an integration of the teachers' and students' understanding of context and content, and greatly depend on the language employed and their strategic competencies. These reflect the participants' ability to communicate and learn through language, incorporating the negotiation of meaning in the act of communication.

When entering the EFL classroom, students leave behind the reality created by Romanian and start constructing a new perspective on the world and new group relationships. English becomes both a tool for potential encounters in the world outside the classroom and an instrument that creates and shapes the social meaning of the class itself. Through interacting with their teacher and classmates in English, the students learn not only lexis and grammar structures but also *how to use* this language in communicating. Through classroom communication and interaction in English, they also create a new group reality and identity. Consequently, we can see EFL learning as being more than a simple language learning task.

The duality of the student's identity as an individual learner on one hand, and a participant to a new learning group relationships on the other, may create tensions between the students' individual learning and the group's learning, and between teacher-controlled and individual-managed learning. These tensions are often amplified in the Romanian context, where teaching is still seen by many as directly determining learning and as being a predominantly verbal activity. All Romanian teachers know they are supposed to lecture, explain, ask questions and ask students to do things. They see their students as having a largely complementary role to their own – of listening, understanding, answering and responding to the initiatives of the teachers. The everyday educational process and classroom routines are based mostly on teacher – student dialogue, with emphasis laid on public, explicit, verbal expression of knowledge, achieving a close relationship between talking, teaching, and learning. (Stubbs 1983, 44).

In this context, EFL teachers are expected to be able to communicate effectively in English in the classroom, to operate in English using its textual, social, organizational,

and personal potential fully, within their fixed, institutionalized status, within expected and predictable behavior patterns, acquired through years of schooling. At the same time, they are expected to communicate *naturally in class*, to assume a variety of roles and tasks and negotiate them with their students, as these are brought together by the study of a language to be used for communication outside the classroom. Neither behavior can exist in its pure form exclusively. For the successful completion of classroom learning and teaching tasks, in an unstable balance between the instructional and the interactional, each teacher tries to establish a form of creative classroom discourse and interaction, by constantly negotiating and/or suspending social roles. Teacher and students employ and practice verbal and non-verbal strategies that they think to be appropriate to fulfil certain communicative and social goals. In the interaction, they produce their own behavior but also they understand and respond to the behavior of others. However, these classroom communication behaviors are to a large extent determined by the teacher's approach to teaching and learning that influences the kind of tasks – either teacher- or student-oriented – that the teacher assigns for and during the interaction.

Classroom discourse can be viewed not only in pedagogical terms but also as a social event. It is not only the outcome of the participants' knowledge of English as both usage and use, but also of the interaction of social and cultural structures that exist as a resource shared by the participants. And indeed, quite a lot of genuine social interaction can be generated in the EFL classroom, even when the topic of discussion is the English language itself. This perspective on classroom discourse has been suggested by researchers such as Allwright (1984) and Tsui (1987, 1995) among others.

Coulthard (Coulthard 1977, 101) maintains that verbal interaction inside the classroom differs markedly from natural conversation, as the main purpose of verbal interaction in the classroom is to instruct and inform. In the classroom, he says, the teacher chooses a topic, decides how it will be subdivided into smaller units and copes with possible digressions and misunderstandings from the part of the students. In contrast, in natural conversation, topic changes and topic developments are unpredictable and uncontrollable just because participants do not have the same degree of control. As for digressions and misunderstandings, they are dealt with by all contributors to the conversation.

However, it has been shown (Tsui 1995) that in natural conversation too, at any point in the discourse, there is a (limited) number of choices available to a second speaker following another speaker. For instance an initiating move, both in classroom communication and in natural conversation, confronts the next speaker with a limited number of choices that form a system: only a reply or another elicitation asking the first speaker to explain the question or comment on the question can be used.

In a recent study of goreign language classroom interaction, Lynch (Lynch 1966) points out that there are striking similarities between teacher – student interaction and natural conversations (both between native speakers of different levels of proficiency and between native and non-native speakers). Also, he shows that classroom interaction strategies are more important than teacher talk modifications in providing comprehensible input for the students. Not unlike the native speakers in casual conversations, EFL and ESL teachers (native or non-native) use a number of devices to enable their students to

understand them better and to avoid breakdowns in communication: confirmation checks, clarifications, comprehension and repetition requests, and decompositions.

However, as interaction is a two-way process (Tsui 1995, Lynch 1996), the comprehensibility of the classroom message does not depend solely on the teacher but also on how involved the students are in trying to obtain comprehensible input. Students can do this by using devices such as confirmation checks, clarification and repetition requests – devices similar to those employed for similar purposes by the teacher and by native speakers in natural conversation: The presence of such devices in classroom interaction is a sure signal that the students are actively engaged in the negotiation of meaning. Such practices are not completely absent from the Romanian EFL classroom, but the rather limited number of examples that I managed to collect shows that Romanian EFL teachers tend to disregard the interactional, social dimension of classroom talk.

If Romanian EFL teachers can become more aware of these similarities between classroom discourse and natural conversation and better prepared to exploit them skillfully, they may be able to introduce more natural conversational practices in their classrooms. The real challenge is for them to be able to deal with the pragmatic and linguistic unpredictability of the classroom and skillfully exploit its inherent naturalness.

In the more unpredictable student-oriented communication, the emphasis is on the interactional, interpersonal process itself, on the way in which each student interacts with the material of the task and negotiates intended meanings with other members of the group. The focus of such activities is on learning how to learn and how to acquire control over communication. The students can practice language use and also acquire interactive skills. However, irrespective of the teacher's approach to teaching and learning that can

be seen in the kind of activities that are favored, classroom interaction is characterised by both situational and linguistic planning and unpredictability and authenticity. These features lead to two types of classroom communication: interpersonal and pedagogical.

In brief, EFL classroom communication serves more than one functions at the same time: English is not only the subject of instruction but also the means through which instruction is achieved and interpersonal bonds are built. Students learn and use English concomitantly while interacting as members of a group, even when their L_2 resources are very limited. Moreover, the language that is taught and used in the classroom is learnt to be used outside it, as the ultimate goal of learning is for the students to be able to use English receptively and productively outside the classroom for purposes that, very often, cannot be foreseen in advance socially, situationally, tactically or linguistically.

CHAPTER TWO

In this chapter, I present an analysis of classroom discourse in the Romanian EFL classrooms. This analysis is drawn from research I conducted, and I provide examples to illustrate various discourse features. I describe the following aspects of discourse: macro-functions, micro-functions, language switching, and turn taking. I go on to examine correction practices. In my analysis, I provide two perspectives on these varied discourse strategies: the interpersonal and the pedagogical functions. Based on my analysis of the data, I argue that Romanian EFL teachers who ascribe to interpersonal goals in their classroom discourse can enhance their students' long term acquisition of interpersonal language skills.

The Functional Duality of EFL Classroom Communication

This chapter operates a binary distinction of pedagogy and interaction in EFL classroom discourse. This dual nature of EFL classroom discourse is not regarded as

serving two independent and mutually exclusive purposes; rather these are considered as being complementary.

a) Macro-Functions of EFL Classroom Discourse

EFL classroom talk aims at providing the students with the means of communicating successfully outside the classroom. To achieve this goal, classroom communication should serve two macro-functions simultaneously: the **pedagogical** and the **interpersonal** functions.

a.1. The Pedagogical Function

The pedagogical function is realised mainly through the content of the lessons. Pedagogic communication serves the teacher's lesson plan, taking into consideration not only the learners' needs and interests but also administrative, time and place restrictions. Paradoxically, the EFL teachers' concern with giving their students the linguistic means of communication has often resulted in restricted, simplified, detached teacher discourse. However, since the advent of the communicative approach, many teachers have been concerned with the sociolinguistic and cultural aspects of communication. English – taught as a subject – is taught through and for communication, and its interpersonal function cannot be neglected.

As the Romanian context provides limited input in English outside the classroom, the need for the inclusion in the EFL classroom communication of natural, socio-emotional aspects of in classroom is even greater. This should determine the teachers to take into account social and affective considerations in order to strengthen the affective domain and interpersonal communication and supplement them.

a.2. The Interpersonal Function

A big dilemma of the EFL teachers is how they could create the conditions of natural language use in the classroom. This prompted me to examine the communication generated in the actual classroom, taking into account the rights and obligations of the participants to discourse. I looked at the ways the ways in which the classroom, by virtue of being a social context within which people interact to some purpose, can provide authentic input and instances of natural communication.

In interpersonal communication the use of English is seen as a direct, involving personal experience through which acquired knowledge is demonstrated. Interpersonal communication often happens between students in pair or group work. In such instances the teacher has the role of manager, organiser and provider of input for pedagogic purposes, and teacher – student communication becomes less prominent. It may display features of authentic social discourse and interpersonal relationships or provide strategies for real communication that the students can adopt and exploit inside and outside the classroom. To promote this type of communication, the teacher, besides being an

authoritative source of language to whom the students may relate and whom they could imitate, must also be a person sensitive to classroom socio-emotional factors.

The Interpersonal Function and Imposition

The interpersonal function in teacher talk aims at developing two different, if not opposing kinds of relationships between teachers and students:

- to safeguard teacher power and status in the classroom
- to indicate social role relationships other than that of teacher – students, realised through small talk and observing face-preserving strategies.

EFL teachers must bear in mind that an appropriate choice of language serves social functions and that, although face-saving practices may be universal as processes and natural features of communication, they are culturally bound and different from society to society and from group to group within a society. Each language has its own rules as to when, how and to what degree a speaker may impose a given verbal behavior on the communication partners, and the norms of imposition vary according to the social and personal habits of the speakers.

Very often Romanians sound impolite, even rude, when speaking English. Most often than not, the lack of appropriate politeness markers in the English spoken by Romanians is not simply a transfer from L_1 but rather the consequence of a lack of awareness of the English usage rules and of the pattern of classroom training and speech simplification practised in many EFL classrooms. In their L_1, EFL students master strategies to avoid difficulty, to self-correct, and to ask for help, they know how to show others that they acknowledge and appreciate them, that is, they know how to save both their own and the

other communication participants' face. In the EFL classroom situation, however, the same students, less proficient in the foreign language than in their mother tongue, have fewer possibilities of avoidance and escape than in their natural settings, as they lack the linguistic means. Consequently, students may find turns at talk difficult to gain in English, the actions and reactions of the group members can be difficult to anticipate and the intentions difficult to interpret correctly. Their situation is made even more difficult when the teacher wants to be in control of the whole classroom interaction.

Natural communication presupposes reciprocal talk where participants are requested to be courteous to each other. Unfortunately, the data collected show that Romanian EFL teachers seldom respond to the learner's face-saving practices. A student's *I don't know* is nearly always followed by the teacher's *Does anybody else know?* that is, by an expression typical of a teacher-oriented attitude in a command context, by an illustration of the pedagogical function. Teachers often ignore the fact that such a turn in the students may also receive a more interpersonal response, and that in real communication the exchange would be finished appropriately with *OK, That's all right, Never mind,* etc.

Van Dijk's definition of a command context and its linguistic realisation (Van Dijk 1986) may be faithfully attributed to the Romanian EFL classroom and to EFL classroom talk. Van Dijk argues that the pragmatic function of an utterance is often somehow expressed in the grammatical structure of a sentence. The same, he claims, may hold for the expression of macro-speech acts through the discourse as a whole. Thus, the linguistic characteristics of a command context are typical uses of pronouns, an imperative syntactic structure, the use of certain lexical units, the absence of hedging and indirectness. Many of the speaker's sentences seem to refer to the actions of the group in the near future. All these characteristics

are amply illustrated in EFL teacher talk in the Romanian context. Teachers tend to use a lot of imperatives and statements in an attempt to monopolise discourse in the classroom and control the class. They usually demand strict turn taking and do not favor the questioning of their ideas, orders and wishes. They seem to favor the imperative form, the imperative followed by *please* and *Can I/ you...*?

Example 1

T: & (...) what was the weather like yesterday compared with the weather that we have today? + yes? + Anca

P_1: today is warmer than yesterday

T: yes

P_2: I don't think so

T: Cosmin you're a little bit strange + I think it was warm in the afternoon yesterday

(grade 8, 10th year of study)

Many EFL teachers make the most of the social ritual, using everyday phrases related to recurrent social situations such as greetings, valedictions, apologies, congratulations, etc. And yet, surprisingly, most of the lessons recorded that make up the data, begin abruptly, without any greeting and finish in the same manner. Of more than 250 recordings only in three of them does the teacher find it necessary to explain to the students why the lesson is being recorded and to introduce to the class the student who is doing the recording.

In principle, students become acquainted with various forms of making polite requests through models and classroom talk. Still they will use those they have often experienced in the classroom, since the socio-cultural rules and conventions of a foreign

language are learnt after prolonged exposure and lengthy practice. Hence the need for teachers to introduce interpersonal communication along with pedagogic communication as soon as possible and strive for authentic interpersonal behavior in the English classroom. In interpersonal communication both teachers and students must be involved as co-participants, teachers forgetting for a while their roles of managers, organisers and providers of comprehensible input for pedagogic purposes and acting like any other human beings.

b) Micro-Functions of EFL Classroom Discourse

Both the pedagogical and the interpersonal macro-functions can be realised by a range of micro-functions. For instance, the pedagogy function of teacher talk can be broken into **linguistic**, **managerial** and **instructional** functions. All these micro-functions promote the teaching and learning of English as a subject and take up most of the classroom time. For instance, if the teacher devotes a lot of time to language explanations or management instructions, the students have less opportunity to participate as speakers in classroom talk. Also, if the students spend much time in guided communication in the classroom, they may have less opportunity to be exposed to authentic input or produce creative language.

b.1. Pedagogical Micro-Functions

The **linguistic function** is realised and developed by language practices such as drill practice, questions – factual, display and referential –, language games, structured conversations, songs, communicative games, problem-solving activities, information-gap activities, simulations, free conversation, etc.

However, language itself can be exploited as a subject of discussion where communication exchanges arise naturally. English as a subject of discussion seems to be quite popular with Romanian EFL teachers as the presence of awareness-raising activities shows. Although the teachers may sometimes forget to fully exploit the potential of such discussions on language phenomena, and restrict themselves to the passing on of information, neglecting the interpersonal work that might be required of the participants, such discussions involving factual recall communication (or "skill-getting", in Wilga Rivers' words (Rivers 1983) and promoting mainly the pedagogy function, are still better than the one-way teacher – students communication.

Managerial functions (e.g. setting up activities and exercises, indicating transitions, disciplining the class, a.s.o.) and **instructional functions** (e.g. giving explanations and clarifications, checking comprehension, giving grammar instructions, giving cultural information, a.s.o.) also serve the pedagogy function of classroom communication.

b.2. Interpersonal Micro-Functions

The English classroom is both a social environment where interpersonal communication may take place and a learning environment that must include meaningful

interpersonal communication. Interpersonal communication, however, requires more than interaction: it requires the use of affective and social markers in the language. Classroom discourse, therefore, fulfils the parameters of meaningful interpersonal communication to the extent that it is characterised by **affective** and **social micro-functions**. The presence of these micro-functions in classroom discourse have to be promoted, exploited and intensified in order to increase the authenticity and naturalness of classroom communication.

The **affective functions** of teacher talk aim at developing interpersonal relationships between the teacher and the students. These functions can be realised as:

- *we*-code solidarity markers (examples 2, 3 and 4)
- tag questions (example 4)
- interpersonal humor (example 5)
- fun (example 6)
- language that indicates positive attitude towards the students (example 7)

For instance, teachers break the ice or foster solidarity purposefully using sometimes realisations of the affective function, as the following example shows:

Example 2

T: & are you tired?

P_1: yes

T: & why are you tired? + because...

P_1: I'm sick of school

T: you're sick of school + && who else is sick of school?

Ps: us

T: & it's not good + we + all of us + are you sick of school?

P2: yes

(grade 6, 8th year of study, lycée)

Like the teacher in example 2, the one in example 3 uses *we* when referring to her students, to show solidarity with them:

Example 3

T: OK + so + & who wants to go there + to the blackboard and write + come on Liviu it was your proposal

P_1: [goes to the blackboard]

P_2: ştiu ["I know"]

T: can't we speak in English? + in English Laura + this is an English lesson

(grade 9, 7th year of study, lower secondary school)

Both inside and outside the classroom, *we* is usually taken as a positive politeness marker indicating sharing and commonality. In the classroom, it is often used in correction to minimise offence for the student, but it can also be found in affectionate scolding, as in example 3 above.

The use of tags, indicating tentativeness of message, can also indicate that the teacher treats her students as equals from whom she requests confirmation:

Example 4

T: & we need a piece of chalk, don't we? + a piece of chalk? + you have some?

(grade 5, 7th year of study, lower secondary school)

In example 5, the students encouraged by the teacher also show the use of solidarity expressions:

Example 5

T: & good morning children

Ps: good morning teacher

T: & sit down please + sit down + please tell me how are you right now?

P_1: fine thanks

P_2: how are you?

T: I'm not too well

P_2: why?

T: do you really want to know?

Ps: yes

T: why?

P_3: because we'd like to know

Ps: {yes

T: find another reason + I want some more serious reason

P_4: because we want you to be + erm + very fine

P_5: we don't want you to be hurt

T: oh thank you I'm not hurt only…

P_6: we are your bodyguards

T: thank you sir very very nice + & good gentlemen + my nose is clogged and I'm not very well + I have a cold + yes

P_7: it's spring

(grade 6, 8th year of study, lower secondary school)

Other times, natural communication practices demonstrating affective functions are present in response to situational constraints that may come up unexpectedly in class. For instance, the teacher may encourage the students to use English instead of Romanian, as in example 3. Affective functions, therefore, are real and natural in classroom interpersonal communication and they may enhance teacher – learner interpersonal relationships. In example 6 the teacher scolds the student in a humorous and affectionate manner by taking over the mix of L_2 and L_1 elements used by the student that made his classmates laugh. Laughter in response to the student's solution clearly intensifies the affectionate climate of the lesson, releases tension and increases understanding and goodwill among students.

Example 6

P: I forgot my + erm + *burete* at home [Romanian for *sponge*, used as a board eraser; in some schools the student on duty is supposed to take it home and bring it back to school the next day]

Ps: [laughter]

T: you forgot your *burete* + why did you forget your *burete*? + [writing on the board] + that is *sponge* and you forgot your sponge

P_1: yes

(grade 8, 10th year of study, lower secondary school)

This kind of laughter in response to a classmate's or the teacher's comment can be evidence of the affection that the speaker enjoys.

Also, the use of *dear* by the teacher in example 7 makes her utterance friendlier and closer to everyday communication practices – less superior to inferior oriented:

Example 7

T: (…) OK + & do you know any other great capitals of the world + other great capitals of the world + for example which is the capital of Germany + yes

P: Bonn is

T: is it my dear

(grade 5, 7th year of study, lower secondary school)

As seen from the examples above, EFL teachers do employ conversational practices that show students the use of the language for various social role relationships. Often they make language sound less superior to inferior oriented. However, when they do so, they need to explain to students the functional value of the endearment expressions and that of the politeness markers so as they may not be misinterpreted. As human communication is multi-functional and there is not a one-to-one correspondence in the realisations of social and affective functions, often one cannot dissociate affective functions from social functions, as both social and affective considerations can prompt the teacher's behavior.

Traits of natural communication can be identified in all the examples given above and in many other instances of classroom discourse in which the teachers provide the missing lexical items very discreetly, without interrupting the flow of the students' interaction, or in which the teachers correct the students tactfully as if involved in casual conversation. The use of markers such as *OK, All right,* or the use of back channel signals (such as *Mhm*) also indicates to the students that they are within a joint activity similar to natural communication.

In spite of the importance of the **social** and **affective micro-functions** in classroom discourse not all EFL teachers seem to be aware of their importance or to consider them part of the English learning process. The pedagogical function tends to prevail in their classes if not to embody the English language learning process itself. In these classes, where the pedagogy function seems to have an upper hand, teacher talk addressed to learners often sounds flat, impersonal, primarily aiming at discovering whether knowledge has been comprehended or acquired. Moreover, sometimes the teachers blunder socially while seeming to ignore the student's message, carried away by stereotypical (pedagogical) exchanges, as the following sample shows:

Example 8

T: & acuma faceți liniște ["quiet now"]+ all right + all right + who is absent today? + who is absent today?

P: Mihailescu Andreea + Sandu Moraru + Sandu Moraru

T: but where is Cioroviței?

P: he is ill

T: he is ill?

P: yes

T: & good + all right + what was your homework for today?

(grade 10, 6th year of study, lycée)

Other times, the teacher's attempt to confine classroom discourse within pedagogic limits is in conflict with the students' attempt to lead talk in a direction that may become a source of social communication. In example 9, for instance, the teacher's inhibiting remark is very likely to spoil the teacher – student interpersonal relationship.

Example 9

T: & (...) what was the weather like yesterday compared with the weather that we have today? + yes? + Anca

P_1: today is warmer than yesterday

T: yes

P_2: I don't think so

T: Cosmin you're a little bit strange + I think it was warm in the afternoon yesterday

(grade 8, 10th year of study, lower secondary school)

The fact that teachers sometimes fail to seize the opportunity offered by students is most probably a reflection of their fixity of purpose in pursuing pedagogic goals only.

In Search of Natural Interaction: Return to L_1

Quite often EFL classroom discourse involves code switching. Papaefthymiou-Lytra (Papaefthymiou-Lytra 1990, 170) argues that there are four categories of factors determining language switch in the foreign language classroom: **linguistic, affective, social,** and **pedagogical.** Out of these four categories, the paper examines those connected to natural interpersonal expression – the affective and social factors –, as these switches deflect students from practising the interpersonal function in English.

The data collected show that language switches are quite frequent and that they are is usually motivated functionally. They are encountered in both teacher – student and student – student talk and can be explained by a number of factors. EFL teachers may switch to Romanian when they are pressed for time or want to cover some specific aspects of the lesson quickly, as switching to Romanian saves time and ensures immediate understanding of the metalanguage or of classroom instructions. Teachers seem to switch to Romanian at all stages of the lesson, when they feel that their students' linguistic competence is too poor to cope with a specific situation.

Pupils in their turn switch to Romanian when they feel that their language level is not adequate to express exactly what they know or feel. Even advanced learners may switch to L_1 if they feel there is no equivalence of concepts between the two languages or when they feel they do not master the appropriate linguistic realisations of the thoughts and ideas that are really important to them.

Affective Factors That Determine Language Switch

The preference for Romanian may be determined by affective factors. Students seem to show preference for the use of their mother tongue when expressing such things as:

- motivation and interest in learning English
- need for verbal humor and relaxation in the classroom
- need to express attitudes, feelings, and preferences about the work done in class.

Teachers may also prefer Romanian when they feel that tension and dissatisfaction is building up in the classroom. For instance, both teachers and students tend to switch to Romanian when they find themselves in a psychological 'role crisis', that is when they have to perform otherwise than expected in a traditional teacher – student relationship, with its specific authority, superiority, and knowledge polarities. In the Romanian context, teachers are still perceived as being invested with full authority and in control of the progress of the lesson, and by this very role, they are in a superior position to their students. The latter generally see teachers as being not only knowledgeable about the general field under discussion but also in possession of all main individual items of information that are exchanged during the lesson. The teacher in example 10 below, for instance, exercises her authoritarian powers over the class, reinforcing them through the use of Romanian:

Example 9

P: [reading] the princess

T: pune-ţi limba între dinţi ["put your tongue between your teeth"]

P: the hand

T: şi de ce râzi + fii serioasă ["why are you laughing + be serious"]

P: of the princess... [goes on reading]

T: dar pune-ţi fetiţă limba între dinţi + hai nu mă enerva + hai ++ citeşte mai departe [“and put you tongue between your teeth young girl + come on don’t get on my nerves + come on + read on”]

P: [goes on reading]

T: [to another pupil] ieşi afară + las-o să citească sau... [“get out + let her read or... “]

P: [goes on reading]

(9th grade, 8th year of English, vocational school)

The switch determined by the need for verbal humor and relaxation in the classroom is exemplified by the following exchange:

Example 11

P: I forgot my + erm + *burete* at home

Ps: [laughter]

T: you forgot your *burete* + why did you forget your *burete* [writing on the blackboard] that is *sponge* and you forgot your sponge

P: yes

(grade 8, 10th year of English, lower secondary school)

Learning materials that are closely related to learner experiences or drawn from the Romanian setting may also constitute a stimulus for language switch as the need to communicate interest, knowledge, familiarity or affective attachment may well surpass the linguistic resources of the students and sometimes even those of the teachers.

Example 12

T: where does it come from? + where does it spring + de unde izvorăşte Dunărea? ["where does the Danube spring from"?]

P: it comes from the mountains Pădurea Neagră

T: it springs from Pădurea Neagră Mountains ["the Black Forest Mountains"] + good

(7th grade, 6th year of English

Social Factors That Determine Language Switch

Social factors pertaining to face-to-face interaction may also determine the use of Romanian. Generally, the teacher interacts with the students both to impart knowledge and to elicit responses from the students as if they were a single interlocutor, or s/he nominates a particular student. In other cases, the teacher and students manage to duplicate in the classroom the type of more natural interaction that they have outside it. This differs from pedagogical communication in at least two aspects:

- students get the language interaction directed at themselves as individuals
- students get more language addressed to them than if they were to wait for the teacher to allocate them a turn.

This kind of behavior can be encouraged by comprehension and confirmation checks on the part of the teacher and by clarification requests formulated by pupils, all serving as mechanisms for input modification by triggering natural repetitions and rephrasings of input content. Such episodes of more interpersonal communication are often

centred on topics which are not directly related to the immediate content of the lesson and which frequently imply affective dimensions (e.g. the conflict in example 13). However, this classroom language sample shows that such exchanges tend to trigger language switch, just because they are so close to natural communication. Interestingly, as soon as the teacher has settled the conflict (in Romanian), everyone switches back to English:

Example 13

[the pupils are struggling over a textbook]

P_1: doamna profesoară ++ [“Madam”]

P_2: dă-i-o şi lui [“give it to him too”]

P_1: dă-mi şi mie [“give it to me too”]

T: luaţi şi citiţi ++ de ce nu citeşti Bogdan? ["start reading ++ why aren't you reading Bogdan?"]

(grade 8, 7th year of study, lower secondary school)

Teachers also get involved naturally in interpersonal communication when they are required to talk or comment on topics unrelated to the lesson or to give their personal opinion on the content of the lesson:

Example 14

T: yes + so tennis + what about cooking? + you don't need a kind of equipment to cook + well + equipment nu înseamnă neapărat nişte maşini de astea ["equipment doesn't necessarily mean such machinery"] + I mean any kind of complicated machinery + I don't think that you can cook without any equipment + all right + do you find any other activities done with equipment + did you say cycling?

P: yes

(10th grade, 9th year of English, lycée)

Other instances when the teachers employ Romanian are the cases when disciplinary measures are taken. As urgency may override all other concerns, Romanian is the most effective vehicle for simple and prompt requests or commands. Obviously, it is easier to reinforce discipline if teachers address pupils in their mother tongue, as in example 13. Also, some teachers opt for Romanian when they do not feel confident enough to handle metalinguistic or metacommunicative language in English. The use of Romanian in such circumstances, even if for pedagogic reasons, is felt to be a protective strategy to save face:

Example 15

T: yes 29th of course + what is 29th? + what is 29th?

P: este un numeral ordinal care se formează prin adăugarea particolei *th* la sfârşitul... ["it is an ordinal numeral formed by adding the particle *th* at the end..."]

T: da + şi în față ce mai avem? ["yes + and before it what is there?"]

P: în față *the* ["before there is *the*"]

T: de regulă *the* + deci numeralele ordinale se formează + din numeralele cardinale care primesc o terminație + bineînțeles că suferă şi nişte transformări la pronunție sau şi la scriere + sigur că da + deci de ce este important să cunoaşteți bine numeralele ordinale? + o cauză foarte corectă şi concretă este... ["as a rule *the* + so ordinal numerals are formed of + of the cardinal numerals that get a termination + of course they also suffer transformations in pronunciation or and in writing + of course + so why is it important to know numerals well? + one very correct and concrete cause is..."]

P: exprimarea zilei de naştere sau a datei ["expressing birthday or date"]

T: a datei sigur că da + yes + the next question + Andreea ["date of course"]

(grade 8, 7th year of study, lower secondary school)

Language switch in the EFL classroom often results from the combined teachers' need to control the class and save face and the students' desire to avoid displaying their poor EFL competence in class. In most cases language switches fulfil more than one function at

the same time. They can also be seen as an attempt at suspending the artificiality of the EFL class communication, where both non-native students and teachers of English have to use a means of expression that is not their L_1 and whose imperfect mastery may be at times a communication barrier.

Language switch can function as a teaching/learning strategy on condition it used by teachers and students alike with discretion. Excessive use of language switch deprives both students and teachers of the opportunity for more interpersonal communication in English, where they could negotiate together meanings and differences of opinions. As a result, the less the students use English in the classroom, the less adept negotiators they can be expected to become outside it.

Dominant Classroom Discourse Turns Between Pedagogical and Interpersonal Practices

In natural conversation the meaning and illocutionary force of utterances are negotiated between the participants. In classroom discourse, the illocutionary force of the utterances is often determined by the teacher. This section looks at the functions of a characteristic type of initiation – the elicitation, and at those of different types of follow-ups in classroom discourse.

In natural conversation the initiating turn is subjected to the interpretation of the addressees, who display their interpretation in the response, which is usually followed by a further contribution from the speaker – the follow-up. In this last turn the speaker has an

opportunity to inform the addressees that his initiation has been correctly interpreted, or that the addressees' response was acceptable and the whole interaction has been felicitous. The follow-up move is likely to be withheld when the speaker is not happy with the addressees' response or when the interaction has not been felicitous. On the follow-up is based the onward development of the conversation.

In the classroom, teachers do most of the talking, determine the topic of the talk, and initiate most of the exchanges. Of the possible classroom initiating acts – directives, requestives, elicitations, informatives –, the teacher-initiated elicitations are by far the most common. The dominant pattern of interactions is similar to that commonly found in all classrooms: (teacher's) elicitation, (student's) response and (teacher's) follow-up and it may take up to 70 per cent of classroom talk (Tsui 1985).

Elicitations. Elicitations in natural conversation require a verbal reply or a non-verbal response. They fall into several categories, according to the kind of reply expected: inform, confirm, agree, commit, repeat and clarify (Tsui 1994). Classroom elicitations vary from teacher's checks of student comprehension or knowledge to checks of students' attention (e.g. elicitation and check acts) or attempts to involve the latter in the lesson (metatalk acts). Most teacher elicitations are of the repeat, clarify and inform types and as such have a pedagogical function. These limit the students' output, as they encourage the regurgitation of facts or the use of pre-formulated language structures and discourage the natural communication of personal ideas. In the classroom, meaning negotiation is absent most of the time, as the meaning of the question and the appropriateness of the answer are predetermined by the teacher. If a students' response does not match the teacher's expectations it may be negatively evaluated.

In contrast, only few questions are followed by answers that inform the teachers, and do not generate the opportunity for these to evaluate the answer as good or bad. Such questions often perform the interactional function and are typical of the interpersonal discourse. Outside the classroom, people seldom ask repeat and clarify type questions, and when they do so, they are very careful not to sound challenging or aggressive. Also, the meaning of a question or of an answer can be subject to negotiation between the speaker and the hearer.

Follow-ups. In casual conversation the follow-up turn has the general function of acknowledging the outcome of the interaction. The evaluation of the correctness of the reply or response is only one of the possible realizations of this general function (Tsui 1994, 40).

In the classroom, the follow-up turns very often include evaluations and rejects realized through corrections. Both teacher and students can make use of evaluation, but typically, it is the teacher who points out errors and requests students to correct their own or their fellow students' mistakes and thus restores communication. Evaluation is an integral part of the classroom interaction process to such an extent that it can be considered a vehicle of socialization (Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks 1977).

Corrective Action Between Pedagogical and Interpersonal Practices

Ideally, classroom correction should make use of strategies and language behaviors similar to those used in natural communication, which minimize offence for the speaker. In practice, classroom error correction practices can be either supportive or

aggressive in nature. Supportive practices help students to solve problems by themselves and as such promote the interpersonal function. Aggressive practices lead to either teacher or other students resolving conflict and promote the pedagogical function. The overt language behavior of the corrector will demonstrate whether the practice followed promotes pedagogical communication only or it is also oriented towards natural communication and promotes interaction. Correction practices can be classified as **commission**, **location**, or **identification** (Papaefthymiou-Lytra 1990).

Commission practices involve informing the speaker of the commission of error – letting the speaker know of the presence of a problem and thus implicitly requesting a rerun. **Location** practices involve informing the speaker of the location of conflict – locating the problem for the speaker and allowing the latter to self-correct. Finally, **identification** practices involve informing the speaker of the identity of error – identifying the problem for the speaker and setting it right for him/her.

In the data collected in the Romanian EFL classroom, all three strategies are present, realised in a variety of practices. However, it must be mentioned that most of the practices identified serve the pedagogical communication.

a) Commission Practices. A student's erroneous utterance can be followed by a challenge that informs the speaker of the existence of a problem. The challenge can be supportive (if it invites self-correction) or aggressive in nature, depending on the intention of the participants, their view of classroom communication, and their view of the immediate needs of the specific situation.

a.1. The commission practice that serves the **interpersonal function** is realized when the teacher and pupils employ supportive challenging moves. A teacher's supportive challenge move to a student may be realized as: *Do you think so? Are you sure? I didn't hear what you said, Pardon? Can you repeat? e*tc.

Example 16

P: she have + she has

T: I didn't hear what you said

P: she rang me up yesterday

(grade 8, 7th year of study, lower secondary school)

The commission practices that serve the **pedagogy function** are realized as:

a.2. The teacher or the pupils employ aggressive challenge moves, that may be realized as: *Be careful, Something sounds wrong here, False step, Say it again, Mistake, Wrong, Try again,* etc.

Example 17

P: have you drink a coffee?

T: & now we have another mistake + pay attention + what is the mistake?

Ps: {drunk a coffee

(grade 8, 7th year of study)

In the following example the teacher sounds even more aggressive when she formulates the challenge in Romanian. Ironically, the use of Romanian, probably meant to reduce the distance between the speakers, makes correction sound even more

aggressive as the implications may be that the student is unable to understand simple English or that the mistake is so gross that the teacher is reacting emotionally:

Example 18

P: my father (…) eaten (…) two of them and (…) I eaten last of them

T: nu nu nu ["no no no"]

(grade 9, 8th year of study, vocational school)

Young pupils tend to inform their classmates of the presence of a problem by shouting out *No* and adding the correct reply. Alternatively, they may compete for the floor, by raising their hands in an attempt to attract their teacher's attention or by calling out *Miss, Madam, Sir* (often in Romanian). These practices can also be considered aggressive as they do not take into account any face work.

a.3. The teacher addresses the class requesting other students to negotiate conflict and set things right. If the teacher expects some other student(s) to provide correction, then the challenge move may be realized as: *Do you all agree? Any other opinion? What do you think?* etc.:

Example 19

T: so you think that those people didn't like her + & let's have another opinion

(grade 12, 11th year of study, lycée)

Example 20

P: he wanted to learn who was Eliza

T: to find out who Eliza really was + did he? + what do you think? + did he?

(same as above)

b) Location Practices. A location practice is similar to a commission practice: the teacher or the students request clarifications or explanations from the speaker. In order to locate the problem, they may repeat the correct part pausing just before the problematic part of the utterance, and thus inviting the speaker to self-correct. The location practices that serve the **interpersonal function** are realized as:

b.1. The teacher (or another student) repeats the correct part pausing before a problematic bit of utterance hoping the speaker will resolve the problem:

Example 21

P: he has his mind very clear

T: he has a…

P: he has a clear mind

(grade 12, 11th year of study, lycée)

b.2. At other times a clarification or an explanation of the speaker's utterance may be requested before a response is provided:

Example 22

P: he was supposed to win most of the courses

T: to win what?

P: the races

(grade 10, 9th year of English, lycée)

Especially if it is the students who employ location practices to request clarifications or reruns from the previous speaker (who can be the teacher), the practice is very similar to the strategy of clarification request used in natural communication:

Example 23

T: what makes it strange?

P: I don't know what makes it strange but I can't understand what's all about in this fragment

T: what is special about the fragment?

P: there are just long sentences in it + this is strange + that's all

(grade 12, 11th year of study, lycée)

b.3. The **pedagogical** function is realized by those teacher utterances that realize the challenge move by repeating the wrong item with a low-rise intonation. In this case, too, the teacher hopes that the student will self-correct:

Example 24

P: the teachers come at school at two thirty

T: come at school?

P: come to school

(grade 4, 3rd year of study, primary school)

b.4. A pedagogical challenge move may be as short as a blunt *No* interrupting the students' utterance as soon as the error was committed (as in example 25), or it may be more expanded:

Example 25

T: what kind of animal is it?

P: it is a domestic…

T: [interrupting] no no

P: măgar ["donkey"]

T: it's a donkey

(grade 2, 1st year of study, primary school)

b.5. The function of a teacher's pedagogic elaborate move is to help students to self-correct, and this can be done using associative semantic networks they might have developed:

Example 26

T: what else will be happening?

P: lost luggage

T: lost or left?

P: left luggage + they will be looking for left luggage

(grade 9, 8th year of English, lycée)

If the response to a challenge move in commission or location practices is not appropriate, the same cycle may start all over again.

Example 27

T: what about the associations he makes?

P: why does he wish to be dead when he finds out about it?

T: my question was different

P: when he finds out about Parnell's death?

T: yes?

P: because Parnell was a personality while he was alive

T: yes + and…

(grade 12, 11th year of study, lycée)

The sequence challenge – response may be repeated as many times as the teacher or the class think appropriate. Often, with junior classes, the sequence reminds us of a game-like sequence encountered in child talk:

Example 28

T: He was also a…

P: a famous mathematic

T: ma…

P: mathematicals

T: ma…

P: mathematics

T: ma…

Ps: {mathematician

(grade 7, 6th year of English, lower secondary school)

If a student is unable to self-correct and if other students cannot do so after the teacher's challenge moves, the teacher undertakes the responsibility to bring an end to the negotiation deadlock. This practice is particularly encountered in elementary classes where the pupils' knowledge and ability in using English is limited. In example 29, for instance, the use of Romanian requested by the teacher is indicative of the pupils' level of English and of the function of the practice:

Example 29

T: & what is this?

P: this is a cook

T: not cook

P: cock?

T: what is it in Romanian?

P: cocoş [“cock”]

T: and cook?

P: bucătar? [“cook”]

T: yes

(grade 2, 1st year of English, primary school)

c) Identification Practices. Romanian EFL teachers seem to favor identification practices for error correction. These, in principle, resemble restatement strategies in natural communication, where the addressee restates the first speaker’s intentions and implicitly requests a confirmation of the latter’s understanding and interpretation. Using such strategies, participants build up a common ground of shared knowledge.

c.1. The only identification practice that serves the **interpersonal function** is realized by the teacher or the students who identify the error and provide a correct response without requesting a repeat:

Example 30

P: there is a list of + erm + verbs

T: of irregular verbs + and what else can you say about this grammar book?

(grade 10, 9th year of study, lycée)

The identification practices that serve the **pedagogy function**, can be realized as:

c.2. The teacher identifies the point of conflict, provides the correct response, then requests a repetition of it by the student(s). For instance, in example 31 the teacher herself identifies the mistake and invites a follow-up repetition of the corrected item by the student, while in example 32, the corrected utterance is provided by another student.

Example 31

P: here are restaurants green parks gardens and campsites ++ with a great feeling of holiday activity and + relaxious

T: relaxations

P: relaxations + and the possibility of medical treatment

(grade 11, 10th year of study, lycée)

Example 32

T: & what happened when George found out that it was his shirt in fact?

P_1: he stopped laughing

P_2: his face color got …

P_1: changed

P_2: changed suddenly + yes

(grade 9, 8th year of study, lycée)

The follow-up moves may be explicitly required by the teacher or are supplied by the students of their own accord, as a confirmation of the teacher's or their classmate's interpretation of their intention. Interestingly, in 32, where the correction is provided by a classmate, the first student feels obliged to produce a follow-up confirmation, which sounds natural due to the presence of the marker *yes* and suggests a different power relationship.

c.3. The teacher may confirm another student's identification. In some cases, the teacher identifies only partly the required item for the student, in an attempt to help the latter to finish off the utterance, and then confirms another student's identification, as in example 33:

Example 33

T: & who is his friend?

P_1: Kit is his…

P_2: Kit is his cat

P_1: yes + his cat

T: <u>Kit is his cat</u>

(grade 4, 3rd year of study, primary school)

To perform a follow-up, the teacher either repeats the correct solution (as in example 33) or chooses from among a closed class of items such as *Yes, Good, (That's) Right, That's it, OK*, *All right.* At other times, the teacher may simply praise the student who provided the correct utterance. Sometimes the teacher's *(that's) right* may inhibit the student's follow-up, as in example 34:

Example 34

T: tell me what Andy does

P: Andy swim

T: Andy swims + right

(grade 4, 3rd year of study, primary school)

c.4. The teacher may use lengthy comments and evaluations concerning the correct response that aim at providing students with further information and at helping them store the new item in their short-term memory. Such comments consist of classifications, categorizations, analogies or other cognitive strategies.

Example 35

P_1: when did you ++ spend…

T: spend your holiday there?

P_2: I spent…

T: I spent it…

P_2: I spent it +erm + last year

T: last year + good + we use present perfect in these questions "have you ever + have you ever been?" and then we follow with another question in past tense

(grade 6, 5th year of study, lower secondary school)

Comments or evaluation may be also be delivered in Romanian, as in example 36:

Example 36

P: I've just (…) jumped in the river + but I've not came home yet

T: come home

P: come home

T: came home + past tense + este timpul trecut + a doua formă, nu punem a doua formă + punem a treia formă ["it is the past tense + the second form + we don't use the second form + we use the third form"]

(grade 8, 7th year of study, lower secondary school)

The data recorded offer a variety of negotiation types meant to handle errors. They show that many Romanian EFL teachers prefer to identify errors for their students, thus emphasizing pedagogical communication to the detriment of interpersonal communication. From the examination of the recordings we can conclude that the handling of error in the Romanian EFL classroom often lacks the social and affective features of natural communication. The aggressive *Wrong answer* or *No, no* can hardly be seen as an equivalent of the supportive *I didn't quite hear/understand you*. The role relationship that the aggressive realizations indicate is that of a powerful, knowledgeable and distant teacher, who is in the classroom to instruct and scold the careless, inattentive students, whenever it is necessary. The teacher's power stems from better knowledge of English and from a better mastery of discourse and communication strategies.

This classroom behavior, strongly indicative of the pedagogy function of classroom communication, can be partly explained by the (still) relatively homogeneous structure of the Romanian society, which prompts the students into underestimating the importance of rhetorical skills and the communicative dimensions of discourse. Romanian teachers tend to disregard individuality and the negotiation of social relationships and so do many of their students. Imposition is not uncommon in the

Romanian EFL classrooms: silence is almost always penalized by both teacher and classmates, verbosity and aggressiveness tend to be imposed on the others and positively assessed. Face-work also tends to be aggressive. All students fear losing face when using English incorrectly or inappropriately. In Romanian, they know how to save their own and the other speakers' face, but in English they have fewer avoidance strategies. Moreover, the classroom itself offers fewer avoidance and escape strategies than the natural context. Here the presence of a powerful, if not dictatorial figure – the teacher – makes student face-saving even more difficult.

In spite of the presence of a few practices that serve the interpersonal function, Romanian EFL teachers seem to seldom exploit their students' comprehension and production difficulties – linguistic or cognitive – to introduce more conversational practices for error handling. Their language behavior is reminiscent of a command context rather than an easy-going socializing one where a variety of roles can be expressed through language. The use of Romanian intensifies this command context, as Romanian is employed as a means to reinforce authority and discipline in the classroom.

Also, Romanian EFL teachers tend to prefer other-participant practices to resolve conflict in classroom discourse. They seem to disregard that other-participant action should function not only as a pedagogical device but also lead to socialization through the use of English. In natural communication, conversation participants provide naturally the missing information, request clarification or repetition in an attempt to set things straight and get the meaning negotiation going and also make sure that they comply with the conventions of politeness prevailing in their culture.

Romanian EFL teachers should be aware of the short- and long-term consequences of the practices and the language they adopt for using in the classroom. If their goals are strictly pedagogical in nature, then their practices and language only cater for the short-term needs of their students in the classroom setting. If the goals are interpersonal in nature, then their practices and language cater for the long-term needs of the students and go beyond the classroom proper.

CHAPTER THREE

In this chapter, I describe strategies that Romanian EFL teachers could implement to help their students get more exposure to the interpersonal language they need to use receptively and productively outside the classroom. The strategies are the following: a call for natural use of language, teacher self-analysis of discourse, diversification of interaction formats, and group activities.

Bringing Classroom Discourse Closer to Natural Conversation

1. More Natural Teacher Behavior in Teacher-Centered Classes

In teacher-centered classrooms, the teacher has control over both the topic and the turn-taking mechanism. Consequently, the information exchanged between the teacher and students and among students is predictable and most of the time ritualized. Questions are mostly of the display type. However, even in these limited circumstances, the teacher

could systematically encourage the students to adopt some of the features of natural discourse.

One of the first steps the teacher may take in order to bring classroom discourse closer to natural communication is to tolerate silences and to refrain from filling the gaps between turns. This will put pressure on the students to initiate turns. Also, the teacher may direct her gaze towards any potential addressee of a student's utterance rather than nominate this. Also, rather than allotting all turns, the teacher could teach the students floor-taking gambits. Generally speaking, the teacher should refrain from always being the next potential speaker and the students' exclusive addressee.

Moreover, the teacher could encourage students to sustain their speech beyond one or two sentences and to take longer turns. The data show that often teachers use a student's short utterance as a springboard for their own lengthy turn or they even cut off an exchange too soon to pass on to another student. Exchanges with individual students could be extended to include clarification of the speaker's intentions and the teacher's understanding of them.

Encouraging Natural Expression in Teacher-Centered Activities

Natural expression can be encouraged in teacher-centered activities in several ways. Here are a few places on which Romanian EFL teachers could work:

- English can be used not only to deal with the subject matter, but also to regulate all the classroom management and the whole interaction

in the classroom. This kind of language will be a model of how to use interpersonal gambits in natural discourse;

- The number of display questions should be kept to a minimum. The more genuine the requests for information are, the more natural the discourse becomes;
- The topic at hand could be built together with the students by assuming that whatever they say contributes to this topic. A student's utterance should never be cut off arbitrarily because the teacher perceives it to be irrelevant as it may be very relevant to the students' perception of the topic.

Handling Error

Errors can be considered natural accidents on the way to interpersonal communication. Natural forms of interaction in the classroom require that the teacher frequently adopt a communication behavior characterized by:

- attention paid to the students' message rather than to the form in which the utterances are cast. Comments and repairs can be kept for later;
- pragmatic treatment of linguistic errors done by interaction adjustment and not as a normative form of redress. It can be done, for example, by reformulating the incorrect utterance in a correct manner rather than by pointing explicitly to the error;

- leaving students a choice in the linguistic form of their utterance;
- making extensive use of natural feedback (*Hum, Interesting, I thought so, too*), rather than evaluating and judging every student's utterance following its delivery (*Fine, Good*);
- avoiding constant over praise;
- giving students explicit credit by quoting them (*Just as X said, Picking up on what Y was saying…)* and not taking credit for what students have contributed by using what they said only to further the teacher's point.

Self-Analysis of Teacher's Discourse

A relatively easy way for teachers to see how natural their classroom talk is and where they stand is to record themselves in the classroom and note their questions and then ask themselves how many of the questions asked were factual, genuine questions and not display. Also they may consider their follow-up turns and see how predictable these responses are, how varied and what they mean when they say *Good,* for instance. Starting from the analysis of such a highly equivocal word, and asking themselves if they meant to judge the quality of the form or that of the content of the utterance, or to congratulate the student for having responded, or if they meant to frame the exchange and mark a pause before their next question, and what the students may have understood, can

be the first steps towards naturalness. The next is to think how one could diversify their responses so as to make them more reflective of their meaning.

2. Diversifying Interaction Formats

Another way of cultivating naturalness in the classroom is through a variety of interaction formats. The formats through which the language is used and acquisition can take place in the classroom should reflect the multiple communication needs and purposes of the class as a social group engaged in the learning process. Restricting classroom interaction to the public, teacher-monitored and teacher-controlled discourse is limiting. Asking the students to answer only display questions is a reduction of the social dimensions of language teaching and implicitly, of the interpersonal potential of the classroom. Allowing the students to recognize their mistakes on their own from the interactional context in which they are made, and giving them the freedom to act upon this awareness, can and should be developed within a variety of contexts and group formats.

Some Romanian ELT teachers still fear chaos and conflicts arising within groups and the use of L_1 in group work, but group behavior in the classroom can be taught and learnt. Various forms of discourse must be demonstrated and practiced for different interaction formats. Also, specific tasks that require deliberation and negotiation among the members of a group can be set to be achieved within a strict time limit. Such interaction constraints may deflect communication stress and lower its level by reducing the uncertainty and potential anxiety inherent in any group-centered situation.

Group-Centered Activities

By moving towards more group-centered activities, classroom interaction gives the group more practice in interpersonal talk and in the management of topics. In group work, the kind of questions that the teacher and students may ask can show the information gap characteristic of natural discourse, in which the speakers ask questions only when they need the information they do not have. Also, in group work answers are not judged according to whether they correspond to what the teacher had in mind, but are assessed according to how well they contribute to the topic. The students' perceptions and intentions are the object of negotiation and constant readjustment. However, if students are to take an active part in group interactions, they must be shown how to control the way topics are established, built, and sustained, and how to participate in group interaction.

A few techniques that could be used in developing group interaction strategies are given below:

Face-saving gambits. The teacher could explicitly sensitize the students to the routine of group conversation and the mechanisms of perceived fluency by teaching the student group activity etiquette: the appropriate ways of opening and closing a conversation, polite ways of interrupting, making a request, making a negative comment, and the like. A number of alternative gambits can be given either on the board or on

handouts and the groups can be asked to repeat these practicing them with appropriate or slightly exaggerated intonation. Students can then practice these individually by addressing the teacher or a fellow student as an opportunity arises or is created within the limits of the lesson.

Discursive role-play. After the teacher has introduced a given discourse strategy to the whole group (through modeling or by playing a recording of native speakers), pairs of students are given two minutes to act out a situation requiring the use of this strategy. For instance, they can be asked to act out fictitious telephone conversations, in which the connection is so bad that the two speakers repeatedly have to ask for clarification, check understanding, and request and offer rephrasings, repetitions or paraphrases.

In a somewhat similar activity, the students are encouraged to give their partners feedback. These are recounting the most frightening experience they have ever had, using such emotional expressions as *My God, Really? How awful, At night?* One peer observer notes how the pairs manage the conversation and the gambits they use. The observers report to the class. A general discussion on the role of the listeners may bring the interaction process into explicit focus.

Peer-observation of discourse. The next step can be taken by asking students to observe their own group discourse. Three – four students can lead a one minute-debate on a topic of their choice in front of the class. One-third of the class observes the turn-taking routine, one-third the way the topic is steered from speaker to speaker, and one-third the way in which errors or misunderstandings are repaired and how the teacher and students conduct a 15-20 minute debriefing.

Group Activities That Promote Natural Discourse

Group decoding of a text. A reading text can be assigned to a group of students with the teacher acting as recording secretary. The students brainstorm lexical items they find important towards understanding the story. A time limit of 4-5 minutes can be set. The students can take the floor if and when they wish; during the time allotted the students are in total control of the discourse. The teacher writes all their contributions on the board in their correct form, without evaluating them. After the brainstorming, the teacher can suggest how the separate items can be linked to make chunks of cohesive discourse. The students can then take over again and suggest which chunks can be linked in which way. In the end, the teacher can draw the links on the board and recapitulate the suggestions made.

Interpreting a story. The teacher chooses a story and asks one open-ended question that allows many possible answers, all of which illuminate various meanings of the story, and writes the question on the board. The group brainstorms different responses. The teacher neither prompts nor monitors or evaluates the responses, but merely records them on the board in their correct form. The students' contributions are freely initiated and one idea often prompts another, as in natural discourse, especially if the teacher restrains herself from intervening in any way. In less spontaneous classes, the students can be given some time to write their answers; the papers are then collected and

read aloud anonymously by a student. Since the students in the group focus their response according to their perception and personal experience, the list written on the board by the teacher offers multiple perspectives on the subject, which can then be discussed as a group. As a result of this discussion, the teacher may suggest grouping items using logical links, analogy, contrast, or inference. Thus the group arrives at an interpretation of the text through common exploration and discovery by teacher and students.

Get to know someone or guess who someone is. In this variant of the well-known icebreaker, the interviewer may ask only four direct questions. The rest of the conversation must be steered through interpretive statements such as *Oh, so you don't live in London?* paraphrases like *You mean you don't like to…?* or comments (e.g. *That's amazing*) that show empathy and understanding. A peer observer notes the strategies used and makes a report to the class.

As the data show, despite the increasing amount of communication in the classroom, Romanian EFL teachers and students often fall short of their goal because their style of interaction remains at the instructional end of the continuum. Furthermore, by maintaining patterns of institutionalized interaction and a social reality typical of the Romanian culture, EFL teachers reinforce ethnocentric attitudes rather than help to dispel them. On the other hand, pretending that the classroom is similar to the natural environment of the target culture and relinquishing the control of the interaction entirely to the students would be both deceiving and threatening to all parties involved. However, only by broadening the students' discourse options in the classroom can students stop being exclusively foreign language consumers and become the active architects of interpersonal understanding.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

The paper explores aspects of EFL classroom discourse in the Romanian context and pleads for the use and cultivation of natural communication practices and relevant language behavior in the EFL classroom. This need is overbearing in the Romanian context, where natural conversational input outside the classroom is almost non-existent.

Classroom interpersonal communication is counteracted by frequent language switch. For a variety of linguistic, psycholinguistic, personal and affective factors, pupils and teachers find recourse to Romanian in order to achieve more impact in their communication.

EFL classroom discourse is ambivalent between pedagogic and interpersonal communication. In spite of being largely pre-planned, this is situationally authentic and pragmatically unpredictable. These two features of classroom discourse promote the use of natural communication practices in the classroom and may lead to authentic interpersonal communication that complements the steadfast pedagogical communication.

Even the language employed to realize conflict-handling practices demonstrates the two aspects of classroom communication: pedagogic and interpersonal. Teachers make use of either language behavior basing their judgment on the pragmatics of the classroom situation, their communicative goals and their pedagogical objectives.

At various moments in the development of their sessions, Romanian EFL teachers give prominence to the pedagogical function rather than the interpersonal one. The saliency of the interpersonal function, however, requires the teacher to function primarily as a foreign language user and an equal participant in interaction. In such situations, the teacher has to assume a role more complex than those of instructor, guide, facilitator, organizer and language model taken together.

Teacher role versatility, a good relationship with the pupils, and the use of group work are ways of maximizing pupils' participation and bringing classroom talk closer to natural communication. Also allowing pupils time to think and discuss with their peers before answering a question can enhance interpersonal relationships, dynamics and communication. Group work provides more opportunities for the pupils to interact and practice English than lockstep teaching.

The most important dilemma of the EFL teachers is perhaps how they could create the conditions of natural language use in the classroom. This dilemma prompted me to examine the quantity and quality of communication generated in the classroom, taking into account the rights and obligations of the participants to discourse. I found it also useful to consider the ways in which the classroom, by virtue of being a social context within which people interact to some purpose, can provide authentic input and instances

of natural communication. In my opinion, two conditions are necessary for achieving natural communication in the EFL classroom:

- aiming at the use of English
- aiming at interpersonal communication, not only pedagogic communication, with the necessary affective and social connotations of natural communication employed by teachers and pupils alike.

If these two conditions are fulfilled, the EFL classroom can become more than a pedagogical setting where English language learning takes place; it can become a social environment where natural communication may take place, a learning environment that may include opportunities for pupils to engage in meaningful social interpersonal communication.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Allen, D.E. and R.F. Guy. *Conversation Analysis: the sociology of talk*. The Hague: Mouton, 1978.

Allwright, R. L. "The importance of interaction classroom language learning." *Applied Linguistics* 5/2 (1984): 156-171.

Berry M. "Systemic linguistics and discourse analysis: A multi-layered approach to exchange structure." in Coulthard and Montgomery (eds.) 1981.

Brown, P. and S. Levinson. "Universals in language usage: Politeness phenomena" in E. Goody (ed.) *Questions and Politeness: strategies in social interaction*. Cambridge: CUP, 1978.

Burt M. and C. Kiparsky. "Global and local mistakes." in J. H. Schumann and N. Stenson (eds.) *New Frontiers in Second language Learning*. N.Y.: Newbury House, 1975.

Chaudron, C. "The interaction of quantitative and qualitative approaches to research: A view of the second language classroom." *TESOL Quarterly* 20/4 (1986): 709-717.

Coulthard M. *An introduction to Discourse Analysis*. London: Longman, 1977.

Coulthard, M. and M. Montgomery (eds.) *Studies in Discourse Analysis*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981.

Ellis, R. "The effect of linguistic environment on the second language acquisition of grammatical rules." *Applied Linguistics* 9/3 (1988): 257-74.

Edwards A. D. and D. P. G. Westgate. *Investigating Classroom Talk*. London: The Falmer Press, 1994.

Fanselow, J. F. "Beyond 'Rashomon' – conceptualizing and describing the teaching act." *TESOL Quarterly* 11/1 (1977a): 17-39.

_____. “The treatment of error in oral work.” *Foreign Language Annals* 10/4 (1977b): 583-593.

Hatch, E. *Discourse and Language Education*. Cambridge: CUP, 1992.

Hymes, D. “On communicative competence.” in Pride and Holmes (eds.) *Sociolinguistics*. London: Penguin, 1974.

Kramsch, C. J. “Interactive discourse in small and large groups.” in Rivers, W. M. (ed.) *Interactive Language Teaching*. Cambridge: CUP, 1987.

Levinson, S. C. *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: CUP, 1983.

Lewis M. *The lexical approach: the state of ELT and a way forward*. London: Language Teaching Publications, 1996.

Long, M. and C. Sato. “Classroom foreigner talk discourse: forms and functions of teachers’ questions.” in Seliger H. W. and M. H. Long (eds.) *Classroom Oriented Research in Second Language Acquisition*, Rowley, Mass: Newbury House, 1983.

Lynch T. *Communication in the Language Classroom*. Oxford: OUP, 1996.

Mishler, E. G. “Studies in dialogue and discourse: an exponential law of successive questioning.” *Language in Society* 4 (1975): 31-51.

Moskowitz, G. “The classroom interaction of outstanding foreign language teachers.” *Language Annals* 5 (1976): 211-221.

Papaefthymiou-Lytra, S. *Language Awareness and Foreign Language Learning*. Athens: The University of Athens Press, 1987.

_____. *Explorations in Foreign Language Classroom Discourse*. Athens: The University of Athens Press, 1990.

Rivers, W. *Communicating Naturally in a Second Language: theory and practice in language teaching*. Cambridge: CUP, 1983.

Sacks, H., E. Schegloff, and G. Jefferson. “A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation.” *Language* 50/4 (1974): 696-735.

Schegloff, E. A., G. Jefferson, and H. Sacks. “The preference of self-correction in the organization of repair in conversation.” *Language* 53/2 (1977): 361-382.

Schiffrin, D. *Discourse Markers*. Cambridge: CUP, 1987.

Seliger, H. W. and M. H. Long (eds.) *Classroom Oriented Research in Second Language Acquisition*. Rowley, Mass: Newbury House, 1983.

Sinclair J. McH. and R. M. Coulthard. *Towards an Analysis of Discourse: the English used by teachers and pupils*. London: Longman, 1975.

Stubbs, M. *Discourse Analysis: The Sociolinguistic Analysis of Natural Language.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983.

_____. "Analyzing input and interaction in second language classrooms." *RELC Journal* 16/1 (1985): 8-32.

Tsui Amy B.M. "An analysis of different types of interaction in ESL classroom discourse." *IRAL* XXV/4 (1987): 336-353.

_____. *English Conversation*. Oxford: OUP, 1994.

_____. *Classroom Interaction*. London: Penguin, 1995.

van Dijk, T.A. *Text and Context: explorations in the semantics and pragmatics of discourse*. London: Longman, 1986.

Widdowson, H. G. "Knowledge of language and ability for use." *Applied Linguistics* 10/2 (1989): 128-37.