

# **A Preliminary Investigation of an Interacting Dialogue in a Thai EFL Classroom: An Application of *Exchange Structure Analysis* (ESA)**

**Cheewala Badklang**

PhD. EIL student, Kasetsart University,  
Khampaeng Saen, Nakhon Prathom, Thailand  
cheewalab@gmail.com

Udomkrit Srinon, PhD.  
Lecturer, Kasetsart University,  
Khampaeng Saen, Nakhon Prathom, Thailand  
srinon@hotmail.com

## **Abstract**

This paper reports on findings from a Thai EFL classroom discourse. An application of linguistic analysis; exchange structure analysis (ESA) to do with a preliminary investigation of classroom dialogue between the teacher and students and making visible certain patterns of classroom discourse (Martin & Rose, 2007). In relation to sequencing moves, a K1 move is an obligatory move in exchange knowledge, but the study shows the teacher provides less the K1 move, also just only offers praise and repetition of students' contributions. Therefore, the needs of extending students' knowledge-based should be intensified.

## **Introduction**

In recent years, many researchers have investigated and identified the main factors affecting students' learning and focused their attention on classroom talk as a situation for students' learning, compliance to school norm, and participation inside the classroom (Schultz, 2009; cited in Clark and Blackburn, 2010: 315). Especially in the language classrooms, it is acknowledged that classroom interaction demonstrates a meaningful teaching and learning process. If there is no participation, then there is no learning. To learn second or foreign language, learners need to be more practice in order to become more successful in language learning.

In the spoken texts of classroom interaction; it is generally focused on oral behavior of a teacher and class. Allwright and Bailey (1991) suggest that an important feature of classroom interaction has been the explicit type of instructional talk teacher uses in the

transmission of language rules. In order to promote students talking in class, a teacher should be a manager or facilitator (Nassaji and Wells, 2000), and counselor to build a further talk and guide deliberately students' ideas (Nakamura, 2010: 128).

### **1.1 A Thai EFL in Yala Rajabhat University (YRU) – Background and Data**

YRU, where this data is gathered, is a southern most local university in Thailand where is the majority of the population is Muslim with a moderately low socio-economic status. Most of them generally graduated from Religious Private High School. Bahasa Malayu is their mother tongue while Thai language is a second language. Their English proficiency is relatively low. The subjects of the study are the third year students majoring in English Education. The study takes place in a class of an English interpretation reading class with a Thai woman who has an English language teaching experience more than 20 years. For the lesson, the reading topic is about 'Love' she asks her students to read the passage and answer the questions. She speaks English approximately 60% and 40% for Thai in her class. For interacting dialogue between the teacher and her students, the Exchange Structure Analysis (ESA) is adopted as an analytical tool in the study.

## **2. Theory of Bernstein's pedagogic discourse**

In Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse, he defines it as "a principle for appropriating other discourses and bringing them into special relation with each other for the purposes of their selective transmission and acquisition" (1990, p.183-4). In classroom discourse, a pedagogic discourse is instructional in building and shaping students consciousness into different subjects with varying access to and chances for educational success (Bernstein, 1990; Christie & Martin, 2007). This theoretical framework has the essential to bring teachers' both implicit and explicit evaluations of students' oral and written texts, also authorizes discussion the type of knowledge-knower structures catered to in the observed pedagogical discourse (Martin & Rose, 2007). Furthermore, it concerns the nature of two discourses inside the pedagogic discourse; an instructional discourse and the regulative discourse; these can be defined thus:

We shall define pedagogic discourse as the rule which embeds a discourse of competence (skills of various kinds) into a discourse of social order in such a way that the latter always dominates the former. We shall call the discourse transmitting specialized competences and

their relation to each other *instructional* discourse, and the discourse creating specialized order, relation and identity *regulative* discourse. (Bernstein, 2000: 183).

According to Christie (2002), she adapts Bernstein's terms as the notion of the two registers in such a way that it is realized primarily in a first order or *regulative register*, to do with the overall pedagogic direction taken, their goals, pacing and sequencing, and a second order or *instructional register*, to do with the 'content' and its specialized skills at issue (p. 25).

## 2.1 Sequencing moves: Exchange Structure Analysis (ESA)

ESA is one of the analytic discourse approaches in which describes quantify discourse patterns at different strata and understands the interactive dialogue in such a way of doing social life. Also, it focuses on the negotiation of meaning construction in spoken language. ESA is drawn on work by Ventola (1987) and Martin (1984, 1988), who was in turn building on work by Berry (1981). Berry refers to goods-and-services negotiations as action exchanges, and information exchanges as knowledge ones. She also refers to the person responsible for proffering goods or performing a service as the *primary actor* (A1), and the person who has the authority to adjudicate information as the *primary knower* (K1). The dialogue partner for primary actors as a *secondary actor* (A2), who receives the goods or has the service performed for them; the *secondary knower* (K2) is the person who receives the information professed by the primary knower. Besides, a primary actor and knower who anticipates proffering goods or performing a service by offering to do so, or anticipates professing information by first alerting their listeners that it is coming. These anticipatory moves in a sense delay the exchange of goods-and –services and information, thus are termed by Berry as dA1 and dK1 moves ('d' standing for 'delay').

In this paper, it focuses on the exchange sequences in a classroom context in which the delay exchange of information will be initiated by primary knower as teachers ask students questions about what teachers already know. For example,

Teacher:	dK1	Who headed the Truth Commission?
Student:	K2	- Archbishop Tutu.
Teacher:	K1	- Right.

(Martin and Rose, 2007: 239)

The exchange sequences also allow for the possibility of follow-up moves by primary and secondary actors or knowers ('f' standing for 'follow-up). For instant,

Sannie:	dK1	You'll never guess who's here.
Llewelyn:	K2	Who?
Sannie:	K1	Coetzee.
Llewelyn:	K2f	Is he?
Sannie:	K1f	Yeah.

(Martin and Rose, 2007: 239)

To sum up, the various possibilities the interactive dialogue using parentheses for optional moves. The structure potential for action exchanges is thus: ((dA1) ^ A2) ^ A1 ^ (A2f ^ (A1f)), and for information exchanges, it can find the same possibilities as ((dk1) ^ K2) ^ (K2f ^ (K1f)). In addition, the interactive dialogue sometimes may not be clear about what is being discussed so the interlocutors interrupt for clarification. This refers to dependent moves of this kind which clarify in some way the ideational content of what is being negotiated as *tracking* moves, and label them 'tr' and 'rtr' for response to track as required. For example,

Sannie:	K1	Coetzee's here.
Llewelyn:	tr	- Pardon?
Sannie:	rtr	- Coetzee's here.
Llewelyn:	K2f	- Really?

(Martin and Rose, 2007: 241)

### 3. An application of ESA to the data

In this extract of a classroom dialogue, the teacher is leading the class to read and discuss the unit's 5<sup>th</sup> lesson that is about 'Love'. The lesson focuses on the vocabulary in a passage. The teacher starts the class as below:

**Extract** ( 'T' means a teacher; 'S' means a student)



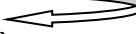
	<b>Turn</b>	<b>Moves</b>	
1	T:	K1	Look at your book!
		dK1	What's it about? What's it about? Unit 5
	Class:	K2	Love
	T:	K1	Love.
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2	T:	dK1	What does love mean in your mind?
	Class:	K2	(3 seconds of silence)
	T:	K2	Aunn (S1), are you in love?

S1: K1 No! (laughing)  
 T: K2 No?  
 tr Are you in love now?  
 S1: rtr No.  
 T: K2f (smiling and showing her face expression like unbelievable her student answer.)

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3 T: K2 Nureesun (S2), how about you?  
 S2: K1 Umm...I'm...I love my friends and my family.  
 T: K2f Okay, very good!

-----a student(S3) interjects the conversation -----

S3: K1 I love your father. (she is pointing to Nureesun-S2.)  
 S2: K1  Because my father is handsome!  
 T: tr  You said you love her father? (looking at S3)  
 S3: rtr  (Nodding.)  
 T: K2f Yes! Yes! (smiling)

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4 T: K1 Today we will study all about love. I think you are interested in love.  
 dK1 Marayan (S4), is it yes or no?  
 S4: K2 Sure!  
 T: K1 Sure! Yes!

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5 T: K1 Emm...Look at pre-reading exercise. First, I would like you to read rapidly thorough the passage on page 51. The topic is the six styles of love. I would like you to read rapidly through the story and get the six words in bold type and put in the exercise of pre-reading.  
 tr Understand?  
 Class: rtr Yes.  
 T: K1 Yes.  
 K1 I will give you 6 minutes for six items.  
 dK1 What's the 1<sup>st</sup> word you can see?  
 Class: K2 Attitude.  
 T: K1 Attitude.  
 dK1 What's about number 2?  
 Class: K2 Attract.  
 T: K1 Attract.  
 dK1 Number 3?

(the teacher asks students answer the words until the last word, number 6.)

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6 (Six minutes later)

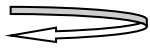
T: dK1 The sentence number 1, Marriage should be considered a strong bra..bra..bra..and a promise that a couple will work hard to love and take care of each other.

	dK1	What word do you put?
Class:	K2	Commitment.
T:	K1	Commitment.
	tr	Do you agree? Marayan (S4), what is your answer?
S4:	rtr	Commitment
	(missing K1)	

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7	T:	dK1	Number 3, Ann doesn't like flowers for a present. She prefers bra..bra..gifts that are useful.
	Class:	K2	Practical.
	T:	K1	Practical.
		dK1	What's a practical gift, Marayan (S4)?
	S4:	K2	Err... things can use in a real life.
	T:	K1	Good!
		K1	A practical gift is a thing that we can use in our real lives. For example, chocolate, it is a practical gift because we can eat it.

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Dependency arrow means to group tracking moves.

### 3.1 Discussion

Based on the extract above, all exchanges are initiated by the teacher who is the most authority in the class. Three of these exchanges (1&4&5) are begun with a K1 move as a primary knower who knows the information, and can give the stamp of authority to the information expressed. For 2, 6 and 7 exchanges, they are started with a dK1 move as the teacher asks the students a question that she already knows the answer. In addition, the aim of employing the dK1 move is the teacher needs to check whether students know the appropriate response.

According to this extract, it could be said that this classroom exchange feature as a pedagogic routine that is based on the cycles of ordinary classroom discourse, often known as Initiate-Respond-Feedback (I-R-F) or triadic dialogue (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975, Well, 1999); however, the teacher rarely shows the way of such elaboration to the students' contributions such as in the 6<sup>th</sup> exchange; a K1 move of the teacher is not provided. Therefore, the teacher lacks the opportunity to elaborate students' responses or explicitly evaluate the meanings being negotiated. In addition, a K1 move is not only praise or repetition, but also reformulation and elaboration the students' responses. On the other hand, the 7<sup>th</sup> exchange is rather completely obligatory K1 move. The teacher provides elaboration to support the students' contribution so the students are able to perceive the knowledge.

In the light of the pedagogic observation, the teacher has a ‘focus zone’ in classroom learning. It refers to ‘the most verbal interaction between a teacher and students where they can get eyes contact together (Adam and Biddle, 1970). The students who are out of this zone seem to keep silent they do not much interactive learning. Also, another indication is the student number 4 (Marayan) who is called the most by the teacher in order interactive learning. Presumably, the S4 can speak English quite well and understand what the teacher said, thus the teacher often nominates her rather others.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The study is illustrated preliminary investigation of an interactive dialogue in a Thai EFL classroom by using exchange structure analysis (ESA). The study shows an overview of sequence moves in a classroom interaction which consists of K1, K2, dK1, K1f, K2f exchanges. ESA shows that the teacher’s input lacks refinement, thus ignoring to focus on expanding students’ knowledge-based. It affects to inadequately language communicative competence skills in concerning students’ language learning. Additionally, ESA exposes the interpersonal relations between the teacher and students, it demonstrated that the quantity of teacher talk displays too much in the class, therefore the students lack the chances to develop language communication competence skills and the teacher authority is a central in the class.

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