ANALYSING DISCOURSE: AN INVESTIGATION OF THE RESPONSE MOVE (R-MOVE) IN COMMUNICATION AND STUDY SKILLS (CSS) CLASSES

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Abstract

This paper explores the Response move in Communication and Study Skills (CSS) classes of the University of Botswana (UB). It aims to find out how the students' responses in the classroom contributed to quality classroom talk. The mixed methods approach was used and two research instruments were used for collecting data for this research article. The said instruments were systematic observations and classroom observations. The checklist of items from the systematic observations was used to allow for the quantitative aspect of the study. On the other hand, the discourse gathered during the classroom observations was used for the qualitative aspect of the study. Nine (9) CSS lesson extracts obtained from the classroom and systematic observations were used to analyse the classroom discourse. The said two research instruments were used to obtain and triangulate information relating to the use of the Response Move (R-Move) in CSS classes. The findings revealed that the CSS lecturers preferred the students to respond to the questions posed in class individually as opposed to choral ones. Another note-worthy experience revealed by the findings, though minimal, was that the students also had some questions which were responded to by their lecturers. The findings from this paper are valuable to both literature and practice. This is because they consider the use of the R-move in higher learning. Additionally, the findings might serve as a teaching "lense" to practitioners in all academic contexts.

Key words: *Discourse Analysis, The Response Move, Classroom Interaction, Systematic Observations, Choral Responses, Individual Responses*

Introduction

Discourse Analysis (D.A) is the analysis of patterns that people's utterances follow when they take part in different domains of social life (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 1). From the above definition, D.A is talk between two people who can be the lecturer and students. D.A has been observed by other scholars (e.g., Serratrice, 2014; Short, 1994) as highly ambiguous and complex as it covers other concepts such as language, communication, interaction, society and culture (van Dijk, 1997).

As part of the discourse, the R-move is the second step during classroom interaction. The R-move refers to the response or reply to the teacher's questions, and it is normally provided by the students (e.g., Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975; Chin, 2006). From the research of the above scholars it can be seen that, in most cases during classroom interaction, students respond to

what the lecturer has initiated. Students respond to the questions posed by the lecturer or the teacher 'to solicit a linguistic response' (Kasper, 2006). During this step, students have the upper hand in the answering of the questions raised in class in their endeavour to keep up with the tempo of the nature of classroom interaction.

Numerous studies in classroom discourse claim that the two types of student responses (individual and choral) are prevalent during the teaching learning process (e.g., Abd-Kadir & Hardman, 2007; Ingram & Elliott, 2014). For Abd-Kadir and Hardman (2007), there were more choral responses than individual ones in the classes that they observed. According to the scholars, the said pattern had a negative impact on the quality of classroom interaction because it, "prevented the pupils from engaging in more creative and higher levels of thinking. It therefore led to the perpetuation of a restrictive, often monotonous, model of teaching and learning with little exposure to different functions of language" (Abd-Kadir & Hardman, 2007, p. 10). It can be argued that a relationship exists between the type of responses used by students in the classroom, their critical thinking and the nature of classroom interaction. The said relationship portrays a process of spoken interaction. This process can be illustrated in Figure 1 below:

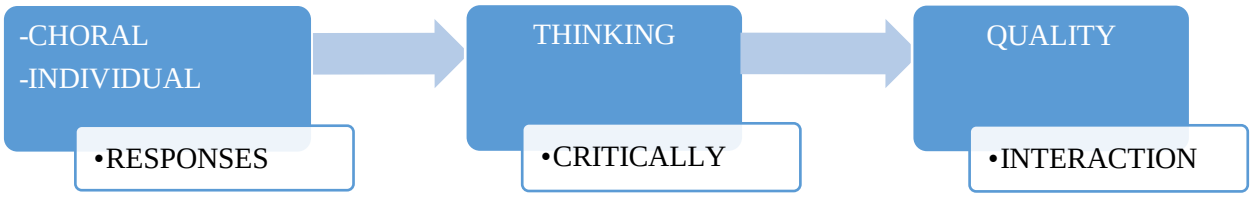

Figure 1: The relationship between the students' responses and quality classroom interaction

Methodology

The participants

The lecturers who participated in this study were given synonyms. The synonyms helped to avoid the participants to be identified by members of the public. However, identification of the faculties was not changed because the strategy helped in realising the faculties which really took part in the study. The students' numbers varied within classes, because of a number of factors such as students' enrolment for the academic year, the students' specialisation choices during registration and sponsorship from the Botswana government.

The student population for this paper was 3 483, whilst the total lecturer population was 29. From this population, a sample was chosen. This view is supported by Mertens (1998, p. 112) who writes, "once the general nature of the respondents has been identified, it is time for the researcher to become more specific about the information sources". Since CSS is offered to all first years at the University of Botswana, a sample was chosen from the pool of all the CSS lecturers and students.

The sample consisted of those lecturers who agreed to being observed, of whom there were 7 in total. On the other hand, 356 students participated in the study. The said sample was categorised as follows:

Lecturer's name	Faculty	Number of students
Pretty	Science	30
Star	Science	35
Star	Business	47

Victor	Business	41
Masterpiece	Social Sciences	43
Queen	Engineering and technology	22
Princess	Humanities	54
Glorious	Education	54
Glorious	Health Sciences	30
TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS		**356**

Table 1: Participants of the study

Initially, data was accessed by writing the participants some letters seeking permission through the Office of Research and Development (ORD) at the University of Botswana, and the Director and Deputy Director of the Centre for Academic Development (CAD), within which CSS falls. The Deputy Director of CSSU sent out an e-mail to members of staff to inform them about my data collection. The classes observed were based within UB campus. I followed them to their respective venues as I was given the classroom venues by the lecturers.

The sample consisted of seven lecturers from the seven faculties of UB which are; Business, Education, Engineering and Technology, Health Sciences, Humanities, Social Sciences and Science. However, two of the lecturers observed taught CSS in the faculty of Science, and the other two taught in the faculty of Business making a total of nine lecturers. On the other hand, the sample consisted of students of the groups concerned. The sample students consisted of varying numbers of students from all the seven faculties mentioned above.

Research Instruments

Systematic Observations

One of the research instruments used for this study was the Systematic observations. There was a checklist of items which the researcher ticked as the lectures progressed. The discourse was analysed using two components namely, the individual responses or the choral ones. The advantage of systematic observations is the recording and sequential analysis of the number of 'talk turns' between the lecturers and the students (Mercer, 2010). This particular instrument was used to ensure that I did not miss any important aspect of the spoken interaction. This was done, by ticking the various aspects of talk that were used by both the lecturers and the students. The checklist of items was also used to allow for the quantitative aspect of the study. In summing up the above function of the Systematic Observations, (Luke, 2018) states that the systematic observations set up inter-textual relations to classroom discourse. Therefore, the research instrument helped to find out the nature of classroom interaction in CSS classes, with particular reference to the R-move.

According to Bryman (2006), a quantitative instrument, of which systematic observations are one, reveals important features about a case. Therefore this study revealed the main feature (R-move) observed in each of the twenty-seven classrooms. The R-move was used to analyse the data for this study. Also, in relation to systematic observations, the R-move was used to measure the quantitative aspect of the study. This is because I was in a position to draw conclusions regarding the nature and success of interaction that took place in CSS classes. Consideration of this move helped in the analysis of the nature and pattern of interaction.

As indicated above, the main item that the researcher focused on was the response move that was checked considering three aspects. These were, whether it was a male or female student

who gave the response. For another aspect, the same was checked for choral responses. However, the talk turns between males and females were later combined in order to smoothly and explicitly address the research, for two reasons. One was to align the data with this study's overall purpose of examining the quality of the R-move in CSS classes. Secondly, this was done to bring to agreement the findings of the study and the dialogic teaching indicators identified by Alexander (2008).

However, systematic observations have also been noted to have limitations that can affect the coding (Mercer, 2010). Such limitations include ambiguity of meanings, temporal development of meanings and utterances with the same surface form. However, the said limitations did not affect the coding for this study because the 'ticks' for this study mainly considered the R-move and were not related to the time as in a time analysis study.

Classroom Observations

From another perspective, the classroom observations were also used to collect data relating to the investigation of the R-move in CSS classes. According to research methods scholars, classroom observation is where one gets first-hand information by watching and recording how people being studied naturally behave in a research setting (Dikinya, Seeletso, Tloteng, Lesetedi, Molebatsi & Ntuma, 2008; Eichelberger, 1989). Additionally, the above scholars have revealed that the aforementioned research instrument is advantageous in a number of ways, such as for observing the physical environment, the human and the social environment, and program activities in order to obtain detailed and context related data. Therefore, in this paper, classroom observations were used in order to get data from the participants' natural setting (their classrooms) in order to come up with detailed information that could be used to explain the quality of the R-move.

Even though the classroom observation is advantageous, there are some disadvantages related to it, such as being time consuming and labour intensive. For this paper, however, the said limitations were addressed by employing a research assistant. The research assistant video recorded the classroom lessons whilst I administered the systematic observations. After the lesson observations, the division of labour was addressed as I transcribed the observed data.

The observations for each of the classes were about fifty minutes in reality and on average, twenty minutes. A Canon DVD camcorder DC220 was used for the classroom observations. The capturing of the lessons was done by the research assistant using Verbatim or TDK mini DVD's. The use of DVD as a data collection instrument is also noted by Skalski, Neuendorf & Cajigas (2017). The use of the camcorder enabled me to holistically capture the discourse within the classroom.

Data Analysis Procedures

Previous studies have reported that data analysis is the process of discovering themes, detecting patterns and concepts embedded within the facts or data to test a specific hypothesis (Dikinya., et al, 2008; Fitz-Gibbon & Morris, 1987). Based on the findings by the said scholars, the data were analysed in this paper to find out the nature of the R-move in CSS classes. The data were analysed as follows:

Classroom Observations

In analysing the discourse for all the nine lecturers observed, the data were coded by numbers and pseudonyms provided for the lecturers as a way of classifying the information. Some scholars (e.g., Basit, 2003) assert that coding is categorising and sorting out the data so that it makes sense, in order to aid in the next step of the research process, which is discussion of the results. Coding helps in that, after data collection, there is always a lot of data that needs to be consolidated by the researcher before analysing it.

Finally, the classroom observations were analysed to find out the quality of the R-move in CSS classes at UB. This was done using Sinclair and Coulthard's system of analysis, which they gave the distinctive features called IRF moves. In addition, the 'acts' were used to further analyse the data. The 'acts' indicate the lowest rank of discourse. The IRF moves were used in this paper to address the quantitative and the qualitative analysis. The analysis of each lesson transaction was done in two ways. One showed an explicit lesson transcript indicating the teaching exchanges, the participant within the exchange, the classroom talk, the IRF moves, and finally the acts.

Systematic Observations

In addition to the classroom observations, the data were also analysed using systematic observations.

The R-move was quantitatively examined as an aspect of the analytical tool. From the R-move tool, a further step was taken to consider the sub-types used in each. This was done by counting the frequency of the sub-types that fell under the R-move. From the route presented above, the claims of the study were identified. The themes that emerged from analysing the discourse quantitatively were the students' attempts to talk in CSS lessons.

Results

Deeper Analysis of the Response Move

This section analyses the responses that were used in the CSS classes. These were mainly in three categories as illustrated in Figure 2.

A percentage breakdown of the analysis of the R-move is given in Figure 2 below:

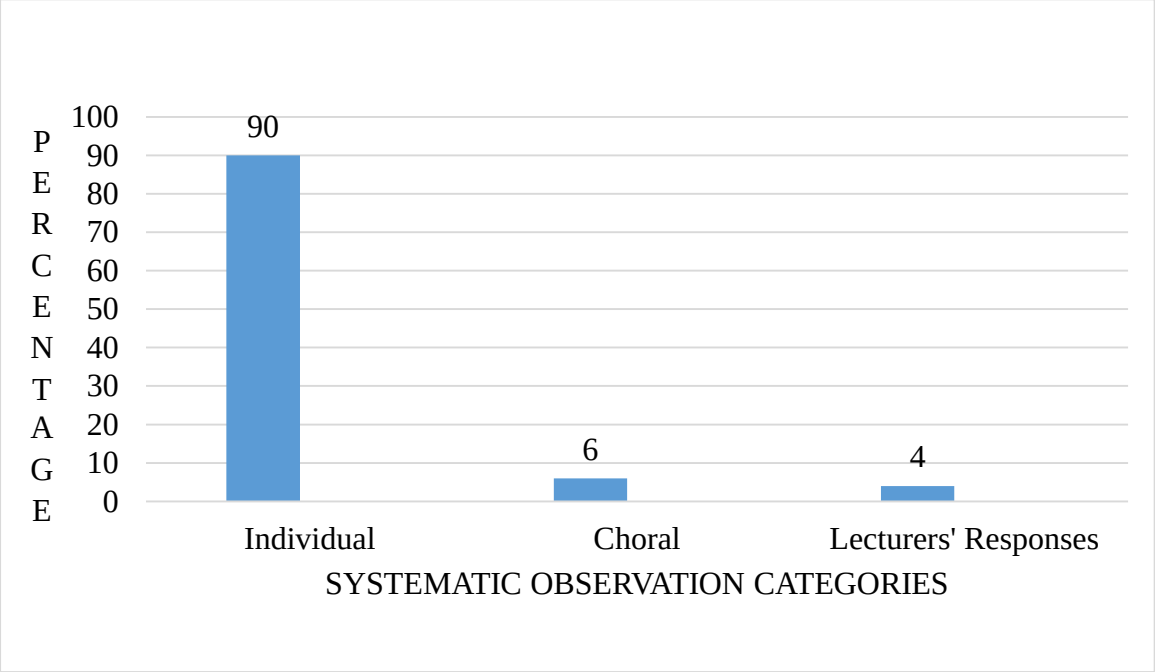

Figure 2: Frequencies of the Types of Responses in all the Twenty-Seven Classes

Students' Individual Responses

From the above illustration, the students' individual responses were the most frequent, as indicated by the vast majority of the whole responses. This could be because the lecturers in the CSS classes preferred the students to answer their questions in single form by raising their hands to bid for providing answers. Three reasons are advanced for preferring individual responses. Firstly, single responses indicate better classroom management, as all the members will hear one another, as the speaking skill will be practised in an orderly manner. Examples where individual responses were called for can be seen in lecturer Pretty's lesson on reading for academic purposes where the lecturer stated, 'okay. Let's have one person at a time'. On the other hand, lecturer Victor in his lesson on information literacy said, 'we don't chorus; we indicate by raising hands'. Studies have shown (Dawes, 2004; Francis & Hunston, 1992; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975) that the individual students responses are the most frequently used in classrooms. It can be concluded that individual student responses are the preferred mode of classroom talk as they might result in all the students being actively involved in the interaction. This is because the students and lecturers have a chance to listen, think and respond appropriately.

Secondly, the lecturers want to monitor the students who talk in class versus those who do not (turn-taking) so as to consider equal distribution of classroom talk. That is why lecturer Queen in her lesson on paraphrasing said, "next. The last person; and a male this time. We have had two females this side". In another example, lecturer Princess in her lesson on listening said, "what about others? I pick at random. At the back; I like the back benchers. Yes. This side and then we go that side. How do you listen?" The same results of turn-taking during classroom interaction were found by a number of studies (e.g., Dawes, 2004; Liu, 2008; Radford, Blatchford & Webster, 2011) when they stated that taking turns provides a pedagogical role as 'classroom isolates' will be rejected. It can be argued that individually taking turns to talk might assist all the students to fully take part in speaking.

Finally, the lone responses might be a form of extrinsic motivation to the students. Lecturer Victor stated in his lesson on information literacy, "what else? Remember I give out what for tables that participate? I appreciate; so, I am watching; any table for that matter." From this example it can be seen that, the students can be motivated to talk in class, because they know that the lecturer will in some way appreciate their efforts. In another example, lecturer Star in the Faculty of Science lesson said, "what is it that you observed? When you cite, sources…….Class, can we talk? I told you that I am a communications lecturer, I do not talk to myself; I talk to students. How do we cite a source?" In lecturer Star's example, it is very likely that the students will be motivated to talk because the lecturer is encouraging them. Some studies have revealed that motivation helps students to develop their own verbal ideas (e.g., Wells, 1993). It can be concluded that if lecturers motivate the students, that can contribute more to their verbal interaction. The individual students were helped by the lecturers to share verbal information with one another as a whole class. Finally, the same was done as members of the various groups shared information with the whole class.

Students' Choral Responses

Another point worth mentioning regarding the students' responses is that 6% were choral responses (refer to Figure 2). Although these were very infrequent as compared to the individual responses, it is certain that there were instances where some of the lecturers wanted the students to respond in unison. An example was found in lecturer Star's lesson in the Faculty of Science when she declared, "class can you check how much the project is worth. How much is the project worth?". The use of the noun 'class' may have led the

students to provide a choral answer. This is because they unanimously responded by saying, "40%". Another illustration comes from lecturer Victor's lesson on information literacy skills given below:

Exchanges	Participant	Classroom talk	Moves	Acts
6	**L**	Everybody, It is-′	**I**	**n** **el**
	Ss	Information Literacy	**R**	**rep**

It is worth mentioning that the latter example occurred at the same time as cued elicitation and rising intonation. In the former teaching exchange, lecturer Victor had informed the students that the lesson was going to focus on information literacy. As a result, he wanted the students to repeat 'information literacy' in teaching exchange 6 above.

In addition, choral responses were given where the question needed a 'yes' or 'no' responses. An example of this was found in lecturer Pretty's lesson on reading for academic purposes when she asked if layout and presentation matters. The students together replied with a "yes". In another example, lecturer Star's Faculty of Business students gave a choral answer of "no" when the lecturer checked if they had notes on an introductory paragraph. Previous studies have reported that there is indeed the use of choral responses in the form of 'yes/no' (e.g., Bunyi, 2005; Hardman, Abd-Kadir & Smith, 2008; Jin & Cortazzi, 1998; Littleton & Mercer, 2010; Vásquez, 2007; Xie, 2010). On the other hand some scholars have found that the use of 'yes/no' choral responses is highly used in verbal interaction (Chafi, Elkhouzai & Arhlam, 2014; Dalton-Puffer, 2006). The implication is that the 'yes/no' choral responses are there, and they may be rarely or highly used depending on a number of factors, such as the nature of the course (whether content or skill-based). Secondly, how the choral responses are used may be determined by the students' educational level (pre-primary, primary, secondary or tertiary). It can be concluded that all three types of choral responses (unison, cued elicitations, yes/no), co-occur with closed questions. Even though the choral responses were on the dip end in comparison with the individual ones, this might suggest that the lecturers asked the students to respond as a whole class in order to emphasise a particular point. Also, it could be maintained that the type of questions asked by the lecturers led to the type of responses.

Lecturers' Responses

Lastly, it is worth mentioning another type of response, which unlike the other first four (individual, choral, cued elicitation, yes/no), was made by the lecturers. The lecturers' responses made up 4% and were very rare for two reasons. One of the reasons was that the lecturers seldom responded to the students' questions. The lecturer responses followed where students initiated the question on their own accord. An example of this is found in lecturer Pretty's lesson on reading for academic purposes when she responded by saying, "you can. You can still use them but it depends on how you use them. You can also be critical on how you use them to say, 'this is what they think' or 'this is what they have discussed'. You become critical as well". Another example is from lecturer Star's lesson in the Faculty of Science when she said, "well you have to put the year. You can't just say 'according to Milna' and not indicate the year the source was published, because Milna might have various sources. In academia, even the professors do that; the people who are supposed to be knowledgeable they support; supporting, supporting, supporting. The fundamental issue is supporting a well-developed paragraph". One question that needs to be asked, however, is whether the lecturers are aware that by responding to the students' questions, they are limiting the students' chances to talk. This teaching strategy could have been successful if

the lecturers had asked the students to respond to their peers' questions. This strategy would motivate the students and also help them to develop their classroom talk. It can be claimed that the lecturers' responses are determined by how they respond to the students' questions, and the student initiations to a question.

In conclusion, regarding the responses indicated in Figure 2, a significant discrepancy is observed between the individual responses and the latter two (choral and lecturers). It can be argued that CSS lecturers prefer individual responses rather than the other types of responses.

Discussion

What Kinds of Responses do the Students Provide?

From Figure 2 above, the students provided two types of responses in the form of individual and choral responses. There were more individual responses than choral responses as indicated by the 90% and 6% rates respectively. During most of the CSS classes, the students were expected to answer individually. Kaur (2009) has found that individual responses in the classroom are a characteristic of good teaching practice, because they allow both the educationist and the students to hear what is being said. Adding on to the said good teaching practice, Alexander (2008) states that all organisational contexts provide opportunities for dialogue, if the potential for carefully thinking about and for the planning of talk is involved. According to Daniels (2001), "in sociocultural theory the emphasis is on semiotic mediation with a particular emphasis on speech" (p.1). Thus, in the classroom, students think before they talk. In the case presented by the three authors above, and the findings of this research paper, if the students give individual responses, this exemplifies the involvement of thinking before they talk which eventually leads to good teaching practice.

Nevertheless, there were also some choral responses, which were short, as they included 'yes/no' responses or cued elicitations. The 6% choral responses could be because some of the lecturers just wanted the students to complete the missing word, or that the question was closed merely requiring a yes/no response. It could also be that the lecturers considered the students' educational level (pre-primary, primary, secondary or tertiary). However, in some classrooms, students' choral responses to teachers' questions were more dominant (e.g., Chafi, et al., 2014; Dalton-Puffer, 2006; Hardman, et al., 2008). To conclude the claim that there were more individual student responses than choral ones suggests that the lecturers felt that posing questions to the students are a key to interaction.

Another point worth mentioning is that there were some lecturers' responses, as indicated by 4%. These said responses occurred when the students posed questions. Nonetheless, the students' questions were not frequent, for two reasons. One of the reasons contributing to the aforementioned amount of lecturer responses were that the lecturers seldom responded to the students' questions. The second reason contributing to the rarity of lecturer responses might be that it was generally uncommon for the students to initiate a question. The above findings are supported by other researchers (e.g., Boyd & Rubin, 2006; Hardman & Williamson, 1998; Thornbury, 1996) that little classroom discussion is initiated by the students, and only in certain circumstances, so as to allow interchange of ideas.

Conclusion

This study has made a contribution to the literature regarding the use of the R-move in higher learning by addressing some main points. One of these is that it provides knowledge and understanding of the nature and patterns of interactions in university classrooms in the

context of Botswana. This addresses current gaps in the literature, in that very little research can be found that deals with investigating the R-move in higher education in general. Most classroom interaction studies cover the primary schools. Also, very little research has been done in the Botswana context.

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