

INSTRUCTIONAL COMMUNICATIONS IN AN ENGLISH CLASSROOM AT PHATSIMO JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL, TUTUME, BOTSWANA

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Abstract

Teacher–student instructional interaction (TSII) is essential for evaluating teaching and learning effectiveness. This qualitative study utilized the Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC) to analyse TSII in a junior secondary English classroom where English is a second language. Data were collected over four class sessions through classroom observations, video recordings, and note-taking. Analysis indicates a pronounced dominance of teacher-led interaction, primarily through lecturing and questioning, with teacher discourse occupying 79.4%, 96.2%, 94.1%, and 73.2% of interactions across sessions one to four meetings, respectively. These findings reveal a persistent teacher-controlled communicative pattern, with minimal peer-to-peer exchanges among students, thereby constraining their opportunities for linguistic advancement and content mastery. The implications call for instructional strategies that foster more balanced and interactive classroom discourse.

Keywords: Teacher-student instructional interactions (TSII), Flanders Interactions Analysis Categories (FIAC) system, English classroom, Botswana, Tutume

Introduction

Numerous studies on low academic performance have identified factors that contribute to consistent low academic achievement in junior secondary schools in Botswana, including those in the Tutume sub-region(Khan, 2014; Mphale & Mhlauli, 2017; Novianti, et al., 2023; Pansiri & Jotia, 2013). The most pronounced are lack of trained teachers, lack of parental involvement, poor support for the teachers, poor school leadership, and poor management skills. To address challenges that contribute to low academic performance, Botswana government has introduced remedial interventions that include the provision of trained and qualified teachers, the implementation of school-based performance management system (PMS) (Bulawa, 2017) and parental involvement (Pansiri & Bulawa, 2013). Despite these government interventions, low academic performance is still observed in learners in junior secondary education. Table 1 gives an example of poor performance in the Tutume sub-region.

Table 1: Poor performance in junior secondary schools in the Tutume sub region.

Year	Total Number of Candidates	Candidates Who Attained							
		M	A	B	C	D	E	U	X
2014	2070		19 (0.9%)	178 (8.6%)	525 (25.3%)	720 (34.7%)	316 (15.3%)	312 (15%)	0
2015	2154		7 (0.3%)	163 (7.6%)	462 (21.4%)	796 (36.9%)	335 (15.6%)	391 (8.2%)	0
2016	2098		13 (0.6%)	159 (7.6%)	445 (21.2%)	732 (34.9%)	374 (17.8%)	370 (17%)	5 (0.24)
2017	1995		17 (0.9%)	159 (8%)	472 (23.7)	684 (34.3%)	320 (0.2%)	336 (0.17%)	7 (0.35)
2018	2237	1 (0.04%)	14 (0.6%)	177 (7.9%)	517 (23.1)	821 (36.7%)	363 (16.2%)	335 (15%)	9 (0.4%)

Source: Botswana Examination Council (2018). Note: For ethical reasons the pseudonyms are used for the schools

Table 1 shows that in the period between 2014 and 2018 only one (1) student obtained merit (M). The table also shows that fewer numbers of students obtained good grades compared to large numbers of students who obtained poor grades. In the meagre literature that exists, there does not seem to be much, if any, research which been done to address this continued failure in the Tutume region.

The available literature on classroom interaction in Botswana is largely limited to cross sectional studies conducted years ago, indicating a need for more recent and longitudinal research (Prophet, 1995; Tabulawa, 1998). These studies were also conducted over a short period of time. A related and more recently conducted study by Moorad and Mungoo (2015) focused mainly on learner-centeredness which is not the only strategy that could affect teaching

and learning. The current study seeks to augment the one by Moorad and Mungoo in investigating various types of interactions in the classroom: teacher-learners, learners-teacher, and learners-to learners. The purpose of the current case study was to explore the contribution of TSII in enhancing learner performance, with particular focus on lesson delivery in the English classroom in a community junior secondary school in the Tutume region. Data was collected from one teaching subject (English) and was repeated over a longer period. This approach is consistent with the general system theory (Ployhart & Vandenberg, 2010).

Methods

Study population

The study encompassed 180 students and 35 core-subject teachers (Science, Mathematics, English, and Setswana) from Forms 1 to 3, with a purposive subsample focusing on Form 3 English students and their teacher. Purposive sampling—also known as judgmental sampling was used to select participants deemed most informative based on researcher judgment, following Politand Beck (2012). Form 3 was chosen due to its longer tenure at the school, and to reduce COVID-19 transmission, a single Form 3 class (the lowest-performing) and one female English teacher were observed across four sessions. English was then selected from the core subjects using simple random sampling, a method in which each member of a population has an equal probability of selection. This is because students' final Junior Certificate grades hinge on performance in the four core subjects plus the best-performing optional subject, focusing on English instruction was particularly pertinent.

Data collection strategies and analyses

Data collection involved classroom observation, video recording, and note-taking. To analyse teacher-student instructional interactions (TSII) during classroom interactions, the study employed the Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC) system developed by Flanders (1970). Data were analysed following the four steps outlined in the FIAC analysis system as described below.

Step 1: Coding the verbal interaction

The observer translates the observed behaviour into a descriptive code. Each verbal behaviour is recorded as a number of categories as illustrated in Table 2.

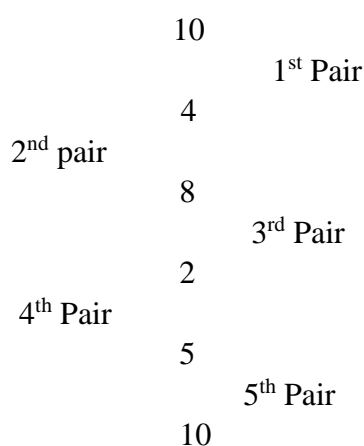
Table 2: Categories for classroom verbal interaction

Actual classroom verbal interaction	Recorded as category
Teacher: what is summary writing?	4
Student: summary writing is a short statement on a text	8
Teacher: very good	2
Teacher: summary contains the main points. Let us list these main points	5

In Table 2, each number describes the type of verbal interaction and who was speaking. Every time the verbal interaction changes, a new number was recorded. If the same verbal interaction continued for more than three seconds, the same number was recorded.

Step 2: Plotting the coded data into the matrix

The observations were recorded as 4, 8, 2, and 5. In addition, the beginning and end of the coding should have the same number of the categories, therefore, number 10 was added at the beginning and at the end. Hence, the numbers 4, 8, 2, 5 were written as 10, 4, 8, 2, 5, 10. To fill the observational sheet, the recorded numbers were plotted as pairs such that the first two numbers represented a pair, the next two numbers represented a pair where the first number in the second pair was the last number in the first pair as illustrated below.



Thus, the sequence of the pairs was: (10,4), (4,8), (8,2), (2,5) and (5,10). The matrix in the observational sheet consisted of ten rows and ten columns. The first number of the pair represents row, and second number of the pair represents column. For example, in the first pair (10, 5), the number 10 represents a row, and the number 5 represents a column. Because the first number in the following pair was the last number in the previous pairs, therefore overlapped. The tallies were added to give a total. In addition, the first pair represented one point of the matrix. So, each column and each row represented one of the ten categories of Flander's coding system. Table 3 shows the sample matrix of the Flanders' coding system.

Table 3: Sample Matrix of the Flanders' Coding System

Column Row	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
1											0
2					√						1
3											0
4								√			1
5									√		1
6											0
7											0
8		√									1
9											0
10				√							1
Total	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1		5

Step 3: Analysing the matrix

In a complete matrix, some areas have more tallies than others. A heavier concentration of tallies in a certain area gives information about who is talking and what kind of talking is taking place. Table 4 illustrates information given by tallies.

Table 4: Information given by tallies

Column Row	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	Teacher Support								Students	Silence
2										
3										
4	Content Cross									
5										
6										
7						Teacher Control				
8										
9										
10										

The following may be noted. *Content Cross*: A heavy concentration in a column 4 and 5 and row 4 and 5 indicates teacher dependence on questions and lectures. *Teacher Control*: A

concentration on column and row 6 and 7 indicates extensive commands and reprimands by the teacher. *Teacher Support*: A heavy concentration of tallies in column and row 1, 2, and 3 indicates that the teacher is reinforcing and encouraging students' participation. *Student Participation*: A concentration of tallies in column 8 and 9 reflects student responses to the teacher's behaviour.

Step 4: Analysing the additional data

Additional data include Teacher Talk, Lecturing, Direct Teaching, Indirect Teaching, and Silent. These can be analysed as follows. For illustration purposes characteristics of classroom interactions in the English meeting are represented in a table such as Table 5.

Table 5: Sample Characteristics of Classroom Interactions in the English Meeting

Teacher Talk

Teacher Talk indicates the teacher's verbal activities in the teaching and learning process. It is represented by a concentration in columns 1–7. The result of teacher talk proportion in each meeting is therefore calculated as follows:

Columns	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Total numbers	3	4	1	6	9	6	2	6	1	3	41

$$\frac{31}{41} \times 100 = 75.6\%$$

Lecturing

Lecturing indicates the teacher's activities in explaining, giving facts, or opinion about content or procedure with her own ideas, and asking rhetorical questions. It was represented by a concentration in column 5. The result of lecturing proportion in this meeting is therefore calculated as follows:

$$\frac{9}{41} \times 100 = 22\%$$

Silent

Silent indicates pauses, short periods of silence, and periods of confusion in which communication cannot be understood by the observer during the teaching and learning process.

It was represented by a concentration in column 10. The result of silent proportion in the meeting is therefore calculated as follows:

$$\frac{3}{41} \times 100 = 7.3\%$$

Direct Teaching

There are two teacher influences within teacher talk: direct and indirect. Direct influence determines the degree of direct teaching by the teacher, while indirect influence determines the degree of indirect teaching by the teacher. Direct influence is represented by a concentration of tallies in columns 5–7 divided by those columns 1–7 and indirect influence is represented by a concentration of tallies in columns 1–4 divided by those columns 1–7. Results for both are calculated as follows:

$$\frac{17}{31} \times 100 = 54.8\%$$

Indirect teaching

$$\frac{14}{31} \times 100 = 45.2\%$$

Results

As mentioned earlier, the purpose of the current study is to augment the investigation done by Moorad and Mungoo (2015) on the various types of interactions in the classroom: teacher-learners, learners-teacher, learners-to learners etc. The current case study sought to explore the contribution of TSII in enhancing learner performance, with particular focus on lesson delivery in the English classroom in Phatsimo community junior secondary school in the Tutume region. Based on the four meetings conducted in the English language lessons at one junior secondary school in Tutume, it was found that all categories in teacher talk (both direct and indirect teaching), students' talk, and silent or confusion occurred.

The first meeting

In the first meeting all categories of FIAC analysis system occurred during classroom interaction. Based on the result of step 3 the most dominant characteristic of categories found

was the content cross which consisted of 4th and 5th categories. The proportion of content cross in the first meeting was 79.37% showing that the teacher spent more time in teaching and learning, asking questions, and lecturing. When a teacher speaks for a long time, students may become passive or bored and become disengaged. Reduced motivation and attention during the lesson leads to poor academic performance. The second dominant characteristic was the students' participation or student talk which consisted of the 8th and 9th categories. The students participated in responding to the teacher's question and talking initiation. The proportion of student's participation in the first meeting was 19.04% meaning that the students were not active in classroom interaction. The proportion of student participation in this meeting was lower than the third meeting but higher than the second and fourth meeting. When they misunderstand concepts and forget information, inactive students do not ask questions or participate, and this leads to poor performance.

The third dominant characteristic was the teacher control which consisted of the 6th and 7th categories, which are two of teacher talk categories. It recorded 3.1 % of teaching and learning process in the first meeting, showing that the teacher spent little time giving directions and criticizing or justifying activity. The proportion of teacher control in this meeting was lower than the second, third, and fourth meetings. When the teacher spends little time giving directions and criticizing, learners do not know what to do and they become unsure of what is expected of them, leading to poor task performance.

The fourth dominant characteristic was the teacher support which consisted of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd categories; the lecturer only spent 1.59% of the teaching and learning process in the first meeting. It showed that the teacher rarely accepted students' feelings, rarely praised or encouraged them. The proportion of teacher support in this meeting was lower than the second, third, and fourth meetings. When the teacher rarely accepted students' feelings, rarely praised or encouraged they doubt themselves and feel they worry about being judged. When students feel that their emotions are dismissed, they doubt themselves and develop low confidence which affects their participation and performance. From the additional data based on step 4 in data presentation, the other characteristics of classroom interaction could be analysed. The characteristics of classroom interaction in the first meeting are summarized below.

- a) The most dominant characteristic of the additional data was teacher talk which consisted of all teachers talk categories from the 1st–7th categories. The proportion of teacher talk in the first meeting was 66% meaning that the teacher was talking too much, and she dominated the classroom interaction. The proportion of teacher talk in this meeting was the lowest compared to the second, third, and fourth meeting.
- b) The second dominant characteristic of the additional data was direct teaching which consisted of the 5th, 6th, and 7th categories. It recorded 54.55% meaning that the lecturer spent more time in direct teaching (lecturing, giving directions, and criticizing or justifying authority). The proportion of direct teaching in this meeting was lower than the second and fourth meeting but higher than the third meeting.
- c) The third dominant characteristic of the additional data was lecturing (5th category), it is one of the teachers talk categories. It recorded 54.17% meaning that the teacher was giving facts or opinions about content or expressions of her own ideas, giving her own explanation or citing an authority other than students. The proportion of lecturing in this meeting was lower than the second and third meeting but higher than the fourth meeting.
- d) The fourth dominant characteristic of the additional data was indirect teaching (1st and 4th categories). Indirect teaching recorded 45.45% in the first meeting. It was higher than the second and fourth meeting but lower than the third meeting.
- e) Furthermore, in silent or confusion (10th category) the classroom recorded 15.9% in the first meeting. It means that there is silence or no interaction between teacher and students and it was the highest one compared to the second, third, and fourth meetings.

The second meeting

In the second meeting all categories of FIAC analysis system appeared in classroom interaction. Based on the result of step 3 the most dominant characteristic of categories found was the content cross which consisted of the 4th and 5th categories. The proportion of content cross in the second meeting was 96.2%, meaning that the teacher spent more time in the teaching and learning process asking questions and lecturing. The teacher dominated classroom

activities, and it was higher than the first, third, and fourth meeting. Teacher dominated lessons tend to focus on closed questions, factual recall and memorisation. As a result, students rarely practice critical thinking, reasoning or problem solving and this leads to poor academic performance.

The second dominant characteristic was the students' participation which consisted of the 8th and 9th categories that are the categories of student talk. The students participated in responding the teacher's questions and talking initiation. The proportion of students' participation in the second meeting was 17.3% meaning that the students were not active in classroom interactions. Their participation in classroom activities was lower compared to the first and third meeting but was the higher compared to the fourth meeting. Inactive students do not request for clarity if they do not misunderstand and often leave the lesson with gaps in understanding the information taught during class.

The third dominant characteristic was the teacher control which consisted of the 6th and 7th categories. It recorded 5.8% of the teaching and learning process in the second meeting, which showed that the teacher was rarely accepting students' feelings and rarely praised them and rarely accepted their ideas. The teacher's role in supporting the students in classroom activities was the highest one compared to the first and third meetings and was lower compared to the fourth meeting. If the teacher does not acknowledge students' feelings, they may become emotionally withdrawn or anxious in class and this may result in students not doing well.

The fourth dominant characteristic was teacher support which consisted of 1st, 2nd and 3rd categories which are two of teacher talk categories. The lecturer only spent 1.9% of the teaching and learning process in the second meeting. This percentage was similar to the third meeting but higher than the first and fourth meeting. From additional data based on step 4 in data presentation, the other characteristics of classroom interaction could be analysed. The characteristics of classroom interaction in the second meeting are summarized as follows. Just like the first meeting the most dominant characteristic of the additional data was teacher talk which consisted of all teacher-talk categories from 1st – 7th categories. The proportion of teacher talk in the second meeting was 79.4% meaning that the teacher dominated classroom interaction and it was the higher than the first and third and fourth meetings.

The second dominant characteristic of the additional data was direct teaching which consisted of the 5th, 6th, and 7th categories. It recorded 57.9% meaning that the teacher spent more time in direct teaching (lecturing, giving directions, and criticizing or justifying authority). In the second meeting, the teacher's direct teaching was higher than the first, third, and fourth meetings. The third dominant characteristic of the additional data was lecturing (5th category); it is one of the teacher-talk categories. It recorded 72.7% meaning that the lecturer was giving facts or opinions about content or expression of her own ideas, giving her own explanations, or citing an authority other than students. In the second meeting lecturing was higher than the first and fourth meetings, but it was lower than the third meeting. In indirect teaching (1st – 4th categories) there are some categories of teacher talk. The teacher spent 39.5% in indirect teaching in the second meeting. It means that the teacher spent much time in indirect teaching, but it was lower than the first, third, and fourth meetings. For silent or confusion (10th category) the classroom recorded 9.6% in the second meeting, which means that there was silence or no interaction between the teacher and students in this meeting although it was lower than the first, third, and fourth meetings.

The third meeting

In the third meeting almost all categories of FIAC analysis system appeared in classroom interaction. Based on the result of step 3 the most dominant characteristic of categories found was the content cross which consisted of the 4th and 5th categories, which are two of the teachers talk categories. The proportion of content cross in the third meeting was 94.1%, showing that the teacher spent more time in the teaching and learning process asking questions and lecturing. The teacher dominated classroom activities by talking too much and it was lower than the first meeting but higher than the second and fourth meeting. Research shows that minimal student interaction can result in poor understanding of concepts.

The second dominant characteristic was student participation or student talk which consisted of the 8th and 9th categories that are the categories of student talk. The students participated by responding the teacher's questions and talking initiation. The proportion of students' participation in the third meeting was 21.6% meaning that the students were not active enough in the classroom interaction. The students' participation in the classroom activities was higher than the first, second, and fourth meeting. If students engage less, they also remember less, leading to poor results.

The third dominant characteristic was the teacher control which consisted of the 6th and 7th categories, which are two of teacher talk categories. It recorded 3.9% of teaching learning process in the third meeting, showing that the teacher spent little time giving directions, criticizing, or justifying activity. In the third meeting, spent time in teacher control was lower than the second and fourth meeting but higher than the first meeting.

The fourth dominant characteristic was the teacher support which consisted of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd categories; there are three teacher talk categories in which the lecturer only spent 1.9% of the teaching and learning process in the third meeting. It showed that the teacher was rarely accepting feelings, rarely praising, encouraging or accepting students' ideas. In this meeting, the percentage of the lecturer's support to her students was similar to that of the second meeting but higher than the first, and fourth meeting. From additional data based on step 4 in data presentation, the other characteristics of classroom interaction could be analysed. The characteristics of classroom interaction in the third meeting are summarized below.

- a) The most dominant characteristic of the additional data was teacher-talk which consisted of all teacher-talk categories from the 1st – 7th categories. The proportion of teacher talk in the third meeting was 67.1% meaning that the teacher still dominated classroom interaction. It was higher than the first meeting but lower than the second and fourth meeting.
- b) The second dominant characteristic of the additional data was direct teaching which consisted of the 5th, 6th, and 7th categories. It recorded 52.8% meaning that the teacher spent more time in direct teaching (lecturing, giving directions, and criticizing or justifying authority). In the third meeting, the teacher's direct teaching was the highest one compared to the first, second, and fourth meeting.
- c) The third dominant characteristic of the additional data was lecturing (5th category), it is one of the teacher-talk categories. It recorded 78.9% meaning that the teacher was giving facts or opinions about content or expression of her own ideas, giving her own explanations or citing an authority other than students. In the third meeting, the lecturing was the higher than the first, second, and fourth meetings.

- d) The third dominant characteristic of the additional data was indirect teaching (1st - 4th) category. In indirect teaching (1st – 4th categories) there are some categories of teacher talk. Teacher spent 47.2% in indirect teaching in the third meeting. It means that the teacher spent much time in indirect teaching, but it was higher than the first, second, and fourth meetings.
- e) In silent or confusion (10th category), the classroom spent 7.8% of this in the third meeting. It means that there was silence or no interaction between the teacher and students in this meeting and it was lower compared to the first and second meetings and was higher compared to the fourth meeting.

The fourth meeting

In the fourth meeting almost all categories of FIAC analysis system appeared in classroom interaction. Based on the result of step 3 the most dominant characteristic of categories found was the content cross which consisted of the 4th and 5th categories, which are two of the teacher-talk categories. The proportion of content cross in the fourth meeting was 73.2%, showing that the teacher spent more time in the teaching and learning process asking questions and lecturing. The teacher dominated the classroom activities by talking too much and it was lower than the first, second, and third meetings. When the teacher speaks too much, students became passive learners and not active thinkers, leading to poor academic performance.

The second dominant characteristic was the students' participation or student talk which consisted of the 8th and 9th categories that are the categories of student talk. The students participated by responding the teacher's questions and talking initiation. The proportion of students' participation in the fourth meeting was 17% meaning that the students were not active enough in classroom interactions. The students' participation in the classroom activities was lower than the first, second, and third meetings. Students who do not speak in class have fewer chances to practice language resulting in weak oral communication skills. Weak oral communication skill will lead to students not doing well especially in language subjects.

The third dominant characteristic was the teacher control which consisted of the 6th and 7th categories that are two of teacher talk categories. It recorded 9.8% of the teaching and

learning process in the fourth meeting. It showed that the teacher spent little time in giving directions and criticizing or justifying activity. In the fourth meeting the time spent in teacher control was higher than the first, second, and third meetings.

The fourth dominant characteristic was the teacher support which consisted of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd categories; there are three teacher talk categories in which the lecturer only spent 4.9% of the teaching and learning process in the fourth meeting. It showed that the teacher was rarely accepting feelings, rarely praising, encouraging and accepting the students' ideas. In this meeting, the lecturer's support to her students was like that of the second meeting but higher than the first and fourth meeting. From the additional data based on step 4 in data presentation, the other characteristics of classroom interaction could be analysed. The characteristics of classroom interaction in the first meeting are summarized as follows:

- a) The most dominant characteristic of the additional data was teacher talk which consisted of all teacher-talk categories from the 1st–7th category. The proportion of teacher talk in the first meeting was 68.2% meaning that the teacher was talking too much and she dominated the classroom interaction. The proportion of teacher talk in this meeting was the lowest compared to the second but higher compared to the first, and third meetings.
- b) The second dominant characteristic of the additional data was direct teaching which consisted of the 5th, 6th, and 7th categories. It recorded 54.8% meaning that the lecturer spent more time in direct teaching (lecturing, giving directions, and criticizing or justifying authority). The proportion of direct teaching in this meeting was lower than the second and fourth meeting but higher than the third meeting.
- c) The third dominant characteristic of the additional data was lecturing (5th category), it is one of the teacher-talk categories. It recorded 52.2% meaning that the teacher was giving facts or opinions about content or expression of her own ideas, giving her own explanations or citing an authority other than students. The proportion of lecturing in this meeting was the lower than the first, second, and third meetings.

- d) The fourth dominant characteristic of the additional data was indirect teaching (1st and 4th categories). Indirect teaching recorded 45.2% in the first meeting. It was higher when compared to the second meeting and lower compared to the first and third meetings.
- e) Furthermore, in silent or confusion (10th category) the classroom recorded 7.3% in the first meeting. It means that there is still silence or no interaction between teacher and students and it was the lowest one compared to the second, third, and fourth meetings.

Discussion

Interaction is a central component of language learning in communicative classrooms. According to Ellis (2003), interaction provides learners with comprehensible input, opportunities for output, and feedback that facilitates interlanguage development. The various configurations of interaction—teacher–learner, learner–teacher, and learner–learner—each contribute uniquely to language acquisition, engagement, and classroom dynamics.

Teacher–learner interaction

Teacher–learner interaction remains the dominant mode of communication in many language classrooms. This interaction pattern, whether direct or indirect, typically includes teacher questioning, explanation, correction, and elicitation. Teacher–learner interaction plays a crucial role in scaffolding learning through guidance and modelling. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) concept presented by Vygotsky (1978) underpins this dynamic; the teacher supports learners in performing tasks they could not complete independently. Walsh (2011) emphasizes that effective teacher talk can maximize learning opportunities by balancing control with learner participation. Moreover, the Interaction Hypothesis by Long (1996) suggests that negotiation of meaning between teacher and learner facilitates language development through modified input and feedback. For example, when teachers adjust their speech, through simplification or clarification for example, learners are more likely to understand and internalize information that is being imparted to them. It should be mentioned that teacher-dominated interactions, as was observed at Phatsimo community junior secondary school, may reduce students' opportunities to learn meaningfully. According to Nunan (1991), overuse of teacher talk often limits student-initiated communication and can reinforce passive

learning roles, especially in large classes. This was also noted at Phatsimo community junior secondary school.

Learner–teacher interaction

In contrast to teacher-led exchanges, learner–teacher interactions involve student initiation of dialogue. This includes questions, requests for clarification, and responses expressing personal views. Such interactions promote learner autonomy and critical engagement. Allwright and Bailey (1991) argue that when learners take interactional initiative, they actively construct meaning, thus enhancing cognitive processing and retention of information. Additionally, learners' questions often reveal gaps in understanding, enabling teachers to adapt instruction responsively. According to Lyster and Ranta (1997), this two-way exchange allows for negotiation of form, where teachers can provide corrective feedback that directly addresses learners' errors and gaps in understanding. The immediacy of such exchanges supports the development of accuracy and fluency.

However, as was observed at Phatsimo community junior secondary school, learner-initiated interaction is often scarce, especially in cultures where teacher authority is emphasized (Tsui, 2001). The imbalance in power relations can discourage learners from questioning or challenging teachers, which may restrict communicative opportunities. Another restrictive factor is when there is a lot of criticism from the teachers. This was also observed at Phatsimo. The lesson to be learnt by teachers is the issue of power relations and its negative impact in student learning.

Learner–learner interaction

Peer interaction is increasingly recognized as a powerful context for student learning. The Output Hypothesis by Swain (2005) posits that learners acquire language by producing it and reflecting on their output. Learner–learner interaction provides opportunities for authentic communication, negotiation of meaning, and collaborative problem-solving. Research shows that peer interaction fosters fluency, confidence, and communicative competence (Storch, 2002). Collaborative dialogue encourages language-related episodes (LREs), where learners discuss linguistic forms and meanings. Moreover, the Input Hypothesis by Krashen (1985) suggests that comprehensible input from peers, though imperfect, remains beneficial when it occurs within a meaningful context. Such interaction also enhances social and pragmatic

competence, as learners learn to manage turn-taking, politeness strategies, and conversational repair (Seedhouse, 2004). It aligns with communicative and task-based language teaching methodologies, where communication is both the means and the goal of learning. It should be mentioned that without teacher mediation, peer interaction may perpetuate errors or lead to communicative breakdowns (Philp et al., 2014). Therefore, structured peer tasks and reflective feedback are essential to maximize its benefits. Feedback from the teachers should be without intimidation and unnecessary criticism which can dampen enthusiasm and the spirit of learning.

Conclusion

The teacher-student instructional interaction in the English class was in a three-way communication; there were interactions between the teacher to the students, the students to the teacher, and the students to the students. Interactions between teacher and students happened when the teacher was asking questions, giving directions, accepting feelings, praising or encouraging, accepting or using ideas, and criticizing or justifying authority. The interaction between students to the teacher occurred when students responded to the teacher or when the student initiated the talk. Student-to-student interactions occurred during group discussions. In each of the four meetings conducted in the English class at one of the junior secondary schools in the Tutume area, almost all the categories of FIAC system appear.

The most dominant TSII in English class was content cross. It means that the category that appeared most are the 4th (asking questions) and the 5th (lecturing or lecture) category of teacher talk based on the Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC) system. This means that most of the time the teacher was asking questions and lecturing during the teaching and learning process. The proportion of content cross in the first meeting was 79.37%, in the second meeting it was 96.2%, in the third meeting it was 94.1% and in the fourth meeting it was 73.2%.

Furthermore, based on step 4 (the additional data), the most dominant characteristic or category in the English subject class was teacher talk. It means that all of teacher talk categories appeared in each meeting. It also shows that the teacher spent more time talking in the classroom than the students. The proportion of teacher talk in the first meeting was 66%, the second meeting was 79.4%, third meeting was 67.1% and the fourth was 68.2%. Although in each meeting the teacher dominated the talk or interaction in the classroom, the students were participating in the classroom interaction even though it was not active enough. The result

showed that the students' participation (students' talk response and students' talk initiation) was high enough from the total teaching learning process.

To summarise the points made above, it should be noted that each type of classroom interaction: teacher–learner, learner–teacher, and learner–learner, contributes distinctively to learning. Teacher-led interactions provide scaffolding and input; learner-to-teacher exchanges encourage autonomy and feedback negotiation; and peer interactions facilitate authentic communication and collaborative learning. Effective instructional design should balance these interactional modes to optimize both language development and learner engagement.

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study. Firstly, there is need to craft performance development plans at school level as an instrument that would be used to objectively assess teacher performance on agreed objectives for a given year. Secondly, teachers who are promoted to higher positions should be inducted so that they are aware and conversant with their job specifications as this could bring better results. Thirdly, in-service training should be conducted for leaders and teachers who are currently teaching. This in-service training would be aimed at updating teachers' knowledge by introducing them to the latest educational methods and teaching aids. Fourthly, there is need to conduct needs assessment or self-study to identify instructional strategies of all teachers in a junior community school and relate the findings with academic performance for each class. Lastly, Flanders's Instructional Analysis Instrument could be used by the school to self-reflect on how instruction is done and how it should be conducted for maximum efficiency.

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