ANALYSIS OF THE INTERACTION AND QUESTIONS BETWEEN TEACHER EDUCATOR-TEACHER CANDIDATES IN A CONTEXTUAL GRAMMAR COURSE

Bağlamsal Dilbilgisi Dersinde Öğretim Elemanları ile Öğretmen Adayları Arasındaki Soruların ve Etkileşimin Analizi

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Abstract

Recently, there has been an increasing trend to examine the talks between the teacher educators and teacher candidates. These studies are important in that they reflect the interactions between them in the natural classroom setting. The present case study deals with the interaction among teachers and students and the question types in teacher talk for Contextual Grammar course of English Language Teacher (ELT) candidates. To examine data, the matrixes developed by Flanders (1960) were used. The matrixes enable to gather data related to the repetitions, the questions, the points which are emphasized, corrections, criticisms and silences made by teacher educators. In that sense, the main purpose of the article is to highlight the conversations according to different question types. The participants of this case study are three lecturers who teach Contextual Grammar course for ELT candidates. According to the results, lecturers generally asked questions while talking, and they did not attach importance to teach grammar in context though the name of the course implied it. Furthermore, teachers in the present study constantly asked display questions rather than referential questions. It has been found out that this situation leads to less interaction between teacher educators and teacher candidates.

Key Words: *Language teacher, teacher education, interaction analysis.*

Özet

Son yıllarda öğretmen eğitimcisi ile öğretmen adayları arasındaki konuşmaları inceleyen çalışmalarda artış olmuştur. Bu çalışmalar doğal ortamında etkileşimleri kaydetmesi açısından önem taşımaktadır. Bu vaka çalışmasında İngilizce öğretmen adayları ve öğretmen eğitimcileri arasında geçen etkileşimdeki soru tipleri incelenmiştir. İnceleme için Flanders (1960) tarafından geliştirilen Etkileşim Analizi matriksleri kullanılmıştır. Matriksler öğretmen eğiticilerinin tekrarlarını, sorularını, bilgi verdiği noktaları, düzeltmelerini, yönlendirmelerini, eleştirilerini ve konuşmada geçen sessiz noktaları kaydetmeyi sağlamaktadır. Böylelikle eğitici ile öğretmen adayı arasında konuşmaların ses kayıtları bu veriler ışığında incelenebilmektedir. İlgili veri İngilizce Öğretmenliği bölümünde 1. sınıf dersi olan Bağlamsal Dilbilgisi dersinden toplanmıştır. Çalışmanın temel amacı, farklı soru tiplerine göre etkileşim sırasındaki soruları incelemek ve Bağlamsal Dilbilgisi dersindeki iletişim yönünü incelemektir. Çalışmanın verisi üç farklı Bağlamsal Dilbilgisi dersi veren öğretim görevlisi ve öğrenci gruplarından elde edilmiştir. Sonuçlara göre, öğretim elemanlarının dersler işlerken sıklıkla sorular sorduğu ve dersin adının Bağlamsal Dilbilgisi olmasına rağmen dilbilgisini bağlamda öğretmeye yönelik sorular sormadıkları tespit edilmiştir. Ayrıca, çalışmadaki öğretmen eğiticilerinin referans soruları yerine sürekli yüzeysel sorular sordukları tespit edilmiştir. Öğretmen eğiticilerinin ağırlıklı

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konuşmalarında referans sorularına nadiren rastlanmıştır. Bu durumun öğrenci öğretmen eğitimcisi iletişimini azalttığı düşünülmektedir. Bunun yanısıra dersin Bağlamsal Dilbilgisi adında olmasına rağmen öğretmen eğiticilerinin dersi bağlamda işlemedikleri tespit edilmiştir. Çalışma dil öğretmeni yetiştirme ortamındaki soru tiplerini incelemesi açısından önemlidir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Dil öğretmeni, öğretmen yetiştirme, etkileşim analizi.*

Introduction

Throughout the recent decades, there has been a growing interest in the interactions among teachers and students as well as questions teachers ask in those interactions. Quite recently, considerable attention has been paid to this topic. In this light, Nikula (2002) points out "classrooms need to be studied as social contexts in their own right to gain a better understanding of the features of language and interaction that have pragmatic significance in them." (p. 464) As a result of his study, Cullen (2001) puts forward to use transcripts for improving classroom language of language teachers.

As for the questions in teacher talk, Pica (1994) highlights the importance of teacher questions in classroom settings and states "teachers are asking questions that researchers cannot, indeed would neither dare nor choose, to ignore." (p. 50). When the questions of the teachers have been examined, David (2007) concluded that teachers use more display questions (85%) than referential questions (15%). On this aspect, Ho (2005) states "questions that are claimed to be closed and therefore pedagogically purposeless, do in fact serve a purpose within its overall agenda and learning goals." (p. 309).

On the one hand, many studies have been conducted to identify the properties of classrooms as social contexts which also paid attention to teacher-student interactions. On the other hand, many efforts have been allocated for improving language teacher education. A lot of researchers put forward ideas on language teacher education (Richards & Nunan, 1990; Crandall, 2000; Borg, 2011 among others). Several publications have appeared in recent years documenting beliefs of language teachers (Borg, 2011; Sanger & Osgurthorpe, 2011 among others). In the last decade, modern language teacher education (Grenfell, 2014) and language teacher professional development (Golombek & Doran, 2014) have attracted much attention from research teams.

However, the problem is that most of the previous studies do not take into account the questions in teacher talk which has vital importance. In this paper, while earlier works in language teacher education are referred to for a comprehensive view, the focus is different. The aim of the present study is to describe questions in teacher-student interactions thoroughly in three different language teacher education contexts.

Methodology

Method and Participants

The present study applied descriptive techniques as the method. Therefore, the lessons were recorded by taking the consents of participant teachers and students. The participants of the study are three lecturers who teach Contextual Grammar course for ELT candidates in three different universities of Turkey. After that, the conversations were described, and content analysis was done in addition to the Interaction Analysis. The study has its limitations to the lapse of time in each class, for it was left to the option

of the teachers, which means it is variable as for the contact hour, and such a situation may lead to different results.

Data Analysis

For the analysis of compiled data, Interaction Analysis by Flanders (1960, as cited in Allwright & Bailey, 1991) has been used. According to this analysis type, matrixes have been used. These matrixes help to identify the nature of the interactions.

Procedure

As for the procedure, three teachers who teach contextual grammar course have been contacted by e-mail. After teachers recorded their classes, they sent the lesson records by e-mail. Then, the researcher transcribed the lessons and did the interaction analysis in line with Flanders' interaction analysis. As the final step, the researcher prepared three maxis (adapted from Flanders, 1960 as cited in Allwright & Bailey, 1991) which make it easy to follow the interactions among the students and teachers.

Findings & Discussion

The findings of the study have been studied thanks to matrixes and interaction analysis offered by Flanders (1960, as cited in Allwright & Bailey, 1991). (see Appendix A for the items counterparts)

Table 1. Matrix for describing interaction analysis of the participant teachers

	Teachers	1.	2.	3.	Total
Events	1.	5	6	5	16
	2.	3	5	2	10
	3.	3	12	8	23
	4.	29	43	18	90
	5.	7	10	16	33
	6.	15	7	3	25
	7.	4	6	0	10
	8.	16	38	15	69
	9.	1	4	0	5
	10.	3	5	1	9
	Total	86	126	68	240

In line with Figure 1, it can be obviously inferred that most of the teacher talk is made of the questions that they ask. Examples 1 and 2 illustrate some display and referential questions that they have asked:

Example 1: Teacher 1: What do you remember about cohesion? What is cohesion?

Why did the writer prefer to use passive structure from time to time?

Example 2: Teacher 2: What type of relationships do we have in adverbial clauses?

Who do you think he might be? Any guesses?

As it can be seen from the examples (1 and 2), teachers used both type of questions frequently (43 questions out of 86 for Teacher 2, as the highest rate). In terms of the total rate, student talk-response takes place as the second important item which compromises teacher talk. Example 3 shows student talk response of Teacher 2:

Example 3:   Teacher 2: Do you think he get over his fears?

Student A: Yes. I think he became self confident.

In Example 3, as a response to a display question, the student responds, and the student also adds comments about the context. There have been such examples in all of the lessons. Another important thing in the total talk list is whether teachers accept or use the ideas of student. Example 4 shows how they accept:

Example 4: Teacher 1: Correct….Different types of sentences…

You are right. We can change the structure

As well as accepting ideas, the teachers also gave directions in a clear way. The students do not experience a misunderstanding because of unclear instructions (see Example 5 below).

Example 5:   Teacher 2: Here are some questions, before we discuss, we will answer them actually.

In 16 events out of 260, teacher acceptance has been observed. Example 6 and 7 show how they accept:

Example 6: Teacher 1: Possible, yes… Yes, that is correct…

Yes, good, that is actually right

Example 7: Teacher 3: All right… Good…

In 10 events out of 260, teachers used praises or encourages, and in 10 events out of 260, teachers criticized or justified authority (see Examples 8,9,10 below). For warning, teachers also used the techniques which do not threaten the interaction between student and teacher.

Example 8: Teacher 2: (After an explanation of a question) Thank you, good…Good memory….I did not expect it actually…

Example 9: Teacher 1: (Says the name of the student)…Be serious…

Example 10: Teacher 1: I want you to work on fourth and fifth sentences at home..You know why? Because I want you to focus on this. Think of what we have talked about, repetition, subordinators, cohesion, coordination and whatever…Work on these two sentences carefully…And next week, let's start with these two sentences. You may feel stressed in here; I think you need to work on them at home.

Teachers preferred to teach the course by lecturing though the name of the course, itself, implies teaching grammar in context. Examples 11 and 12 display the grammatical explanations of the teachers:

Teacher 1: No need to tell pronouns. If you have problems, you can ask me, but I am not going to tell you personal pronouns, possessive pronouns.

Teacher 2: Simple sentences contain a subject and a predicate as a must.

Silence or confusion did not compromise a big percent in teacher talk though there are some examples (see Example 13).

Teacher 1: We can use synonyms or....

Who would like to tell me? Huı?.....

Remember that word...Repeating the same word unnecessarily...

Lastly, as one of the most interesting findings, it has been revealed that students do not initate a topic for discussion frequently; and therefore, there is not a frequent student-student initiation of the topics. Example 14 shows some sentences for this issue.

Example 14: Teacher 1: When one student wanted to interrupt another student, the teacher said, "Student X is talking" Then, student Z said:

Student Z: Is this like restatement?

Teacher 1: Kinda...Of course,...Paraphrase means restatement actually....

Example 15: Student Y: Hocam, are we responsible for those?

Teacher 2: No, not for the midterm actually, before the final.

Conclusion and Implications

The results of the present study display the density of teacher talk in three different contexts. Furthermore, it has also been revealed that teachers in the present study constantly asked display questions rather than referential questions. This may also yield to a non-communicative atmosphere since the answers of the display questions are not open to discussion. Due to the fact that the answers are short like these, the students were not able to initiate student teacher interaction several times.

On this aspect, teacher educators may need to focus on more referential questions in their classroom settings. Thanks to the referential questions, they may create a communicative atmosphere in their classroom settings. That's why, the findings of this study shed light onto the use of referential questions, and the volume of these questions in such interactive classes.

Though there have been various studies related to teacher talk (Swanson et al., 1990; Minor et al., 2002 among others), the results of the present study yield fruitful results in that it is the first study that examined the questions in teacher talk in a language teacher education program. Furthermore, the results of the present study will also shed light onto the language teacher practitioners with a view regarding their teaching styles. Further studies may deal with the relationships among language teacher candidates and their lecturers regarding the techniques to develop interactions.

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Appendix A

Summary of Categories for Interaction Analysis

Indirect influence

1. Accepts feeling: accepts and clarifies the feeling tone of the students in a nonthreatening manner. Feelings may be positive or negative. Predicting and recalling feelings are included.

2. Praises or encourages: praises or encourages student action or behavior. Jokes that release tension, not at the expense of another individual, nodding head, or saying "un huh;" or "go on" are included.

3. Accepts or used ideas of student: clarifying, building, or developing ideas or suggestions by a student. As a teacher brings more of his own ideas into play, shift o category five.

4. Asks questions: asking a question about content or procedure with the intent hat a student answer.

Direct influence

5. Lectures: giving facts or opinions about content or procedure; expressing his own idea; asking rhetorical questions.

6. Gives directions: directions, commands, or orders with which a student is expected to comply.

7. Criticizes or justifies authority: statements intended to change student behavior from non-acceptable to acceptable pattern; bawling someone out; stating why the teacher is doing what he is doing, extreme self-reference.

8. Student talk-response: talk by students in response to teacher. Teacher imitates the contact or solicits student statement.

9. Student talk-initiation: talk by students, which they initiate. If "calling on" student is only to indicate who may talk next, observer must decide whether student wanted to talk. Of he did, use the category.

10. Silence or confusion: pauses, short periods of silence, and periods of confusion in which communication cannot be understood by the observer. (Allwright, 1988: p. 60)