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Analysis of Discourse within Classroom Interaction: Towards a Social Constructivist Perspective

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ABSTRACT: This paper aims at examining the way of developing learning by enhancing interaction skills through a constructivist approach. In fact, learners of English may be in a crucial need for developing their linguistic competence, but also their communicative one. Therefore, there has been an intention for dealing with learners as knowledge constructivists to identify their Meta-competences and interactional discourse within a constructivist learning context. In the English language teaching context, constructivist learning has been deeply incorporated through theoretical lens in teaching English skills in class. It is referred to as a process in which learners are exposed to primary sources and are able to interact with others by learning from relating their life experience. Typically, we arrived at identifying the nature and scope of interactional discourse and conversational linguistics in language teaching classes from the prospect of the Social Constructivist Approach.

Keywords – Constructivism, conversation discourse, conversational linguistics, ELT context, social interaction

I.　　INTRODUCTION

Learning theories can provide a pedagogical groundwork for understanding the process of learning and assisting the process of teaching. In fact, among those learning theories is found to be efficient; some of which is Constructivism theory. The basic claim of constructivists which makes it differ from the other theories of learning is that knowledge is constructed depending on previous experiences. Typically, teachers nowadays feel the need to pull their attention to constructivism which can improve students' self-learning and thus active knowledge construction. Learning through interaction has recently appeared under many referred concepts over the century, yet it is considered as an effective way of enhancing many of the students' interaction skills. It is even more useful today than any other teaching approaches because of the knowledge development and technological advances which make learning easier.

Teachers are challenged to find approaches in the classroom which prove to be efficient in helping students have adequate understanding after each task or lesson set. Indeed, the main assumption of constructivists is learning by doing and communicating. It is typically based on the fact that learning occurs as learners are actively involved in a process of knowledge construction and meaning instead of passively receiving information. Learners are the maker of meaning and knowledge. Constructivist teaching tempts to foster critical thinking and allows learners to be independent and highly motivated. By being able to create ideas and interpret them personally and relate them to their experiences, constructivism allows learners to be able to understand how they relate ideas to each other and link previous knowledge with existing one. Constructivist teaching belongs to modern teaching approaches and it is distinguished from traditional educational classrooms.

II.　　PREFACE TO CONSTRUCTIVISM THEORY

Constructivism has been based on many different perspectives which may date back to ancient times. Recently, it has been influenced by the Swiss psychologist and Jean Piaget (1896–1980) and the social constructivists John Dewey (1859-1952) and Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) who argued that teachers need to provide students with tasks for acquiring ideas and knowledge based on social relationships and interaction. As they claimed that through the process of learning, learners can have the opportunity to interact and communicate using interactional discourse under social and cultural variables: "the knowledge people interact with is added to schemas of prior knowledge wherein learners construct knowledge. This knowledge is formed by learners' own

experiences, and hence this construction varies among learners" (Jonassen, 1991; Mayer, 2004) [1] [2] as their views have been applied and reaffirmed in classrooms in the late century.

Constructivists' claim is that learners construct knowledge themselves rather than acquiring new knowledge, as learning is an active process based on the learners' experiences and their learning environment. In addition to Vygotsky, Piaget, and Dewey, there are other pioneers of social constructivism such as Leontief, Brown, Collin, and Duguid who view learning as an interactive process based on social relationships. The focus in constructivism is usually on learners and on creating a collaborative and interactive environment. Based on Vygotsky'sThe Zone of Proximate Development which reflects the relationship between what learners can achieve by themselves, and what they can achieve with the interaction with others. This concept not only brought to light the social nature of learning, but to this day remains one of the most prevailing constructivist concepts within education. Vygotsky (1978) [3]
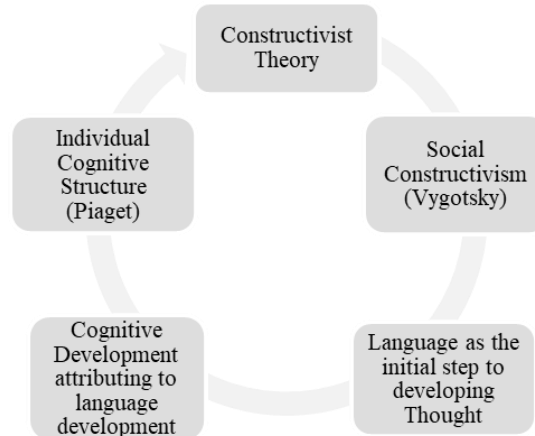
Fig 01: Piaget and Vygotsky's Constructivist Theory (Warriner & Anderson, 2016, 10) [4]

Social constructionism has been associated with Vygotsky's development of language and social interactions, it has been claimed by Shotter and Gergen (1994) that:

Social constructionism has given voice to range of new topics, such as the social construction of personal identities; the role of power in the social making of meanings; rhetoric and narrative in establishing sciences; the centrality of everyday activities; remembering and forgetting as socially constituted activities; reflexivity in method and theorizing. The common thread underlying all these topics is a concern with the processes by which human abilities; experiences, commonsense and scientific knowledge are both produced in, and reproduce, human communities (Shotter and Gergen, 1989, 01) [5]

Constructionism has been also developed by Papert who viewed it as an educational tool which allows learners to be kinesthetic in practicing what they have learned and to experience what they are learning while they are engaged in constructing knowledge. Besides, constructionism involves learning by doing Papert & Harel (1991) "Learning outcomes can be seen, criticized, and used by others, and that knowledge is constructed by practicing skills physically, not just intangibly. Knowledge becomes constructed where complex problems and real issues arise in the learning environments and, specifically, where learners are engaged and involved.

Constructionist activities integrate arts and design with the subjects being taught" (Papert & Harel, 1991) [6], as constructing knowledge is an essential part in the learning process which contributes to achieving the desired outcomes of learning context. Constructivist pedagogy puts emphasis on strategies in classrooms which allow learners to depend on themselves and think critically which leads to learning by doing for the sake of achieving the learning outcomes. Further, the constructivist theory also focuses on the meta-cognitive strategies of the learners.

Learning occurs constructively where new knowledge is based on previously acquired knowledge. When learners construct their knowledge they are guided by the teacher in order to help them build on their previous knowledge (Ranelhort, 1980; Enck, 2011). Usually, in constructivist teaching, students learn new information and acquire ideas through many learning activities and strategies while the teacher' role is to help foster their class. According to Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism theory, learning can be acquired through collaborative work and social interaction to learn new information and ideas and develop skills and stimulate imagination. Hussain (2012) [7]

III.   CONSTRUCTIVIST PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

English language teaching has changed today from traditional to modern methodologies in order to foster students' learning abilities. Yet, not all teachers are aware of the importance of that. Constructive teaching

and learning strategies require effort and role of both students and teachers. Therefore, teachers need to inquire into those teaching methodologies in their classes. (Nayak, 2013) besides, Kim (2005) believes that students and teachers work in collaboration in the teaching and learning processes. According to Moore (2009), "teachers in the constructivist theory, should be aware that they are facilitators and guiders rather than the only source of information" (cited in Hajal, 2018) [8]

Interactive learning methodologies can help learners stimulate interest and involvements during the whole lesson and feel comfortable with what they learn. According to Cooperstein et al. (2004) "the benefits of constructivist teaching and learning are not only in favor of the student, but also the teacher who can learn new information and develop more professional teaching methods" (cited in Hussain, 21). As Daouk et al. (2016) claims that in constructivist teaching, teachers transform from being the transmitters of knowledge to a guide and facilitators of knowledge in the learning process. As She asserts: "instructors play the most important role because they can encourage students to engage in activities more often and they can do this by including these activities as part of grading" (360-361) [9]

Generally, constructive learning demands highly cooperative learning and physical activities for much enhancing learning. As Hamuddin (2012) [10] contends that constructive learning can be achieved through physical activities and group work which will typically motivate those learners who are demotivated. Those teaching strategies and activities can develop new make learners more productive and motivated while implementing those learning strategies. Since students are the main part in the learning process, teachers should motivate them and actively involve them in learning.

Thus, they become independent learners and acquire enough information to build on new knowledge and be intellectual. As Richardson (2003) [12] claims, teachers should be aware of different strategies to guide students and facilitate learning, and they should provide the learners with opportunities to construct ideas based on previous knowledge. Besides, constructivist teachers should encourage students to ask questions because teaching is based on their own prior ideas and field of interest, as they guide them to choose the task or activity by accepting the others' ideas.

Brooks and Brooks (1999, cited in Djik, 1997) [13] claim that teachers should let students look for answers themselves and encourage them to get the answers on their own; therefore, their learning can be progressive and lasts longer. Constructivist teachers are asked to edit the students" way of thinking by trying to find new ways that fit their own thinking. Overall, constructivist theory helps both the teachers and learners to maintain higher communication and thinking skills which results in independent learning.

IV.   DISCOURSE AND CLASSROOM INTERACTION

The concept of discourse analysis is in an interdisciplinary field which studies discourse and semiotics, linguistic analysts, social change, and socialization process. Discourse as a term is related to linguistics which uses language as a way of comprehending interactions in a social context and making social relations, it refers to the analysis of the relationship between connected speech and written discourse. Hamuddin (2012) [11] its aim is to describe activities at the interaction of fields of sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, philosophical linguistics and conversational linguistics. (Dijk, 1997), it is "the study of how stretches of language used in communication assume meaning, purpose, and unity for their users: the quality of coherence" (101)

According to Carter (1993), discourse analysis aims at examining the use of language in varied speech communities and exploring patterns in spoken or written forms and their relationship with society. It has been influenced by the work of Foucault (1972) with his two traditions in dealing with conversational and linguistic method. Based on his work, discourse can be seen as:

How a creative and innovative topic can be shaped and built into society, an analysis that will develop knowledge through history and experience and knowledge. We can see from here that conversational analysis is simple language communication as a system to represent real life or what it is. Language is the conversation and all the data is very important (cited in Fairclough, 2003, 10) [14]

Fairclough's approach to discourse analysis is based upon the assumption that language is a part of social life and a tool of communication, as he asserts that discourse is "oscillating between a focus on specific texts and a focus on the order of discourse, the relatively durable structuring of language which is itself one element of the relatively durable structuring and networking of social practices". Fairclough (2003, 01-02)

4.1 Conversation Discourse Analysis

Discourse Analysis originated from the works of different fields in the early 1970s, such as linguistics, psychology, anthropology and sociology. Discourse analysts study language using different written texts and spoken language and speech such as conversation, interviews, dialogues, and talk. Discourse analysis is defined by Bavelas, et, al, as:

The systematic study of naturally occurring (not hypothetical) communication in the broadest sense, at the level of meaning (rather than as physical acts or features) However, a survey of the literature on discourse analysis would quickly reveal that, although some researchers employ the tern to describe a particular kind of

analysis, it is also a label that has widespread usage across several disciplines with diverse goals. Consequently, it is more accurate to think of discourse analysis as a cluster of methods and approaches with some substantial common interests rather than as a single, unitary technique". (Bavelas, et, al, 2000, 102) [15]

Generally, language is the main task of any social analysis using a particular dimension of discourse analysis. Fairclough's approach to discourse analysis emphasized social theory which aims not at analyzing texts and works which focus on language of texts, because discourse analysis is not only a linguistic analysis of texts. However, according to Jaworski and Coupland (1999, cited in Potter, 1996) [16] discourse analysis involves studying certain written texts. Written discourse can be viewed from various angles according to the readers' interests as it can be approached from different perspectives and fields. Carter (1993) According to Potter & Wetherell (1988) [17] "discourse analysis focuses on talk and texts as social practices, and on the resources that are drawn on to enable those practices. For example, discourse analytic studies of racism have been concerned with the way descriptions are included in particular contexts to legitimate the blaming of a minority group" (cited in Potter, 1996, 07)

Dijk (1997) argues that "what we can do with discourse analysis is more than providing adequate descriptions of text and context. That is, we expect more from discourse analysis as the study of real language use, by real speakers in real situations, than we expect from the study of abstract syntax or formal semantics. Together with psycho- and sociolinguistics, discourse analysis has definitely brought linguistics to the realm of the social sciences" (02)
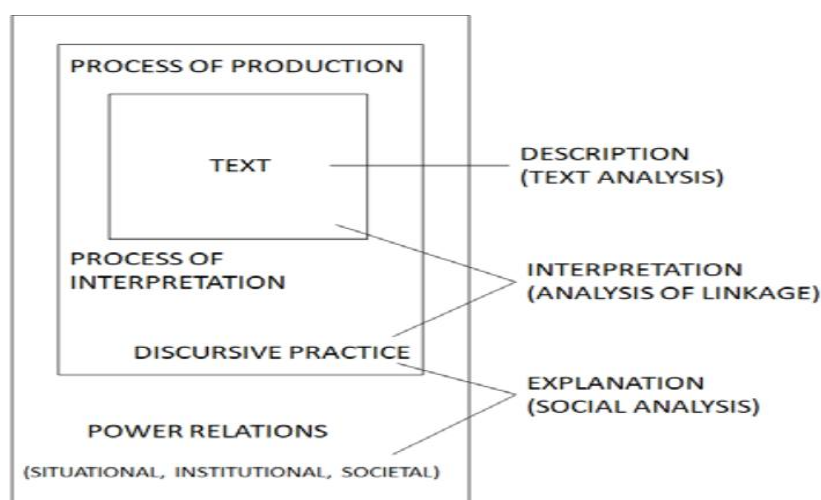
Fig 02: Dimensions of Discourse and Discourse Analysis (Adapted from Thomson, 2004, 18) [18]

Brown and Yule (1983) tempted to analyze discourse linguistically by investigating using language as a tool for communication and how speech is constructed as a linguistic message for listeners and how they deal with linguistic messages to interpret them later; besides, They (1983) claims that "the analysis of discourse is, necessarily, the analysis of language in use. As such, it cannot be restricted to the description of linguistic forms independent of the purposes or functions which those forms are designed to serve in human affairs" (cited in Dijk, 56)

On the other hand, according to Stubbs (1983) [19] discourse analysis involves the linguistic analysis ordinal connected spoken or written discourse, as he argues: "it refers to attempts to study the organization of language above the sentence or above the clause and therefore, to study larger linguistic units, such as conversational exchanges or written texts. It follows that discourse analysis is also concerned with language in use in social contexts and in particular with interaction or dialogue between speakers" (01) As it studies the language of spoken or written communication discourse analysis also inquires asking questions about how language, is used to interpret the aspects of a situation at a particular time and place and how those aspects construct meaning to that language.

Besides, social interaction is a kind of interaction which leads to communication. The concepts and rules of speech analysis are to connect the language in an institutional conversation or an ordinary conversation. For instance, conversational analysis can be found in social care and health research as it can be found in multiple topics which require analysis. Typically, linguistic analysis or linguistic practice is a perspective of interactional sociolinguistics which allows human interaction and socialization. It aims at analyzing patterns of language which contribute to building an opinion. Besides to conversational analysis, interactional sociolinguistics also explores methods of language structure, how the language is structured and understood. Conversational analysis doesn't focus on high level of language while sociolinguistics deals with gender, ethnicity and culture.

Conversation Analysis gives a general understanding of interaction which is usually performed through conversation and discourse analysts provides explorations to the social and psychological issues through pragmatics of conversation. Potter (1996, 14) Conversation analysis approaches to discourse provide the way learners provide alternative solutions to to particular problems of conversation. The analysis of conversational discourse and discourse in general is carried out in a high political practice of society, which can lead to the desire for positive political change, to be better for the future. From this perspective, what will happen, whether real or not, depends on the context of the place and the social context. Indeed, conversation analysis discusses repeating each subject's design through examining relationships and eliciting facts in many social contexts. As Sacks (1992) claims that:

> Interaction is not merely organized in its general forms, but is also organized in its particulars. Any level of detail in talk — hesitations, repairs, pauses — can be crucial for a piece of interaction; indeed, much of the business of interaction may be happening in the details. Workers in this tradition have also developed a sophisticated critique of cognitivist approaches to interaction, and at the same time attempted to identify grounds for making inferences about cognitive entities (cited in Potter, 1996, 14)

In the analysis of interactive oral discourse, conversational analysts argued that conducting turn taking is essential. Participants in conversations and interacting in class are part of particular types of turn taking, which are typically advocated through linguistic and non-linguistic means, therefore the practice of conducting conversations is employed in the target language is an important feature in constructivist language learning. (Badulu, 2009) [20] Indeed, Gumperz widely affirmed intercultural interaction and miscommunication; he expounded how falling rather than rising intonation on a single word can prompt complex patterns of interpretation and misinterpretation between individuals of different social cultural classes. These motifs of misinterpretation, known as conversational reasoning rely on the authentic structure of talk, and the processes of perception of the mechanisms based on intonation, rhythm, pausing, phonetic and lexics etc. These are called contextualization cues refer to the context of knowledge meaning. Schiffrin (1994) [20]

V.   CONCLUSION

The aim of this research has been to affirm the role of discourse analysis as a constructivist method in ELT classes. We tempted to look forward maintaining general guidelines and empirical examples of dealing with conversations and classroom interaction within this frame. Since its advent as an academic discipline in the 20th century, constructivism focused on the analysis of interactions between learners-teacher and learners-learners through social relationships. The use of constructivism allows for an examination of the discourse surrounding decisions and actions, breaking down the motivations and cyclical effects between structures and actors. By engaging in a constructivist analysis throughout this research, EFL learners and their relationship with learning through interaction in class has been examined and discussed. Overall, the discipline of discourse analysis depends on how individuals adopt existing traditions, and how they extend the core of their analytic findings, also how to look for new insightful means of analyzing empirical data. In effect, constructing new forms of discourse analysis will typically be related to creating new theoretical boundaries new approaches. We tempted to use conversation analysis as an approach of studying learners' way of communicating in the class based on their verbal and non-verbal life situations and social relationships through their prior experiences which can lead to classroom interaction.

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