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Second-Language Classroom Interaction: Questions and Answers in ESL Classes by Ann C. Wintergerst. Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 1994. xv + 159.

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This book presents an empirical study of teacher-student interaction in ESL classes, particularly in the area of student responses to teachers' questioning techniques. Data were gathered from six teachers and their twelve ESL classes at an English language institute in New York City during the spring semester of 1985. Three of the classes were beginning-level and the other three were advanced-level. The students included native speakers of Amharic, Arabic, Chinese, French, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Spanish, Thai, and Turkish. Those whose Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) scores fell below 400 were placed in beginning-level classes, while those who scored around 500 were placed in advanced-level classes. Except for their language background and TOEFL scores, no other information on the twenty-seven students was available.

Wintergerst begins her book by reviewing research on teachers' talk and question behaviors in (non-ESL) content classrooms and ESL classrooms. She summarizes previous related research and highlights the works of Gamta (1976), Rwakyaka (1976), Lobman (1979), Shapiro-Skrobe (1982), Hines (1983), and Libdeh (1984). Then the author moves on to the research methodology in her study, and discusses the research setting, subjects, data collection and analysis. The observation system used in the study—Fanselow's (1987) Foci for Observing Communications Used in Settings (FOCUS)—plays a major role in the analysis of classroom interaction in terms of the following communication characteristics: source/target, move type, medium, use, and content.

Source/target refers to who or what is communicating to whom or what. In a classroom setting, the source and target of communication essentially involve either the teacher or the student. *Move type* refers to the four moves for the pedagogical purpose of communication—structuring, soliciting, responding, and reacting. A structuring move sets the stage for a subsequent activity, e.g., "Alright, we're going to be in this room to help Ann with her tape-recordings." A soliciting move elicits a response to a question, request, or command, e.g., "How old are you?" A responding move answers a question or responds to a request or command, e.g., "I am thirty-seven years old." A reacting move is a reflexive move that is not solicited by others. It can be a comment on what others have communicated, e.g., "Sounds like Raphael had a wonderful party." I

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find the label 'reacting move' too general as it can possibly include a responding move too. *Medium* refers to the linguistic, paralinguistic, or non-linguistic element, or silence between the source and the target. *Use* refers to how the medium is used to communicate *content*.

Of the above five communication characteristics, Wintergerst devoted most of her discussion to *move*. Her quantitative findings showed that teachers devoted 7 percent of their total moves to structuring, 56 percent to soliciting, 6 percent to responding, and 32 percent to reacting. There was no structuring move by students. Students solicited 17 percent, responded 67 percent, and reacted 16 percent of the time. The results of the study suggested that students were inclined to use language more and produce more extended responses which were longer and more complex syntactically if teachers solicited with wh-questions (rather than yes/no questions), referential questions or questions to which the speaker did not know the answer (rather than practice or display questions), questions that expected the students to present or answer with a statement of information (rather than with a comment or inference about the information), and questions about the content of special areas or specific subjects (rather than language-related drills). Structuring one activity as opposed to several activities in a discussion lesson also generated extensive student responses and syntactic complexity in their language output. Student responses in content discussion lessons tended to be longer than those in grammar lessons.

The above findings are not very meaningful without substantiating the claim through in-depth presentations of classroom contexts. Although Wintergerst did present a detailed analysis of the extent of students' language output based on the types of questions, her analysis was largely quantitative in nature and was mostly concerned with percentages and frequencies of questions and answers from teachers and students. More qualitative evaluation is needed to complement the quantitative interpretation. The author did acknowledge the fact that qualitative data were not adequately explored in her study. She also suggested that a study with a greater emphasis on contextual factors in a larger variety of classes may reveal even richer findings. As mentioned previously, except for their language background and TOEFL scores, no other ethnographic information on the student participants was investigated. Qualitative investigation of their cultural and personal background may generate insight into the results of the study. For example, the length and complexity of student responses may not have entirely been due to the nature of the questions, but rather the students' cultural and personal background, and their experience and attitude toward learning English.

While the author's claim that a single class activity per discussion lesson as opposed to multiple activities would lead to more responses from students and more complex syntactic structures in their language output, the rate of students' responses and the complexity of syntactic structure in their responses could very well be irrelevant to the number of class activity. The responses could be affected by other factors such as the content of the discussion and the

organization of the activities (e.g., group work vs. pair work vs. individual work).

Another shortcoming of the book is the paucity of excerpts from the various lessons that show actual teacher-student interactions and questions and student responses. It is difficult for the reader to follow the five characteristics of communication (source/target, move, medium, use, and content) and their numerous subcategories outside the context of actual classroom interactions in the form of excerpts. The richness of lessons yielding extended student responses can be best illustrated from excerpts of actual lessons. The author did compensate for this shortcoming by providing examples from actual lessons under each subcategory of communication characteristic in Appendix D. However, more data of this nature are essential for the reader to get a better overall picture of the classroom context.

The gist of the findings in the study is also given in seven appendices, many of them in the forms of tables and diagrams. Most of the quantitative data in the appendices are accompanied by brief descriptions and explanations, which are quite convenient for the reader as a quick reference.

In sum, it is not very clear what Wintergerst is trying to achieve in her book. The objectives of her study are not spelled out clearly in the early chapters. Likewise, a good portion of her concluding section contains a rehash of literature review and lacks clarity as to what exactly is significant about the outcome of her study.

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