

A Study of The Classroom Language of Junior Secondary School Teachers of English,

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is basically to identify the language functions most commonly used by junior secondary school teachers of English in the classroom. In addition, the study aims at identifying the linguistic errors that occur in the language functions and along with this it attempts to show which language functions the teachers find most difficult to handle and which they manipulate with ease.

Four government junior secondary schools were selected for the study. From the twelve teachers of English working in these schools eight were selected and recorded while teaching English in the classroom. The recorded lessons were then transcribed and analyzed on the basis of the system of analysis developed by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) with a slight modification made by this researcher.

The results of the analysis of the findings showed that the most common language functions used by these teachers were:

- a) Asking questions (Eliciting and Re-eliciting) which took 59.3% of the lesson time;
- b) Explaining, Exemplifying, Summarizing (Informing in general which took 26.1% of the lesson time;
- c) Giving instructions and orders (Directing) which took 9.3% of the lesson time;

- d) Opening and closing the stages of the lesson (Framing and Focusing) which took 4.5% of the lesson time; and
- e) checking students' understanding of the lesson which took 0.8% of the lesson time.

The results also showed that there were 577 errors (grammatical and pronunciation errors) which were classified into 17 categories. Of these errors, 39.5% were identified in Elicits, 36.4% in Informs, 14.2% in Directs, 6.6% in Boundary exchanges, and 3.3% in Checks. Further, it was found that the ratio of errors to exchanges is much greater in Informs than in any one of the other exchanges. There were nearly three more errors in every Inform exchange than in every one of the other exchanges.

In addition, the results showed that the functions of explaining, summarizing, evaluating (in general explaining meaning or putting over information) and giving instructions were the most difficult ones for the teachers to handle while asking questions (particularly Re-eliciting by nominating or prompting or looping) and checking students' understanding were the ones the teachers found easy to manipulate.

On the basis of findings it was recommended that junior secondary school teachers of English need to be given appropriate training in these language functions, particularly in the functions concerned with explaining meaning or putting over information, rephrasing and simplifying unanswered elicits, and giving instructions. In addition, it was recommended that the improvements should be made in the textbooks in a way that would minimize teachers' over-reliance on them and provide enough chances of using these language functions as frequently and meaningfully as possible.