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TEACHER DISCOURSE AND THE LANGUAGE OF QUESTIONS AS A SOURCE OF FACE-THREATENING ACTS

Questioning in class is often found by students to be highly stressful and a cause of anxiety. Lower-order questions, in particular, are often closely linked to behaviour management, with teachers using them as a means of control in the classroom while e.g. manipulating or accusing. The fact that questions are mainly initiated by teachers (they ask up to two questions every minute and questioning may account for even up to a third of all teaching time) and that there exists a strong asymmetric relationship in their number (students, on average ask not more than 6 questions during one lesson) may have a tremendous impact on students' emotional well-being and their learning. This asymmetric relationship stems from differences of status, roles, age, education or class and can give teachers power or authority. Questions are commonly used as part of a power struggle, and pupils can still find this sort of interrogation intimidating. Thus teacher's questioning (Mitchell cited in Hastings 2003) has been found children's main source of fear and face-threatening act – the learners are not afraid of being wrong, but of looking silly – saying something that will be ridiculed by the teacher or other pupils. It is well known that FTAs threatening the hearer's self-image include expressions negatively evaluating the hearer's positive face, e.g. disapproval, accusations, disagreement or criticism and all of these elements are commonly appearing in teacher's discourse and questions they ask. Those of the lower status and less dominant role (students) use more indirectness and more negative politeness features, such as hedges and mitigation, than those with the higher status (teachers) do (Cutting 2002). The article also aims at presenting Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive learning (1956) and the influence the language of teacher's questions may have on students experiencing face-threatening acts.

1. Introduction

“Questions can embarrass, rather than inquire. They can leave a student feeling exposed and stupid, more willing to skip class than to be humiliated again” (Bly 1986 in Wolf 1987 cited online).

The article will consider the influence of teacher's discourse (with special reference paid to academic discourse) and especially, types of questions they ask on students' emotional well-being. This analysis will take into account the ideas of Basil Bernstein's theory and will be investigated in terms of teachers discourse and questions leading to face-threatening acts. Academic discourse comprises highly sophisticated, accurate and lexically rich language that may be more difficult to comprehend and acquire than other types of spoken discourse (Łyda 2007). Moreover, this form of public communication is affected by such social factors as frame, classification or social distance (cf. Bernstein 1970, 1971) which, in turn results in the production of specialized, contextualized and elaborated code. This paper additionally intends to describe different taxonomies of questions types and their influence on students experiencing anxiety.

2. Teacher discourse

Although teacher discourse may have a huge potential to foster meaningful conversation and student learning in classrooms (e.g., Cazden 1986) it is commonly regarded as the language of power and authority. Academic discourse and Teacher Talk (TT) used in the second language classroom differ in terms of their nature (academic discourse and the language of lectures is essentially monologic whereas TT tends to be rather dialogic) and the level of formality as well as grammar and lexis used, but there exists a lot of features that they share. Teacher Talk can be described as "the language a teacher uses to allow the various classroom processes to happen, that is the language of organising the classroom. This includes the teacher's explanations, response to questions, instructions, giving of praise, correction, collection of homework, etc". (Wajnryb 1992: 43-44).

Academic discourse, on the other hand, is defined by Valdes (2004 cited in Łyda 2007:35) as the one that involves "the development of logical arguments and the communication of authority following a set of conventions, including linguistic ones". Zamel (1993 cited in Łyda 2007:35) also adds that this type of discourse characterises itself with "specialized form of reading, writing, and thinking done in the "academy" or other schooling institutions". Moreover Łyda (2007:37) claims that

academic discourse is language situated in the context of academic community, continuously modified by its use and modifying the context to perform actions aiming at the attainment of the goals of the community by means of conventionalised forms of communication operating within the community.

Last but not least, academic discourse (but also "regular" teacher discourse not necessarily produced at university level) is characterised by omnipresent assymetry exhibited in many areas which, for the purpose of this analysis, will

be categorised into social and linguistic aspects and perlocutionary effects they bring with them. The asymmetry exhibited onto a social field may result from differences in age, social position (academic teachers already hold degrees and their students are just aspiring to them) and status, teacher's power, differences in attitude, values hold, code of conduct, clothes and many other important variables (Walsh 2011, Nunan 1992; Riettel 1994). This asymmetric relationship might be also magnified by the roles teachers and students play. It has to be stated here that the formality of the context as well as the social distance (being the source of power and authority) between the teachers and their students may have a substantial impact on the language used, i.e. the educators, due to their superior position choose direct speech acts, whereas "generally those of the less dominant role ...tend to use indirectness" (Cutting 2002: 20-21).

While investigating the linguistic aspect, it has to be clearly stated that academic discourse may be lumped under the category of English for Special Purposes, as the lecturers use a deliberative style (cf. Joos 1967 in Brown 1994) – a highly sophisticated and elaborated language requiring a multidimensional discourse that combines the professional, institutional or social expressions words relating to the field of e.g. psychology or medicine, linguistics, methodology, literature, etc. Moreover, classroom discourse cannot be also categorized as a form of conversation as it lacks its most typical features:

1. discourse is not mutually constructed and negotiated in time between speakers
2. it is not informal and unplanned
3. any unequal power of participants is not partially suspended
4. classroom transactions follow IRF (initiate, respond, feedback) sequence – the series or chain of moves in the interaction (Cook 1989 in Cutting 2002:28, Majer 2003).

The kind of discourse produced by teachers was described by Bernstein (1971, Marody 1987 in Bielecka-Prus 2010: 38), who divided it into two basic kinds -elaborated and restricted code. Academic discourse shares the features of the former where "prediction is much less possible at the syntactic level, is likely to arise in a social relationship which raises the tension in its members to select from their linguistic resources a verbal arrangement which closely fits specific referents". The major function of the elaborated code is the preparation and delivery of relatively explicit meaning. The code will also facilitate the verbal transmission and elaboration of the individual's unique experience. The concept of classification is at the heart of Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse and practice. It refers to 'the degree of boundary maintenance between contents' (Bernstein 1973a :205; 1973b: 88) and is concerned with the insulation or boundaries between curricular categories (areas of knowledge and subjects). Classification refers to "the organization of knowledge into curriculum" while framing "is related to the transmission of knowledge through pedagogic

practices”. Framing, on the other hand can also be described as “ the location of control over the rules of communication” and, according to Bernstein (1990:100), ‘if classification regulates the voice of a category then framing regulates the form of its legitimate message’. Furthermore, ‘frame refers to the degree of control teacher and pupil possess over the selection, organization, pacing and timing of the knowledge transmitted and received in the pedagogical relationship’ (1973b: 88). Therefore, strong framing refers to a limited degree of options between teacher and students whereas weak one implies more freedom (Bernstein 1973 in Sadownik 2001: 687-703).

Bernstein’s theory gains in importance especially in a situation when the students themselves do not use (or even understand) the language that is directed to them but produce a restricted code with low level of vocabulary and syntactic selection. The input they are exposed to is neither roughly-tuned nor comprehensible and hence one can assume that the audience of a lecture will not benefit much. Attending the classes/lectures where one is forced to comprehend not only the new item/topic as such but also understand it from lexical point of view can lead to serious emotional problems resulting in students anxiety (foreign language anxiety) and face-threatening acts. Hence his theory analyses not only the description of the production and transmission of knowledge but also its consequences for different groups. Thus classroom discourse has to be analysed in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Additionally teachers should modify their discourse and questions asked (in terms of e.g. scope of lexis used, syntactic difficulty or speed of delivery) so that they would lead to bigger students language production.

While analysing teacher discourse it has to be clearly stated that one of its most typical features is correction of errors (cf. van Lier 1988b:276). This correction can also take the form of questions depending on the type of feedback provided and technique used, e.g. while echoing student’s incorrect response (*She go, go, go to school..?*), providing metalinguistic feedback (*what’s the ending that we put on verbs when we talk about the past?*), introducing clarification requests (using phrases such as *Pardon me ...what do you mean by ...?*), elicitation (e.g. *how do we say X in English?*) (cf. Lyster and Ranta 1997, cited in Lightbown and Spada 1999: 103-105; Majer 2003). Error correction inevitably raises students affective filter and disrupts communication as well as it is fairly likely to lead to face-threatening acts. Oddly enough, such an activity is not considered inappropriate in the classroom context as it fights with fossilophobia or pidgin-breeding. Seedhouse confirms that

“learners appear to have grasped better than teachers and methodologists that, within the interactional organisation of the L2 classroom, making linguistic errors and having them corrected directly and overtly is not an embarrassing matter.’ For many teachers, repair, like other practices which prevail in language classrooms, is a ritual, something they ‘do to learners’ without really questioning their actions. This is not intended as a criticism, merely an observation. The

consequences of such ritualistic behaviour, however, are far-reaching, since for many practitioners, the feedback move, where correction of errors typically occurs, is crucial to learning” (Willis 1992; Jarvis and Robinson 1997 cited in Walsh 2011).

3. Bloom’s taxonomy of cognitive learning

While recognising various kinds of questions, one may use Bloom’s Taxonomy of Learning that distinguishes between six categories of questions:

Tableau 1. Bloom’s taxonomy of learning.

| CATEGORY | EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| KNOWLEDGE | <i>Who, what, why, when?</i> |
| COMPREHENSION | <i>How would you classify the type of...? ,How would you compare...? contrast...?, Will you state or interpret in your own words...?</i> |
| ANALYSIS | <i>Why do you think . . ? , What is the theme . . ? ,What motive is there . . ?</i> |
| APPLICATION | <i>How would you use?, What examples can you find to...?, How would you show your understanding of...?</i> |
| SYNTHESIS | <i>What changes would you make to solve...?, How would you improve...?, What would happen if...? , Can you elaborate on the reason...?</i> |
| EVALUATION | <i>Do you agree with the actions/outcome...? ,What is your opinion of...?, How would you prove/ disprove...?, Can you assess the value or importance of...?</i> |

The classification of levels of intellectual behaviour important in learning overlaps three domains, such as the cognitive, psychomotor and affective. The categories were ordered from simple to complex and from concrete to abstract. Further, it was also assumed that “the Taxonomy represented a cumulative hierarchy; that is, mastery of each simpler category was prerequisite to mastery of the next more complex one”(Kratwohl 2002: 213). Moore (2001:203-205) suggested four types of questions based on Bloom’s taxonomy namely; factual, empirical, productive and evaluative. Some studies (cf. Wintergest,1993, cited in Walsh, 2006:8) also indicate the importance of teacher’s choice of questioning strategies on learner participation and amount of language produced.

The questions teachers ask may be difficult for students to comprehend as some of them may require higher order thinking processes. Moreover, the utterances in daily communication may often have more than one illocutionary meanings. According to Searle (1975), there exist cases of indirect speech acts

when the message spoken does not necessarily correspond with what is actually intended. The examples of such instances constitute two subtypes of indirect speech act, namely conventional indirect speech act (like in case of e.g. *Can you pass the salt?*) and nonconventional indirect speech act (used while e.g. giving hints and joking). Inferring the primary illocutionary act requires the shared knowledge by the speaker and the hearer, the knowledge of conversational principles and the ability of inferring (ibid.). Although performing indirect speech act is complicated for the speaker and the hearer, it is still common in communication (Walsh 2011).

4. Questions

Most of questions asked in a classroom are produced by teachers and this is one of the principal ways in which they control their discourse. Long and Sato (1983 cited in Walsh 2006: 8) have also observed that “teacher’s use of questions is the single most- used discourse modification to aid and maintain participation among learners. In other words, classroom discourse differs from ‘normal’ communication in terms of the number of questions used and their function: to encourage involvement rather than elicit new information”. Moreover, teacher’s questions play the role of directives, i.e. speech acts that make the hearer do something, such as “commending”, “requesting”, “inviting”, “forbidding”, “suggesting”, etc. (1991: 17). Lynch characterizes a question as an utterance with a particular illocutionary force; and Quirk et al. (1970 and 1985) define it as a semantic class used to seek information on a specific subject (Lynch 1991). The *Longman Dictionary of the English Language* enlarges this description stating that a question may be understood not only as a command or interrogative expression used to elicit information or a response, but also to test knowledge. The latter aspect is of very significant importance as it allows one to acknowledge that “not all questions are interrogatives (*Tell me how you make cockaleekie soup*’), and that, conversely, not all interrogatives are questions (*How do you do?*)”, (Lynch 1991: 201).

The abovementioned definition also distinguishes between the situations when the speaker does not know the answer from the one when we (teachers) just want to confirm whether our interlocutors (students) know what we believe they should –testing their knowledge is a case in point. Hence questions can be used not only to measure knowledge, but also to acquire it. Long and Sato (1983) identified two types of questions that may be asked by teachers in their classrooms; display questions, and referential ones. The former can be generally described as those that “teachers know the answer to and which are designed to elicit or display particular structures”, as distinct from referential questions when teachers do not know the answer to (Faruji 2011: 1821). Brock (1986), Long and Sato (1983) also concluded that display questions requiring short answers contained small pieces of information (e.g. on part of speech, word

stress, intonation, antonyms and synonyms, word pronunciation and meaning, comprehension checks, etc). Such questions seem also to dominate classroom interaction and can encourage language learners, especially beginners, to get interested (cf. Majer 2003). Additionally they may also facilitate the process of teaching helping educators provide comprehensible input for learners. Referential questions, on the other hand, typical of content classrooms and high proficiency language groups, usually requiring long and syntactically complex answers contain, in fact, important points such as e.g. interpretation, elaboration, giving opinions, etc. It should also be added that taking into account pedagogical perspective, asking display questions should be avoided as they do not resemble real-life communication, are introduced merely to check the students' state of knowledge and thus are purposeless (cf. Nunn 1999).

Questions could also fall into the category of, so called open and closed –the former being framed to encourage an expansive response where *how...., who...., what....,when...., where...* are cases in point. The latter category aims at eliciting yes/no answer.

While categorising different questions, one should also enumerate another taxonomy, namely lower-order questions requiring people to remember, recall a single act, and higher-order ones that make us think. “As a general rule, lower-order or factual recall questions tend to be closed, with a single right answer, and are likely to be *what, who, when* or *where*. Higher-order are more likely to start with *how, why* or *which*, and tend to be open – with a range of possible responses” (Hastings 2003 cited online). Classroom, playing and imitating the setting of a social interaction, is also submitted to previously-mentioned rules of “the communication of authority following a set of conventions” –that is to exerting social control. Van Lier (1998: 224 in Lynch 1991: 203) claims that “it may be relatively unimportant whether teachers ask display or real questions: what *is* important is the way in which control over discourse is maintained by the teacher or made available to the learners: (...)” [and thus one has] to investigate what different tasks questions set, and the different commitments they place on the answerer”.

A teacher can also ask a hypothetical question (“*suppose we went ahead with this plan of action and it failed. How would you handle the situation?*”), that may confuse the interviewee and should be avoided if they involve explaining lots of background information before the interviewee can attempt a reply, leading questions (“*surely, you didn't agree with that?*”) aiming at compelling the interviewee to say what the interviewer wants to hear, rather than what the interviewee thinks, or completely unanswerable, also known as “killing ones”. An example of the latter category can include such queries as:

1. “*What happens when we die?*”
2. “*Can you tell if the universe is infinite?*”
3. “*Is eternal life the ultimate phase after death?*”
4. “*Why is the earth round in form and if it is not, then what is its shape?*”

5. “*Why does a rain drop and a snow fall?*” (online.the Internet. www.exforsys.com).

All of the examples fall under the category of referential questions, but at the same time require higher-order thinking and, undeniably, a very advanced command of foreign language necessary to answer them. A student nominated to that may face not only the challenge of creating the utterance in the second language but also the problem of “nothing to say”. Finally, as the question is neither logical nor typical, learner’s answer is fairly likely to be laughed at, too.

A highly asymmetric number of questions posed by teachers, and those asked by their learners may also stem from cultural perspective on politeness. Thorp (1991: 111-112) provides the example of a teacher, annoyed at her students talking to each other during the lecture she was running. When asked about the reasons of disturbing, the learner replied that “she had not understood, did not want to be impolite by interrupting the lecturer, so asked a friend instead”. Such a reaction could be caused not only by cross-cultural differences, but also by the fact that directing questions towards a lecturer is rather rare.

5. Face

One of the most fundamental concepts of politeness theory is that of “face” –“the self image that speakers try to demonstrate and maintain in verbal communicative interactions” (Oleksy 2010:177). For Brown and Levinson (1987) all speech acts are potentially face-threatening –either to the speaker’s or the hearer’s face, or to both. They further distinguish between positive and negative face, where the latter reflects the desire not to be unimpeded by others, whereas the former equals the effort for one’s wants to be desirable to others. Moreover, they also enumerate positive-face-threatening speech acts and negative-face-threatening speech acts. Insults, contradictions and challenges belong to the first group of acts which aim at ignoring or challenging their interactant’s positive face damaging at the same time the one of their interlocutor. On the other hand, negative -face-threatening acts “put the addressee in a situation in which they have to make a decision whether to comply with or to reject the action, whether physical (e.g. in response to a request or an order) or verbal (e.g. in response to a question or a warning), triggered by the speaker’s speech act” (ibid.).

In selecting strategies for performing a face-threatening act (FTA), the speaker needs to take into account the degree of face threat which can be assessed according to the variables of social power (P) and social distance (D) and the imposition of the speech act (R) (Ogiermann 2009:11). According to Brown and Levinson, all three social parameters contribute to the ‘weightiness’ of an FTA on a summative basis, resulting in the following formula (1987: 76):

$$W_x = D(S,H) + P(S,H) + R_x$$

The overall weightiness indicates the degree of face-threat involved in performing the FTA.

Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) enumerate five possible strategies for performing FTA:

1. 'Do the FTA on record without redressive actions (the least polite)';
2. 'Do the FTA on record with redressive action addressing positive face';
3. 'Do the FTA on record with redressive action addressing negative face';
4. 'Do the FTA off record'
5. 'Don't do the FTA (the most polite strategy)'

The chart depicts how the strategies vary in terms of the amount of face-redress necessary for the FTA to be polite.

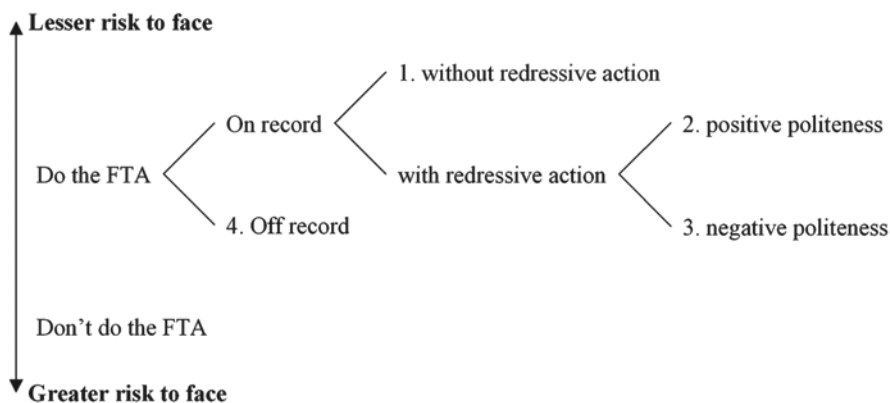


Fig. 1. Brown and Levinson's strategies for doing an FTA (1987: 69)
adapted from Ogiemann 2009: 12.

As can be seen, bold on record strategies focusing on clarity and efficiency, pay no attention to face, but conform to Grice's maxims. The other strategies will help to save the face, (off record strategies) but at the same time take the form of implicatures flouting the maxim of Grice's cooperative principle, or, combined with redressive action" have the advantage of being clear and polite at the same time" (on record strategies) (ibid., p.13).

A slightly different approach to face is exhibited by Ting-Toomey and Oetzel (2001, cited in Bogdanowska-Jakubowska 2010: 244), who analyse this concept in terms of "identity and relational-based issues". The authors state that face can simultaneously be perceived at three levels, such as affective (feelings of shame and pride), cognitive (calculating how much to give and receive), and behavioural. They also believe that there exist some "vulnerable social situations", requesting, embarrassment or conflict being the case in point, when the interactants' self-

images are threatened. Hence it is logical to assume that asking a question (in the presence of other class-mates) that a learner finds difficult to answer may be considered as such.

A very interesting attitude towards saving or losing face of children (so in this case also of learners) is presented by Bogdanowska-Jakubowska (2010: 190) who claims that in some societies (e.g. the Polish one) children are not treated “as fully-fledged human beings deserving of respect”, but rather as those who do not deserve that, following the custom of not giving face to individuals in childhood:

This is visible in the manner adults treat them and refer to them. Everyday politeness and facework in general seem not to apply in interaction with children (there is an almost total lack of the use of such words as *dziękuję* (thank you), *proszę* (please)). In the adult world, their face concerns often do not count at all. A good illustration of the Polish attitude to children is the saying: *Dzieci i ryby głosu nie mają* (Children and fish do not have the right to speak) (...) This is related to the principle (...), that **the child can speak only when addressed by an adult**¹.

Presumably the same principle is followed in the classroom and thus it affects unequal number of questions posed by teachers and their students. Instilling these “norms” to children from the very moment of their development can result in some sort of passiveness and withdrawal in the classroom and the conviction that any attempt of interrupting an adult (e.g. a teacher while asking a question) equals to the “violation” of this social custom. A very important teaching implication that should be drawn here is that any educator, irrelevant of the place they work in (primary school or a university) must remember about respecting, what Ting-Toomey (1998, cited in Bogdanowska-Jakubowska, 2010: 245) calls face-Negotiation Theory, that is *self-face* “the concern for the self-image of other participants in the conflict situation” and, at the same time, of *mutual-face* – “the concern for both images of self and others, or the image of their relationship”.

6. Questions as a source of face-threatening acts

Clearly, teachers can use questions to embarrass or to empower. For instance, questions can be designed to smoke out guilty parties-students who didn't do their homework, who fail to answer quickly enough, or who can't think on their feet (Wolf 1987 cited online).

¹ emphasis mine

Teachers question can often lead to the feeling of anxiety and frustration. As has been already stated, educators choose the form of questions during the process of their “discourse management”, e.g. while correcting students, asking display or genuine questions or even during requesting. A request, being the example of an illocutionary act, can be realized in a variety of locutions and the act of speaker’s verbalization may lead to many misunderstandings on the hearer’s side, as the addressee can decode the speaker’s meaning in a different way than was intended by the speaker (Oleksy 2010: 157). A very good illustration of this situation is presented by Harlow (in Brown 1994: 231).

AMERICAN TEACHER: Would you like to read?

RUSSIAN STUDENT: No. I would not.

The abovementioned example clearly indicates misunderstanding of the illocutionary force of the utterance within the context. Oleksy (2010: 157) concludes that such a situation is likely to appear whenever “the speaker does not provide enough clues as to how his/her utterance was meant to be understood and/or the situational context is not helpful in disambiguating the speaker’s intention”. Similar implication can be drawn from Grice’s conversational maxims, where the maxim of manner distinctively advocates the idea of being perspicuous, brief, orderly, avoiding obscurity and ambiguity. Violating these rules (especially in teacher’s questions) can inevitably lead to students experiencing face-threatening acts as their erroneous answers can be corrected, if not even laughed at. Teacher’s questions can directly lead to negative face-threatening acts as they force the students to perform or deny to perform the act stipulated by the other interlocutor.

Students’ face can also be threatened in a situation when the teacher deprives them of sufficient amount of ‘wait time’. Walsh (2006: 122) describes it in the following way: “much of the interaction in teacher fronted, multi- participant contexts is based on question- and- answer routines, with learners in the disadvantaged position of having to first understand a question, then interpret it, formulate a reply and finally utter a response”. A very important pedagogic implication that can be inferred is that silence, in the form of extended wait-time may be of significant value, giving learners essential processing time and frequently resulting in enhanced responses, whereas its lack can contribute to learners frustration and anxiety in not being able to express themselves, ask for clarification or confirmation. Teacher’s questioning used in order to allocate and initiate talk can also result in some form of face-threatening act. Students who are shy or less confident, or simply not very keen on answering teacher’s question may be forced to do it through asking or being allotted a turn. Last but not least, questions remain in teacher’s disposal to distribute turns fairly among all the learners –those who are always eager to speak, those, who treat a question as a form of “punishment” for disruptive behaviour when providing answer is supposed to make them stay focus during the lesson, and those for whom teacher’s questions will inevitably lead to anxiety and face-threatening act.

Scollon and Scollon (1981: 171) claim that “any act of communication is a threat to face, that is, to the public self-image that a person seeks to maintain”. The classroom situation serves the example of many face-threatening acts performed with status-unequals, when a person of lower status (a student representing lower level of knowledge) is talking to someone of higher status (a teacher). Unequal status relationship between teachers and students is also widely discussed by Walsh (2006: 6) who describes this situation in the following way:

In the L2 classroom, teachers control both the content and the procedure of the learning- process. According to Cazden (1986), some of the features of the L2 classroom context include: teachers control the topic of discussion; teachers control who may participate and when; students take their cues from teachers; role relationships between teachers and learners are unequal; teachers are responsible for managing the interaction which occurs; teachers talk more. Johnson (1995) supports Cazden, suggesting that teachers control both the content and structure of classroom communication, at least in part, by their use of language. Furthermore, their decision as to whether to tightly control the topic of discussion or whether to allow a more egalitarian discourse structure in which students self- select and have a more equal share in turn- taking, is not random.

The feeling of anxiety is one of many perlocutionary effects brought about by teachers questions. Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) have identified three components of foreign language anxiety: a) communication apprehension, b) fear of negative evaluation, and c) test anxiety. Learners experiencing communication apprehension feel discomfort while speaking the second language in front of others. This can result from their limited knowledge of the target language, especially in relation to speaking and listening skills.

The second aspect of anxiety is strictly related to FTA as the students who experience fear of negative evaluation do not treat language errors as an inevitable part and parcel of the learning process, but as a threat to their image, and a source for possibly negative evaluations from their teacher or peers. Consequently, they are rather silent and withdrawn most of the time, and do not participate in language activities (Ely 1986). Those who suffer from test anxiety treat every single language activity (and mainly oral production situation) as a test situation.

Young (1991 cited in Kitano 2001: 549) has enumerated six types of sources of foreign language classroom anxiety: personal and interpersonal anxieties (e.g. self-esteem, communication apprehension), learner beliefs about language learning, instructor beliefs about language learning, instructor-learner interactions (teachers' harsh manner of correcting student mistakes), classroom procedures (speaking in front of peers), and testing. Kitano (2001: 549) also claims that there exists a correlation between a) anxiety and fear of negative evaluation, and b) anxiety and perception of low ability in relation to peers and native speakers.

Hence it is also recommended that teachers should try to facilitate the process of learning of those with fear of negative evaluation, by providing these students with positive reinforcement, such as positive comments. "In relation to learners' perception of low ability, teachers should make interventions in the classroom environment and practices and create a "sense of community in the classroom", so that students do not perceive it a competitive, while pair and group work can be incorporated" (Kitano 2001). Surprisingly enough, positive feedback from the teacher in the form of praising in front of everyone, may be perceived in some cultures (e.g. Chinese one) as a form of FTA (Catterick 2001 cited in Cutting 2002: 54).

Another aspect which clearly indicates the violation of face in the classroom refers to the rules of turn taking and transition relevance place. TRP –a point in conversation when the turn taking is possible is often violated by teachers. Cutting (2002: 29) believes that in the orderly-classrooms there are neither overlaps nor interruptions. "This is partly because of the power structure and the conventions: students are not supposed to interrupt the teacher but to wait till the turn is handed to them". This specific relationship stemming from unequal status and position between the teachers and their students may strongly affect learners' self-confidence and face, especially, in the case of age-differences (younger teacher and older students) or sex differences (the teacher being a woman running a course for men). Accepting the fact that it is a teacher who nominates and allots a turn in the classroom might be, for some of the students, "a bitter pill to swallow".

7. Recapitulation

The aim of this article is to look at the effects of teachers discourse and questions they ask on students production of the target language as well as to analyze some possible perlocutionary effects and face-threatening acts that are likely to appear during this process.

As has already been mentioned, entering a social relationship requires acknowledging and showing the awareness of the face and our interlocutors' self-image. A teacher, due to the fact of holding a superior position in a classroom, may immediately create self-threatening acts and attack the face of their learners.

Students' face can be threatened not only because of the asymmetric position and unequal status between the educator and his or her learners, but also because of "linguistic choices" that are made, the types of questions, and the manner they are asked. The most important, though is the fact that a teacher should be aware of different options helping to avoid FTA, such as redressing the threat with negative or positive politeness (Brown and Levinson 1987). On the other hand, running the classes often requires making a suggestion, requesting, offering or inviting in an open and direct way and thus the teacher does an FTA bold on record, and in this case, no mitigation devices are implemented.

The extend of option-giving influences the degree of politeness, relying on a simple rule –the more options/possibilities to” say no”, the more polite the utterance is. The specifics of classroom situation together with obligatory roles that teachers have to play (e.g. the role of a controller or an assessor) do not provide many options for students to refuse while being asked. This situation may be additionally magnified by social context and a premise claiming that social distance (determined by e.g. status, roles, age, education differences) can give speakers power and authority on one hand, but may also influence the level of politeness i.e. people with higher status use not as many negative politeness features, such as hedges and mitigations. Cutting (2002: 53) claims that a lecturer, because of their role and status, is expected to give generalized orders when addressing a class of students, directly and bold on record:

Now, what we’re going to do is um a quick game of twenty questions: you’ll get some points up here. Now these people can only answer Yes or No, so you must ask Yes/No questions. So you can’t ask a question like” “What happened?”

While enumerating strategies helping teachers save their students’ face, one could mention that of achieving “common ground”, when the speaker attends to the hearer’s interest, wants and needs (Brown and Levinson 1987 cited in Cutting 2002: 48). This idea, connected with conducting needs analysis may turn to be very beneficial in terms of limiting the number of FTAs. Hence it is of significant importance to bear in mind that students’ face is their self-image based not only on their performance, but also on others’ opinion of them. Wolf (1987 cited online) states that questions may embarrass or empower even through nonverbal performance as this form of teacher’s reaction can also contribute to students’ experiencing emotional comfort and respect. “The teacher looks at the student when he poses questions; he studies the prints when she does; he respects, rather than cuts off, the student, even when she gropes for an answer; he waits for her to formulate a reply”. As Tobin (1986) concludes, even the nonverbal integrity of questioning combined with such subtle phenomenon as wait-time (discussed before), can bring measurable effects on the quality of classroom inquiry.

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