

CLASSROOM INTERACTION PATTERNS IN A FEW VARIED ESL
TEACHING CONTEXTS IN SRI LANKA
A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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A B S T R A C T

This is an investigative study into the interactions of some observed English language classrooms in Sri Lanka. Chapter one introduces the topic with a brief preview of the research exercise, definition of the topic of research, its significance and place in the corpus of research in Sri Lanka. The primary and secondary objectives of the study are then outlined in detail. The exposition is replete with a description of the sample population, the choice of the particular tool of analysis and the method of analysis. The value of using a widely tested and tried out system of analysis and a technical language to describe classroom interaction in comprehensible terms is also outlined in detail.

The research literature overview in chapter two covers a large repertoire of sources; books, journals, magazines, some unpublished theses and papers, mostly referred to at institutions abroad. The review is presented in two parts, sources prior to 1970 and those from the 1970s to 1980s. Sources on the general topic precede those on the varied aspects of classroom

interactions. Contemporary research studies are reviewed to show how the field has been greatly enriched and has acquired a much wider significance following recent developments in the associated fields of study. Some explanation provided as to the valuable theoretical insights gained into the patterns of discourse, language learning strategies and communicative language teaching through the process of classroom interaction analysis.

The third chapter details the topic of concern and the rationale behind our choice of research topic. It also explicates the methodology used by the researcher in the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data in relation to our primary and secondary objectives. The details of the research instrument in use in the analysis, the different categories and method of classification are also described while presenting the research design. A short enumeration of the envisaged limitations of the study concludes this chapter.

The analysis of the data of this study and the manner of their interpretation are the main components in chapter four. The data is analysed under five headings of teacher - student interaction patterns in general, patterns of teacher solicits, teacher

feedback to learner responses, teacher's repair techniques and teachers use of classroom language being the most striking aspects observed in the verbal data. The findings are then presented under different functional areas and results interpreted to prove the general contention, that language classrooms are the same in their overt characteristics whether in Sri Lanka or outside. Special mention is also made of deviating trends in the data.

The final chapter lays out our conclusions and suggestions for changes in teaching behaviour and in techniques of teacher training. The conclusions are based on specific findings and the study ends on the hopeful note that this would be an incentive to more objective research by those directly involved in teaching and also research that is both experimental and descriptive in nature. It is hoped that these conclusions would be relevant to current teacher education and teacher observation programmes.