



ENHANCING LEARNER ENGAGEMENT THROUGH TEACHER TASK INSTRUCTIONS IN EFL CLASSROOMS: A DISCOURSE-ORIENTED PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This extended abstract explores the role of teacher task instructions in enhancing learner engagement within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. While classroom interaction has been widely studied in applied linguistics, the specific discourse features of teacher instructions remain underexplored (Walsh, 2011). This study adopts a discourse-oriented perspective to examine how instructional language functions in classroom settings and how it may influence student participation. Drawing on selected classroom data and a qualitative analytical framework, the study identifies key linguistic and pragmatic features of effective instructions. The findings suggest that clarity, sequencing, and interactional support embedded in teacher talk can significantly contribute to increased learner engagement (Ellis, 2012). This research forms part of an ongoing project and presents preliminary insights into the pedagogical value of instructional discourse.

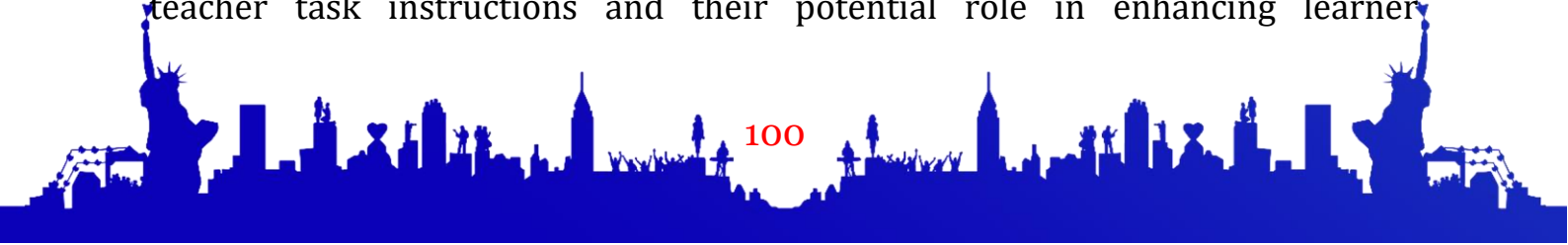
Keywords: EFL classroom, teacher talk, task instructions, discourse analysis, learner engagement

1. Introduction

In recent years, the importance of classroom discourse has gained increasing attention in the field of English language teaching. Teacher talk, as a central component of classroom interaction, plays a crucial role in shaping learning opportunities and influencing student engagement (Walsh, 2013). Among various aspects of teacher talk, task instructions represent a key element that directly affects how students understand, interpret, and perform learning activities.

Despite the growing interest in classroom interaction, relatively little attention has been paid to the discourse features of teacher task instructions. In many EFL contexts, ineffective instructions can lead to confusion, reduced participation, and limited learning outcomes (Scrivener, 2011). Therefore, understanding how teachers construct and deliver instructions is essential for improving classroom practice.

This study aims to explore the linguistic and pragmatic characteristics of teacher task instructions and their potential role in enhancing learner





engagement. Rather than presenting a comprehensive analysis, this paper focuses on selected examples to illustrate key patterns in instructional discourse.

2. Literature Review

Previous research in applied linguistics has highlighted the significance of teacher talk in facilitating classroom interaction. Studies have shown that the way teachers use language can either promote or hinder student participation (Long, 1996). For example, clear and structured instructions are often associated with better task performance and higher levels of engagement (Ellis, 2003).

From a discourse analysis perspective, instructional language can be examined in terms of its linguistic features, such as sentence structure, vocabulary choice, and cohesion, as well as its pragmatic functions, including directing, clarifying, and scaffolding learner activity (Hall, 2011). Researchers have also emphasized the importance of interactional features, such as checking understanding and providing feedback (Walsh, 2011).

However, much of the existing research has focused on general classroom interaction rather than specifically analyzing task instructions. As a result, there is a need for more focused studies that examine how instructions are constructed and how they function within classroom discourse.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach to analyzing teacher task instructions in EFL classrooms. The data consist of selected excerpts from classroom interactions, focusing specifically on moments when teachers introduce and explain tasks.

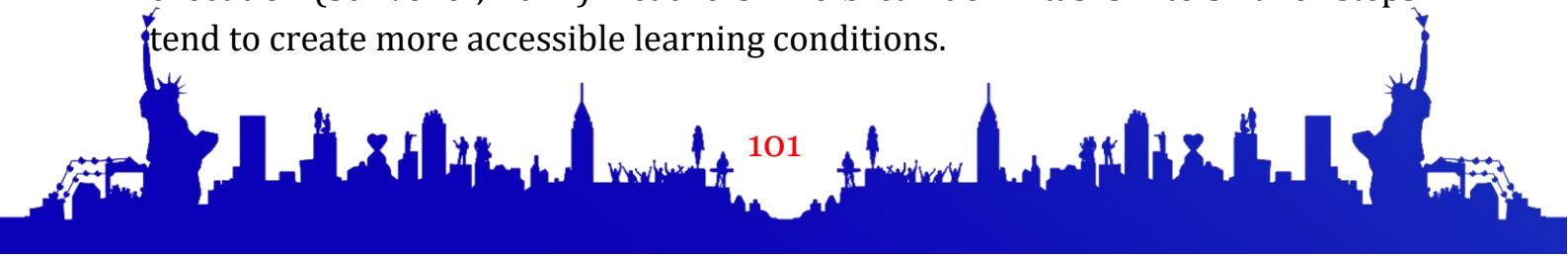
The analysis is guided by a discourse-analytic framework that considers both linguistic and pragmatic aspects of instructional language (Gee, 2014). Particular attention is paid to clarity of instruction, sequencing of information, use of supportive language, and interactional strategies such as comprehension checks.

It should be noted that this study is based on a limited dataset and forms part of a larger ongoing research project. Therefore, the findings presented here are exploratory in nature.

4. Findings and Discussion

The analysis reveals several recurring features of effective teacher task instructions.

Firstly, clarity emerges as a key factor. Instructions that are concise and well-structured appear to reduce student confusion and facilitate smoother task execution (Scrivener, 2011). Teachers who break down tasks into smaller steps tend to create more accessible learning conditions.





Secondly, sequencing plays an important role in guiding students through tasks. Logical ordering of information helps learners understand not only what to do, but also how to proceed (Ellis, 2012). This is particularly important in complex activities that require multiple stages.

Thirdly, the use of interactional support enhances learner engagement. Teachers often employ strategies such as asking checking questions, rephrasing instructions, and providing examples (Walsh, 2013). These practices help ensure that students are actively involved in the learning process.

Additionally, the findings suggest that the tone and delivery of instructions can influence student motivation. Instructions delivered in an encouraging and supportive manner appear to foster a more positive classroom atmosphere.

5. Conclusion

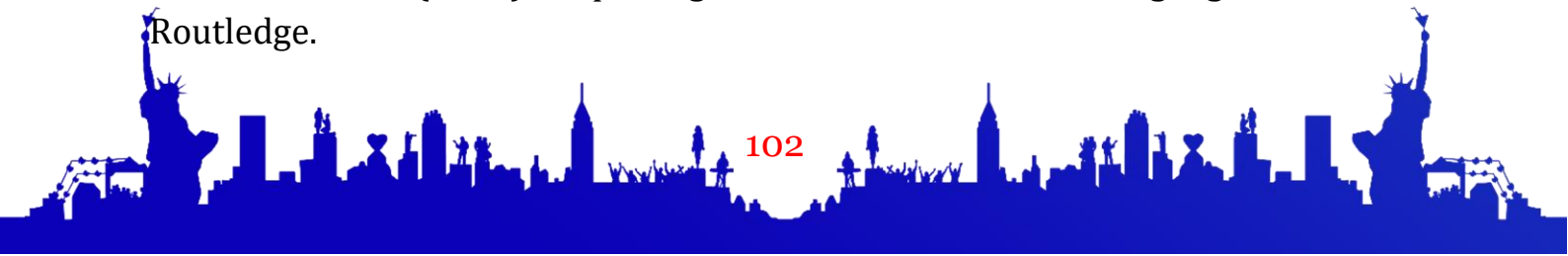
This extended abstract has examined the role of teacher task instructions from a discourse-oriented perspective. The findings suggest that effective instructional language is characterized by clarity, logical sequencing, and interactional support, all of which contribute to enhanced learner engagement.

While the study is limited in scope, it provides preliminary insights into the ways in which teacher talk can shape classroom interaction. These insights have important implications for teacher training and professional development, particularly in helping educators develop more effective instructional strategies.

Future research will involve a more comprehensive analysis of classroom data and a deeper exploration of the relationship between instructional discourse and learning outcomes.

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