

REVIEWS

Betáková, L. (2010) *Discourse and Interaction in English Language Teaching*. Prague: Charles University. Faculty of Education. 316 pp.

The aim of this book, inspiring to read for its topic and content, is to study the nature of classroom discourse. Betáková points out in the final chapter of her work that a thorough analysis of classroom discourse can be very useful for teachers and consequently for their learners in that it shows the teachers their own practice and gives them an opportunity to reflect on it. Of many potential research challenges in this area, the author has chosen to explore the problem of classroom discourse in English as a foreign language classes with special emphasis on the interaction between the teacher and his/her pupils. One of the main aims of the book is to study how the teachers themselves – i.e. their mother tongue, language proficiency or training – influence the nature of classroom interaction. That is why three types of classes have been analyzed – one taught by a native speaker, the second by a fully qualified non-native speaker teacher of English and the third by an unqualified teacher of English with a lower language proficiency. The author believes that such classes reflect the contemporary reality of teaching English in the Czech Republic.

The nine chapters of the book provide a good survey of the author's opinions on classroom discourse, opinions based on many years of research into English language teaching.

The first four theoretical chapters provide the necessary context to the practical analysis of classroom discourse.

In the first one, titled *Discourse Analysis*, the author deals with discourse analysis in general, describes its aims, terminology, possible definitions and key concepts including speech act and communication theories. She pays attention to the differences between spoken and written, and planned and unplanned types of discourse in the subchapter on discourse mode. In this part of the work Betáková pays special attention to conversation as a discourse type, the most common and most needed type of discourse for language learners. It is closely related to classroom discourse, which is the main focus of her work. In the final subchapter the author looks for the relationship between discourse analysis and foreign or second language teaching. The author asks whether discourse analysis theories can help both the language learners and their teachers achieve their goals, i.e. to learn and promote learning. She claims that a true acquisition of a foreign

language also involves the acquisition of pragmatic knowledge. Discourse and language elements (grammar and vocabulary) must be developed together. Learners always have to be aware of the functions of the particular structures they learn. Language functions are also an important part of the English syllabus within the newly reformed Czech curriculum referred to as RVP (Rámcový vzdělávací program, i.e. Framework Educational Programme). It states the aims of foreign language teaching in terms of what the learners will be able to do with the language. On the other hand, the author is rather critical of the language teachers in the Czech Republic. There is still a very high number of unqualified English language teachers. She is right in saying that their proficiency level is rather low. Some teachers even have problems forming the basic language structures they teach. They can explain how to form them but they are not able to use them naturally in speech. That is why they conduct the lesson in their mother tongue and the learners have no chance to explore how the particular structure is used in everyday speech. She sums it up (p. 50): “Mastering the structure constitutes a good first step to be able to use it effectively for communicative purposes. However, it is only the first step. The students have to perceive the structure in natural contexts.”

In the second chapter, the author moves from discourse in general to classroom discourse as such. First she looks at typical features of classroom discourse in comparison with conversation. She describes the main role of language for teaching and learning in formal education and observes that classroom discourse is collaborative. In her opinion, collaboration and participation are crucial for the development of classroom discourse. She studies various aspects of classroom interaction and asks the question whether classroom discourse is also communicative. She shows that even if classroom interaction does not bear features of ordinary conversation, it can be very effective in the classroom context. That is why she introduces the term classroom communicative competence. Speaking about teacher dominance in the classroom, Betáková points out that (p. 66): “In most classes all over the world, the person playing the dominant role in the classroom is the teacher.” She is aware, though, that teachers should create more opportunities for their learners to participate in classroom events. That is why she suggests various strategies to deregulate classroom discourse. The last subchapter deals with typical classroom discourse structure referred to as IRE (Initiation–Response–Evaluation) or IRF (feedback). It represents the starting point for the practical analysis she has carried out.

The third chapter is devoted to teacher talk, the verbal behaviour of the teacher in the classroom and the verbal behaviour of language teachers in particular. The characteristics of the ‘ideal’ language teacher are also considered. The author

