ED 275 175                                           FL 016 079

AUTHOR          Voss, Bernd
TITLE           "Classroom Language"--A Neglected Area in Foreign
                Language Teaching and Testing.
PUB DATE        84
NOTE            19p.; In: Practice and Problems in Language Testing.
                Papers from the International Symposium on Language
                Testing (7th, Colchester, England, 1984); see FL 016
                066.
PUB TYPE        Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) --
                Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE      MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS     *Classroom Communication; Discourse Analysis;
                Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries;
                Higher Education; *Language Styles; *Language Tests;
                *Language Usage; Second Language Instruction; Teacher
                Behavior; *Teacher Education
IDENTIFIERS     West Germany

ABSTRACT
                Classroom language has not yet been recognized as an
important aspect of foreign language learning and teaching, but it
can make a meaningful contribution to language instruction. Providing
for teacher training in this field not only implies provision of
information and practice, but also involves changing teacher
attitudes about the appropriateness of certain areas of reference for
foreign language classroom discourse. Teaching styles and methods
would probably also be affected by incorporation of classroom
language study. Although there are large areas of overlap between
general and classroom-related aspects of teachers' language,
classroom language provides a less arbitrary and possibly more
helpful framework for examining language learning activities in
teacher education. Research can build on some recent advances in the
conceptualization of classroom language and its importance in
learning and teaching. (MSE)

'CLASSROOM LANGUAGE' — A NEGLECTED
AREA IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE
TEACHING AND TESTING

BERND VOSS
(UNIVERSITY OF BIELEFELD)

2

# 'CLASSROOM LANGUAGE' - A NEGLECTED AREA IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND TESTING

Bernd Voss (University of Bielefeld)

## 1 Introduction

This paper is an attempt to give an account of some aspects of the background to a larger project concerned with the development of teaching materials in the field of 'classroom language' for German teachers of English (1).

By 'classroom language' we mean the kind of language used by teachers and pupils to conduct classroom business, e.g. to set up groups for group work, to distribute material, to organise activities, to tell a pupil off, to focus attention onto a particular teaching point, to ask for further clarification or for a repetition, to bid for the floor, to express joy or regret over something that has just happened in the classroom etc.. All of these are real communicative acts between teacher and pupil, pupil and teacher, or amongst the pupils themselves, within the classroom setting. Conducting this kind of interaction (as far as possible) in the target language opens up a directly relevant practice field in using the foreign language for real communicative purposes. However, language teachers do not always make (appropriate?, full?, any?) use of this only genuine situation that institutionalised language teaching provides.

A major reason for this neglect appears to be that language teachers themselves tend to have difficulties with this domain of language, and we shall argue in this paper that there are mainly three closely interrelated factors responsible for this - (i) deficiencies in the set-up of the language education of intending language teachers (certainly in Germany); (ii) lack of suitable teaching materials for this language domain; and (iii) uncertainty as to what 'classroom language' actually entails.

In what follows we shall take up each of these three problems in turn in an attempt to clarify the field before providing a brief sketch of the nature of the proposed teaching and testing materials and some general conclusions.

## 2 Language Needs and Language Education of Language Teachers

An attempt to specify the language needs of language teachers can perhaps best start off from the observation that teaching a foreign language is rather different from teaching any other school subject in that the foreign language is not only the goal but also the medium of instruction. In subjects such as biology, mathematics, or sports, where the objectives may be knowledge of biological facts, understanding of mathematical processes or the development

3

of ergonomic movements, the medium of instruction is the mother
tongue. This is typically different in the modern language class-
room where the foreign language is to replace the mother tongue as
the medium of instruction as soon as practicable, and that could
.'ean right from the start.

While this may not be universall, accepted as a description of
the facts at present, there is little doubt about its desirability
in principle. Few people would disagree with the view that the aim
of teaching a modern language has not been reached when learners
are able to talk about the language and its cultural background in
their mother tongues, but that it is necessary for them to develop
the ability to interact meaningfully in it. Where is the learner to
learn this if not in the foreign language classroom? But how is
this conceivable unless the interaction in the classroom is done as
far as possible in the foreign language itself?

There is no doubt that conducting lessons entirely in the tar-
get language makes particularly high demands on the teacher's
active command of the foreign language, and it may be instructive
to look more closely into the language needs of language teachers
in general, before considering the question of how and whether
these needs are being met within the context of teacher education.

The language needs of the language teacher can be conveniently
thought of as having a general aspect, a study-related aspect and
a classroom-related aspect.

Since it is not central to our argumentation, it may suffice
here to characterise the general aspect of the language command
hopefully possessed by a language teacher in such general terms as
the ability to cope with everyday communicative needs in the coun-
try of the target language, or to explain aspects of one's own
country to a foreigner. The need for this aspect of language com-
mand is obvious in that this is what teachers are usually supposed
to teach their language learners in the foreign language classroom.

The study-related aspect of a teacher's language command
refers to specialised language domains such as the language of
literary analysis, of linguistic description, of methodological
discussion, of the presentation of cultural and sociological fields.
Language teachers need this aspect of their language command in
order to be able to inform themselves about their own fields of
study in the target language, but also to be able to introduce the
more advanced ones of their own learners to the basics of the
disciplines concerned. This need is perhaps most obvious for teach-
ers teaching advanced learners about to enter university, i.e. at
a level where highly demanding topics call for appropriate linguis-
tic skills on the part of the teacher.

The classroom-related aspect of a language teacher's language
command is the component which we are particularly concerned with
here. It refers to the kind of language needed to conduct lessons
in the target language, i.e. to cope with the classroom situation

4

in the foreign language. Why teachers need this aspect of their language command has already been suggested above: there are many good reasons why foreign language lessons should be conducted as far as possible in the target language. What this entails will be set out in more detail below (part 4), so that we can now turn to the question of how these various language needs are met within the context of teacher education.

Teacher education in Germany usually starts with a three or four year course at a university or college (1st stage). This is then followed by a probationary period of between 18 months and two years, in which the trainee teacher receives practical training in the teaching of his or her subjects (2nd stage). The examination taken at the end of this stage establishes a person as a fully qual- ified teacher. At a later stage, there is in-service training avail- able for those who are lucky enough to be near where such courses might be offered and sufficiently interested in attending (3rd stage).

Looking at these three stages of teacher education in reverse order makes plain how much the language education of future lan- guage teachers is a chance product rather than the result of care- ful planning.

In-service courses - as far as they exist at all - usually exclude training in the target language, presumably because the addressees are qualified teachers who by definition must possess an acceptable level of competence in the foreign language, which obviates the need for further activities in the field. In other words, it would come near to breaking a taboo to offer language courses of any kind at this level because such a step would recog- nise officially that deficiencies exist.

A similar reluctance to accept explicit language training as part of the instructional programme can be observed during the second stage of teacher-training. By passing their university exam- ination, trainee teachers have demonstrated their possession of at least passable levels of language competence in the foreign lan- guage, which could not possibly be called into question by offering more language instruction at this stage. To be fair, there are also many other important demands competing for time at this stage, but in spite of not infrequent complaints about the limited language command of some future language teachers (cf.e.g. Ostberg 1982), not much is explicitly being done about it.

Even at the first stage of teacher training it should not be forgotten that it is only comparatively recently that the language teaching aspect has been taken somewhat more seriously. Especially where languages such as English or French are concerned with their long standing and strong presence in German schools (often between seven and nine years of instruction before entering university), tradition is still strong in encouraging the belief that language teaching is not really a proper task for a university - apart per- haps from translation - , since students can theoretically be expec-

ted to have a reasonable command of the language when they arrive,
guaranteed by the final school-leaving examination, which effective-
ly defines the end of language learning needs. Where does the buck
stop?

Turning now, against this outline of the language education of
future language teachers, to the question of how their language
needs are met within the context of their training, we are confront-
ed with the following picture.

The general component - perhaps precisely because of its in-
herent vagueness - is the least problematic one in this context in
that it has come to be an accepted part of the training at the
first stage. While not all teachers eventually turn out to be pro-
ficient in this field, there seems to be general agreement nowadays
that improvement is necessary, and steps are being taken to remedy
the situation by encouraging periods of residence abroad and by pro-
viding appropriate language courses.

There is less readiness to cater for the study-related lan-
guage needs of future language teachers. The possible step of te  
ing all or at least most subjects usually making up a teacher',
study course in the target language is hardly ever taken 'r  
universities and colleges. Still, students do become at  
what acquainted with this aspect of the language com       
of future teachers, in the context of their studies.

It is the classroom-related aspect of their lang         1
that future language teachers get least preparation for. As     t-
ed out above, at the second and third stages of teacher education,
overt language training is practically nonexistent. At best,
trainee teachers are referred to one of the numerous little book-
lets with more or less adequate collections of classroom phrases
(cf. part three below for more details), which do little to improve
the situation. A significant effect can only be expected from ex-
plicit teaching at the first stage, where overt language teaching
is considered acceptable. However, in spite of the considerable
progress that sociolinguistic research into aspects of language
use in the classroom has made in recent years (cf. Sinclair and
Coulthard 1975, Edwards and Furlong 1978, Mehan 1979, Sinclair and
Brazil 1982, Lörscher 1983), the growing awareness of the role of
language in classroom teaching seems to have had little influence
to date on the language training of future teachers of foreign lan-
guages. It is extremely rare to find institutions which expressly
include classroom-specific language needs in their language teach-
ing programmes, nor are there usually any steps taken to specifi-
cally screen-test future teachers as to their proficiency, or lack
of it, in this highly relevant field of language use.

It seems that classroom language has not yet emerged in the
professional consciousness as an important aspect of the language
command of (future) language teachers. Two fallacies contribute to
the frequent failure to perceive the problem. One is implicit in

the notion that a good general command of the language will carry
the language teacher through most of the exigencies of his profes-
sional life. While nobody would quarrel with demanding a high gene-
ral level of attainment, unfortunat   not all language teachers
can be said to have reached this stage in the language they are
teaching. In addition, however, the teaching situation is character-
ised by interactional patterns rarely       tside the classroom,
so that the non-native teacher will have little experience with
classroom talk no matter how good his g       mand of the lan-
guage might be. The second fallacy is imp     in the curious no-
tion that certain aspects of the verbal interaction in the class-
room are not legitimately part of the lesson 'proper' and should
therefore be conducted in the mother tongue of the learners rather
than in the foreign language. We shall comment on this more fully
below (part 4).

We have tried to show so far that classroom language has not
yet found its proper place in the context of teacher education. The
result of this neglect is that important aspects of the verbal in-
teraction in the foreign language classroom are not at all, not
sufficiently or not adequately covered in the target language, with
unfortunate effects on the language learning opportunities of the
pupils or students involved.

Observations of lessons taught by university students on teach-
ing practice and even by fully qualified (non-native) teachers show
that deficits in the classroom-related component of the teacher's
language command tend to make themselves felt in one or the other
of the following ways.

The teacher may use the mother tongue for a large proportion
of the interaction in the classroom, thereby depriving his learners
of considerable opportunities to use the foreign language meaning-
fully. This is primarily a quantitative problem, but we may also
expect this to induce in the learner the - perhaps unconscious -
notion that when it comes t     l communicative needs the target
language is unsuitable, so i      t would also be a qualitative
one.

On the other hand, the teacher may take over the kind of lan-
guage he himself experienced as a learner, with all its mistakes
and deficiencies, and thus establish and perpetuate a classroom
dialect at worst comprehensible only within that particular class-
room, without ascertaining its value in the real world.

Or the teacher may use a tightly controlled repertoire of stere-
otyped formulae which in their rigidity (blunt imperatives prevail)
are not only inappropriate but also dangerous as a model for the
learner inasmuch as the latter may be tempted - or forced through
lack of experience with alternatives - to use similar expressions
himself (e.g. 'Speak louder!'), for instance in a conversation with
his peers or even superiors, without being aware of the social
implications of the phrase used.

### 3 Classroom Phra   Books

If the first of the factors contribu     to the feelings of
unfamiliarity and unease towards the domain    classroom language
is connected with deficiencies in the set-up of the language educa-
tion of future language teachers in Germany    there is no doubt that
lack of suitable lear     and teaching mate     s for this area is
the second.

As we have note   above, it is not u      l, during the second
stage of teacher educat   n, for the teach    trainer or perhaps an
older colleague to        e t  nee teach   s attention to one or
another of the nu          klets containing lists of classroom
phrases arranged t         ious headings     ntended for the use of
the practising teac        h  move    ften triggered off by
some language          ac en    have occu    d in the trainee's les-
son, and it i          of en        t in a somewhat embarrassed
and apolcge                      co     le attempt to spare a young
colleague                   1        th the shameful recognition
of the in                           booklets are not really
consider                    d       sed on as covert rather than
overt inf

The in                        that they are to be used for
reference pu                    eparation of the foreign lan-
guage lesson                    nt), the teacher realises that
there is                   ic     ed to do and which he cannot (or
could not        on    iv      ne foreign language. In other words,
their usefulness dep    ely on the realisation that something
might go, or has gone, wrong. Considering the characteristic ways
in which problems with the domain of classroom language manifest
themselves (cf. part 2 above) it comes as no surprise to find that
the phrase-book approach does not seem to make much impact. Al-
though the dictionary format (e.g. Kissling 2/1981) is the excep-
tion rather than the rule, it is the logical consequence of the
reference purpose the books are primarily meant to serve. However,
dictionaries by themselves are not very suitable learning and teach-
ing materials in this field, nor in any other.

The other and perhaps more serious reason for the understand-
able misgivings aroused by the phrase-books is connected with their
contents. While a more detailed analysis than is possible here
would reveal the various merits and demerits of the individual
phrase-books concerned, in general they appear narrow in scope,
often unreliable in their information, and unsystematic in their
view of the nature of what is presented as classroom language. The
result is that many questions a user might have, are in fact left
unanswered.

### 4 Classroom Interaction and Classroom Language

The third factor contributing to the problem of classroom lan-
guage in foreign language teaching - and the difficulties teachers

themselves may have with this language domain - is connected with a more general uncertainty as to what the notion of 'classroom language' entails.

Language has an extremely important role to play in any educational setting, and perhaps even more so in foreign language lessons. Looking at these lessons in their entirety and at the kinds of verbal interaction going on within them immediately draws attention to the fact that the language of the classroom is by no means all teacher talk, but includes pupil-teacher talk and, of course, also pupil-pupil talk. In addition, it is important to reali:e that a considerable proportion of the interaction in the classroom is not directly concerned with the topic of the lesson at all, but with preparatory moves, organisatory aspects, social behaviour, or similar fields of reference. In other words, classroom language covers a much wider field than just one aspect of a teacher's language command.

Existing implicit (as e.g. in classroom phrase-books) and explicit (cf. theoretical literature) categorisations of the field can be systematised into five different - and no doubt complementary - approaches which, taken together, provide a comprehensive mapping of the classroom language domain and can be captured in the following five questions,

1   At what stage in the lesson does the interaction take place?

2   What is the interaction about?

3   What is the function of the interaction in the context of the lesson?

4   What is the communicative purpose of the interaction?

5   By which linguistic means is the interaction implemented?

We shall now discuss each of these five questions in turn in an attempt to provide a comprehensive outline of the field, as well as an indication of where the problematic areas of the concept of classroom language lie.

4.1. At what stage?

The first question draws attention to the sequential structure of a lesson, the stages of which are often separated from each other by explicit boundary signals, such as "Now let's close our books and turn to the board" or similar indicators. Most classroom phrase-books follow this approach in the presentation of the greater part of their material. Stages suggested by this approach include the following:

1   opening (making the pupils come in, greetings; attendance, lateness; opening of the actual proceedings)

9

2    transition (from one stage to the next)

3    homework (setting, checking)

4    working with course books (texts, exercises)

5    working with/at the board

6    working with technical aids (OHP, tape recorder, cassette recorder, language laboratory, video; maps, charts, flashcards etc.)

7    working with worksheets (producing them, distributing them in class, using them during the lesson)

8    songs and games

9    group work and role play

lo    discussing topics, organisation, behaviour

11    discussing extra-curricular activities (excursions, day trips)

12    topic-related work (usually based on texts)

13    language-related work (pronunciation, orthography, syntax, lexis, pragmatics; comprehension; conversation skills etc.)

14    tests and examinations (announcing, setting up, correcting, discussing)

15    announcements (speech day, assembly; changes in time-table, absent teachers, temporary replacements)

16    special events (festivities, holidays, prizes, birthdays etc.)

17    closing (end of work, clearing up, valediction, dismissal)

While it is no doubt possible to define these stages differently, an attempt has been made in the above list to be as comprehensive as possible and to present exhaustively all characteristic stages   of a lesson. What is perhaps more interesting than the question of whether they do indeed cover all conceivable cases is the fact that they mirror different levels at which decisions about the next stage in a lesson tend to be taken. While some are definitely bound to a particular place in a lesson (1, 17), others are free as to when they occur and are characterised by the medium used (4 to 7), or the type of activity envisaged (8 to 11), or the main purpose pursued (12, 13), or the function fulfilled (2, 3, 14, 15, 16). These differences of level may be theoretically unsatisfactory, but are a natural result of the fact that different kinds of features can serve as the dominating aspect of a particular stage of a lesson.

10

## 4.2 What about?

The second approach to classroom language starts off from an analysis of what the interaction in the classroom refers to, i.e. what it is that teachers and pupils in the classroom in fact talk about. It shows that it is necessary to distinguish between several areas of reference, within the context of the verbal interaction in a lesson.

Priesemann (1971) distinguishes between subject-related and communication-related talk in the classroom setting, emphasising that a considerable proportion of the verbal interaction is needed to establish common ground and to prepare for the understanding of the topic, and that without these moves the learner has no access to the subject-related part of the interaction. More specifically concerned with foreign language teaching is Black and Butzkamm's (1977) distinction between language-related and content-related aspects of classroom communication. Language-related communication is characterised as monodimensional: the main concern here is whether language has been used formally correctly. Content-related communication, on the other hand, is more concerned with the content of an utterance as an expression of a communicative aim. The examples and further explanations narrow this down to refer specifically to the real-life situation of the learner, even to the exclusion of e.g. the lesson topic. Fanselow (1977) is more precise in this respect in distinguishing between language/life/procedure/subject matter as areas of reference of classroom talk. Language refers to a wider field than Black and Butzkamm's language-related communication, because Fanselow sees metacommunication as part of this category, whereas in Black and Butzkamm's analysis this is expressly excluded. Procedure highlights those areas of classroom talk that are concerned with procedural questions. The separation of life and subject matter into two categories makes it possible to keep the real-life situation of the learner apart from the content of the lesson, as two different fields of reference of classroom discourse. Chaudron's (1977) analysis of the correction behaviour of foreign language teachers shows that the corrections refer either to language points (linguistic), or to the actual classroom situation (classroom interaction and discourse) or to the lesson content (subject matter). His second category then covers what Fanselow keeps separate as life and procedure. From a somewhat different point of view, Boueke, Henrici and Schülein (1983) describe classroom interaction as either content-referenced, process-referenced or group-referenced. Content-referenced interaction focusses on the lesson topic, process-referenced interaction aims at establishing acceptable procedures according to which the topic is to be handled in class, and the group-referenced parts of the interaction refer to the development of behavioural norms within the group of learners. The aspect of behaviour as something that is potentially being talked about in the classroom is also singled out specially in Sinclair and Brazil's (1982) analysis, where distinctions are made between the topic (content), the organisation of working procedures (organisation), the behaviour of the learners (discipline), and - although perhaps not very distinctly put - classroom dis-

course (discourse) itself, as areas which teachers and pupils talk about in the classroom setting.

An attempt to systematise the results of the above studies leads to the following six areas of reference of classroom discourse:

1   topic. This term covers the lesson contents, or topic, as it is for instance suggested by the text or textbook used, i.e. the (non-actual, imaginary) situations, problems, facts presented for classroom treatment. Examples:

    Who was Mary Stuart? When does Peter get up every morning? What is the main point of the first part of the text?

2   reality. This term covers references to the real-life situation in which the learners find themselves (except areas five and six below). We would argue that this area is of primary immediacy to them, as opposed to the secondary deg.ee of immediacy represented by the first field above. Examples:

    It's nice to see you back, Peter (after an absence). How old are you, Mary? Could I borrow your rubber? May I go to the toilet? Please, sir, Henry's cut his finger.

3   language. The third area covers explicit references to formal aspects of the language being taught, either as the focus of the teaching at that stage, or in the context of a correction. Examples:

    Remember, committee is spelt with two e's at the end. What is the past tense form of teach again, Barbara? What is the meaning of dowdy?

4   discourse. This term is meant to capture those parts of the verbal interaction in the classroom explicitly concerned with the establishment and maintenance of communication. Examples:

    I couldn't hear you  - could you say that again, please? Is that what you mean? I'm not sure whether I've made myself understood, but what I mean is... Could you explain your last point again?

5   organisation. This area covers utterances directly concerned with organisatory moves. Examples:

    Could you do the next sentence? I've finished - what am I supposed to do now? May I work with Colin on this? Could you share your book with Linda today - we're one copy short. I haven't had my turn yet. Could you split up into groups of four now - we want each group to work on a particular aspect of the story.

12

6 discipline. This final area refers to the parts of classroom
talk concerned with the maintenance of order. This is usually
initiated by the teacher, but can also be sparked off by an
appeal from a pupil. Examples:

Could you pay attention for once. No prompting please: give
him a chance to do it himself. Please, sir, Bob keeps pulling
my hair.

A recent informal survey among students studying to become
teachers of English (N = 2o) revealed that they thought the follow-
ing classroom activities to be the three most important ones for
language teachers to be able to do in the foreign language: (1)
explain the meaning of new words, (2) explain a grammatical con-
struction, (3) correct oral contributions. Lowest ratings were
given to:  explanations about classroom procedures; setting up of
technical aid; checking attendance and doing other administrative
duties.While areas 3 and, of course, 1 tend to be accepted as fields
of reference to be covered in the foreign language, in foreign lan-
guage teaching, many of the other areas are often not considered
to be part of the lesson 'proper' and are therefore dealt with in
the mother tongue.

However, it can hardly be emphasised enough that including these
other areas as widely as possible in the foreign language part of
classroom discourse is a decisive aspect of the credibility of
teaching a foreign language at all: the more these fields are ex-
cluded from communication in the foreign language, the more the
learner is inevitably left with the impression that real communica-
tive purposes can only be served in the mother tongue, and that the
foreign language is only suitable for the verbalisation of the
necessarily fictitious worlds of textbooks and other teaching mate-
rials.

4.3 What for in the lesson context?

The third approach to classroom language takes its starting
point from the question of what a particular part of the interaction
means in the context of a lesson. In a rather detailed analysis,
Sinclair and Brazil (1982) distinguish between four basic functions,
initiation as the starting point of an interactional sequence,
response as the reaction to an initiation, follow-up as the reac-
tion to a response, and frame and focus, signalling a transition
from one stage to another. A sequence of the first three functions
is called teaching exchange, the last two are grouped together as
boundary exchange. Bidding, i.e. asking for permission to speak,
can be considered a special aspect of the response function; com-
plex initiations include nominations, cues, prompts, clues, and of
course reformulations as re-initiations.

It seems, then, that it is useful to distinguish between (1)
initiation, (2) response, (3) follow-up and (4) boundary as the
four basic functions of classroom discourse within the context of
a lesson. Classroom conventions suggest that all except the second

13

are dominated by the teacher. This is not unproblematic, in partic-
ular in foreign language teaching, because although it enhances the
(desirable) role of the teacher as a language model, a strong domi-
nance and the resulting social markedness of the language used may
imply unsuitability of the teacher's language for the purposes of
the learner. As far as possible, care must therefore be taken (i)
to involve the learners also in functions other than the second,
(ii) to use language which is 'reversible', i.e. which can be used
reciprocally, as between equals, rather than language which is
clearly marked for hierarchial (social) implications (as e.g. com-
mands, in contrast to requests, etc.).

4.4 What for in the context of communication?

Asking for the purpose of a part of the interaction in the
classroom is not only a way of aiming at sequential structural
elements of a lesson (as above), but can also serve to elicit gene-
ral communicative functions. Thus, Bellack et al. (1966) distinguish
between four moves within classroom communication, structuring,
soliciting, responding and reacting. A comparison with the approach-
es described above shows, however, that structuring captures the
reference to a particular field of discourse, viz.organisation (see
4.2 above), whereas the other three correspond to a teaching ex-
change as described in the previous section. More recent is Sinclair
and Brazil's (1982) distinction between four communicative func-
tions of teacher talk, telling, controlling, stimulating and reward-
ing. The second and third of these correspond to Bellack's solicit-
ing move and imply a physical response in the first case and a ver-
bal one in the second. Rewarding apparently covers what is termed
reacting by Bellack. Telling is specifically concerned with the
communicative function of informing. All others are focussed on
structural lesson elements, which is perhaps not quite so obvious
since Sinclair and Brazil's description - with its emphasis on the
language of the teacher - does not  include the reaction of the
learners in the analysis.

Looking at the possible communicative functions of language
within a lesson in perspective, we propose the following categori-
sation in an attempt to do justice to the typical range of aspects
involved:

1   inform. This function is not only fulfilled by the teacher
    passing on a piece of information (e.g. 'Washington is the
    capital of the United States'), but also by the pupil who
    answers a (factual) question.

2   evaluate. It will usually be the teacher who deals out praise
    or blame. However, this function would also be performed more
    neutrally by pupils and teacher alike when e.g. expressing
    personal feelings, making personal comments ('what a dirty
    trick that was') or making explicit value judgments ('I don't
    like this story very much because ...').

14

3    instruct. What we mean by this term is the function of someone (usually the teacher) telling someone else to do something, as opposed to

4    elicit, by which we mean the function of asking someone to say something, i.e. to give a verbal response, as is customary with most teacher questions.

5    maintain social climate. With this category we try to capture those parts of the verbal interaction in the classroom that are not obviously concerned with any of the above and primarily serve social functions, such as greetings, valedictions, encouragement ('You're nearly there - just carry on'), social rituals in connection with e.g. a birthday ('Many happy returns'), an excuse ('That's all right'), a sneeze ('Bless you'), a piece of bad news ('I'm sorry to hear that').

6    maintain communication. This category is intended to cover utterances that influence and steer the communication processes in the classroom, such as digression signals ('incidentally ...'), appeals for agreement ('we are all agreed, aren't we, that ...'), handicap signals ('I haven't perhaps understood it all, but has this to do with ...'), appeals for (linguistic) help ('I forgot the English for it again, but what I mean is ...'), or similar.

Obviously, these six communicative functions are by no means classroom-specific as such, although their relative frequency here will differ from that found e.g. in private communication. However, we wish to emphasise that also categories 5 and 6 have their legitimate place in the classroom context: if the aim of foreign language teaching is the eventual ability of learners to interact naturally in the target language, it is difficult to see how this could be achieved if these two functions were to be systematically excluded from foreign language classroom discourse.

4.5 How?

The last question approaches the verbal interaction in the foreign language classroom from the point of view of the linguistic forms needed to carry the various functions described above. It is well known that there is no one-to-one relationship between form and function, and the following forms can serve a variety of - sometimes rather classroom-specific - functions:

1    declaratives, e.g. The blackboard hasn't been cleaned. You are too noisy. I'd pick that up if I were you.

2    interrogatives, e.g. Could you do the next sentence? Why don't you keep quiet.

3    imperatives, e.g. Try again, Peter. Don't give up.

4    interjections, e.g. My goodness, what a noise. Right. Crumbs.

15

**Table 1**

**Aspects of verbal interaction in the (foreign language) classroom**

| 1. At what stage in the lesson? | 2. What about? | 3. What for? (lesson) | 4. What for? (communication) | 5. How? |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 opening | 1 topic | 1 initiation | 1 inform | 1 declaratives |
| 2 transition | 2 reality | 2 response | 2 evaluate | 2 interrogatives |
| 3 homework | | 3 follow-up | 3 instruct | 3 imperatives |
| | 3 language | | 4 elicit | 4 interjections |
| 4 course book | 4 discourse | 4 boundary | | |
| 5 blackboard | | | 5 maintain social climate | 5 set phrases |
| 6 technical aid   work with/at | 5 organisation | | | 6 signals |
| 7 worksheet | 6 discipline | | 6 maintain communication | |
| 8 songs, games | | | | |
| 9 group work, role play | | | | |
| 1o discussing: topic organisation, behaviour | | | | |
| 11 discussing: extra-curricular activities | | | | |
| 12 topic - related work | | | | |
| 13 language - related work | | | | |
| 14 exams, tests | | | | |
| 15 announcements | | | | |
| 16 special events | | | | |
| 17 closing | | | | |

16

5   set phrases, e.g. Happy birthday to you. You're welcome.

6   signals, e.g. hesitations, intentional changes in pitch
    ('quotation'), but also linguistic signals (below the sentence
    level) such as: however, on the whole, as it were.

## 5 Teaching and Testing Materials

On the background of the preceding survey it is now possible
to sketch out in broad terms the basic requirements suitable teach-
ing and testing materials need to fulfil.

First, as our survey has shown, classroom language is a wider
concept than is often realised, and this needs to be reflected in
the materials offered for this language domain.

Second, the materials need to be performance-oriented in that
they need to teach not only the knowledge of the language used in
the classroom, but also the ability to use it.

This aim would assign a very important place to criterion-re-
ferenced tests as a check on the knowledge aspect, and a prerequi-
site for the performance-oriented aspect, of a language course in
this field.

Finally, it would seem important to develop a comprehensive
screen-test for this language domain in order to make sure that
(future, or even present) language teachers who are themselves un-
certain of their language command in this field, can be given spe-
cific help.

## 6 Conclusions

We have argued in this paper that classroom language still has
to come into its own as an important aspect of foreign language
learning and teaching. We hope to have been able to show that it
can make an important contribution to meaningful foreign language
instruction.

Providing for overt training in this field implies not only
the provision of adequate information and practice, but also, in
many cases, an attempt to change attitudes, e.g. as far as the
appropriateness of certain areas of reference for foreign language
classroom discourse is concerned. Teaching styles and methods would
no doubt be rather directly affected, too.

Although there are obviously vast areas of overlap between
what we have called the general and the classroom-related aspects
of a language teacher's language command, we believe that class-
room language provides a less arbitrary, and therefore possibly
more helpful, framework for language learning activities within
a teacher's training course, than whatever general language compe-

tence is taken to mean: any time redirected from general language courses to a specific one on classroom language would not jeopardise the general standard, but would help to raise it by providing language work within an obviously relevant context.

Recent course materials (Hughes 1981, Willis 1981) show that important progress has been made in the conceptualisation of what classroom language implies and in the presentation of it for learning and teaching purposes. It is to be hoped that the project, the background of which has been presented in this paper, will be a further step in this direction.

## 7 Notes

1    supported by grant No B546 of the University of Bielefeld.

2    e.g. Müller and Zellmer (1952), Windmann (1959), Meldau and
     Pearcy (1961), Weidner (1968), Heuer and Parry (1971),
     Ebbinghausen (1977), Kißling (2/1981), Gressmann and Rich
     (1982).

## 8 Bibliography

Bellack, A.A., Kliebard, H.M., Hyman, R.T., and F.L. Smith (eds).
     1966. The language of the classroom. New York: Teachers College Press.

Black, C., and W. Butzkamm. 1977. "Sprachbezogene und inhaltsbezogene Kommunikation im Englischunterricht". Praxis 24: 115-124.

Boueke, D., Henrici, G., and F. Schülein. 1983. "Handlungsfunktionen und Diskursgliederung in selbständig arbeitenden studentischen Lerngruppen". In Ehlich, K., and J. Rehbein (eds). 1983. Kommunikation in Schule und Hochschule. Tübingen: Narr. 137-155.

Chaudron, C. 1977. "A descriptive model of discourse in the corrective treatment of learners' errors". Language Learning 27: 29-46.

Ebbinghausen, K. 1978. Classroom communication. Paderborn: Schöningh.

Edwards, T., and V.J. Furlong. 1978. The language of teaching. London: Heinemann.

Fanselow, J. 1977. "Beyond Rashomon: conceptualising and describing the teaching act". TESOL Quarterly 11,1: 17-39.

Gressmann, L., and A. Rich. 1982. Classroom language. Bielefeld: Cornelsen.

Heuer, H., and P. Parry. 1971. Hands up! Unterrichtssprache deutsch-
    englisch  Dortmund: Crüwell.

Hughes, G.S. 1981. A handbook of classroom English. London: Oxford
    University Press.

Kissling, H. 2/1981. Lexikon der englischen Unterrichtssprache.
    Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer.

Lörscher, W. 1983. Linguistische Beschreibung und Analyse von Fremd-
    sprachenunterricht als Diskurs. Tübingen: Narr.

Mehan, H. 1979. Learning lessons: social organisation in the class-
    room. Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press.

Meldau, R., and I. Pearcy. 1961. Deutsch-englisches Wörterbuch der
    Unterrichtssprache. München: Hueber.

Müller, M., and E. Zellmer. 1952. Englische Schulredensarten.
    Iserlohn: Silva.

Ostberg, H.K. 1982. Gesprächsverhalten in der Fremdsprache (Eng-
    lisch) und fremdsprachlicher Unterricht. Augsburg

Priesemann, G. 1971. Zur Theorie der Unterrichtssprache. Düsseldorf:
    Schwann.

Sinclair, J.McH., and D. Brazil. 1982. Teacher talk. London: Oxford
    University Press.

Sinclair, J.McH., and R.M. Coulthard. 1975. Towards an analysis of
    discourse.London: Oxford University Press.

Weidner, L. 1968. Classroom phrases. München: Hueber.

Willis, J. 1981. Teaching English through English. London: Longman

Windmann, H. 1959. Englische Redewendungen. Münster: Aschendorff.

19