

DISCOURSE BETWEEN TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

Supervisor: Abdurakhmonov To'rakhon,

Mukhtarova Mubina Sherzodbek kizi,

Nabieva Dिल्фуза Ravshanbek kizi, Rustamova Oyjamol Abduvokhid kizi,

Abdushukurova Kamola Abdusalom kizi

Abstract. Discourse between teachers and students is a fundamental component of educational interaction, shaping not only the process of knowledge transmission but also the emotional, social, and cognitive dimensions of learning. This article explores the nature, function, and impact of teacher-student discourse in classroom settings. It addresses both verbal and non-verbal aspects of communication, examining how language use, question strategies, tone, feedback, and dialogic techniques influence student engagement and academic performance.

Keywords: classroom interaction, teacher-student communication, discourse strategies, dialogic teaching, feedback, verbal and non-verbal language.

INTRODUCTION

Classroom discourse is not merely an exchange of information; it is a dynamic, bidirectional process that underpins all facets of education. The way teachers and students communicate influences classroom atmosphere, student motivation, knowledge construction, and the development of critical thinking skills. Teacher-student discourse involves more than the delivery of curriculum content—it reflects power relations, cultural norms, emotional connections, and pedagogical intentions. In both traditional and modern classrooms, the quality of discourse is a key indicator of effective teaching and learning. Therefore, understanding its structure, purpose, and challenges is crucial for educators seeking to foster inclusive and impactful learning environments.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

At the heart of educational discourse lies the interactional structure, typically characterized by the Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) pattern. In this model, the teacher initiates a question or prompt, the student responds, and the teacher provides feedback or evaluation. While this triadic pattern is widespread and efficient for classroom management, it often limits student agency and creative participation. To counter this, contemporary pedagogical approaches emphasize dialogic teaching, in which students are encouraged to ask questions, build on peer responses, and engage in extended discussions. Such open-ended dialogue supports deeper cognitive processing and fosters a sense of academic autonomy [1].

Language choice and style also play pivotal roles in shaping classroom discourse. Teachers who use inclusive, supportive language can promote a psychologically safe environment where students feel valued and respected. Conversely, overly authoritative or dismissive language may hinder participation and reinforce passive learning. Effective discourse

involves a balance between directive communication—necessary for structure and discipline—and facilitative communication that nurtures student voices and promotes inquiry-based learning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Non-verbal communication, though often overlooked, significantly contributes to the teacher-student dynamic. Gestures, eye contact, facial expressions, and body orientation serve as powerful cues for regulating interaction and conveying encouragement or disapproval. A teacher's physical proximity or posture can subtly signal openness or authority, affecting student comfort and willingness to participate. Awareness and intentional use of non-verbal behavior can therefore enhance the effectiveness of verbal communication and foster stronger relational bonds in the classroom [2].

Another essential element of discourse is the quality and type of feedback provided by teachers. Constructive, timely, and specific feedback supports student growth and builds confidence. It signals that student contributions are heard and valued, creating a dialogic loop rather than a one-way transmission of knowledge. Moreover, the use of metacognitive feedback—guiding students to reflect on their thinking processes—can promote independent learning and higher-order reasoning.

However, several barriers can undermine the quality of teacher-student discourse. Linguistic mismatches between teachers and students, especially in multilingual classrooms, may cause confusion or disengagement. Cultural differences in communication styles, such as indirectness or deference, can affect how students interpret questions or respond to authority figures. Additionally, rigid curriculum constraints and large class sizes often limit opportunities for meaningful interaction. Overcoming these obstacles requires teachers to adopt culturally responsive communication strategies and flexible discourse structures that accommodate diverse learner needs [3].

Technology-mediated classrooms present both new opportunities and challenges for teacher-student discourse. While platforms such as forums, chat functions, and video conferencing can extend communication beyond the physical classroom, they also alter the rhythm, tone, and immediacy of interaction. Teachers must therefore develop digital communication competencies, adapting their discourse practices to maintain clarity, engagement, and relational presence in online environments.

Ultimately, discourse in the classroom is not only a tool for instruction—it is a medium for shaping relationships, fostering inclusion, and constructing knowledge. Teachers who reflect critically on their communicative practices and adapt to the evolving needs of their students contribute meaningfully to the development of effective, democratic, and empowering educational spaces [4].

CONCLUSION

The discourse between teachers and students forms the backbone of educational practice. It influences how students engage with content, interact with peers, and perceive their place in the learning process. Effective discourse is characterized by balance: between authority and

openness, between structure and spontaneity, and between content delivery and student participation. By understanding the nuances of classroom communication—both verbal and non-verbal—teachers can create environments that are not only intellectually stimulating but also emotionally supportive. As education systems become more diverse and technology-driven, the ability to facilitate meaningful, inclusive, and adaptive discourse will be a defining feature of successful teaching.

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