

# The Problem of Neutrality in Intercultural Classroom Research

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## Summary

This article discusses the question of neutrality in the field of intercultural innovation in English language teaching. While no research model can claim neutrality, the pre-pedagogical model of communication analysis proposed here encourages the avoidance of the ideologies of the field under investigation. The ethnographic perspective to intercultural research outlined in the research model is considered to be particularly relevant to intercultural innovation of educational methodology, but the underlying principles are considered to be relevant to intercultural research beyond the educational setting.

**Key Words** context of situation - context independence - context sensitivity - ethnographic - innovation - intercultural- method-in-use - neutrality - research

## The Problem of Neutrality in Intercultural Classroom Research

### Introduction

*The perception of a need for more descriptive research into what happens during any kind of intercultural communication stems from the view that we need to achieve a better general understanding of what actually goes on during intercultural encounters. However, the problem inevitably arises as to the neutrality of the researcher and the tool of analysis he is using. This article discusses the question of neutrality in the field of intercultural innovation in English language teaching, proposing the principle of using a model that avoids the ideologies of the field under investigation. The underlying principles are considered to be relevant to intercultural research beyond the educational setting.*

### Pre-pedagogical Analysis

One way of attempting to avoid judgmental categories is to analyse classroom interaction as an example of general communication prior to analysis in terms of pedagogy. Allwright and Bailey (1991:12) specifically refer to the emergence of discourse analysis in classroom research as a way to avoid prejudging "what is worth paying attention to." By avoiding

pedagogical categories in the primary data description, researchers are less likely to focus on predetermined categories based on one teaching approach from their own culture and have more scope for eventually focusing on what is salient in the actual data itself.

The principles for the selection and development of an adequate non-pedagogical model for describing communication and the application of this model to classroom interaction is the major theoretical focus of this article. This leads to the description of what teachers actually do in classrooms in terms of communication. This description of method based on a non-pedagogical analysis will be referred to as a teacher's method-in-use.

### **Method-in-Use**

Stern (1983:477) refers to the "break with the method concept", In particular he refers to a movement away from a single method approach in language teaching "to overcome the narrowness, rigidities, and imbalances which have resulted from conceptualizing language teaching purely or mainly through the concept of method". Rather than reject the idea of method, he argues in favour of recontextualizing the notion within a wider framework, utilizing empirical studies to explore fundamental principles of language teaching.

Allwright (1988) and Allwright and Bailey (1991) review the failure of the concept of method as a research tool. Referring to inconclusive results from a methodological comparison in Pennsylvania (p. xviii), they point out that methods cannot be effectively compared until the teaching they bring about has been adequately described. They conclude (p xviii) that "it is not 'the latest method' that we need, but rather a fuller understanding of the language classroom and what goes on there".

One reason for the failure of methodological comparison has been the assumption that if an approach is labelled "communicative" or "structural" by planners, writers and trainers, this very approach is actually operationalized in the classroom by teachers. A label such as "the communicative approach" may be useful to describe the contents of a course in general terms, but what is needed as a starting point for evaluating methods is an adequate description of what really happens in classrooms in the specific contexts where methods are enacted. The suitability of methods proposed for intercultural innovation in specific contexts cannot be usefully assessed until the method actually used has been adequately described.

Even if it is assumed that "method" is a problematic concept for intercultural descriptive or contrastive studies, methodological labels will inevitably remain in common use wherever EFL specialists discuss their professional concerns, so there is little point in taking a purist stance and considering the term obsolete. Indeed, I shall attempt to argue that "Method" as a concept is still valuable. What we mean by method may, however, need re-examining, so that it is based on the primacy of "method-in-use" If what happens between teachers and students in the classroom is a central factor in defining method for

specific contexts, it follows that no abstract definition of any method should be seen as immediately applicable to any intercultural research context.

This view is illustrated in the context of the Gulf State of Qatar because EFL teaching in Qatari schools has been the subject of some controversy ever since the introduction in 1977 of a British communicative course called the Crescent, advocating a new approach to language teaching. In Qatar it is often assumed that a communicative approach is being used in Qatari schools, mainly because the course claims to be "communicative", but only a description of what happens to the course in classrooms can show the method-in-use and reveal what "communicative" actually signifies in this particular context.

The actual method-in-use in Qatari schools has never been described. No records of descriptive research in the Qatari schools system can be found beyond reports of informal and often anecdotal classroom observation, in spite of the ten-year British-run teacher training programme linked to the innovation of the Crescent Course. In such a situation, which is typical of many other intercultural innovations in EFL settings, it is necessary to distance research from unsubstantiated prejudgements. Until a description is provided, what is actually being criticised cannot be pinpointed with any precision and this is a hindrance to planning for improvement for both local planners and outside course designers. The problem is then how to provide a neutral description.

With a descriptive approach it is not normally appropriate to provide hypotheses, as these tend to be too predictive of the direction of the analysis, which must be allowed to evolve from salient features in the data itself (See Chaudron 1988:47). Ethnomethodologists (Sacks et Al 1974 & Sharrock and Anderson 1984) claim to make no predictions about how the world is and set out, neither to prove nor disprove any a-priori hypothesis. This claim of neutrality is, of course, a theoretical position in itself with its own premises about how research should be designed. Nevertheless, there are advantages of a description which avoids the bias that is inevitably built into a research design in which a particular methodological or pedagogical perspective influences the model that is adopted. A brief example can illustrate this point. Using a descriptive research approach, we cannot use a term like "display" questions (Long & Sato 1983) when developing a research hypothesis, because to call a question a display question already makes a pre-descriptive statement about the purpose of teachers' questions. Only after adequately describing and analysing naturally occurring examples of teachers' questions in their context of use can we assess their purpose. As Sharrock and Anderson (1984:64) observe,

*The way to investigate a phenomenon was not to begin from conclusions about what the study of it would have to yield, but to begin by examining the phenomenon itself to see what kind of character it has and what conclusions it could support.*

An important objective is to describe the method-in-use of a sample of teachers in the

research setting, based on the analysis of their interaction and to re-examine the notion of methodology in the light of descriptive research.

### **An Ethnographic Perspective**

Intercultural research is ethnographic in the sense that it requires the researcher to observe, record and describe naturally occurring language in a socio-cultural setting. The "cyclical" nature of "ethnographic" research has been represented diagrammatically by Van Lier (1990:46). Van Lier's model is possibly the most exhaustive and complete diagram of a research cycle, including as it does the reality that provides the data, the creation of a formal model itself, the closeness of the model to real experience and the relationship between speculative theory and the data. It also represents the processes the researcher goes through, such as sorting the data, comparing it to other experience, connecting or finding links between parts of the model, inferring patterns and metaphors, generalizing and predicting, focussing and hypothesizing.

The classroom experience of cooperative informants is the central component of the research data. For this reason a research model that builds in the insights of practical classroom experience has been preferred. Kolb's Experiential Cycle (Kolb,1984:42) provides theoretical support for the experiential aspects of the research cycle. It is important to note that what is meant by "experience" here is the way teachers normally communicate in the classroom. An experiential model, combined with an ethnographic focus recording people engaged in authentic communication in a particular setting, is a useful tool to examine what happens when a pedagogical approach developed in one cultural situation is directly applied to a totally different cultural setting. In the case of this research, course writers have made specific reference to one pedagogical approach ( the communicative approach). By describing how the course translates into real experience, the theoretical perspective can be compared to the approach being applied in practice. Rather than first considering and then debating abstract, generalized theory, an experiential cycle attempts to confront theory with real experience within a specific context. What Kolb (op cit) refers to as "apprehension of concrete experience" is often the first step in an experiential cycle.

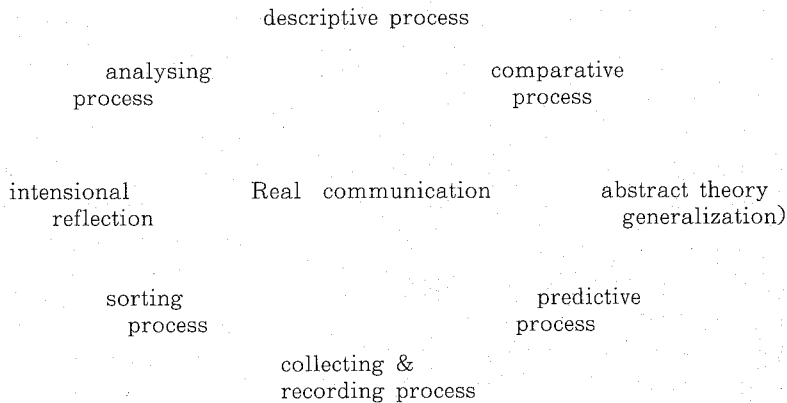
The model is, therefore, experience driven and corrects any bias towards abstract theory by giving the real behaviour of insiders equal importance. In Kolb's terms "knowing by apprehension" is on an equal footing to "knowing by comprehension". It is the tension between the rational and perceptive forms of knowledge that is intended to lead to the creation of more easily applicable intercultural knowledge.

Abstract theory is not the driving force of the model, but is still a key component. It is as important as the other components, as without such theory it would not be possible for professionals to benefit from the experience of others in contexts unknown to them. Relevant abstract theory is called upon once the essential descriptive stages that depend on experience of the specific cultural context have been completed.

## The Research Model

The diagrammatic representation of my research model in fig 1 is intended to represent what actually happens in a long term intercultural research model that is both experiential and ethnographic. It emphasizes the central nature of the communication that the data represents, which is initially examined independently of pedagogical theory. This model also emphasizes the dynamic nature of research. Part of this dynamism is created by the explanatory power accredited to the structural analysis of real life experience.

Fig. 1



A cyclical model allows for the fact that the research can be initiated at any stage in the cycle; it also ensures the application of a wide range of both practical and theoretical perspectives. It separates different research stages fulfilling requirements that research must subject reasoning to empirical inquiry and *visa versa*, emphasizing equally both the complementary and dialectic relationships between different stages of the research cycle. This particular model has deliberately centralized the data itself as the driving force of the research cycle as the whole research effort aims at re-assessing current thinking on intercultural approaches to language teaching in the light of actual communication in classrooms.

## Ethnographic Research and Efficiency

An ethnographic approach can claim to be the most applicable form of social research in that it goes to great lengths to expose a form of ethnographic reality that is not possible in experimental research, which by definition manipulates reality in order to isolate specific elements. In ethnographic research, the nature of the data required prevents the artificial elimination of the unpredictable side of human behaviour and requires the researcher to account for it in his model of analysis. If variability is artificially reduced, behaviour described can no longer be considered as holistic human behaviour. Description of actual rather than simulated behaviour has a degree of face-validity that few other research approaches can claim. This is important if research has to convince decision makers and teachers themselves of its applicability to real situations, although face-validity is in itself

insufficient proof of efficiency.

Chaudron (1988:39) suggests that descriptive analysis of data has led to a proliferation of terms and categories much in need of empirical validation. He also suggests that categories of analysis should be both exhaustive and mutually exclusive and that no unit of analysis should be assigned to more than one category. Chaudron also claims (op cit:44) that there has yet to be a demonstration of the reliability or validity of Sinclair and Coulthards' system. It is difficult to agree with this assessment, when Chaudron himself defines validity as "the extent to which the observational apparatus and inferences drawn from it will be meaningful, significant and applicable to further studies" (p23).

When his definition of reliability - "the consistency with which others agree on the categories and descriptions and the frequencies attributed to them" (p23) - is applied to structural models for discourse analysis that use real-life data it becomes apparent that he is applying inappropriate criteria. The agreement of others seems to be a strange notion on which to build reliability. He suggests (p24) that qualitative research "requires intersubjective agreement because the researcher writes for an audience that must recognize the meaningfulness of the description of analysis". Reliability has now been linked to the ability to persuade rather than to an intrinsic quality of efficiency that is built into the model of analysis.

Wilson (in Bell et al.1984:31) explains why different criteria are needed for non-experimental research designs :

*Reliability in science lies in the requirement that another observer, using the same methods, in the same group, will obtain the same results. But ethnography is not a method in the sense of fixed rules of procedure which can be written down and followed exactly by another observer.*

In ethnographic research the source of the data can never be replicated as in a controlled experiment. The reliability of a discourse model must be linked to its adequacy and efficiency in regularly handling a large amount of data, but only when the analysts are skilled and trained in its use.

Van Lier (1990:35) defines ethnographic research efficiency in terms of quality. The "quality" he refers to is partially defined in terms of "adequacy" (of both argumentation and evidence). "Adequacy of evidence" will be defined as meaning that the model will be comprehensive and inclusive in terms of covering all the data. "Adequacy of argumentation" is attempted in the following sections. These terms replace "reliability" and "validity" because reliability and validity are strongly associated with the quality of experimental and statistical research designs and need redefining in terms of ethnographic, descriptive models. Changing the terminology avoids confusion with efficiency criteria of

experimental research and recognizes that the concepts themselves are not applicable unless they are radically redefined.

Descriptions are not measurements so are not subject to experimental reliability criteria. Nevertheless, attempts can be made to improve the quality of descriptive research design by including some standard experimental techniques for assessing consistency such as observing different communicative events in the same setting, dual observation of the same events and applications of different methods of analysis on the same data. All these consistency checks can provide more confidence in the adequacy and value of the data and the way it has been analysed.

### **Triangulation**

Approaches to descriptive and analytic adequacy are in part subsumed by the notion of **triangulation** as defined by Cohen and Mannion (1989:269-286). Triangulation is the multiplication of the standpoints or the angles from which a research problem is examined to provide a more adequate description. Manion and Cohen suggest triangulation as a form of "in-built protection against error." Research bias is less likely to occur if different methods of data collection are used, different perspectives are made available and different methods of analysis are employed. However, there is also the danger of being so eclectic that the research design has no particular focus. A different kind of triangulation (op cit:269) occurs when qualitative analysis is presented along side quantitative analysis, allowing the contrast of more than one standpoint.

In the final analysis the efficiency of descriptive research largely depends on the adequacy of the design of the model for analysing the discourse. This can be judged by attempts to build objectivity, clarity, economy, coherence, and adequacy of argumentation into a model for analysing discourse.

### **Discourse Analysis**

A model that allows discourse to be analysed non-pedagogically at an initial stage is required. Many observation systems were designed for monocultural teacher training programmes that inevitably build pedagogical assumptions into the categories of analysis. For inter-cultural analysis it is important to set aside any such assumptions. While no model of analysis can claim to be neutral, or devoid of theoretical assumptions, a discourse model can be neutral as far as pedagogy is concerned.

Secondly, a rigorous model that is susceptible to efficient definition of elements of structure is needed. A developed version of the Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) rank-scale model has been considered most appropriate for this stage of analysis. It was chosen because it has been developed and critically assessed in terms of structural efficiency from many different angles since 1975. (see Coulthard, 1977, Barton, 1980, Berry, 1980a, Coulthard & Montgomery(Eds), 1981, Sinclair & Brazil,1982, Coulthard (Ed), 1987 & 1992,

McCarthy, 1991, Tsui, 1994.) In addition, Willis, in Coulthard 1987 & 1992 provides a model for approaching language teaching discourse at a later stage of analysis.

Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) proposed a model for the structure of discourse based on a rank scale of act, move, exchange, transaction and lesson. The rank scale was based on a principal of Hallidayan linguistics in which "each rank above has a structure which can be expressed in terms of the units next below" (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975:20). The first three ranks are considered relevant to any style of discourse, not just the teaching exchanges they were originally derived from.

As a rankscale model it allows discourse to be dealt with at different levels of delicacy. Firstly as an act, secondly, as an element of exchange structure, and thirdly, as an exchange in a longer sequence. At each level the element of structure can be defined in terms of higher and lower rank elements, by contrast and comparison to other elements of the same rank and in its own right. The definitions of elements of structure are not pedagogical.

### **Alternative Models**

Allwright and Bailey (1991:12) refer to a "proliferation of tools" for analyzing classroom interaction. They provide a detailed overview of important models of analysis (op cit.: 5-6 and 202-221), from the category systems of Flanders (1970) and Moskowitz (1971) to Frohlich et al's (1985) categories for a "communicative" era.

An inventory of categories of the type developed by Flanders (1960) and Moskowitz (1968) provides a useful inventory for describing many teachers' and students' behaviours. For example Flander's interaction analysis is able to evaluate the extent to which teachers use direct or indirect influence over students, how far students initiate talk etc. This kind of system is of particular use in situations where it has already been decided what it is worth paying attention to. For example observation systems based on pre-determined categories could be useful for training teachers in a particular style of teaching.

There are several reasons why a category system is not appropriate for intercultural description. Firstly, although the categories themselves may be very pertinent to language teaching, they may not represent what is important or salient in a particular context. They oblige the analyst to be too specific too soon. If the purpose of a study is to discover what is salient and then analyze it, a fixed inventory of predetermined categories would not assist this process. The categories would control the analysis by highlighting behaviours from the list of categories from a mono-cultural context rather than generating a description of what is salient in the data.

Secondly the observation systems tend to be over-complex for initial stages of analysis. The COLT system of Allen, Frohlich and Spada (1984 & 1985) has 48 categories just in



part A. In addition, the system is quantitative, using real time analysis. By enumerating and timing behaviours, a general trend of behaviour can be mapped out, but it becomes all too easy to end up judging or criticizing a lesson in terms of quantities of desirable or undesirable behaviours rather than describing the lesson in its own terms. The COLT system aims at assessing the extent to which lessons are "communicative". The reason for not using a model that assesses "communicativeness" was that this would have provided an analysis only in terms of the values of the method, but not in terms of the teachers' own values in their own social context.

Fanselow (in Fine 1988) presents a comprehensive and coherent alternative model for describing communication both inside and outside the classroom. He emphasizes five characteristics of communication (p65) : the source and target of the communication, move type, medium, use and content. At the level of move type the choices of moves (structure, solicit, respond and react (based on Bellack,1966) are not dissimilar to Sinclair and Coulthard's I-R-F exchange structure.

While Fanselow's non-judgemental model would clearly be adaptable to the kind of research outlined here, his model is mainly designed to provide teachers with a means of exploring their own teaching in terms of communication as an essential prerequisite to attempting self-improvement. The principle of description before considering change is retained as a key principle for this research model.

On the purely linguistic level Fanselow's model does not have the delicacy of analysis demonstrated in the Sinclair and Coulthard rank-scale model. For example, the moves are defined by Fanselow in very general terms.

*Any communications that do not fit into any of these categories and comment on what has happened are considered reacting moves. (P 61)*

Classroom analysis based on the Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson (1974) model, emphasizing the structure of participation and the management of turns in classroom interaction is also highly relevant to this research. This approach also provides a different means of applying a non-pedagogical model for analysing communication to classroom discourse. (See Allwright 1980)

When research is carried out in a different cultural context, it is all the more important to avoid imposing a framework of analysis which prejudices which categories are important. Allwright and Bailey (op cit.:12) conclude that "many researchers, concerned over the validity of category systems, over the problem that they necessarily have to prejudice what is worth paying attention to ..... have turned to transcriptions of recorded classroom events as their primary data base".

## Communication in Context : Independence and Sensitivity

While pedagogical theory has deliberately been excluded from the initial intercultural analysis, a discourse model is not neutral in that it is derived from a theory of communication in context with its own assumptions which must be made explicit. In spite of the many references to classroom discourse, it should be noted that the Sinclair and Coulthard discourse model at exchange level is not context bound. It does not specify who can use which elements of exchange structure. Neither does it define the setting where the interaction takes place. The initial analysis refers only to the immediate context of discourse, considering that a model for the analysis of discourse that can at first achieve a measure of independence from a situational setting provides a more neutral approach to any set of data. Sinclair (In Coulthard 1992:88) argues that "the need for a level of discourse, where the higher patterns of language can be described without reference to any particular social use, is fairly obvious".

An attempt at an initially context-free structural analysis at exchange level is an important stage in the research approach because to suggest that an analysis was dependent on a wider context would imply that every situation was unique and beyond meaningful comparison, but the approach also needs to be what Sacks et al (1974:9) have called context-sensitive to provide a solid basis for the interpretation of sets of data in particular domains. The way a model can be applied to the teaching domain without depending on it is a reflection of its sensitivity to context.

A Discourse model should be sensitive to the tenor of the situation (the tenor of the discourse being defined as the status and roles accepted by the participants in the interaction in any given context). I have argued that the status of the participants in the exchange is indissociable from the interpretation of the structure of the exchange itself, but that the basic underlying structure I - R - (F) is still recognizable at a primary level of analysis that attempts to be precontextual. In sample 1 a precontextual analysis of an I -R -F structure at exchange level is independent of any conclusion about the roles of the teacher and student.

Sample 1		
T	Do you think that his wife agreed to live in this villa or not ? Yes, ya Mohannah..	I
s	Yes, she did.	R
T	Yes, she did.	F

### The Context of Situation and Exchange Structure

At this stage it is important to discuss in more detail how far the context of situation is

relevant to the notion of exchange structure, because the ultimate objective of the model is to say something about the method-in-use in a particular setting. The theoretical premises of communication in context will now be discussed in some detail. The work of Halliday (1979 & 1989) and Hymes (1971 & 1980) will be central to this discussion.

Halliday (1989:4) defines his "social-semiotic perspective" in terms of the study of "sign systems" which he calls the study of meaning in its most general sense. Within this perspective he goes on to discuss the context of situation and the context of culture, which is defined by Halliday in terms of "networks of relationships".(p4) In Halliday's view, "we can define a culture as a set of semiotic systems, a set of systems of meaning, all of which interrelate."(p4) From this perspective "language is understood in its relationship to social structure" and he argues that,

*The social dimension seems particularly significant- and it is the one that has been most neglected in discussions of language in education. Learning is above all a social process.... (p5)*

Halliday goes on to underline the very close relationship between the meaning we assign to language and its social context.

*Knowledge is transmitted in social contexts, through relationships, like those of parent and child, or teacher and pupil, or classmates, that are defined in the value systems and ideologies of the culture and the words that are exchanged in these contexts get their meaning from activities in which they are embedded, which again are social activities with social agencies and goals. (p5)*

Citing the work of Malinowski on narratives, Halliday emphasizes the interpersonal dimension of the context of situation. He demonstrates that the act of narration itself contributes to the cultural dimension of group solidarity. Hence the interpersonal setting was not irrelevant even when a story was being told. Halliday (op cit.:8) concludes that "all language must be understood in its context of situation".

Whereas I have argued above that there is a level of analysis that remains independent of a context of situation, and that there are advantages in suspending the intrusion of context into the analysis, there is no intention of disputing the fact that, at the level of interpretation of language data, the context is indispensable and needs to be made explicit. Halliday links the context of situation to the text through "a systematic relationship between the social environment on the one hand, and the functional organization of language on the other"(p11). He outlines three features of the context of situation in its relation to the text itself. (p12) They provide an insight into how text and context can be operationalized in research that analyses the structure of interaction in context.

<b>The context of Situation</b> Halliday 1989:12
The FIELD of discourse - <i>what is happening, what the participants are engaged in.</i>
The TENOR of discourse - <i>participants, roles, statuses , including temporary and permanent roles.</i>
The MODE of discourse - <i>the part the language is playing : rhetoric, function, channel, medium, purpose, effect, etc.,</i>

The third category is the least satisfactory as it appears to include too many different features of context; it is then useful to refer to Hymes (1969) for a more operational set of categories. Hymes (1969 in Halliday, 1989:9) includes the setting, the participants, the intent and the effect of the communication, key (levels of formality and spontaneity), and the norms of interaction in his notion of context.

In discussion of the theory of language teaching, Hymes has mainly been referred to for his ideas on communicative competence (1971) which has led to changes in the views on the language that students needed to learn. Hymes himself also applied his ideas to the educational context in some detail, his papers on this subject being gathered in one volume of "Ethnolinguistic Essays in Language and Education" (1980). The need to view classrooms as social contexts like any other contexts in which communication takes place with their own regularities of linguistic behaviour structured in terms of contextual features is also central to Hymes' philosophy. Commenting on Habermas' ideal of "unrestricted communication" Hymes (1980:42) underlines the existence of structure in social situations.

*It is not possible to envisage viable social life without structure in the sense at least of shared understandings of rights and duties, norms of interactions, grounds of authority, and the like. Even the most free conversational situation , if there is taking of turns, begins inherently to show elements of restrictive structure.(p42)*

Hymes argues that, as "appropriateness" is a universal of speech, the "inherent presence of a principle of structure" is indisputable.(p49) If we accept this view, it is clear that structure cannot be separated from ethnographic inquiry.

*Ethnography is inquiry that begins with recognition that one is at work in situations that are, indeed, massively prestructured, but prestructured by the history and ways of those among whom one inquires. Linguistic inquiry is hence inextricably related to interpretation of codes.(p74)*

Hymes' notion of linguistic routine (op cit.:2) is also relevant to the structure of discourse. Routines refer to the "sequential organization , what follows what, either on the part of a single individual or in interchange between more than one"

## Purpose and Structure

An important aspect of the context of situation for classroom research is the speaker's purpose. In practical terms this can only be observed in the interpretation of the effect of a speaker's contribution. The purpose is inferred from the regular effects that a certain type of exchange contribution can be seen to have.

## Context as a Dynamic Course of Events

Van Dijk (1977:191) balances this view of structure and regularity in social interaction, with a reminder that context is dynamic. He points out that contexts have different states and that a context is itself part of "a course of events". In Van Dijk's formulation a context is a dynamic set of points of time, places and people with their knowledge and beliefs.

Situations change in time, and, as time itself is part of the context, this also changes the context itself. In schools locations range from the narrow location of the classroom to the wider institution location of the instruction which is itself part of the ever changing world beyond the institution. The people themselves are a dynamic aspect of the context. Classes can vary in size, sex, dress. Institutional personalities beyond the classroom can also influence the behaviour of those inside it. In Qatari schools headmasters patrol the corridors with a stick. This has an impact on the behaviour inside the room. All these factors suggest that the analysis of discourse must avoid implying that discourse is a static, fixed entity that can be frozen for analysis. The claim is rather that regular patterns which are relatively stable within an evolving socio-cultural setting underlie dynamic discourse.

## Conclusions

*This article has outlined an ethnographic approach to research involving different techniques of describing and analysing intercultural communication. It has proposed a two stage approach involving pre-pedagogical analysis of classroom communication followed by a discussion of method-in-use. A research model incorporating ethnographic and experiential principles has been described and key efficiency criteria of the model have been outlined. The choice of techniques for analysing communication has been discussed followed by an explanation of the principles of researching intercultural communication underlying the techniques.*

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Manuscript received: September 25, 1995

Published: December 25, 1995