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Power in the Classroom – Linguistic Means of Expressing It

SUMMARY

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BRAŞOV, 2024

The topic of this research is the concept of power and how it is linguistically expressed in classroom discourse. The main objectives are to identify and classify the power strategies used in the classroom by both teachers and students and to analyse the way in which they are realised verbally. Starting from recordings made in the school where I teach, I provide a classification of the teachers' and students' power using as the criterion the aim and intensity of the strategies they resort to in order to gain power.

1. The structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided into two main sections: the theoretical section (chapters 1 and 2) and the data analysis section (chapters 4, 5 and 6). Chapter 3 describes the research methodology. Chapters 4 and 5 focus on the teacher's power strategies, while chapter 6 analyses the students' power strategies. At the end of the study I present the results.

Chapter 1 deals with different approaches to power in the literature. It includes a broad definition of social power and presents the two main views on power, namely power seen as domination and power seen as persuasion. The former type is understood as the authority of certain institutions upon people; among the studies analysing power from this perspective mention is made of Dahl's (1957) and French and Raven's (1959). The latter type is connected to language and it focuses on strategies of power enacted in discourse. This category includes studies belonging to Foucault (1980) or Scott (2001). Three of the most inspiring power theories are presented, namely Foucault's, Fairclough's and van Dijk's theory. As far as the different types of power are concerned various classifications have been made: social vs. personal/individual power; coercive vs. persuasive/manipulative power; institutional power (medical, legal, academic power); reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, referent power, expert power (according to French and Raven (1959). Other researchers distinguish between elementary forms of power (force, manipulation, signification, legitimation) and developed forms of power (domination, counteraction to domination, interpersonal power) (J. Scott 2001). The final part of the chapter presents the relation between power and language, discussing linguistic ways of expressing power, politeness, impoliteness, speech acts, directives, control acts, humour and evaluative language; and how they are applied in the analysis.

Chapter 2 narrows down the research describing power in classroom interaction. It starts with a general description of classroom discourse, including its main characteristics and reviewing significant studies on this topic: Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), Mehan (1979), Cazden (2001), Christie (2002), Arminen (2005), Walsh (2006), Rymes (2008), Pitsoe and Letseka (2013), Brooks (2015), Oppelt (2020), Miricescu and Butănescu-Volanin (2023), Dan (2023) etc. The studies mentioned are discussed in terms of classroom interaction patterns and teacher-student relations.

The chapter also includes the main approaches to the analysis of power in classroom discourse, in terms of teacher-student power relations (Cummins 2009), (Wong 2015), (Fajar and Nadhillah 2023), in terms of power strategies (Pollard 1985), Gore (1995), (1998), (Manke 1997) and in terms of power interaction patterns (Wong 2015). Regarding power relation types, Cummins (2009) identifies coercive and collaborative relations in the classroom whereas Wong (2015) distinguishes

between power conflicts and power sharing ones. Fajar and Nadhillah (2023) mention relationships of power and solidarity established by teachers with their students. As far as the power strategies are concerned, there are various types identified in the literature. I include here oppressive vs. repressive discourse strategies (Holmes and Stubbe 2014 [2003]) and direct vs. indirect discourse strategies (Manke 1997) as these are the ones relevant for this study. The power patterns identified in classroom interaction are: the teacher domination pattern, the power-sharing pattern and the student self-empowerment pattern (Wong 2015). The end of the chapter discusses the concept of resistance defined as students' reaction to teacher's power (Manke 1997), (Alpert 1991), (Kumaravadivelu 1999).

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology, the research purpose, the research questions, the hypothesis and the specific objectives which guided the research. The two main methods Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Conversation Analysis (CA) which are used for the data analysis are briefly presented followed by the description of the framework I used and the power strategies which I have identified. At the end, I depict the data collection process, the participants involved and the ethical issues which were taken into consideration. Data description and data transcription sections also provide further details.

Chapter 4 deals with the analysis of the data. I studied power in terms of the strategies used by the participants, namely teachers and students. For teachers there are two main types of strategies – power-asserting and power-mitigating. The former (a direct way of teachers' expressing and exercising power) analysed in this chapter is further classified into sub-strategies, namely: the use of criticism, sarcasm and irony, dissociation, giving orders, topic control, particular ways of addressing students. Each sub-strategy is analysed from a linguistic point of view.

Chapter 5 focuses on the opposite type of strategies, more exactly the teacher's power-mitigating strategies. These are: using inclusive 'we', using polite requests, using ISAs, avoiding direct naming, minimising requests by using quantifiers, seeking the students' approval, eliciting through questions, scaffolding, accepting students' opinions, correcting students unobtrusively, praising, acknowledging students' ideas/attribution, showing interest in students as people, using humour, apologising, expressing gratitude, observing students' learning pace, addressing students politely. These strategies diminish or soften the teachers' power, representing means of hiding or diffusing the teachers' power and, in this way, creating opportunities for students' empowerment. These sub-strategies are also discussed in terms of lexical realisations.

Chapter 6 includes the students' power strategies used in relation to their teachers (power-subverting and power-complying strategies) and in relation to their classmates (peer support and peer attack). The identified students' power-subverting strategies are: criticism, lack of interest, confrontation (including challenging the teacher's right to interpellate, correcting the teacher), interruption (using challenging questions, repetition, random answers or by prompting the teacher to act), disruptive behaviour. The students' power-complying strategies represent different ways of showing interest (in the teacher's explanations, in the subject, in note-taking, in answering the teacher's questions, in helping the teacher). The peer attack strategies include making demands of their peers and siding with the teacher. The examples analysed indicate that students comply to the

teachers' power (in most cases), but they can also subvert or contest the teachers' power (as a form of resistance).

The Conclusions offer the answers to the research questions related to power strategies in the class, presenting my personal contributions, some limitations of my study and further research directions.

2. Literature review

2. 1. The concept of power (general considerations)

This thesis focuses on classroom power and its linguistic realisations in classroom interaction. Broadly speaking, social power represents the capacity of one person to affect or to produce a particular effect on another person or group (van Dijk 2008). There are two main directions in researching social power: one which focuses on the corrective forms of the power of the state and its institutions ('the mainstream tradition'), and another one which focuses on the effects of power ('the second-stream tradition') (Scott 2001). The mainstream tradition of power research views power as domination, while the second-stream tradition views power as persuasion.

The existing studies on social power which influenced the present research are Foucault's (1980, 1981) and Fairclough's (2015 [1989]). In Foucault's view (1980), power is exercised and experienced rather than possessed; it exists in action and it circulates from one individual to another, manifesting itself into people's actions, attitudes or discourses. The author states that it is not necessarily important what power is or where it comes from, as the ways in which power is exercised and their effects are more important. Foucault brings a new perspective on the productive dimension of power, as it is not only negative, ruling, and dominating, but is also positive, productive, and creative (Foucault 1980).

Fairclough (2015 [1989]) analyses power relations in modern society focusing on the role of language in maintaining and changing them. Power is understood as a social element which is not necessarily unacceptable when considering it as the capacity to do things ('power to'). However, when approached as the capacity to dominate and to control other people ('power over'), power can be intolerable if it is not legitimate, or it has negative effects. In the category of 'power-over', Fairclough (2015 [1989]) further differentiates between two types of power, namely 'power in' discourse and 'power behind' discourse. Power in discourse is usually revealed in 'unequal encounters' between a more powerful participant and a less powerful one (such as classroom interaction). Power behind discourse is of a more hidden type but having a higher impact on shaping social order (Fairclough 2015 [1989], 27). Fairclough (2015 [1989]) also states that those with power have "the capacity to determine to what extent that power will be overtly expressed" noticing a decline in its the overt marking in recent years (Fairclough 2015 [1989], 97). He believes that nowadays power is expressed more and more covertly and indirectly (repressive power, which presupposes that one's status is minimised in order to gain the other's compliance) rather than overtly and blatantly (oppressive power).

The focus of the present thesis lies on 'power in' discourse, more specifically on how power is enacted and exercised in classroom discourse. From this perspective, power is analysed at a microlevel in teacher-student interaction.

2. 2. Power, politeness and impoliteness

Power is enacted and reproduced in language and without communication (spoken and/or written) power cannot be exercised and legitimated in society (van Dijk 2008, 64). In this research power is linguistically studied in terms of politeness and impoliteness, evaluative language, indirect speech acts.

Brown and Levinson's highly influential politeness theory states that "[l]ess powerful speakers are expected to be more polite, while more powerful speakers are allowed to be less polite" (Brown and Levinson 1987 [1978], 80). According to 'the face-saving theory of politeness', 'face' is understood as a public self-image; people can be expected to defend their faces if threatened in interaction, and, in defending their own, they might threaten others' face. Normally, it is in every participant's best interest to maintain each other's face. Hence, politeness can be understood as avoiding threatening the other's face. Brown and Levinson (1987 [1978]) distinguish between positive politeness which include specific strategies that minimise social distance and negative politeness which include strategies that maximise social distance.

Impoliteness is understood as doing a face-threatening act on purpose. Bousfield (2008) states that successful impoliteness occurs when the speaker's intention to offend is understood by the hearer. He proposes two main types, namely on record (explicit face attack) and off record impoliteness (indirect face attack via an implicature). Disrespect does not appear 'out of the blue', it must have been previously invoked and the impolite participant must have been sufficiently provoked before resorting to an impolite strategy (Bousfield 2008, 183).

Other studies which focus on the connection between politeness/impoliteness and power demonstrate that politeness can be used to compensate or to diffuse power (Holmes and Stubbe (2014 [2003]), Vine (2004)). Various studies state that politeness represents a way of claiming power (Ainsworth-Vaughn 1998) and that impoliteness is seen as a means to negotiate relationships, representing an attempt to exercise or to challenge power (Locher (2004) and Bousfield (2008)). Culpeper (2008) states that "impoliteness always involves power" and that both impoliteness and power can be managed in interaction. Possible reactions to impoliteness may be to challenge or to accept it and the same is valid for power. Power is a complex notion and politeness/impoliteness is only an aspect to be taken into consideration when analysing it. All the studies presented above conclude that powerful people tend to mitigate power by using politeness strategies, while less powerful ones tend to claim or to show power by resorting to impoliteness strategies.

In the data analysis, I use the concept of 'face' when talking about the teacher resorting to power-mitigating strategies in order to save the students' face or to prevent them from losing it. From the strategy of positive politeness, I identify in the data analysis the use of certain in-group identity markers, meant to reduce the distance between the teacher and the students and thus, to

soften power. Moreover, starting from the politeness strategy of seeking agreement, I have identified the power-mitigating strategy of seeking the students' agreement, as well as the use of inclusive 'we'. There are also further negative politeness strategies to which I resort, namely being conventionally indirect (indirect speech acts) and apologising.

Related to the impoliteness strategies, I have identified as power-asserting strategies dissociation (when teachers differentiate themselves from the students using the pronoun 'I' vs. 'you'), sarcasm and criticism, and the students' lack of interest and interruption by using challenging questions. In conclusion in my analysis of classroom discourse, I mostly apply Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness and Bousfield's theory of impoliteness.

2. 3. Power and evaluative language

As already mentioned, power can also be reflected through evaluative language (or evaluation). Evaluation has been defined either as an action performed in language, referred to as *stancetaking*. Stance is defined as "something that people actively engage in" (Englebretson 2007, 3). Other researchers view evaluation as a set of words and phrases which express appraisal. Of interest to this research is the theory developed by Martin and White (2005) who state that appraisal is concerned with how evaluation is used to negotiate social relations, what feelings and values are sourced in a text and how readers/speakers are aligned. Appraisal is divided into three domains – attitude (feelings, judgements of behaviour, evaluation of things), engagement (sourcing attitudes, engaging with the other voices in discourse) and graduation (amplifying feelings, blurring categories). In other words, adopting a certain attitude means evaluating, which can be more or less intense while the attitude may be the speaker's/writer's own or attributed to another source.

What is evaluated in class are students' answers, attitudes, or behaviour which are assessed by means of all the three subareas presented above. Thus, teachers express affect in terms of happiness or unhappiness or satisfaction/dissatisfaction triggered by students' behaviour. Alternatively, they can assess a student (in terms of answers or behaviour) by resorting to a more formal way, namely judgement, be it social esteem or sanction. When praising a student (for their answer or support), teachers resort to engagement expand: attribute-acknowledge or to engagement contract: proclaim-endorse. Students also appraise the teacher, the lesson, the activity, their classmates resorting to attitude: affect - satisfaction/dissatisfaction, attitude judgment (both subtypes) and engagement. Both teachers and students grade their assessments. Power is expressed through evaluative language; thus, judgements (of others' behaviour) and appreciations (opinions regarding people or things) represent forms of power.

2. 4. Power in classroom interaction

When one thinks of power in the classroom, the most common belief is that the teacher is the one who has it. The term 'power' is usually associated with negative and unequal human relationships ('power-over') rather than with positive aspects ('power-with'). But power represents more than teachers' authority and control. Van Dijk claims that the power teachers use to educate children should not be understood as inherently bad as this is a legitimate exercise of power (van

Dijk 2008, 17). In the field of education, van Dijk (2008) introduces the idea of 'symbolic power' possessed by the teachers who control (persuade, manipulate) the students' minds ('mind control') in order to make them learn; symbolic power is viewed as control over symbolic resources such as knowledge or education. In other words, teachers are endowed with symbolic power which derives from academic power/knowledge (van Dijk 2008, 12-14). Fairclough (2010) views education as "a key domain of linguistically mediated power" (Fairclough 2010, 529).

There are different approaches to the analysis of power in the classroom, such as: technical (referring to techniques ensuring a proper balance between teacher and student power), organizational (analysing power at macrolevel, how it functions in school as an institution), ideological (revealing racist practices in school and providing alternative pedagogies that change classroom power relations), empowering (shifting the balance of power in educational systems and institutions) (Gore 1995, 77). The present analysis is included in the category of empowering approaches to classroom discourse as it views power mainly as a means to enhance students' power, rather than control them.

Classroom discourse, a particular type of institutional discourse, has certain features specific to teacher-student interaction. Thus, classroom interaction is characterised by a three-part structure called the initiation, response, feedback system (or IRF in Sinclair and Coulthard's terms, 1975) or the initiation, response, evaluation system (or IRE in Mehan's terms, 1979), both used interchangeably in the literature. These three interactional moves correspond to the participants in the interaction, as following: initiation is done by the teacher when asking a question, the response is given by the student, and the feedback or evaluation comes from the teacher. As such, the teacher has more speaking time and that is why a large share of the talking time is taken by the teachers.

Classroom discourse has been analysed from an interdisciplinary perspective, combining notions from the field of education with applied linguistics, sociology or psychology (Mehan (1979), Cazden (2001) Seedhouse, (2010)) and different theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches have been used (ethnomethodology, CDA, CA etc.). Classroom discourse represents more than simple interaction (Wodak and Chilton, (2005)) as it reflects other social issues such as power, inequity, racism (Kumaravadivelu 1999).

In my analysis of classroom power I consider the IRF/E system when I discuss different types of interruptions, the feedback/evaluation sequence when I study teachers' strategies (such as praising, correcting unobtrusively, criticising) and I also use Mehan's (1979) phases of a lesson (the opening phase, the instructional phase, the closing phase) to contextualise the examples. I draw on Mehan's (1979) topically related sets to comment on various topics of discussion in a lesson and resort to the notions of peer solidarity and support (Cazden 2001) to discuss student-student power strategies.

Most studies on power in classroom discourse focus on interaction patterns and on the teacher-student relationship. Power has been analysed in terms of teacher-student relations and strategies (Cummins (2009), Wong (2015), Fajar and Nadhillah (2023); Manke (1997)) or power distribution patterns (Wong 2015).

Cummins (2009) states that teachers can choose to resist the coercive relation of power by changing the way “they orchestrate classroom interactions” (Cummins 2009, 262). He identifies two types of power relations: coercive and collaborative. Collaborative power leads to empowerment which he defines as “*the collaborative creation of power*” (Cummins 2009, 263) (emphasis in the original). Therefore, teachers may decide to reinforce the existing coercive power relations or to challenge them by promoting collaborative power relations which eventually lead to students’ empowerment; another way of enhancing students’ power is by allowing them to express their identity. Cummins’ (2009) coercive and collaborative power relations are reflected in the teacher’s power-asserting and power-mitigating strategies I identify.

Wong (2015) identifies two major types of power relations in the classrooms, namely: power conflicts and power sharing between the teachers and the students. Power conflicts reflect both antagonistic and resistant forms of power, being reproduced in the roles teachers and students play and in the strategies they employ. The conflicts between teachers and students arise from their different interests and aims. For instance, a teacher’s purpose can be teaching his/her students the curriculum, whereas students can be interested in private matters which have nothing to do with school and learning. In such a situation both teachers and students exercise power to influence the other and to achieve their own purposes. This may further affect the transmission of knowledge and students’ learning. In contrast, power sharing is characterised by teachers’ and students’ cooperation. Although teachers generally have more power than students, power sharing creates opportunities for students to exercise power. Bringing new practices into the classroom, recognising students’ ownership over their ideas, making them active participants in their learning process are all methods of empowering students.

Fajar and Nadhillah (2023) analyse power relations in online learning. They focus on how teachers managed to maintain good social relations with their students during the Covid-19 Pandemic. The teacher either asserted his/her power pointing to the unequal social relations between teachers and students or showed solidarity with students’ personal problems (caused by the pandemic) revealing, in this way, equal social relations (Fajar and Nadhillah 2023, 63).

They identify symmetrical and asymmetrical power relations which occur in and out of the classrooms and focus on two main types of teacher-student relations: a relationship of power and one of solidarity. They state that the teacher uses politeness strategies at the beginning of an online lesson “to sway the students’ emotions and convince them to accept him [the teacher] as a member of their group” (Fajar and Nadhillah 2023, 69), referring to it as ‘soft power’. The teacher constructs solidarity by resorting to personal experiences and by showing empathy for the students. My data also reveal that teachers were supportive and showed empathy towards their students during the pandemic.

In my research, I use the notions of teacher’s legitimate and expert power, and the concept of students’ empowerment which can occur when the teacher allows students to express their own identity as Cummins (2009) states. I build on Wong’s (2015) categories of power sharing and power conflicts relationships to provide my own classification of power strategies.

In terms of power strategies, Manke's (1997) study was also a starting point for my analysis. She states that teachers frequently disguise their authority using indirect discourse strategies, such as: politeness formulas, ISAs, inclusive 'we', humour, praising desired behaviour rather than criticising undesired behaviour, stating general principles of behaviour instead of scolding, correcting students' behaviour unobtrusively, asking students' opinion and offering them choices. As far as the politeness formulas are concerned, they can include: using ISAs, using statements showing preference, using requests (with 'please, thank you, excuse me') and conditional clauses (Manke 1997, 77-78). Some teachers use indirect strategies when it comes to correcting students' behaviour, and direct strategies when referring to students' learning. Among the direct strategies the use of control statements and of threats, the distinction between 'I' – the teacher and 'you' – the students, and criticism are included.

Power circulates in the classroom, but it is not exercised equally by all participants; most instances of exercising power occur between teacher and students, rather than between particular students. Wong (2015) identifies three modalities of power distribution: Pattern I – Teacher domination, Pattern II – Relatively balanced opportunities for power sharing, Pattern III – Student self-empowerment. Her model is adapted from Webster, Beveridge, and Reed's (1996) framework (Wong 2015, 15).

Pattern I – Teacher domination is characterised by teachers exercising more power than students. There are three basic features of this pattern: teachers' strict implementation of classroom rules, inflexible adherence to lesson plans and students' obedience to these rules and teaching plan. This pattern is characterised by teacher domination and student disempowerment; teachers act as rule- and textbook-enforcers and they use manipulation strategies to manage students' behaviour and teaching. Students act as rule- and learning-followers, adopting a strategy of compliance. This pattern leads to students' disempowerment by reducing their opportunity and capability to manage their learning. Teachers' domination enhances their coercive power in classroom teaching. On the whole, this pattern reveals an imbalanced, unequal teacher-student power distribution in which teachers dominate classroom management and teaching.

Pattern II – Relatively balanced opportunities for power sharing is characterised by power being shared almost equally between teachers and students. The main features are teachers' facilitation of students' learning through appropriate support and guidance and increased student engagement in and responsibility for their learning. Teachers act as learning-facilitators and adopt a strategy of intentionally giving-power to students. This is a situational type of power, different from the positional or personal type exercised in pattern I. Students are given more opportunities to exercise power, they become learning-partners; greater student involvement results in more student empowerment which is reflected in student-centered teaching.

Pattern III – Student self-empowerment is characterised by a high degree of student power and a low degree of teacher power. Its features are minimal teacher involvement in student learning and students' acquisition of self-management skills. Teachers act as learning-assistants and resort to a strategy of passive support, allowing students the space and freedom to learn through experience and collaboration. In consequence, students play the role of masters of learning and use a self-

governance strategy, taking control of and responsibility for their entire learning process. All these factors lead to student self-empowerment (for further details on the three power distribution patterns see (Wong 2015, 47-84)).

Wong (2015) concludes that teacher-student power relationships are a “reflection of multileveled intertwined interactions” (Wong 2015, 85) being influenced by various factors, players and forces as reflected either in student empowerment and teacher-student collaboration, or in student disempowerment as a result of teacher domination. An interesting observation, though, is the fact that student empowerment and disempowerment usually coexist in all three power patterns and that these patterns can alternate in a single class.

Power has been frequently related to the notion of resistance, defined as contest or struggle for power. In the context of the classroom, students’ resistance can also be interpreted as their oppositional response. Kumaravadivelu (1999) mentions an example of passive resistance when students do not participate in class discussions due to the teaching method.

Students’ strategies of subverting power may refer to: students being unwilling to work on the task set by the teacher (pretended misunderstandings, wiggling silently, withdrawing attention, commenting loudly or silently, moving around the classroom), students rejecting the teacher’s assumptions, students assuming roles that conflict with teacher expectations or students taking over the floor (Manke 1997, 107-117). The teacher may sanction such behaviour or ignore it. In language classes, for instance, teachers can cut off students’ talk by not responding at all to what is said, by insisting that correct vocabulary be used, or by responding to grammatical form not content. Alpert (1991) is interested in subtle forms of resistance such as alienation from learning, rejection of the contents and skills taught, and criticism of the knowledge and values transmitted by the school. She further identifies modes of resistance such as: reluctant participation (silence and mumbling) and arguing (disagreeing with the teacher or as a potential distraction to learning) (Alpert 1991, 354-356). Some of the factors which influence student resistance in the classroom are the teaching approach, students’ dissatisfaction with classroom instruction, the gap between adolescent culture etc.

Other forms of students’ resistance are off-task behaviours which are divided into nondisruptive and disruptive ones; the former refer to mind wandering and daydreaming, refusal to participate in class activities, failure to complete homework assignments, absence or tardiness, cheating on tests while the latter include disruptive talking, interrupting, clowning, being discourteous, bullying, fighting, vandalising etc.) (Cangelosi 2014, 329, 356).

In my analysis I identified students’ power-subverting strategies which can be interpreted as a form of students’ resistance and off-task chatting (as a form of disruptive behaviour).

3. Research methodology

3. 1. The research purpose

The main purpose of this research is to analyse how power is reflected in classroom discourse and how it is linguistically realised. In order to conduct the analysis, I have studied power in terms of the strategies used by both teachers and students to exercise power and I have classified them into two main categories – teachers' and students' strategies. Next, I have further subdivided teachers' strategies into power-asserting and power-mitigating strategies and students' strategies into power-subverting and power-complying strategies. For the students, I have analysed both their interactions with the teachers and with their peers.

The classification has been data-driven; after analysing the transcripts of the lessons, I have identified examples related to each strategy and I have grouped them according to the criteria presented above.

3. 2. The research questions

The research is guided by three main questions which are narrowed down to subsidiary questions. They are presented below:

1. What power strategies are employed by the teachers in classroom interaction?

Subsidiary questions:

1. a. What power-asserting strategies are employed by the teachers in classroom interaction?

1. b. What power-mitigating strategies are employed by the teachers in classroom interaction?

2. What power strategies are employed by the students in classroom interaction?

Subsidiary questions:

2. a. What power-subverting strategies are employed by the students in their interaction with their teacher?

2. b. What power-complying strategies are employed by the students in their interaction with their teacher?

2. c. What strategies are employed by the students in their interaction with their classmates?

3. How are these strategies expressed from a linguistic perspective?

Subsidiary questions:

3. a. How are the teacher's power-asserting strategies linguistically expressed?

3. b. How are the teacher's power-mitigating strategies linguistically expressed?

3. c. How are the students' power-subverting strategies linguistically expressed?

3. d. How are the students' power-complying strategies linguistically expressed?

3. 3. The hypothesis

The initial hypothesis of this research is that the teachers mitigate their legitimate power in order to reduce the social distance, while students tend to claim power in order to assert their identities; teachers resort to a wider range of the power-asserting strategies which are

counterbalanced by the power-mitigating strategies they choose to use. As far as the students are concerned, my assumption was that they use fewer strategies than teachers and, most of the times, these are power-complying strategies. I also assumed that when students subvert the teacher's power, they do so in a more covert manner.

3. 4. The specific objectives

In order to classify the strategies to which the teachers and students resort, the following specific objectives have been considered:

- a. identify all the instances in the corpus that illustrate the teachers' and students' power asserting/mitigating/subverting/complying-strategies
- b. analyse how these power strategies are realised by resorting to the same analytical pattern (context, linguistic realisation) and relying on linguistic markers such as: lexical choices, syntactic structures, turn-taking
- c. classify these examples according to the users and type of power strategy used
- d. provide a classification of the teachers' and students' strategies
- e. compare and describe the strategies used by the teachers and students

The results of the analysis conducted to reach these objectives represent my personal contribution brought to the field of researching ways of expressing power in classroom discourse; both the data and some of the strategies identified provide new approaches to the field of classroom power relations.

3. 5. Theoretical framework

3. 5. 1. Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA has been defined as "a theory and method analysing the way that individuals and institutions *use* language" (Richardson 2007, 1) (emphasis in the original). CDA studies how relations of power, dominance and social inequality are reflected in discourse.

There are various ways of doing CDA taking into consideration the different methodologies existing in the literature (Fairclough 1992), (van Dijk 1993), (Wodak 2001)¹. The dissertation relies on Fairclough's approach to CDA. He identifies three stages in CDA: the text description, the interpretation of the relationship between text (which refers to both written and spoken discourse) and interaction, the explanation of the relationship between interaction and social context (Fairclough 2015 [1989]).

At the level of description, a text should be analysed according to the vocabulary, grammar and the textual structures it contains. Fairclough (2015 [1989]) further describes how a researcher should analyse a text at the vocabulary level; thus, he mentions the experiential values of words

¹ Fairclough (1992) states that the task of CDA is to identify how relations of domination and inequalities existing in neo-capitalist societies are produced and reproduced in discourse. Van Dijk (1993) develops a socio-cognitive framework pointing to the connection between social systems and social cognition. Wodak (2001) proposes a discourse-historical approach, focusing on intertextuality, and integrating background information in the analysis of discourse.

(the classification schemes which are drawn upon, whether there are ideologically-contested words, whether there is 'rewording' or 'overwording', the ideologically significant meaning relations between words, i.e. synonymy, hyponymy, antonymy), the relational values of words (euphemistic expressions, formal/informal words), the expressive values of words (persuasive language), and the metaphors used (for further details see (Fairclough 2015 [1989], 129)).

At the level of grammar, the experiential values of the grammatical features are mentioned, (such as predominant types of process and participant: actions, events, attributions, unclear agency if present, nominalisations, active/passive sentences, positive/negative sentences), followed by the relational values of the grammatical features (modes: declarative, grammatical question, imperative; features of relational modality and the use of pronouns 'you' and 'we'), the expressive values (features of expressive modality), and the link between sentences (logical connectors, coordination/subordination in complex sentences, means for referring inside or outside the text) (for further details see (Fairclough 2015 [1989], 130)).

As far as the textual structures are concerned, an analyst should look for interactional conventions (whether there are ways in which one participant controls the turns of others) and for larger-scale structures the text has (dialogue/monologue) (Fairclough 2015 [1989], 130).

Fairclough (2015 [1989]) differentiates between experiential, relational and expressive values. Experiential values refer to the text producer's experience including knowledge and beliefs. Relational values point to social relationships enacted in a text, while expressive values are related to the producer's evaluation of reality (they refer to subjects and social identities) (Fairclough 2015 [1989], 130).

The thesis relies on these concepts advanced by Fairclough; thus, the first stage, the text description, is reflected in the analysis conducted for the teachers' and students' choices of words, their formal and informal values as well as their expressive ones while at the grammar level I have analysed modality, pronouns, sentence types, use of negation, all connected mainly to relational values (for both teachers and students) but also to experiential (mainly for teachers) and expressive ones (mainly for students).

The second stage of the procedure is the interpretation of a text. According to Fairclough, interpretation is based on background knowledge and common sense assumptions, part of what he calls 'members' resources' (Fairclough 2015 [1989], 154). Interpretation is a combination of what is in the text with the interpreter's own contributions, the 'members' resources' he/she resorts to; these resources are also referred to as 'interpretative procedures' (Fairclough 2015 [1989], 155). There are six levels of interpretation: surface of utterance, meaning of utterance, local coherence, text structure and 'point', situational context, intertextual context. Each level draws upon specific interpretative procedures. As such, when interpreting the surface of an utterance, the analyst looks at phonology, grammar and vocabulary; for the meaning of an utterance, notions from semantics and pragmatics are taken into consideration; for the local coherence, notions related to cohesion and also pragmatics are drawn upon; the text structure involves aspects of schemata, i.e. specific patterns of discourse types. Finally, when interpreting context, the analyst looks at the situational context, which involves social order representations, and at the intertextual context which refers to

the 'interactional history', to the previous discourses which the current one is connected to (Fairclough 2015 [1989], 156-158). The second stage advanced by Fairclough (2015 [1989]) is reflected in the thesis as I am both a researcher and a teacher, whose classes have been recorded. My interpretation of the text relies on my practical experience and on my distancing myself from the data I analyse. The interpretation of the examples is based on my teaching experience and my informal conversations with my colleagues at school.

The third stage of the procedure is explanation, which refers to relations of power and domination. At this stage, discourse is investigated according to three levels of social organization: the societal level, the institutional level, and the situational level (Fairclough 2015 [1989], 173). The third level is mainly reflected in my thesis at the situational and institutional levels, as the thesis is a case study whose conclusions can be generalised for schools.

3. 5. 2. Conversation Analysis

CA points to a particular tradition of analytic work started in the early 1960s in California by the sociologist Harvey Sacks and his collaborators, such as Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson. A significant moment in the development of CA was Garfinkel's (1967) work; he proposes a new research method called *ethnomethodology*, which considers social order methodical and, therefore, is suitable when applied to conversation.

CA derives from sociology (including anthropology and psychology) and from linguistics. From the latter it takes the view according to which language is a structured system for the production of meaning, used primarily in communicative interaction. From the former, it takes the view that both communication and interaction are social practices. Hence, CA has been defined as "the study of talk produced in everyday situations of human interaction" (Popescu 2006, 32), the concept of naturally occurring utterances being a fundamental one. It starts from the assumption that ordinary conversation is a deeply, ordered, structurally organised phenomenon. The underlying principles are that only naturally occurring data should be analysed, that interaction is sequentially organised i.e. the function that an utterance actually performs depends on its sequential position and that context, meaning the prior and the next utterance, is of utmost importance.

Ten Have (1999) makes a distinction between *pure conversation analysis* which focuses on talk-in-interaction abstracted from any specific institutional context and *applied conversation analysis* which deals with typical practices of institution-specific interaction. Casual conversation has been contrasted with institutional talk, which is one of the areas to which CA has brought a significant contribution.

In my research I use applied CA and I rely on some of its principles, such as: the turn-taking system and the analysis of naturally occurring conversation. For the research I have recorded actual classes. The theoretical basis of my analysis is CDA but I also resort to theories and methods taken from CA and pragmatics (politeness and impoliteness, ISAs, humour, evaluative language) which I use to analyse to classroom interaction.

3. 6. Framework of analysis

My data analysis focuses on linguistic ways of expressing power strategies. I did not use any pre-existing taxonomy of power strategies. However, all the previously mentioned strategies employed by teachers and students helped me to develop my own power strategies classification. I resorted to concepts and classifications presented in the literature review in order to analyse the data. There were two particular studies which inspired me in devising my own analytical framework, namely Wong's (2015) power distribution patterns and Manke's (1997) discourse strategies. Starting from their ideas, I developed my analytical framework within which the abstract notion of power becomes concretely revealed through a linguistic analysis in terms of power strategies. I believe that the contributions I have made to the study of classroom power relations are the analysis of the data recorded in actual classes and the identification of the strategies used by teachers and students.

My research is a data-driven analysis; having gone through the data for several times, I first identified the main classes of strategies employed by teachers and by students; next, for each strategy I selected from the data all those instances which reflected it. For example, I have started with the teachers' power-asserting strategies and I have extracted all the exchanges in which the teachers asserted their power. Then, I have tried to classify the selected examples, which finally led to the sub-strategies I present in the study. In order to exemplify each strategy I have selected the most illustrative and interesting examples and for their analysis I have tried to follow the same pattern.

The first criterion in establishing the types of power strategies was the participants involved; thus, I identified teachers' and students' power strategies. My hypothesis was that teachers use power strategies to clearly express their power (I labelled them teachers' power-asserting strategies) and power strategies to diminish their power (or what I referred to as teachers' power-mitigating strategies). In terms of students' strategies, my hypothesis was that they use them to subvert the teacher's power (students' power-subverting strategies) or to comply with the teacher's power (students' power-complying strategies). During the analysis I identified strategies used by students when interacting with their own classmates; thus, I have identified peer support strategies and peer attack strategies (the latter including making demands and siding with the teacher). Starting from these general strategies I established further sub-types. It is important to mention that some strategies may intermingle.

3. 7. An example of analysis

This section illustrates an example extracted from the data and how it is interpreted in the analysis section. Thus, the analysis begins with a definition of the strategy, a brief context of the example and, then, the actual example as it appears in the data.

All the Romanian examples are accompanied by their English translations which are my own; in the examples from the English lessons there were some utterances in Romanian for which I have also provided a translation. The next stage in my analysis is the interpretation of the example which

includes some linguistic realisations specific to the strategy (if possible) and further commentaries. At the end of each example, a brief conclusion is drawn.

In the following section I provide an example of how I analysed the teacher's strategy of using inclusive 'we' as a power-mitigating strategy:

This strategy refer to the teachers' ability of positioning themselves at the same level with the students, including themselves in the learning process. As a result, this strategy induces the idea that both the teacher and the students have the same goal and they exercise the same level of power and effort in achieving that goal. From a linguistic point of view, the strategy is exclusively realised via the use of the inclusive personal pronoun 'we'. In other words, this strategy stands in opposition to a power-asserting strategy, i.e. dissociation, realised linguistically via the use of the personal pronouns 'I' and 'you', which shows a clear opposition between teachers and students and an imbalanced power distribution.

The data reveal many examples with inclusive 'we' which proves that the use of the pronoun in the first person plural is a common strategy in teaching. To illustrate this strategy, one example has been selected. The first five extracts are from all the three English classes. The teachers of English use this type of inclusion in different stages of the lesson.

This example is extracted from one of the English lessons and marks the transition to a new activity in which the students have to enlarge upon a certain topic using the future simple.

T₁: a:: now the second one. what do you think they will do there? so now we use the future. use the prompts. a::nd let's see.

The teacher gives an indication about how to solve the task (*so now we use the future*) and continues with an encouragement to start solving the task (*let's see*). These two utterances are expressed with inclusive 'we' and the short form of 'let us' which points to the fact that the teacher includes herself in the same category with the students, as if she is also solving the task alongside her students. On a closer look, the teacher may resort to the strategy of being inclusive in an attempt to soften the direct question (*what do you think they will do there?*) and the command (*use the prompts*) which represent power-asserting strategies. Therefore, it can be sustained that the power-asserting strategies are intermingled with power-mitigating strategies in the same sequence (even in one and the same sequence). This phenomenon points to the fact that teachers are sensitive to students' face.

3.8. Data

The data is made up of 10 audio-recorded lessons of English, Romanian literature, History, Chemistry, Biology and Music. They were recorded in two different school years due to the Covid-19 Pandemic: two lessons were recorded before the pandemic and the rest during the pandemic when hybrid lessons were held. After recording the classes, the material was transcribed verbatim using simple transcription conventions. The recordings were transcribed in Romanian and only the parts analysed are translated.

Lesson no.	Subject	Teacher	Grade	Class type		Recording date	Length of recording
				Face to face	Hybrid		
1	English	T ₁	9	✓		16.03.2021	34 min
2	English	T ₁	11	✓		16.03.2021	32 min 22s
3	English	T ₂	12	✓		19.03.2021	20 min 41s
4	English	T ₃	11	✓		20.01.2020	1h 28min 40s
5	Romanian literature	T ₄	10		✓	02.11.2020	28 min 51s
6	History	T ₅	5	✓		31.01.2020	44 min 33s
7	History	T ₅	10		✓	15.10.2020	25 min 27s
8	Chemistry	T ₆	10		✓	06.11.2020	20 min 53s
9	Biology	T ₇	10		✓	03.11.2020	33 min 14s
10	Music	T ₈	10		✓	13.10.2020	20 min 40s

Table 1. The description of the classes

3. 9. Participants

There are eight teachers (myself included) who participated in this research, 7 female and 1 male teachers, whose experience ranges from 10-30 years; they are all full-time and teach a variety of subjects to grades 5th – 12th in the same school.

The decision of recording different teachers and different school subjects was justified by my aim to have a wider range of subjects and a variety of grades. First, I approached teachers with whom I had a closer relationship (the other teachers of English like myself) and then I asked the others. I talked individually with each other, carefully explaining the objective of my analysis, i.e. to record their lesson and use those for my PhD thesis. I also explained to them how to record their lesson.

As far as the students are concerned, a number of 146 students participated in this research, their ages ranging from 11 to 17 years. They were students from lower (the 5th graders) and upper secondary school (the 9th grade, two 10th grades, two 11th grades, the 12th grade). They are mixed-abilities classes. All the students and the teachers are Romanians, English being a foreign language. I personally knew some of the students because I was their teacher, as well (I include here grades 11th, 10th, 5th); the other students were not familiar to me as I had not taught them and sometimes this represented an inconvenience when transcribing the recordings, not recognising their voices and not distinguishing them from one another.

3. 10. Ethical considerations

There are ethical issues to be considered when dealing with human participants in a research. As such, the research had to meet a number of stringent ethical requirements, among which the approval of The Committee for Ethics in Social and Human Research of Transilvania University of Braşov. To this end documents were submitted for evaluation: the approval request report, the

school headmaster's request and informed consent, the teachers' request for participation in the research and informed consent, the parental request for participation in the research and informed consent and the team members' agreement to keep the data regarding the research subjects confidential. The approval was issued with number 12398 on the 9th of October 2019.

I obtained all the participants' written consent from the school I recorded the lessons. I explained to the headmaster and the teachers the purpose of my research and I guaranteed confidentiality; each teacher received a copy of their transcribed lesson in case they wanted to modify something. Most teachers agreed with the original transcriptions, except one teacher who wanted some episodes excluded. The parents' consent was also needed because the students were underage. There were nine who did not want their children involved in the study (I did not ask for or receive any explanations). Their decision was respected and their children's contributions in class were excluded from the transcriptions.

All the participants were informed that they could withdraw from the research whenever they wanted, and that their participation was not conditioned by any kind of benefits and/or costs. For instance, students should not claim higher grades if they agree to participate and the teachers should not be prejudiced against the students who do not participate. To protect the participants' identities, I did not use their real names in the analysis. I have used symbols 'T' for teachers and 'S' for students accompanied by numbers in the order they appear in the data transcriptions.

4. Findings

This section summarises all the types of power strategies identified in the data (including the sub-types) and briefly explains them.

4. 1. Teachers' power-asserting strategies

As the name suggests, these strategies reveal an overt use of power. There are six sub-strategies of this kind, namely: criticism, sarcasm and irony, dissociation, orders, topic control, and particular ways of addressing students.

Criticism refers to teachers adopting a hostile attitude towards the students. Criticism is the most overt manner of expressing power This strategy appears several times in the data and it is intended, as the name suggests, to censure, to blame students for inappropriate behaviour, for not fulfilling a certain task etc.

Sarcasm and irony occur when teachers express contempt (sarcasm) or when they express the opposite of what they actually say (irony). This strategy is used as an indirect covert way of expressing criticism. The examples reveal that sarcastic remarks are used by teachers to sanction students' mistakes or behaviour and teachers resort to them when they are not satisfied with students' behaviour and performance.

Dissociation refers to the clear distinction that the teachers draw between themselves and the students. This is linguistically realised via the personal pronouns 'I' versus 'you'. This strategy points to a certain degree of superiority associated with the teachers' status, as the ones who possess more knowledge and power.

Another power-asserting strategy the teachers use in classroom is giving orders. They usually take an imperative form and can appear in instructions when teachers address the students more directly.

Topic control is another way of asserting power. It refers to those particular situations when students deviate the discussion and the teachers return to the main topic.

There are particular forms of addressing students identified in the data and some of them include derogatory terms.

4. 2. Teachers' power-mitigating strategies

These strategies diminish or diffuse the teacher's power and the sub-types are: using the inclusive 'we', using polite requests, ISAs, avoiding direct naming, minimising requests, seeking the students' approval, supporting the students (eliciting through questions, scaffolding), accepting students' opinions, correcting unobtrusively, expressing interest in students' personal opinions and validating their answers, praising, acknowledging students' ideas, showing interest in students as people (sometimes using small talk), using humour, apologising, expressing gratitude, observing students' learning pace, addressing students politely.

One of the most common power-mitigating strategy used by teachers in the classroom is being inclusive, i.e. the teachers position themselves at the same level with their students. This strategy is linguistically realised by the use of the personal pronoun 'we' with an inclusive meaning. In this way, students may feel more supported in their learning process knowing they are not alone.

The use of polite requests represents another power-mitigating strategy. These requests are often followed by the polite marker 'please' and are intended to make students cooperate and do what the teachers request. This strategy is closely linked to the use of ISAs, as a way of softening power. Using questions or requests instead of orders makes teachers sound less demanding with their students.

Avoiding direct naming when checking the students' level of understanding helps pupils to be more relaxed and not feel threatened by the teacher's questions. On the other hand, this strategy can be interpreted as an indirect way of gaining the attention of the whole class and offering the students the possibility to answer if they want, without putting pressure on them.

Minimising requests by using quantifiers represents another common power-mitigating strategy used in the classroom. This strategy is linguistically realised via small amount quantifiers which helps the teacher to present a task as easy. In this way, students may feel more comfortable if knowing they are going to solve only a few exercises, for instance.

Teachers also seek students' approval using adverbs such as 'right' or 'ok', which are often used as tag questions. Their purpose is also to check students' attention or comprehension. It is an indirect way of involving the students in the lesson and acknowledging the importance of their role in the class.

To prevent students from feeling threatened when not knowing the answers, teachers use additional questions to elicit the right answer. Eliciting through questions is a supportive strategy teachers resort to when students are about to lose face for remaining silent.

Another supportive strategy is scaffolding, a term from pedagogy. I refer to this strategy whenever teachers provide students with details about the stages of the lesson; in this way, teachers help students to better understand the dynamics of the lesson.

A strategy which diminishes the teacher's power is accepting the students' opinion. Allowing students to speak freely in class, to give their opinion on certain matters without interfering or contradicting, is an encouraging and empowering strategy.

Correcting unobtrusively, as the name suggests, is a strategy by means of which the teacher corrects a student's wrong answer in an inconspicuous manner. It is a way of leading the student to the right answer.

Praising is another common strategy in teaching whose main purpose is to boost students' self-esteem. When praising, teachers actually validate students' good answers and good behaviour. Teachers mitigate their power by recognising the value of their students.

Acknowledging students' ideas (or attribution in evaluative language) refers to teachers giving students ownership over their ideas. It is a way of recognising their merits in front of the whole class. It usually occurs when the teacher refers back to what a student has said, clearly stating his/her name and his/her contribution.

Teachers show interest in students as people, as well. They empathise with their students taking into account the problems which may exist in their personal lives. This is an opportunity for teachers to create a strong relationship with students.

Teachers use humour in the classroom to diffuse tension, to help students to feel more relaxed or to avoid certain topics. When teachers and students laugh together, power is dispersed and cooperation is established.

Although this strategy is not so frequently used, teachers sometimes apologise to their students for making mistakes. When they do so, they acknowledge their errors and thus, their power diminishes.

Another power-mitigating strategy is expressing gratitude. In general, teachers thank students for paying attention at the end of the lesson or sometimes after a good answer. It is a way of appreciating the students for their collaboration.

Observing students' learning pace refers to the teacher's paying attention to students' keeping up with the lesson (if they have managed to write everything under dictation, if they have written down in their notebooks all the information on the board etc.). This strategy shows the teacher's interest in the students.

Last but not least, teachers mitigate their power when addressing students politely. Some teachers have their own way of addressing students ('mama/my son'); others use endearment terms ('dragilor/my dears').

The figure below summarises findings in terms of teacher's power strategies.

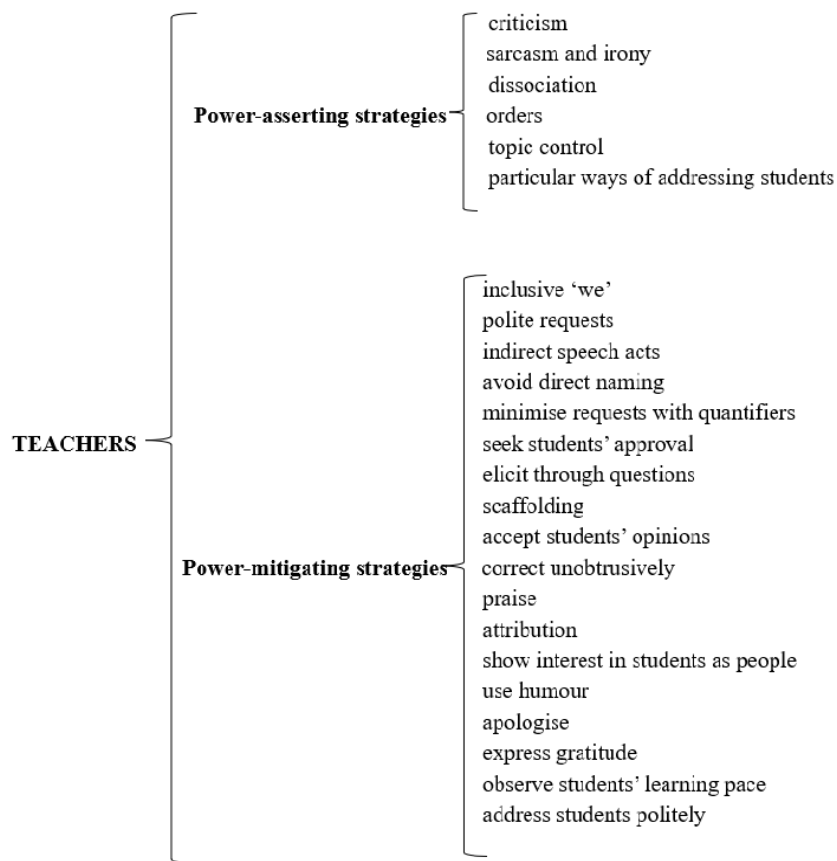


Figure 1. Teachers' power strategies

4. 3. Students' power-subverting strategies

The power-subverting strategies are used by students to subvert, to contest or to resist the teacher's power. The students' power-subverting strategies include: criticism, lack of interest, interruption, disruptive behaviour.

Students use criticism as a power-subverting strategy. They mostly criticise the educational system showing little interest in school; some students also criticise their teachers and their teaching methods.

One of the most common power-subverting strategies is showing lack of interest in school matters. Lack of interest can be inferred from the students' behaviour such as: not accomplishing tasks, not attending the class properly (that is not having a coursebook or a notebook to write on), not paying attention, not knowing which exercise is being solved etc.

Another power-subverting strategy used by students is confrontation. It is a way of contesting or disagreeing with the teacher's opinion by providing evasive answers, by challenging the teacher's right to interpellate or by correcting the teacher.

Interruption is another common power-subverting strategy especially employed by young students to draw the teacher's attention. Different types of interruptions have been identified such as: interrupting through challenging questions, interrupting through repetition, interrupting through

random answers, interrupting by prompting the teacher to act (i.e. urging the teacher to say or to do something).

Adopting disruptive behaviour (actions which interrupt the lesson) represents another way of subverting the teacher's power. The analysis focuses only on linguistic evidence of disruptive behaviour in which off-task chatting is included. Disruptive behaviour can be inferred from the teacher's warnings towards talkative students, as well.

4. 4. Students' power-complying strategies

The power-complying strategies refer to students showing interest in the subject, actively participating in the lesson and cooperating with the teacher. In general, students submit to the teacher's power and recognise the teacher's status and authority. The most visible type of power-complying strategy is showing interest in the subject being taught, in the teacher's explanations, in note-taking, in answering the teacher's questions, in helping the teacher. When showing interest, students use polite language to ask questions and polite forms of address.

4. 5. Peer support strategies

Students use power strategies not only in their interaction with the teacher, but also when interacting with their classmates. They use peer support strategies when another classmate is in a difficult situation as students help each other to prevent the loss of face in front of the teacher.

4. 6. Peer attack strategies

The peer attack strategies represent the opposite of the peer support ones. In these situations students show power over other classmates by being demanding, i.e. criticising and/or ordering the other to behave in a certain way, and by siding with the teacher against peers.

The figure below illustrates the power strategies used by students.

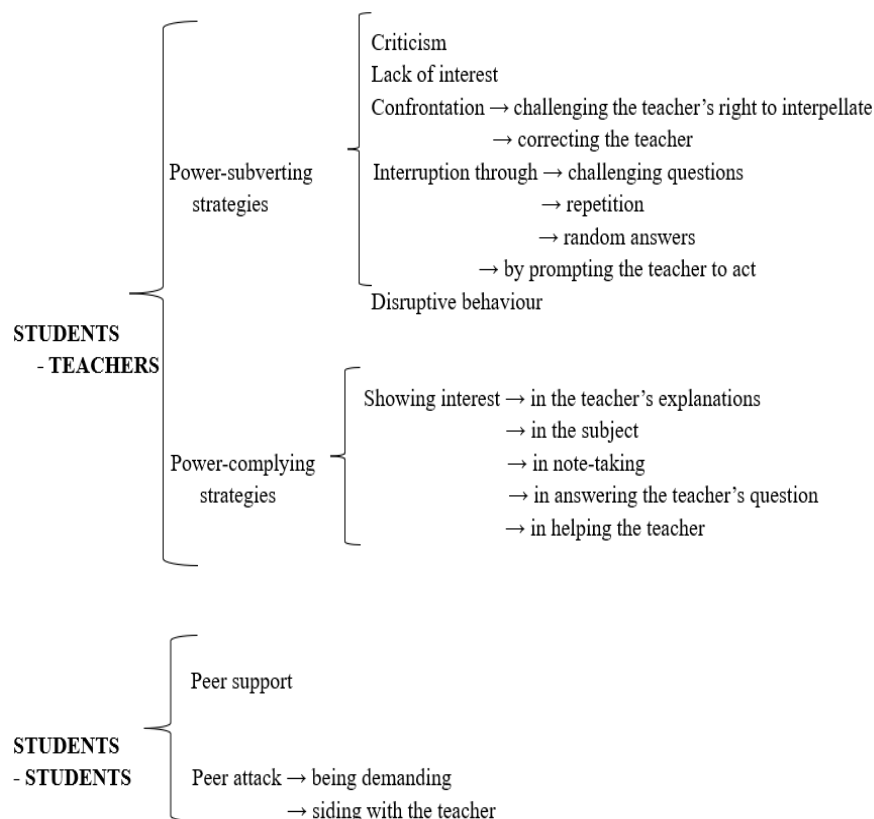


Figure 2. Students' power strategies

4. 7. Linguistic means of expressing power

Some of the strategies presented are realised through specific linguistic markers while others are more context-dependent in the sense that they are not necessarily expressed by the same word/phrase all the time.

In the following section, I mention only those strategies that are realised in a more constant way. For example, the use of personal pronouns 'I/you' for dissociation and 'we' when being inclusive or the use of imperatives by teachers to give orders or by students to make demands on the peers.

Among the forms of address appearing in the data some are derogatory, such as 'mă/you' used by teachers when criticising or 'bă/you' used by students when attacking their peers (impolite forms of address); others are endearment terms, such as 'my dears', 'mama/my son' or the familiar term 'guys' (which are all used in order to create a close relation).

Questions are used by both teachers and students for a variety of purposes. Thus, questions appear when teachers mitigate their power in: polite requests which are usually accompanied by the polite marker 'please', ISAs, eliciting, scaffolding, observing students' learning pace, showing interest in students as people.

Students use questions when resorting to power-subverting strategies when confronting the teacher by challenging his/her right to interpellate or when interrupting the teacher with challenging

questions or by prompting him/her to act. However, they also use questions when showing interest in school matters.

Seeking the students' approval is linguistically marked by the use of 'right', 'ok' which function as question tags. Evaluative language permeates classroom discourse. Thus, attitude: affect is realised by means of adjectives, attitude: social esteem by means of adverbs and appreciation: reaction and value by means of adjectives, as well. Engagement: expand – attribute and engagement: proclaim – endorse are linguistically realised by the teacher when uttering the student's name; finally, graduation: force – quantification is expressed by means of quantifiers ('a few', 'a little').

5. Conclusions

Teachers' power-asserting strategies intertwine with the power-mitigating strategies in the same lesson or even in the same sequence. This indicates that teachers are sensitive to students' face. Teachers do not respond to the students' impolite behaviour with an impolite power-asserting strategy; on the contrary, they treat impolite acts with politeness avoiding in this way any possible conflict with the students. Sometimes, teachers manage to make students participate in the lesson without resorting to power-asserting strategies; the power-mitigating strategies being enough to this end. According to the data, power-mitigating and power-complying strategies lead more to cooperation rather than the displays of power.

It is important to specify that students subvert the teacher's power not necessarily when teachers assert their power but when they mitigate it. According to the data, teachers' power assertion leads to students' power compliance and teachers' power mitigation may lead to students' power subversion. This probably happens because some students may perceive the teachers' intention to mitigate/to diminish their power as a weakness and they take advantage of this opportunity to assert their own power.

Understanding power in the classroom in terms of teachers' and students' power strategies is a complex process. Power should not be perceived only in a negative way (as domination); it can also be viewed in a positive light (as productive) as it can lead to students' empowerment.

The main purpose of this research is to increase awareness of power relations in the classroom and identify how they are linguistically expressed. Furthermore, this analysis may be useful in understanding the dynamics of classroom interaction. Understanding power relations in the classroom may have further implications for teaching strategies as the microcosm of a lesson can trigger certain changes in the macrocosm of the educational system.

6. Personal contribution

The results of the analysis, the classification, the strategies and sub-strategies identified, and the way they are linguistically expressed represent my personal contribution brought to the field of researching ways of expressing power in classroom discourse.

I believe that my analysis, based on real classroom recordings, made in a high school in Romania, provides an alternative to the existing studies on power relations in the classroom as well as a new classification of classroom power strategies. The research includes data specific to a particular school but the results can be generalised to other schools. This study hopefully makes a significant contribution to classroom interaction studies through the identified strategies.

7. Further directions

I am aware that further research is required. One future direction of research can be a more complex analysis of power, including non-linguistic features such as body language.

The research could be continued using the same corpus but studying the power relations depending on the subject taught, the assumption being that foreign language classes, which include cultural elements, could influence the ways in which power is expressed. Studying the same corpus from a sociolinguistic perspective could lead to the comparative analysis of power strategies in terms of teachers' and students' age and gender.

Another possible direction can be a study involving more classes from other schools in order to identify similar and different strategies, or even researching power strategies in other educational contexts in other countries and compare, for instance, English classes in different cultures.

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