

Teacher-Students Classroom Interaction and Balanced Literacy Model

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Overview

As an English teacher in New Taipei City, it's a great honor for me to have this opportunity to take the training course to the USA. I were so impressed by the instructional environments there. Furthermore, I admire those teachers, who invited us into their classroom and shared their teaching experience, about their teaching philosophy and enthusiasm. In the two-week training course, we have not only observed many schools in Chicago and Indiana state, but also taken some useful training classes in which we've learned about the outline of Quantum Learning, SIOP and Balanced Literacy Model. I appreciate that the training connected with observation. I could easily and clearly understand the teaching procedure. In this report, I focus on the classroom interaction. In addition, the classes we observed were doing reading and writing which was about language learning that was based on Balanced Literacy Model, so I will emphasize on Balanced Literacy Model and teacher-students classroom interaction.



Classroom Interaction Analysis System

First of all, because of a large number of the analysis systems of classroom interaction, I would like to introduce the classroom interaction analysis system I used in this report—*Flanders Interaction Analysis System*. “FIAC” system is a famous classroom interaction analysis system which gives me a distinct direction to observe and analyze the classroom interaction.

Flanders’s Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC)

Category number	Activity
1.	Accepts feeling: Accepts and clarifies an attitude or the feeling tone of a pupil in a non-threatening manner. Feeling may be positive or negative. Predicting and recalling feelings are included.
2.	Praises or encourages: Praises or encourages pupil’s action or behavior. Jokes that release tension, but not at the expense of another individual; nodding head, or saying “Um hm?” or “go on” and included.
3.	Accepts or uses ideas of pupils: Clarifying or building or developing ideas suggested by a pupil. Teacher extensions of pupil ideas are included but as the teacher brings more of his own ideas into play.
4.	Asks questions: Asking question about content to procedure, based on teacher ideas, with the intent that a pupil will answer.
5.	Lecturing: Giving facts or opinions about content or procedures; expressing his own ideas, giving his own explanation, or citing an authority other than a pupil.
6.	Giving directions: Directions, commands or orders to which a pupil is expected to comply.

7.	Criticizing or justifying authority: Statements intended to change pupil behavior from non-acceptable to acceptable pattern; bawling someone out; stating why the teacher is doing what he is doing; extreme self-reliance.
8.	Pupil-talk response: Talk by pupils in response to teacher. Teacher initiates the contact or solicits pupil statement or structures the situation. Freedom to express own ideas is limited.
9.	Pupil-talk Initiation: Talk by pupils, which they initiate. Expressing own ideas; initiating a new topic; freedom to develop opinions and a line of thought, like asking thoughtful questions; going beyond the existing structure.
10.	Silence or confusion: Pauses, short periods of confusion in which communication cannot be understood by the observer.

The Flanders's ten categories system can be separated into two main domains: teacher talk and pupil's talk. (Table 1) Category number 1 to 4 are the indirect influence from teacher talk, and number 5 to 7 are direct in fluency. The analysis of student talk depends on pupil's response (number 8) and pupil's initiation (number 9). A third domain is silence or confusion(number 10).

(Table 1)

		Categories
Teacher talk	Indirect Influence	1. Accepts feeling
		2. Praises or encourages
		3. Accept ideas
		4. Asks questions
	Direct Influence	5. Lectures
		6. Gives directions
		7. Criticizes

Student talk	Response	8. Pupil's response
	Initiation	9. Student-talk Initiation
Silence		10. Silence or confusion

Language Learning--- Balanced Literacy Model

Most of the classroom teaching we observed were about language arts. Fortunately, we could take the training class about the “**Balanced Literacy Model (BLM)**”. As knowing clearly about this teaching model of reading and writing, I have found the important influence to classroom interaction. Therefore, it's important to make a short preface about the Balance Literacy Model.

“Balanced literacy programs are a balance of whole language that integrate all aspects of literacy, including reading, vocabulary, writing, speaking, spelling, and grammar.”(Marcy Paulson) The balanced literacy approach is characterized by explicit skill instruction and the use of authentic texts. Through various techniques, the teacher implements a well-planned comprehensive literacy program that reflects a gradual release of control, whereby responsibility is gradually shifted from the teacher to the students. (Wikipedia)

The purpose of BLM is to help students to read and write perfectly. For the reading part, the classrooms focus on different types of reading experiences: read-aloud, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading. For the writing part, students also participate in shared and individual writing activities. The types of writing experiences include word study, shared writing, guided writing, and independent writing. (Table 2)

In this two-week observation, amazingly, most of the classrooms we observed, not only in the urban city but also in the suburbs, were using BLM in teaching reading and writing.

Table 2

Components of Balanced Literacy(With pictures)

Reading

- Read Aloud



- Shared Reading



- Guided Reading



Writing

- Shared Writing



- Guided Writing

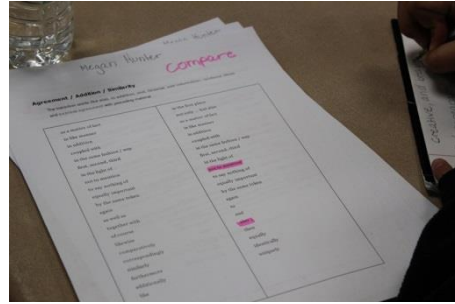


- Independent Writing



- Word Study

● Independent Reading



Classroom Interaction and Balanced Literacy Teaching Model

To analyze the classrooms of balanced literacy teaching model, I apply Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories.

Reading Class

Following tables summarize the findings from reading lectures including read aloud, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading.

✧ *Teacher talk and behaviors*

	Interaction Analysis Categories	Teacher talk and behaviors
Indirect Influence	1. Accepts feeling	<p><i>(During Read Aloud)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>The teacher gives respect to students' cultures and backgrounds</i> <p><i>(During Shared and Guided Reading)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>The teacher listens to students and reflects students' questions positively by saying "Nice," or "Absolutely right."</i>

		<p><i>(During Guided Reading)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>The teacher observes and reinforces students' use of reading strategies</i>
	2. Praises or encourages	<p><i>(During Read Aloud)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>The teacher encourages students to make predictions</i> <p><i>(During Shared Reading)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>The teacher encourages students to discuss reading experiences.</i> <p><i>(During Guided Reading)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>The teacher evaluates students' performance.</i>
	3. Accept ideas	<p><i>(During Shared Reading, Guided Reading and Read Aloud)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>The teacher repeats, paraphrases and writes students' answers and ideas.</i>
	4. Asks questions	<p><i>(During Read Aloud)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>The teacher asks questions to widen students' horizons and understanding about books and the written language</i> <p><i>(During Shared and Guided Reading)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>The teacher asks open questions to build students' comprehension and ensure that the students are actively listening.</i> <p><i>(During Guided Reading)</i></p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>The teacher asks questions that allow for varied student responses and interpretations</i>
Direct Influence	5. Lectures	<p><i>(During Read Aloud)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>The teacher demonstrates fluent reading</i> <p><i>(During Shared Reading)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>The teacher reads interesting and appropriate material with students</i> ● <i>The teacher thinks aloud to demonstrate how proficient readers read.</i> ● <i>The teacher demonstrates how to think critically about an author’s purpose, bias , and perspective</i> <p><i>(During Guided Reading)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>The teacher introduces text and activates students’ prior knowledge</i> <p><i>(During Independent Reading)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>The teacher models for students by doing book talks, book sharing and other presentational methods</i>
	6. Gives directions	<p><i>(During Shared Reading)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>The teacher motivates students to read and comprehend a variety of texts</i> ● <i>The teacher asks students do “turn and talk” with other pupils before sharing their ideas</i> <p><i>(During Guided Reading)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>The teacher arranges and works with flexible</i>

		<p><i>groups of children on text that closely matches the children's needs, abilities, and interests</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>The teacher selects materials to support students' vocabulary development</i> ● <i>The teacher provides a range of genres to read and discuss</i> ● <i>The teacher prompts students' use of strategies</i>
	7. Criticizes	None

✧ *Student talk and behaviors*

Interaction Analysis Categories	Student talk and behaviors
8. Pupil's response	<p><i>(During Read Aloud)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Students use descriptive language from text in book discussions</i> <p><i>(During Shared Reading)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Students demonstrate the use of acquired skills and strategies.</i> <p><i>(During Guided Reading)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Students read orally and apply acquired strategies in order to comprehend the text</i>
9. Student-talk Initiation	<p><i>(During Shared Reading)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Students explain, question, and explore ideas in what they have heard</i> ● <i>Students share what they already know about the topic or text.</i> <p><i>(During Guided Reading)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Students reflect on skills and strategies used</i> ● <i>Students respond to questions, make predictions, listen to others and respond to others.</i> <p><i>(During Independent Reading)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Students make critical connections between text</i> ● <i>Students share what they are reading at the end of Independent Reading(in small groups)</i>

✧ *Silence*

Interaction Analysis Categories	Teacher and students behaviors
10. Silence or confusion	<p><i>(During Read Aloud)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● <i>The teacher reads aloud while students listen silently.</i> <p><i>(During Shared Reading)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● <i>While the teacher modeling the use of strategies and think aloud, students listen silently and watch.</i> <p><i>(During Guided Reading)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● <i>Students reads silently</i> <p><i>(During Independent Reading)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● <i>Students read independently and the teacher monitors the process during reading time(observe, conference and take anecdotal notes).</i>

Writing Class

The techniques and processes in teaching writing are similar with those in reading classes. The analysis of writing class is as following.

✧ Teacher talk and behaviors

	Interaction Analysis Categories	Teacher talk and behaviors
Indirect Influence	1. Accepts feeling	<i>(During Guided Writing and Independent Writing)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● <i>The teacher interacts with students and help them to write independently.</i>
	2. Praises or encourages	<i>(During Shared Writing)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● <i>The teacher encourages students to provide ideas for the writing.</i> <i>(During Guided Writing)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● <i>The teacher encourages students to brainstorm the ideas for the writing.</i>
	3. Accepts ideas	<i>(During Guided Writing and Independent Writing)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● <i>The teacher discusses the purposes of writing with students.</i>
	4. Asks questions	<i>(During Shared Writing and Guided Writing)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● <i>The teacher asks open-ended essential questions to help students compose a meaningful coherent message for a particular audience and a specific purpose.</i>
Direct Influence	5. Lectures	<i>(During Shared Writing)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● <i>The teacher thinks aloud about the writing</i>

		<p><i>process.</i></p> <p><i>(During Guided Writing)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>The teacher provides feedback relative to student writing.</i> ● <i>The teacher provides instruction in grammar, spelling, and punctuation.</i> <p><i>(During Independent Writing)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>The teacher assists students with the revision and editing process.</i>
	6. Gives directions	<p><i>(During Shared Writing)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>The teacher sets standards using correct spelling, grammar, and conventions.</i> <p><i>(During Guided Writing)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>The teacher prompts, and guided students in writing activities.</i> ● <i>The teacher links students' oral language to students' written language.</i> <p><i>(During Independent Writing)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>The teacher creates authentic purposes for writing.</i>
	7. Criticizes	<i>None</i>

✧ Student talk and behaviors

Interaction Analysis Categories	Student talk and behaviors
8. Pupil's response	<p><i>(During Shared Writing)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Students read and reread the composition with</i>

	<p><i>the teacher.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Students demonstrate understanding that thoughts and feeling can be expressed in print (During Guided Writing)</i> ● <i>Students answer questions from the teacher about writing skills, clarifying ideas...etc.</i> ●
9. Student-talk Initiation	<p><i>(During Shared Writing)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Students provide ideas for the writing (During Guided Writing and Independent Writing)</i> ● <i>Student ask for clarification and the teacher providing feedback</i> <p><i>Shares their writing</i></p> <p><i>(During Independent Writing)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Students give other peers feedback</i>

✧ Silence

Interaction Analysis Categories	Teacher and students behaviors
10. Silence or confusion	<p><i>(During Shared Writing)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Students listen to and watch the teacher modeling writing.</i> <p><i>(During Guided Writing Independent Writing)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Students participate in sustained writing silently</i>

Conclusion

According to the main purpose of the Balanced Literacy Model, that is helping students do reading and writing perfectly and independently, the classroom interaction between teacher and students changes in three-part sequence both in reading and writing system.

First, in the process of shared reading and writing, the teacher guides, demonstrates, and leads the children to understand the context. Hence, the percentage of teacher talk is higher than student talk. Students talk only when the teacher ask them to give prediction and ideas. More specifically, when the teacher reads the text and thinks aloud, students are silent and focus on watching the teahcer modeling.

Then, while the guided reading or writing process is on, the teacher divides students in small groups and arranges different works for children. At this moment, the teacher works as a facilitator, using prompts and question strategies to guide students to comprehension. Therefore, the percentage of student talk increases. As my observation of the classrooms in the United States, students work with the teacher read the books chosen by the teacher. In other groups, according to the missions assigned by the teacher, students are busying in doing pair-reading, independent reading, writing worksheets, and doing paper activities with pupils. The teacher-student and student-student interaction happens at the same time.

Third, the final process which is also the main purpose of the Balanced Literacy Model, the independent reading and writing totally focus on students' output. Thus, the percentage of the teacher talk decreases a lot. The teacher talks only when students need teacher's feedback and advice. Students talk a lot when they do "book talks" and "Sharing their writing".

Overalls, in all stages of reading and writing, the teacher encourages students to express their ideas. The teacher always gives positive feedback and praises students' action and behavior. The positive feedback, the responsibility gradually shifted from teachers to students,

and the constant encouragement are efficient to accomplish the objective to engage student in reading and writing independently.

The classroom atmosphere is different from Taiwan. Students are active and enjoying learning a lot. The learning responsibility is on students. Teachers encourage, prompt, and guide students, not instruct and teach. The teacher-student classroom interaction is positive. I am impressed a lot and wish I can build this atmosphere in my classroom too.

Reference

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