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Exploring the IRF Pattern in Corpus Data from 5th Grade EFL Lessons

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Abstract

This paper focuses on one of the most frequent patterns of classroom discourse to be found across all subjects: The typical three-part teacher elicit exchange (Sinclair/Coulthard 1992: 14; cf. 1975: 34) structures many plenary phases through the famous Initiation – Response – Follow up (IRF) pattern, in which the teacher has not only the first, but also the third turn. What can be seen in the authentic classroom data from the Flensburg English Classroom Corpus *(FLECC) is that in EFL teaching, this IRF pattern is not only frequent, but highly useful for a number of purposes. This will be explored in sample analyses of classroom discourse from two 5th year EFL classes. In addition, students' evaluations of seminar work with the FLECC material will be presented, followed by an outlook on the potential of the FLECC and the possibilities of using it for diverse purposes in academic teacher training.*

Keywords: EFL teaching; teacher-pupil interaction; classroom discourse; IRF pattern; teacher education.

1. Introduction

How can Applied Linguistics contribute to the academic training of English teachers? For a while now, the Europa-Universität Flensburg has been home to a theoretically grounded practical orientation of academic teacher training. This provides the communal framework for the practical application of communicative and usage-based approaches to foreign language teaching in the classroom, which have been in favour with the Applied Linguistics community for a while (cf. Schmitt 2002). This paper presents a unique communicative and usage-based approach to English language teacher training at university level, namely one that utilizes the potential of collectively reflecting on the variety and heterogeneity of real EFL teaching as documented in authentic transcripts of classroom discourse without immediate pressure for action (cf. Seedhouse 2004, Walsh 2006, Schwab 2009, Limberg/Jäkel 2016).

The *Flensburg English Classroom Corpus* (FLECC) (Jäkel 2010) is a recent corpus devised and put together at Flensburg University. It consists of reader-friendly transcripts of 39 complete lessons of English as a foreign language taught in North German schools of diverse types: *Grundschule* (Primary School), *Hauptschule*, *Realschule*, and *Gesamtschule* (Comprehensive Schools). This special corpus of more than 56,000 words (amounting to 240 printed pages in the book publication) covers all age groups of EFL learners, from the 3rd year of Primary School, to the last year of *Sekundarstufe 1* (*Klasse 10*), with the numbers of transcribed lessons per year/grade as follows: *3. Klasse*: 4; *4. Klasse*: 7; *5. Klasse*: 10; *6. Klasse*: 6; *7. Klasse*: 3; *8. Klasse*: 5; *9. Klasse*: 1; *10. Klasse*: 3. All 39 lessons were taught by advanced students of English during their major six-week school internships in the years between 2003 and 2007. They were documented and transcribed by the author, who was observing the lessons as academic supervisor. Of course, all participants, pupils, teachers, and schools, remain anonymous.

This empirical corpus material presents unique opportunities for students in language teacher training to develop their analytical skills, working with authentic classroom discourse with all its flaws and hitches. Theoretical approaches from linguistic pragmatics and discourse analysis as well as from Applied Linguistics and TEFL re-

search can be tested as to their explanatory value when it comes to analysing real classroom data. In a consciousness raising approach, students' intuitions about good or bad EFL teaching provide the cognitive basis upon which a sharpened and more profound awareness of linguistic patterns of classroom discourse can be built.

In TEFL research, authentic classroom discourse corpora were and still are scarce: «What is needed is classroom documentation that would enable the serious investigation of processes of foreign language acquisition and learning, of interaction in the classroom as well as of conditions promoting or hindering learning.» (Diehr/Gießler 2011: 158, translation OJ).

The *Flensburg English Classroom Corpus* (FLECC) fills exactly that gap, a finding supported from an Applied Linguistics and Corpus Linguistics perspective: «By way of final evaluation it needs to be said that this corpus with its focus on discourse and events in the English classroom fills a gap in the corpus-linguistic landscape.» (Kreyer 2011: 138, translation OJ).

The following study focuses on one of the most frequent patterns of classroom discourse to be found across all subjects: The typical three-part *teacher elicit* exchange (Sinclair/Coulthard 1992: 14; 1975: 34) structures many plenary phases through the famous Initiation – Response – Follow up (IRF) pattern, in which the teacher has not only the first, but also the third turn. What can be seen in the classroom data from the FLECC is that in EFL teaching, this IRF pattern is not only frequent, but highly useful for a number of purposes.

As I cannot here truly represent the ways in which the discourse data from the FLECC are used in academic seminars (but cf. Jäkel 2014), with all participants involved in the collective exploration of those patterns of classroom communication, the main parts (section 2 and 3) of this paper will instead provide sample analyses of FLECC material from two 5th year classes. After a shorter presentation (section 4) of students' evaluations of seminar work with the FLECC material, the paper will then end (in section 5) with an outlook on the potential of the FLECC and the possibilities of using it for diverse purposes.

2. Sample analysis of excerpts from an English lesson: Canonical IRF

In this section, we will look at an example passage from an English lesson in a 5th year *Grund- und Hauptschule* (old-style Comprehensive) (Jäkel 2010: 88). In the following, bracketed numbers denote transcript lines; T stands for *teacher*, P for *pupil*; short comments on the situational context important for an understanding of what is going on are given in square brackets.

(1)	T:	Let's start! Good morning!
(2)	All P:	Good morning!
(3)		[…]

In this short passage (1-3) we witness the opening of the lesson. Notice that the teacher does not start with greeting the class, which only comes second. The first speech act, though, is a *directive* (Searle 1975) by the teacher, a complex *framing move* (Sinclair/Coulthard 1992: 3, 21; cf. Sinclair/Coulthard 1975), signalling to the pupils that the lesson is about to begin: 'It's English time now, so please concentrate and switch your mindsets on to English!' Only after this has been established, will this teacher proceed to exchange greetings with her class. With this 5th year class, with pupils aged between ten and twelve years, the teacher's "*Good morning!*" is actually followed by a whole-hearted chorus of "*Good morning!*" from all pupils, thereby forming a perfect, ritualised *adjacency pair* (McCarthy 1997: 119-120). With pupils of higher age groups, this might not work out so fine.

   After this opening transaction, the teacher starts an exercise concerning the use of prepositions and prepositional phrases, which lasts for a while (4-23). Making use of the traditional German blackboard with wings that can be opened and closed as a prop, she demonstrates different positions in space by moving from her ordinary position to one behind that wing. During this demonstration, she comments (4 and 5) on the ongoing events, using two *assertives* (Searle 1975) closely resembling motherese, or child directed language (cf. O'Grady 2005: 175-178). The last act in this teacher's turn (6) is a typical *display question* (Allwright/Bailey 1991: 110; cf. Cortazzi/Jin 2004: 501-502). It is the first move of a three-part *teacher elicit* exchange (Sinclair/Coulthard

1992: 14; cf. 1975: 34), displayed here in its most canonical fashion: the famous Initiation – Response – Follow up (IRF) pattern.

(4) T: I'm standing in front of the board.
(5)   Now I'm standing behind the board.
(6)   Where am I?
(7) P: In front of the board.
(8) T: Very good!
(9)   […]

The teacher (6) initiates this exchange by way of her question. This move is followed by a pupil's response (7), which takes the shape of the appropriate prepositional phrase. The elicit exchange is completed by another turn from the teacher (8), the so-called follow-up move, in which the teacher provides feedback on the pupil's performance. As a speech act, this is an *expressive* (Searle 1975), namely one of praise. Fortunately, this teacher does not insist on the pupil to utter a complete sentence, but with her positive feedback provides confirmation of the contextually fully appropriate prepositional phrase.

In the following passage, the teacher asks first a girl (10-11) and then a boy (16) to come to the front of the classroom to help demonstrating positions in space. Both (10) and (11) as well as (16) are *directives* (Searle 1975), the most frequent speech act to be found in many teachers' performance. The passage also displays another series of IRF patterns, both initiated by teacher questions (12 and 17), and followed by appropriate pupil responses (13 and 18). Notice that one pupil actually answers in a complete sentence (13), which may be the reason for an even more emphatically positive feedback by the teacher (14). The last move in the second of the IRF exchanges (17-19) is not revealed in this transcript.

(10) T: Now, Pam, come here!
(11)   And please, sit on the table!
(12)   Where is she?
(13) P: She is on the table.
(14) T: Yes, very good!
(15)   […]

(16)   T: Please go under the table!
(17)   Where is he?
(18)   P: Under the table.
(19)   […]

But the follow-up move in the IRF pattern can be used for other purposes than positive feedback which confirms pupils' answers and praises them for their achievements. The exercise here continues with another boy being called up front by the teacher's directive (20), and yet another IRF elicit exchange initiated by the teacher's display question (21). This time, though, the answer provided by a pupil (22) is found wanting by the teacher, who corrects the incomplete prepositional phrase by modelling the correct form (23).

(20)   T: Please stand in front of the board!
(21)   Where is he?
(22)   P: Front of the board.
(23)   T: In front of the board!

This follow-up move (23) is a corrective feedback in the shape of a *recast* (Allwright/Bailey 1991: 98-118), the most frequent form of error correction found with the majority of teachers in the FLECC. Although situated on the metalinguistic level, this correction within the communicative situation is least disruptive to the ongoing communication. Though she cannot be sure if the pupil who made the mistake will actually take notice, this recast is the teacher's way of making sure that the correct form is modelled as part of the linguistic input for the whole class, in order to avoid irritation of other learners and in order to prevent fossilization of the incorrect form (ibid.).

From here on (24), the lesson enters another stage, the longest in this transcript (24-39). With the overall topic of the use of prepositions and prepositional phrases remaining the same, the new transaction (Sinclair/Coulthard 1992: 5) now is that of a different exercise involving both picture cards (flashcards) and word cards. Having pinned a number of flashcards to the board (24), the teacher uses a pointing gesture while initiating another IRF exchange with her display question (25). The pupil's answer (26) is correct as regards its content.

But this time, the teacher's follow-up move (27) contains not only a short positive feedback ("*Okay*"). This is immediately followed by the teacher's adversative conjunction, which shows that there was still something else wrong, and her directive tells the pupil and the whole class that they should raise their hands before voicing their answers: a small but important disciplinary action.

(24)   […]
(25)   T [pointing at one of the picture cards on the board]:
           Where is the man?
(26)   P: On the car.
(27)   T: Okay. But do it like this [gesture]!

The same exercise continues in the following passage (28-32). In (29), we find the teacher repeating exactly the same display question plus pointing gesture she had used in (25), and again its function is that of initiating another IRF exchange. But this time, the answer provided by a pupil is not really comprehensible (30), so that the teacher finds it necessary to follow up (31) not only with a clearly articulated recast "*Behind the car*". She adds the elliptical directive "*All together!*", to which the whole class responds as desired (32), this chorus fashion being a well-established means to secure uptake with this age group.

(28)   […]
(29)   T [pointing at one of the picture cards on the board]:
           Where is the man?
(30)   P: [incomprehensible mumbling]
(31)   T: Behind the car. All together!
(32) All P: Behind the car.

In the last passage to be analysed here (33-39), the exercise is modified by adding word cards. The teacher's assertive (33), once more commenting on her own actions (34) in motherese fashion, has the function of organizing the collective activity.

(33)   T: And now I've got the words here.
(34)   [T pins word cards to board]

(35)   Can you come here, and take one word, and put it next
            to the
(36)   picture!
(37)   [P pins next to next to the wrong picture]
(38)   T: Nanu?!
(39)   […]

Then (35) the teacher starts yet another IRF exchange, but this time, her initiating move is that of a directive (35-36) requesting no answer, but a non-verbal response (Sinclair/Coulthard 1992: 9, 25-28). The pupil who comes to the board fails to put his word card next to the right picture (37). This non-verbal mistake is followed by the teacher's surprised "*Nanu*?!" (38), which is a most interesting and enigmatic utterance. Quite obviously, the exclamation is an instance of code-switching, in fact the only one on record by this teacher in this lesson. In moments of strong emotional involvement, such as surprise, even some of the most competent speakers of a foreign language are likely to fall back on their L1. When analysing this transcript in an academic seminar, one of the first issues on the agenda will be the students looking for pragmatically appropriate renderings of the illocution of the German exclamation in English. Probably one of the best candidates here would be an emphatic "*Oops!*"

But this is not necessarily the end of the discussion. It could be argued, and is certainly worth discussing, that this teacher may have had other things in mind with her follow-up move (38) to the erroneous performance by her pupil. In fact, her utterance – given enough *wait time* (cf. Allwright/Bailey 1991: 107-108) – could as well be interpreted as a feedback inviting the learner to self-correct. This so-called *prompting* (Allwright/Bailey 1991: 105-108) is meant to give learners room to correct themselves, or to allow them to correct each other as peers. – Our sample analysis of the excerpt, which comprises the first half of this 5th year EFL lesson, so far has revealed some standard uses of the IRF pattern.

3. Sample analysis of excerpts from an English lesson: IRF Variations

In this section, we will look at example passages from an English lesson in a 5th year *Gesamtschule* (Jäkel 2010: 128-134). Similar to the previously analysed lesson, the teacher opens (3) with a framing move "*Okay*" before the ritualized exchange of greetings with the class (3-4):

(1)   7:45
(2)   [All 24 P are standing.]
(3)   T: Okay. Good morning everybody!
(4)All P [somewhat droning]:
              Good morning, Mrs T.!

Next, the teacher starts an exercise in telling the time, using a huge clock as prop. In a canonical IRF pattern, her display question (5) is followed by a pupil's answer (6), which is confirmed (7) by the teacher's verbatim repetition plus positive feedback. The exercise continues in this fashion, with a reduced initiating move (8), another good answer (9), followed by a short positive feedback (10):

(5)   T [displaying a huge clock]: What's the time?
(6)   P: It's three o'clock.
(7)   T: It's three o'clock, right.
(8)   [Adjusting the huge clock to a new time.] And now?
(9)   P: It's quarter past three.
(10) T: Right. [Laughs, adjusting a new time.]

From here on (11-41), we can witness an interesting variation in the IRF pattern, in which the teacher deliberately withholds feedback. The following passage contains a series of six exchanges, all of which are initiated by the teacher's display questions or their elliptical versions (11, 14, 20, 25, 30, 35). The pupils' responses, though, are not followed by an immediate feedback move, but the teacher instead inserts a short tag-like question to the whole class (13, 16, 22, 32, 39), giving every child the chance to make up their own mind about the proper answer. As a result, many pupils confirm either by nodding (13) or even verbally (23, 33, 40). To end each ex-

change, the teacher finally provides her delayed feedback (13, 24, 29, 34, 41):

(11) T: And now, what time is it?
(12) P: It's quarter to four.
(13) T: Is it? [Waiting a moment until a number of P nod
              affirmatively.] Right!
(14)   And … [Adjusts a new time.] Now!
(15) P: It's twenty-five past four.
(16) T: Right?
(17) P: Hab ich nicht verstanden!
(18) T: Say it again, please.
(19) P: It's twenty-five past four.
(20) T [adjusting a new time]:
              And now?
(21) P: It's quarter to five.
(22) T: Is it quarter to five?
(23) Many P: Yes!
(24) T: Yes, it is. Good!
(25)   [Adjusts a new time.]:
              And now? Peter.
(26)   [P keeps quiet.]
(27) T: Who knows it?
(28) P: It's half past five.
(29) T: Right, good!
(30)   [Adjusts a new time.]:
              And now!
(31) P: It's twenty to seven.
(32) T: Is it twenty to seven?
(33) Many P: Yes!
(34) T: Good!
(35) T [adjusting a new time]:
              What's the time now?
(36) P: It's quarter to eight.
(37) T: Say it again, please!
(38) P: It's quarter to eight.
(39) T: Is it quarter to eight?

(40)Many P: Yes!
(41) T: Yes, good!

What we can see in this continuous passage is a very effective way of involving the whole class actively in an exercise that consists of individual pupils providing answers to the teacher's display questions. This is achieved by a conscious delay of the teacher's feedback within the familiar IRF pattern.

At a later stage of the same lesson, the teacher moves to more natural patterns of communication, with open questions about the pupils' daily routines replacing the previous display questions. Here, she also uses the IRF pattern to provide corrective feedback. As in section 2, we witness a defective answer (159) from a pupil mispronouncing *half* with an audible /l/. The teacher's feedback to this in (160) consists of a recast plus positive praise:

(157) T: Okay, most of you have finished. So, let's compare!
(158)   Connie, when do you get up? The first one.
(159) P: [hʌlf] past six.
(160) T: Half past six, good!

While this pronunciation error asked for a corrective feedback from her side, the teacher moves towards an even more natural conversation by sharing personal information (161, 166) before eliciting with more open questions. As regards feedback in the follow-up move, this takes the form of interested backchannelling (163, 180) – or it is lacking completely in the series of IR exchanges (between 166 and 176):

(161)   I have breakfast at seven o'clock. When do you have
              breakfast?
(162) P: Ten o'clock.
(163) T: Ten o'clock? At Saturdays? Oh, do you eat at school,
              breakfast?
(164) P: [incomprehensible mumble]
(165)   8:19
(166) T: I go to school at half past seven. When do you go to school?
(167) P: I go to school at quarter to seven.

(168)   […]
(169) T: When do you come home? Lara.
(170) P: I come home at one o'clock.
(171) T: And when do you come home, Peter?
(172) P: I come home at quarter past one.
(173) T: And Katharina, when do you have dinner?
(174) P: I eat dinner at [incomprehensible mumble].
(175) T: And Max, when do you eat dinner?
(176) P: I eat dinner at six o'clock.
(177) T: When do you go to bed?
(178) P: At nine o'clock.
(179) P: I go to bed at twenty past nine.
(180) T: Twenty past nine! That's late.

Notice that the last IRF exchange (177-180) features even two pupils answering the teacher's open question. The last of these two answers evokes the follow-up expression of surprise or amazement by the teacher, which contributes to the more 'natural' feel of this conversation in an EFL classroom.

In the remainder of this lesson (197-236), the teacher introduces even further modifications of the IRF pattern, which we cannot go into here for lack of space. Thus, she invites individual pupils to take over the elicit move, while still providing the feedback herself. In the end, even the follow-up move is performed by some pupils, who confirm their classmates' good answers to their own display questions. This shows an enormous range of variations of the standard IRF pattern, which is professionally utilised by a teacher who is obviously aware of its limitations as well as its general usefulness.

In summary, the follow-up move of the canonical IRF exchange provides room for at least two very important ingredients of classroom communication: On the one hand, confirmation of good answers and even praise for pupils' achievements, and on the other hand, corrective feedback, which is an essential ingredient of foreign language teaching of pupils in their first years. While we have seen how variable it can be used by a good teacher in the first year of secondary school, and while with older students it may even be completely avoided by a teacher in order to give room to more natural forms of communica-

tion (see Jäkel 2001), according to the 'Birmingham Model', the feed-back move is an essential part of any classroom exchange and should normally not be withheld continually (Sinclair/Coulthard 1975: 51).

4. Work with the FLECC in the eyes of the students

Why in particular teacher students will benefit from exposure to the FLECC and its advantages is clearly stated by Diehr/Gießler (2011: 161, translation OJ):

> As the empirical data of the FLECC come from a world remote from teacher students' everyday experience, they open up an important per-spective on teaching for exactly that clientele in the academic stage of teacher education. […] The FLECC provides a basis, from which access to the experiential level of action in teaching can be gained, by way of applying concepts from teaching methodology and linguistics.

This favourable review is corroborated by recent evaluation results and experiential reports coming from students of English at Flensburg University. Positive judgments can regularly be found in student evaluations of courses that included analytical work with the FLECC, and very often, they will wish and ask for more of that work. The following quotations have been collected from *Reflections* written in English by students after some FLECC sessions of their advanced class in the Primary School Master programme in January and February of 2015:

> (1) I believe that the FLECC offers a wonderful way to look at a lesson and to analyse it regarding specific points which are essential in language teaching. It offers an opportunity to look at a lesson from different angles, to imagine how students could react in specific situations, even though it is not directly visible to the reader. […] It shows how everything we have talked about before in class is put together into a construct called lesson which will enable learners to acquire new knowledge in English. (Loreen M.)

(2) It was so interesting to hear all the others' opinions about the transcribed lesson. […] Although I had read the transcription many times before, my fellow students found out new aspects or their interpretation of some aspects was a little bit different than mine. As I already pointed out during our session, at first I was not quite sure if I liked the transcribed lesson or not. For me it seemed kind of boring how the teacher always repeated her questions. But then I asked myself what would I do differently and then I noticed that she did a great job. […] In conclusion I would like to say that the whole session helped me as a future teacher. […] I am really looking forward to my next internship. (Isabel S.)

(3) Does it make sense to look at the FLECC excerpts in detail? […] Close reading and reflecting on it carefully will help me in particular situations. It might help me cope better with difficult moments. Speaking about and discussing somebody else's mistakes could help one avoid making similar mistakes oneself. […] I learned how important it is to have a clear structure and different, well-chosen and appropriate methods. (Maike S.)

(4) Dealing with the *Flensburg English Classroom Corpus* (FLECC) and hosting a session on an excerpt of a 4th grade EFL lesson in a German primary school gave me the opportunity to deal with an authentic classroom discourse. As I have not had a lot of opportunities so far to hold English lessons, this transcribed lesson provided me with the chance to do some meaningful analysis of different aspects of this English lesson. The excerpt allowed our group to look closely at the structure of the lesson, the media which were used, the errors which appeared, or the topic of motivation. After analyzing those themes our group strongly agreed that the EFL teacher did a very good job and that this excerpt can offer us a lot of practical advice for us as future 'soon-to-be' primary school teachers. […] It was a valuable experience for me as a student preparing to become a teacher to work with this excerpt from the FLECC, because it was very interesting to analyze so many different aspects of a lesson in the 4th grade of a German primary school. (Janika W.)

(5) I was surprised to see how many aspects one can analyze and it was great to look at an excerpt from an outside perspective. Talking about the good and bad things about this lesson has also made me be-

come a little bit more sensitive towards my own teaching. (Jil R.)

These statements bear witness to the general value of studying English language lessons intensively and in detail (1) just as well as to the cooperative aspect of collectively discussing the discourse material in the seminar group, with the reported self-experience of a gradual change and growth of one's perspective plus a boost of expectations, looking forward to the school internship ahead in the integrated practical term (2); to the value of detailed analysis, e.g. of mistakes made by other, unknown teachers (3), as well as to those diverse aspects of a lesson and the inspiration felt for one's own teaching (4), and the truly experienced consciousness raising for matters of lesson planning and teaching (5).

5. Outlook: Using the FLECC

In the concrete investigation into the various uses of the famous IRF pattern, the above analysis of authentic classroom discourse was meant to exemplify some of the potential of the material documented in the FLECC. Probably the greatest advantage of this classroom corpus is that we can use it to engage our teacher students in an ELT analysis 'in slow motion'. One of the most difficult aspects of working in the classroom, not only for beginners, but also for many experienced teachers, is the constant need to make quick decisions on how to react or continue. In the case of pupils' errors, e.g., the teacher has to decide within milliseconds if the error needs to be corrected; if so, who should correct it, as well as when and in what form (cf. Allwright/Bailey 1991: 99-100). In the protected environment of the academic seminar, however, we can take our time to discuss the merits or drawbacks of individual teacher decisions, in as much detail as desired by the group. Moreover, we can take our time, both collectively and in individual project work, to think up alternative options not followed by the teacher in the documented classroom discourse, and again weigh the advantages and disadvantages. In all of this, the fact that we are studying printed transcripts instead of video-taped lessons has the effect of drawing our attention to the linguistic details, which are part and parcel of successful EFL teaching (see Jäkel 2010: 12; cf. Allwright/Bailey 1991: 62, and Kreyer 2011: 138).

The empirical, data-driven approach to language teacher training outlined above presents unique opportunities for students to develop their analytical skills, working with authentic classroom discourse with all its flaws and hitches. In consciousness raising fashion, students' intuitions about good or bad EFL teaching provide the cognitive basis upon which a sharpened and more profound awareness of linguistic and communicative patterns of TEFL classroom discourse can be built. And as we often learn more from the negative examples of obviously 'ropey' teacher performances, it may be regarded as one of the best things about those lessons documented in the FLECC, that they also include some pretty bad ones.

In addition, theoretical approaches from linguistic pragmatics (cf. Spencer-Oatey/Žegarac 2002) and discourse analysis (cf. McCarthy/Matthiessen/Slade 2002) can be tested as to their explanatory value when it comes to analysing real classroom data. E.g., one of the general results from studying the FLECC includes the finding, that the canonical IRF-pattern (Sinclair/Coulthard 1992: 3; Sinclair/Coulthard 1975: 21) is still 'alive and kicking', prevalent in many current EFL classrooms. Thus, the classical Birmingham Model (Sinclair/Coulthard 1975; Sinclair/Coulthard 1992) can be confirmed as one of the most effective tools of analysing classroom discourse (cf. Allwright/Bailey 1991: 12).

I will end this paper with a list of issues that can be tackled based on the FLECC material[1]. How is a particular lesson structured (opening, stages, topics, exchanges/moves/acts, closing)? What kinds of speech acts occur? How much of speaking time in the classroom is occupied by the teacher, and how much is given to the learners? What is the role of typical turn taking patterns such as the classical Initiation – Response – Feedback (IRF)? How are tasks set, and instructions given? What forms and functions of teacher questions can be found? How are new words introduced, explained and established? What kinds of errors can be detected (both pupils' and teacher's), and how are they treated? What role does English-German code-switching play? How can the teacher's performance be evaluated? How are the

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[1] Cf. the research questions proposed in Jäkel (2010: 227-230).

special demands on the teacher as linguistic role model met, in particular in Primary School English? How can the (linguistic) heterogeneity of learners be exploited for the teaching of English? – These and similar questions can be approached on the basis of the authentic corpus material of English classroom discourse provided by the FLECC. The corpus, which is also available online, can be mined for a multitude of purposes, including student projects in Applied Linguistics.

Finally I would like to suggest how great an opportunity it would be to see similar corpora of classroom discourse from EFL lessons being generated by researchers in teacher education from other countries. Apart from providing firmer experiential grounding to local academic teacher training programmes, this would give us the chance of comparing how English is being taught as a foreign language to pupils of different ages in various types of schools in different countries, probably allowing to share and learn from each other. Why not start in Italy, and with a *Roman English classroom corpus*?

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