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Anna Bichlmaier

"Now we do the following" – Teachers' Instruction-Giving Competence as an Essential Part of Effective Classroom Management

For an EFL lesson to be successful, effective classroom management is indispensable. A sub-competence of the latter is effective instruction-giving: Teacher instructions need to be as precise, brief and clear as possible so that students are able to understand what they are supposed to do. Effective instruction-giving also reduces teacher talking time and saves valuable lesson time. Accordingly, this article focuses on effective instruction-giving in classroom management contexts and the possibility to establish and improve this competence in pre-service teacher education with the help of transcript analyses.

1 Introduction

The *DESI-Studie* (cf. Helmke et al. 2007: 40f., Helmke et al. 2008: 350) found that teachers at German secondary schools[1] speak twice as much as all of their learners together. Interestingly, most educators who took part in the survey were not aware of how much they talked and clearly underestimated their own talking time:

> Es zeigt sich eine Kluft zwischen subjektiver Einschätzung (episodisches Gedächtnis) und der videobasierten Realität (Echtzeit). Laut Videoaufzeichnung beträgt sie im Durchschnitt 68%, laut Selbsteinschätzung 51%. […] Etwa ein Drittel der Lehrkräfte schätzt den eigenen Anteil an der Sprechzeit als gering ein (höchstens 40%) –

[1] Here, the term 'secondary schools' refers to *Hauptschule, Realschule, Gymnasium* and *Integrierte Gesamtschule* because Helmke et al. (cf. 2008: 346) conducted the *DESI-Videostudie*, one part of the *DESI-Studie*, in these different types of schools.

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> solch geringe Sprechquoten kommen jedoch laut Videostudie in keinem einzigen Fall vor […] (Helmke et al. 2008: 351).

These results show that apparently, on numerous occasions during an EFL lesson, teachers talk more than they seem to be aware of.

Instruction-giving, i.e. telling students what they are supposed to do, is likely to be one of these occasions. In our analyzed lesson sequence (section 3) the lines between explanation and instruction tend to be rather blurry because the teacher first explains the way the activity works and then gives instructions to set up the double circle. For this reason, we follow in this article Ur's view who considers instructions to be "one particular kind of explanation that is very important in teaching" (Ur 1996: 17) and further defines them as "the directions that are given to introduce a learning task which entails some measure of independent student activity" (ibid.). This broad definition of instructions allows us to also use the term *explanation* when referring to explanations concerning classroom management.

During instructions, the teacher talking time (TTT) is quite high, especially when they are unplanned (cf. Scrivener 2011: 65). Then, in many cases, the "essential information about what to do is embedded in confusing and unnecessary babble" (ibid.). Consequently, a classroom activity often fails because the students have not understood what they are expected to do (cf. ibid.). However, instructions are a common and frequent element of classroom discourse and they support effective classroom management if delivered properly. Hence, it is important for pre-service as well as in-service teachers to train and foster their instruction-giving competence as well as their overall classroom discourse competence.

In order to reveal (in)effective teacher talk in general and (im)precise instructions in particular, different tools such as transcript analyses can be used in teacher education. Making the quantity and quality of teacher talk explicit and creating awareness for particular features of classroom discourse are only two of the aims and potentials of transcript analyses in pre-service EFL teacher education. With regard to instruction-giving, Sowell points out that it "is an area that deserves attention and practice, as it has a major impact on how well students are able to carry out activities and, as a result, how well they learn" (2017: 11). For this reason, we will focus on characteristics of effective instruction-giving (section 2), which is then followed by a transcript analysis of a video-recorded lesson in section 3. The sequence is analyzed with regard to the teacher's instruction-giving competence while he is trying to implement a

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double circle in his classroom. The article closes with a reflection on teaching key concepts of classroom discourse in pre-service teacher education in section 4.

2 Reducing Teacher Talking Time through Effective Instruction-Giving

In this section, we will introduce characteristics of teacher explanations in classroom management contexts, namely their pedagogical aims and interactional features. For this, we will have a closer look at the approaches of Seedhouse (2004, 2009) and Walsh (2006).

In every EFL lesson teachers need to tell their students at some point what they are expected to do. While Seedhouse (cf. 2004: 133, 2009: 67) defines this particular lesson context as *procedural context*, Walsh (cf. 2006: 65f.) calls it *managerial mode* and lists the following pedagogical goals for this mode:

(a) to transmit information related to the management of learning
(b) to organize the physical conditions for learning to take place
(c) to refer learners to specific materials
(d) to introduce or conclude an activity
(e) to move to and from alternative froms of learning: lockstep (whole class), pair- and group-work, or individual. (Walsh 2006: 67)

Both Walsh (cf. 2006: 62) and Seedhouse (cf. 2009: 67) explicitly point out the interdependence between the pedagogical goals and the way teachers interact with their learners. With regard to the *procedural context*, respectively *managerial mode,*[2] they agree on an extended teacher turn (cf. Seedhouse 2004: 133, Seedhouse 2009: 67, Walsh 2006: 68). During the latter, the teacher transmits "procedural information to the students concerning the classroom activities which are to be accomplished in the lesson" (Seedhouse 2009: 67), most of the time uninterrupted by learner contributions (cf. Seedhouse 2004: 133, Seedhouse 2009: 67, Walsh 2006: 68). Walsh further explains the interactional features of *managerial mode* in greater detail:

(a) a single, extended teacher turn, frequently in the form of an explanation or instruction

[2] In this paper, Walsh's term *managerial mode* will be used in order to refer to situations when teachers explain to their students what they are supposed to do, as Walsh's framework of pedagogical goals and interactional features will then also provide the basis for the analysis in section 3.

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(b) the use of transitional markers (*all right*, *now*, *look*, *OK*, etc.) to focus attention or indicate the beginning or end of a lesson stage
(c) confirmation checks (Is that clear? Do you understand? Have you got that? Does everyone know what to do?)
(d) the absence of learner contributions. (Walsh 2006: 68, emphasis in the original)

When we look at the interactional features (a) and (d), it becomes evident that during *managerial mode*, the teacher is the center of the classroom. Consequently, the TTT is quite high at this point whereas student talking time (STT) can be considered almost non-existent, except if students "ask a question concerning the procedure" (Seedhouse 2004: 134), teachers actively involve their students or if the latter are asked to repeat the procedure (cf. Seedhouse 2004: 134f., Seedhouse 2009: 67f.).

Managerial mode can be found in different phases of an EFL lesson. According to Walsh, "it is most commonly found at the beginning of a lesson, managerial mode may occur post-activity or as a link between two stages in a lesson […]" (Walsh 2006: 69). For a successful transition between two lesson stages, it is important to distinctly mark it. Possible ways to do that include, among others, the use of certain discourse markers or prosodic features (cf. Seedhouse 2009: 73). According to Seedhouse, a clearly indicated transition as well as simple, clear and focused explanations (cf. ibid.: 76) are distinctive features of "successful, experienced teachers" (ibid.: 73).

All of the above mentioned characteristics are part and parcel of what Seedhouse defines as *Erklärkompetenz*, "a professional skill which is learnt with time and practice" (Seedhouse 2009: 66). However, as novice teachers usually lack this experience, their explanations are often not as efficient as those of experienced teachers: "They move away from the procedural explanations already given and enlarge or dilute the focus considerable by issuing multiple differing and even mutually contradictory pedagogical focuses" (Seedhouse 2009: 77). Even if the intention of the young, inexperienced teachers might be good, too much information or too many illustrating examples at a time tend to confuse rather than help the learners (cf. ibid.).

In order to avoid such situations, it can be helpful to note down the necessary instructions as precisely and clearly as possible while preparing a lesson (cf. Ur 1996: 16), using learner-friendly language (cf. Scrivener 2011: 65). It might also help to think of possibilities to support the instruction with tools such as gestures, pictures, drawings or written instructions (cf. Sowell 2017: 13). Before giving an instruction, it is important to have all the students' atten-

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tion (cf. Ur 1996: 17, Scrivener 2011: 65, Sowell 2017: 13). If an activity is more complex, students' understanding might be supported by breaking down the instruction into several steps (cf. Sowell 2017: 15) as well as demonstrating the activity beforehand (cf. Ur 1996: 17, Scrivener 2011: 65). Eventually, teachers also need to find out whether or not their students understood what they are supposed to do. While Sowell (2017: 15) proposes so-called *concept-check questions*, "simple questions that students can respond to with a short answer", Ur (cf. 1996: 17) and Scrivener (cf. 2011: 65) recommend a student's summary of the instruction to check for their understanding. All of these decisions depend on the learners' proficiency level and the complexity of the activity. Finally, it is the teacher's task to monitor the class while they carry out the activity in order to verify whether they have understood the instruction (cf. Scrivener 2012: 131). If this is not the case, teachers should stop the activity, get their learners' attention and explain the activity one more time (cf. ibid.). Even if certain activities do not work out the first time, it is worth trying again because the students need a certain routine until everything works out as planned (cf. Grieser-Kindel et al. 2006: 49). One of these activities might be the *double circle*, a cooperative learning method whose principles are briefly introduced in the following section.

3 Teachers' Instruction-Giving Competence: Explaining How to Use the Double Circle Method

3.1 Double Circle

While cooperative learning holds a lot of potential for all kinds of classrooms, it is especially known for its beneficial effects in foreign language teaching and learning contexts. In times of *Communicative Language Teaching*, so-called cooperative learning methods have become an integral part of foreign language teaching in general and in EFL classrooms in particular. With regard to foreign language classrooms, Bonnet et al. (cf. 2010: 146) point out that, among other advantages, cooperative learning methods create the opportunities to speak, to interact and consequently increase STT. In addition to that, they promote the students' social competence as during these activites, all of the group members have to work together in order to accomplish their goal (cf. Johnson et al. 2009: 103). Methods which pursue these goals of cooperative

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learning are, for example, the *placemat*, the *zipper*, the *jigsaw puzzle* and the *double circle*.

However, the successful and effective use of cooperative learning methods in ELT contexts depends to a considerable extent on the students' understanding of how it works. This, in turn, implies that the teacher's role is a crucial one as he/she needs to be able to precisely explain the method first. Especially the *double circle* method, which the teacher uses during the lesson sequence analyzed below, needs to be introduced properly for a smooth course of the activity.

The *double circle*, based on the *Think-Pair-Share* principle (cf. Bonnet 2009: 2), is supposed to proceed as follows: First, each learner has to prepare notes with regard to a certain topic (*Think*) (cf. ibid.: 3). Then, the class forms two circles: The inner circle faces outwards and the learners in the outer circle are looking at a fellow student of the inner circle (cf. Grieser-Kindel et al. 2006: 49). The students facing each other (*Pair*) exchange their opinions, information or solutions prepared in the sequence before. The aim of this phase is to create an opportunity for interaction. The partners are not supposed to merely read out loud what they have noted down before, but listen and respond to each other, just like in an authentic conversation. Usually, after an acoustic signal given by the teacher, one of the circles moves and the procedure is repeated with another partner (cf. Grieser-Kindel et al. 2006: 49). Grieser-Kindel et al. (cf. ibid.) suggest that, depending on the amount of time available in class, the students should talk to three or four different partners before they get back to their seats. Finally, one or several students of each circle present their outcomes in front of the class (*Share*) and the rest of the class is supposed to add aspects, give feedback or, if necessary, correct their classmates (cf. ibid.).

Altogether, Grieser-Kindel et al. (cf. ibid.: 48) schedule 30 to 45 minutes for this activity during which most of the time is supposed to be reserved for the interaction between the different partners and not for the teacher's explanation. Grieser-Kindel et al. further explain that the *double circle* permits a great number of learners to talk simultaneously. Consequently, the individual STT increases (cf. ibid.). In addition, learners can benefit from the *double circle* method as the simultaneous talk of all may reduce inhibitions of the individual learner to talk. Furthermore, students are not exposed to the whole group but only have to present their opinion or information to their partner (cf. ibid.).

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Properly implemented, the *double circle* can be considered an effective method to increase STT in language-in-use scenarios and to promote cooperative learning.

3.2 Transcript Analysis

In this section, a transcript analysis is used to investigate the instructions of an English teacher during a lesson in grade 9, *Realschule*. The video-recorded lesson is part of the material of the *EMU* project (Evidenzbasierte Methoden der Unterrichtsdiagnostik) conducted by Helmke and fellow researchers (cf. Helmke et al. 2018). The video is accessible under the following link: http://www.unterrichtsdiagnostik.info/video/. The website also provides a transcript of the entire lesson. However, as a more detailed transcript was needed for a thorough analysis, an individual transcript was created manually on the basis of the video-recorded lesson with regard to the transcription conventions we were introduced to in the university seminar "The Way Teachers Talk: Developing Classroom Discourse Competence".[3]

The overall topic of the lesson is "The perfect job"[4] (cf. Helmke et al. 2018). Prior to the analyzed sequence, the class had collected important aspects for choosing a career and had noted them in a mind-map. Then, the learners had been asked to choose some of these aspects and prepare a 20-second statement in which they explain why these aspects are important to them when they choose a job (individual work). In the analyzed sequence, the students are to present their statements to a partner. Therefore, the teacher wants them to form a *double circle*. The sequence at hand takes place towards the end of the lesson, from [34:18 to 40:24].

3.2.1 Managerial Mode

The teacher clearly marks the transition from individual work to a new activity with the sentence "Finish your sentence, please." (l. 2). This explicit announcement tells the learners that a shift in focus will follow. From line 6 to 35, the teacher explains what the learners are supposed to do next and – except for a short pause during which he is writes something down on the blackboard

[3] My transcript of the sequence at hand can be found in the Appendix to this article.
[4] The lesson is designed around the text "The perfect job" in *Red Line 5* (Stuttgart: Klett, 2010), 42–43.

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(ll. 15–16) – he speaks uninterruptedly. For this reason, we consider this part of the transcript the *managerial mode*:

01 [*Class is working on exercise. Sound of chalk on blackboard.*]
02 T: [*T is standing in front of the class.*] Finish your sentence (.)
03 please.
04 [*Some students are looking up, others are still writing into their*
05 *exercise books.*]
06 T: Take your (.) exercise book or, if you can do it without (1)
07 BRILLIANT [*T is raising both of his thumbs.*] then leave it
08 [*T is moving both hands towards a student's desk*] on the table
09 (1) [*T is raising both indexes*] Stand up, please!
10 [*Some students are standing up, others are still writing.*]
11 T: Now we do the FOLLOWING which (1) you know we did this
12 BEFORE (1) We make two CIRCLES (1) Okay? (2) One
13 person is missing today, so (.) there are (.) [*T is looking at class*]
14 exactly, one person is missing (.) so we are TWENTY-ONE.
15 [*T notes something on blackboard, while some students*
16 *are mumbling.*]
17 T: So we have (1) an INNER CIRCLE [*T is pointing to double*
18 *circle drawn onto the blackboard.*] with TEN people and (.) a
19 circle OUTSIDE [*T is drawing circle into the air.*] with (.)
20 eleven people. Okay (1)? So (2) we make one group with three
21 [*T is holding up three fingers.*] Okay (.)? So we have to (1)
22 make sure that everybody has a partner. And one group always
23 has (1) THREE. [*T is holding up three fingers.*] Not two (.) but
24 three (1) [*T is holding up two, then three fingers.*] Okay?
25 So (3) after this (1) I clap my hand (.) [*T is clapping hands.*] you
26 tell your partner (.) your statement (1) and (.) the partner tells
27 his statement to you (.) OKAY? [*T is clapping hands.*] I clap
28 again and I say (.) how many persons you move (.) Perhaps only
29 ONE [*T is holding up one finger.*], perhaps three persons (1)
30 [*T is holding up three fingers.*] to the left, to the right, I tell you
31 (.) So (.) SURPRISE, SURPRISE. I clap (.) I tell you (.) you
32 move (1) OKAY? Yes, we need some space here. So (.) could
33 you please just move the front row (1) [*T is pulling desk in*
34 *front of him a little to the front.*] and the middle row a bit (1)
35 then go into the CIRCLE.

Fig. 1: Transcript (ll. 01–35)

With regard to the pedagogical goals Walsh defined for this mode (see section 2 above), the teacher's intentions are the following here: Firstly, he has just concluded the former activity (l. 2), i.e. the individual work on the 20-second statement, and now, he introduces the next activity, the *double circle*. Therefore, he gives his learners information on the procedure, for example that there

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need to be two circles and that a group of three is needed due to the uneven number of learners (ll. 17–35). He also refers to the learners' materials and explains that they can either work with or without their notes (ll. 6–7). Lastly, the teacher organizes the physical learning environment by telling his students to move the desks of the front and the middle row in order to create some space for the *double circle* (ll. 32–34). Altogether, all of the five pedagogical goals for *managerial mode* established by Walsh (cf. 2006: 67) can be found in this extract.

As regards the use of interactional features that are characteristic of the *managerial mode* (cf. Walsh 2006: 68), the teacher's single, extended turn as well as the complete absence of learner contributions are among the most salient features to be noticed: From line 6 to 35, the teacher speaks uninterruptedly, except for a small pause in which he notes something on the blackboard (ll. 15–16). In total, this period takes 01:35 minutes, including the pause of four seconds. This means that the teacher already needs 01:31 minutes to tell his students what they are supposed to do before they start to form the double circle. In an overall sequence of 06:06 minutes it can be considered quite much to spend one quarter of the time to introduce the activity – especially because the learners already seem to be familiar with it, as the teacher mentions in line 11f.: "[…] you know we did this BEFORE […]". The main reason for this very long explanation seems to be the teacher's constant repetitions. For example, he tells his class three times that there needs to be a group of three people (ll. 20–24). The teacher also summarizes the procedure of what to do after the acoustic signal one more time but in a much shorter version: "I clap (.) I tell you (.) you move (1)" (ll. 31–32). Repetitions in general seem to be a part of the teacher's *teacherese*. Before the first round of the double circle, he informs his students: "I clap my hand, you start, statement one, statement two (.) and then we go ahead (.)" (ll. 55–57), which is the short form of the overall procedure he had explained before. In addition, the teacher repeats the instruction of where to go and how many people are to move at least twice after each round (ll. 61–62, 64, 72–73). Presumably, he thinks that more learners will hear or understand his explanations and instructions if he keeps repeating them. Most of the time, however, learners tend to get rather inattentive because they know that the teacher will tell them again what to do. For this reason, repetitions can be considered a rather ineffective feature of teacher talk, which, in many cases, unnecessarily increases TTT.

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With regard to TTT, another aspect is noteworthy: The teacher explains to his learners that he will tell them after each round how many persons and in which direction they will have to move (ll. 27–31). This creates additional TTT throughout the activity because the teacher always needs to give an instruction before the students can proceed. These additional instructions would not be necessary if the students were told to move a certain amount of steps to the left or right throughout the activity. Grieser-Kindel et al. (cf. 2006: 49) further propose to announce that only one circle moves after each round. For example, by clearly telling the class that after each round the inner circle moves three people to the left, TTT can be reduced because additional instructions such as in line 61 and 62, 64, 72 and 73 are no longer necessary.

Other interactional features of the *managerial mode* are transitional markers and confirmation checks (cf. Walsh 2006: 68). "Now we do the FOLLOWING" (l.10) functions as a transitional marker to announce the new activity. Furthermore, the transcript reveals that the teacher extensively uses the transition marker *so* and the word *okay* for confirmation checks: Basically all of the first four sentences (ll. 17–27) and the two last sentences (ll. 31–33) start with *So* and end with *Okay*, which is why it can be assumed that this is a structure that the English teacher uses subconsciously. Presumably, the teacher's instruction was neither planned nor practiced in advance. If he had done so while preparing the lesson, the instruction would have been more precise and he maybe would have integrated his drawing of the *double circle* more effectively into his explanation. It might have also helped the students to break down the instruction into several steps and/or to do a test run with the class before starting the activity.

Even if there are certain aspects that should be improved, it also has to be mentioned that the teacher speaks English not only throughout the *managerial mode* but also, as we will see later on, during the entire lesson sequence transcribed here. He further backs up his explanations with gestures, such as a *thumbs up* (l. 7) or raising a certain number of fingers to illustrate how many members the groups should have for the *double circle* (l.21, 23–24). Nevertheless, the instruction itself does not seems to have been explicit enough, as the following section will illustrate.

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3.2.2 Implementation of the *Double Circle*

The *double circle* starts after the teacher's short repetition of the overall procedure (ll. 55–58) and ends in line 76, when the teacher is clapping his hands and tells them to go back to their seats:

53 T: Eh (2) where is the group of three? Where is [*Group is raising their*
54 *hands*.] the group of three (.)? Wonderful [*T is also raising his hand*
55 *to signal group that he has seen them.*] (.) OKAY (1) I clap my
56 hand, you start, statement one, statement two (.) and then we go
57 ahead (.) OKAY [*T is clapping hands. Then, he is moving towards*
58 *the teacher's desk.*]
59 SSS: [*Students are standing in the double circle, presenting their*
60 *statements to each other. T is monitoring the class.*]
61 T: [*T is clapping hands.*] Now you move (1) THREE (.) to (.) THE
62 LEFT. THREE (.) to THE LEFT.
63 SSS: [*Students are mumbling.*]
64 T: Three to the left.
65 S6: Nur die Äußeren oder beide=
66 T: =BOTH circles.
67 SSS: [*Students are mumbling and move accordingly*.]
68 S7: Ehh, there is a problem.
68 T: = And (2) [*T is clapping hands.*] Go!
69 SSS: [*Students are moving a little further and are mumbling.*]
70 S8: Ich hab SELBER keinen Plan.
71 SSS: [*Students are presenting their statements to next partner*.]
72 T: [*T is clapping hands.*] And (1) TWO (1) to (.) THE RIGHT. TWO
73 to (.) THE RIGHT.
74 SSS: [*Students are moving again and are presenting statements to next*
75 *partner.*]
76 T: [*T is clapping hands.*] Go back to your seats please.
77 SSS: Oooh.
78 S9: Sollen wir die Tische wieder zurückstellen?
79 T: YES (1) exactly. Move back a bit (1) with your (.) first row.
80 SSS: [*Some students are mumbling and laughing, while they are moving*
81 *desks and chairs.*]
82 T: Now go to exercise (.) NUMBER (1) two. We work (.) with the text
83 IN DETAIL now.

Fig. 2: Transcript (ll. 53–83)

In total, this period is 02:25 minutes long and comprises three rounds of the *double circle*. According to the teacher's instructions, the students were supposed to prepare a 20-second presentation on job aspects that are important to them. Students were also asked to give reasons for their choices. Consequently, each round of the *double circle* should take *at least* 40 seconds so that each

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learner has the possibility to present his or her statement. Especially for the group of three, it would be ideal if these periods were even a bit longer. But only in the last of the three rounds we have a presentation period of 40 seconds. In the first and second round, however, the teacher gives his students about 35 seconds until he announces the next round through clapping his hands. Altogether, most of the learners barely speak for 55 seconds and the members of the group of three get to talk even less during the activity, if we only count the time during which they speak English. The overall STT, when the learners speak German *or* English, is very likely to be higher because many of them are mumbling, for example while pushing aside the chairs and tables in order to make room for the double circle (ll. 36, 43–44, 51). Some of these utterances were audible in the recording and therefore transcribed. Except for the sentences "I am inside?" (l. 40, see Appendix) and "Ehh, there is a problem." (l. 68), all of the audible student contributions were uttered in German, thus representing incidences of student code-switching.

In contrast to that, the teacher has an overall talking time of 02:19 minutes. This is more than one third of the transcribed lesson sequence and more than twice as much as the individual STT during the *double circle*. Consequently, it can be stated that the *double circle* increased the STT only marginally. In addition, the realization of the *double circle* did not include one of the most important principles of *cooperative learning*: positive interdependence (cf. Johnson et al. 2009: 103–109).

The way the teacher uses this method here does not require the contribution of each group member in order to achieve the goal. This is why the *double circle* does not unfold its full potential in this lesson. In order to do so, the teacher needs to design the activity in a way so that the learners are interdependent of one another. This could be realized, for example, through a competitive element, such as the instruction for the members of the inner and the outer circle to collect as many different job aspects as possible during the different rounds because the group with more aspects wins a prize. Each learner would then have to contribute to the group's success and they also would have to pay attention, listen closely and note down what their partners are telling them.

In addition, the *Share*-phase as well as the aspect of group processing do not exist in the transcribed sequence (or in this lesson). They are, however, central aspects of *cooperative learning* (cf. Johnson et al. 2009) which should not be left out. Instead, the teacher sends the students back to their seats once the last round of the *double circle* has come to an end and continues the lesson

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with the next exercise in the book (ll. 82–83). The *Share*-phase could, for example, be integrated through a task for each group (inner circle, outer circle) to design a poster with their collected aspects and then present it to their classmates.

It is also necessary to reflect these processes, not only for the learners, but also as a feedback for the teacher. If the teacher of our lesson sequence had done so, he maybe would have received the feedback that his instructions were not precise enough, as the transcript in Fig. 3 illustrates:

61 T: [*T is clapping hands.*] Now you move (1) THREE (.) to (.) THE
62 LEFT. THREE (.) to THE LEFT.
63 SSS: [*Students are mumbling.*]
64 T: Three to the left.
65 S6: Nur die Äußeren oder beide=
66 T: =BOTH circles.
67 SSS: [*Students are mumbling and move accordingly.*]
68 S7: Ehh, there is a problem.

Fig. 3: Transcript (l. 61–68)

During his introduction of the *double circle* in the *managerial mode*, the teacher forgot to mention which of the circles is to move after the acoustic signal. This is the reason for the confusion and hesitation of the students in line 63: They do not know whether the inner, the outer or both circles need to move and discuss it with lowered voices until S6 directly asks the teacher what to do.

Apparently, after this problem was solved, another one remains to cause confusion among the learners: S7 also informs the teacher about it ("Ehh, there is a problem."), but the latter does not seem to hear it, so the learners continue as they think. We can only guess what kind of problem arose here. It may have been the question of who forms the next group of three because also with regard to this aspect, the teacher did not give any further instructions once the group of three was found in the beginning (ll. 53–54). Grieser-Kindel et al. suggest with regard to this question: "Bei ungeraden Schülerzahlen, bittet L zwei S im Außenkreis mit einem S im Innenkreis eine Dreiergruppe zu bilden, ein überzähliger S kann auch als Regelbeobachter eingesetzt werden" (Grieser-Kindel et al. 2006: 49). These two learners need to know that they form the group of three with a third student of the inner circle throughout the entire activity and therefore, a clear instruction is needed.

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Another point that would have accelerated the sequence a bit and that presumably would have given the students more time to speak is the organization of the groups. Instead of only telling the learners to form an inner and an outer circle (ll. 12, 17–20), it would have been helpful to tell each student which circle he or she is a member of. This can be realized by letting the learners count alternately from one to two or by "Abzählen in A und B Gruppen" (Grieser-Kindel et al. 2006: 49). Then, all of the learners would have known where to go and the formation would not have taken as long as it did in the transcribed sequence.

All in all, the teacher's intention to use the *double circle* to increase STT was good, but there are certain aspects which still could be improved in order to unfold the full potential of this method.

4 Reflection

"Explaining to students what they are supposed to do is a skill which is acquired through experience" (Seedhouse 2009: 77). For a very long time, I was of the same opinion. I thought that classroom discourse competence in general and instruction-giving competence in particular would be something that novice teachers would master over time: the longer you teach and the more experience you gain, the better you would get at it. But the seminar "The Way Teachers Talk: Developing Classroom Discourse Competence" taught me otherwise. In the seminar, we looked at different features of classroom discourse and ways to analyze and improve teacher talk. By doing so, my awareness for this topic was raised and I realized that teachers, especially foreign language teachers, strongly guide and influence their students' learning through the way they talk.

After having attended the seminar, I am now convinced that classroom discourse competence is not only learnt through experience, but that it is possible and necessary to support this process by teaching the key concepts of classroom discourse at university. By doing so, pre-service teachers would know what to pay attention to when talking to their students and this theoretical knowledge could then be enriched by practical experience during internships and the two-year teacher training. Furthermore, knowing about the theoretical background enables teachers to work much more specifically on their classroom discourse competence and to improve certain aspects if necessary. While I was writing this paper, I interned at a Bavarian *Realschule* and when-

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ever I got the opportunity to prepare a lesson, I first tried to clearly state the goal of the lesson and then asked myself: What do you want to say and what do the learners need to know? These two questions helped me to formulate my instructions. I realized that if you do not know where you want to go with your explanation, you tend to get imprecise and the utterance lacks focus. While I was preparing the lessons, I also noted down my instructions, trying to be as precise, brief and clear as possible and practiced them. This procedure gives security and is a possibility to avoid superfluous and/or unstructured teacher talk.

Knowing about the theoretical background not only helped me to work on my own classroom discourse competence, but it also made me look differently at other teachers' instructions. During the internship, there were teachers who did a great job explaining to their students what they were supposed to do, and there were others who were not precise enough in their instructions. Consequently, they lost some students on the way who then came up with completely different solutions because they did not do the task as they were expected to. Particularly in groups of younger learners of English, I realized how important it is to provide a tight frame with concrete instructions because if you are too vague, the majority of the class will not know how to proceed.

In addition to integrating the teaching of key concepts of classroom discourse in pre-service teacher education, it is also helpful to get to know the tools which can help to analyze and evaluate teacher talk. Transcripts and transcript analyses, for example, are one of them: not only do they help to reveal, for instance, unnecessary teacher utterances or imprecise explanations and instructions, they also serve to identify code-switching, commonly used classroom phrases, error treatment and feedback habits (cf. Helmke et al. 2007: 42f.). They make classroom discourse discernible. When I first listened to what the teacher in the analyzed sequence said, I noticed some of the features of his *teacherese*, but only when I had transcribed this sequence myself manually and thoroughly studied the final transcript did I realize, among other things, how much he uses (unnecessary) repetitions and that the (over)use of certain discourse markers (*so* and *okay*) seem to have become rather ineffective features of his "classroom idiolect" (Walsh 2011: 217). The transcript helped me to notice a discourse pattern which I had not been aware of before. Though evaluating teacher talk on the basis of video-taped lesson recordings might yield some valuable insights, transcribing and analyzing lesson sequences might lead to an even deeper understanding of the complex structures of

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teacher talk and classroom discourse. Even if it is quite time-consuming to transcribe a lesson sequence manually (i.e. without the help of transcription software), it is absolutely worth it because it promotes your competence to listen closely and to critically reflect on teacher talk and classroom discourse in general. Furthermore, it raises your awareness towards different classroom discourse features, and creating a transcript makes you also think critically about your own classroom discourse competence and teacher talking habits.

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Appendix

Transcript of Lesson Sequence

[*Class is working on exercise. Sound of chalk on blackboard.*]
T: [*T is standing in front of the class.*] Finish your sentence (.) please.
[*Some students are looking up, others are still writing into their exercise books.*]
T: Take your (.) exercise book or, if you can do it without (1) BRILLIANT [*T is raising both of his tumbs.*] then leave it [*T is moving both hands towards a student's desk*] on the table (1) [*T is raising both indexes*] Stand up, please!
[*Some students are standing up, others are still writing.*]
T: Now we do the FOLLOWING which (1) you know we did this BEFORE (1) We make two CIRCLES (1) Okay? (2) One person is missing today, so (.) there are (.) [*T is looking at class*] exactly, one person is missing (.) so we are TWENTY-ONE. [*T notes something on blackboard, while some students are mumbling.*]
T: So we have (1) an INNER CIRCLE [*T is pointing to double circle drawn onto the blackboard.*] with TEN people and (.) a circle OUTSIDE [*T is drawing circle into the air.*] with (.) eleven people. Okay (1)? So (2) we make one group with three [*T is holding up three fingers.*] Okay (.)? So we have to (1) make sure that everybody has a partner. And one group always has (1) THREE. [*T is holding up three fingers.*] Not two (.) but three (1) [*T is holding up two, then three fingers.*] Okay? So (3) after this (1) I clap my hand (.) [*T is clapping hands.*] you tell your partner (.) your statement (1) and (.) the partner tells his statement to you (.) OKAY? [*T is clapping hands.*] I clap again and I say (.) how many persons you move (.) Perhaps only ONE [*T is holding up one finger.*], perhaps three persons (1) [*T is holding up three fingers.*] to the left, to the right, I tell you (.) So (.) SURPRISE, SURPRISE. I clap (.) I tell you (.) you move (1) OKAY? Yes, we need some space here. So (.) could you please just move the front row (1) [*T is pulling desk in front of him a little to the front.*] and the middle row a bit (1) then go into the CIRCLE.
SSS: [*Students are moving tables and chairs. Some students are quietly talking to each other.*]
T: Ten inside, eleven outside as I said (.) Give your partner (1) your hand to show that it works.
S1: I am inside?
T: [*T is laughing.*] Torsten, do you need a CHAIR? (2) Mmh (1) [*T is laughing again.*] OKAY.
SSS: [*Class is trying to form a circle. Each student is looking for a partner. Some students are mumbling and laughing.*]
S2: Hallo, wir müssen einen KREIS machen.

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S3: Das ist doch ein Kreis.
S4: Ja Anni, mach mal zu!
T: Yeah (1) Just move the row back a bit. It's (1) Yes (.) you have to stand a bit CLOSER (.) Nobody bites (2) Give your partner the hand, please. [*T is laughing.*]
SSS: [*Students are mumbling.*]
S5: Wir haben hier schon fast nen'halben.
T: Eh (2) where is the group of three? Where is [*Group is raising their hands.*] the group of three (.)? Wonderful [*T is also raising his hand to signal group that he has seen them.*] (.) OKAY (1) I clap my hand, you start, statement one, statement two (.) and then we go ahead (.) OKAY [*T is clapping hands. Then, he is moving towards the teacher's desk.*]
SSS: [*Students are standing in the double circle, presenting their statements to each other. T is monitoring the class.*]
T: [*T is clapping hands.*] Now you move (1) THREE (.) to (.) THE LEFT. THREE (.) to THE LEFT.
SSS: [*Students are mumbling.*]
T: Three to the left.
S6: Nur die Äußeren oder beide=
T: =BOTH circles.
SSS: [*Students are mumbling and move accordingly.*]
S7: Ehh, there is a problem.
T: = And (2) [*T is clapping hands.*] Go!
SSS: [*Students are moving a little further and are mumbling.*]
S8: Ich hab SELBER keinen Plan.
SSS: [*Students are presenting their statements to next partner.*]
T: [*T is clapping hands.*] And (1) TWO (1) to (.) THE RIGHT. TWO to (.) THE RIGHT.
SSS: [*Students are moving again and are presenting statements to next partner.*]
T: [*T is clapping hands.*] Go back to your seats please.
SSS: Oooh.
S9: Sollen wir die Tische wieder zurückstellen?
T: YES (1) exactly. Move back a bit (1) with your (.) first row.
SSS: [*Some students are mumbling and laughing, while they are moving desks and chairs.*]
T: Now go to exercise (.) NUMBER (1) two. We work (.) with the text IN DETAIL now.