INTRODUCTION

Current research addresses the relationship between the language available to learners in language classrooms and its affect on language acquisition. Different types of classroom activities can be expected to affect the classroom discourse. For example, the interaction between teacher and students when doing a language drill is expected to be different from the interaction that takes place when the teacher is giving a lecture or assisting students with homework. Based on Long's (1981) findings that the degree of adjustment made in foreigner talk (FT) is related to the nature of the task performed, task type was considered an important factor in the analysis of classroom discourse. The work presented here provides a description and characterization of teacher talk (TT) in two different classroom activities: grammar and vocabulary explanations. Vocabulary and grammar explanations both involve the expression and explanation of information to facilitate comprehension by the students. These were selected for analysis because they are believed to be typical of a commonly occurring type of teacher talk.

Chaudron (1979) looked at the characteristics of TT when elaborating, explaining or clarifying vocabulary. He considered which characteristics might prove helpful or harmful for the comprehension and acquisition of vocabulary, finding that over-elaboration by increased redundancy or rephrasing may complicate the decoding process for the NNS. In another work, discussing simplification of speech by teachers in ESL classrooms, Chaudron (1983) attributed the ambiguity and confusion in providing vocabulary explanations to the dual pressure on the teacher to present information while adjusting to the students' linguistic level.
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PURPOSE

This paper will focus on providing a description and characterization of the structure of vocabulary and grammar explanations as manifested in classroom discourse with a view towards identifying features for comparison which might lend themselves to further quantitative analysis. Issues to be investigated are: (1) how teachers structure explanations, in particular, what features occur which designate a portion of discourse an "explanation," (2) how these features are sequenced and (3) what features may or may not make these explanations comprehensible.

METHOD

Data Collection. Six hours of classroom interaction were tape recorded. Data was gathered from three basic level ESL courses (Basic Reading Skills (BR), Basic Oral and Listening Skills (BL), and Basic Writing Skills (BW)) which is equivalent to a basic grammar class) and from three advanced level ESL courses (Advanced Grammar (AG), Advanced Writing (AW), and Advanced Speaking and Listening class (AL)) offered at a private college in Hawaii.

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1 The Basic Writing Skills course was recorded a second time, because most of the first class period was spent doing individual study and the consultations between teacher and individual students were largely inaudible. The second taping also included sections of individual study, but the two tapes taken together provided about one hour of data.

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The two proficiency levels were chosen for comparison purposes. New students at the college are placed on the basis of the Michigan English Placement Test, a writing sample, and the CELT Listening Test. The Michigan English Placement Test tests students' listening, grammar, vocabulary and
reading. Out of 100 possible points, students with scores ranging from 1 - 15 are placed in the basic level and students with scores ranging from 65-89 are placed in the advanced level. The difference between basic and advanced levels represents a 50 point difference on the Michigan English Placement Test. However, the students ranked here as advanced, may not be at a comparable level of English language proficiency as students in other institutions.

Informed only of our interest in doing classroom centered research, teachers were asked to record the entire class session. They were told that any normal class activities were of interest to the researchers, and that they should carry out whatever lessons were planned for that day. The researchers were not present during the classes. The transcription of the entire taped periods was shared by the researchers, each later verifying the transcriptions done by the other. Analyses were conducted using these transcriptions and/or the sound tapes as needed.

Teachers. The teachers were three males and three females, all experienced and qualified with Masters degrees as teachers of ESL. ESL teaching experience ranged from 5 to 27 years. All were familiar with at least one other language, and had had overseas teaching experience.

Students. At this college, students represent a heterogeneous group with widely varying L1 backgrounds. Class size averages about 20 students. Length of time spent in the U.S. varies from a few weeks to one year or more. Most students are studying in order to continue their educations at the college, although others are enrolled primarily to learn English.

Coding Procedures. Once the categories as presented in this paper were established, the researchers practiced together to code three transcripts for these features then the remaining transcripts were coded by each researcher.
separately. Inter-rater reliability was 95%, determined in the following manner: percent of agreement = (total number of coding instances) minus (total number of coding instances where raters disagreed) divided by (total number of coding instances).

**Analytical Categories.** Various approaches have been suggested for an analysis of general classroom discourse (Bellack et al., 1966; Sinclair and Coulthard 1975; Fanselow 1977; Sinclair and Brazil 1982). In order to provide a description and characterization of the structure of vocabulary and grammar explanations the researchers developed a model for the categorization of these two types of classroom activities. The categories of analysis presented here were derived from a careful examination of the collected data. In conducting this analysis, the researchers first examined the transcripts and tried to determine where the grammar and vocabulary explanations occurred and what features characterized these sequences. From among the features identified by the researchers, the units of analysis for this study were selected. Finally, a binary system of ± features (to capture the distribution of features) and a type of flow chart analysis (to capture the sequencing of structural features) was established by which to code the data. While the system presented here is by no means comprehensive in accounting for all the phenomena occurring within an explanation, the researchers believe the system of analysis presented does give preliminary insight into the structure of vocabulary and grammar explanations. A discussion of the viability of these features as categories of analysis will follow. For the purposes of analysis, sections of the transcripts which deal with a vocabulary or grammar explanation were identified. All such instances of explanation were considered in the analysis, although a few cases which were only partially audible were deleted from the coding.
An explanation sequence is defined as an utterance or a series of utterances by the teacher, or an exchange of utterances between the teacher and students which incorporates any explanation (definitions, statements about rules of usage, and examples) given by the teacher concerning a vocabulary item or grammatical point. A sequence includes all utterances related to the giving of an explanation. A vocabulary sequence is any sequence (as defined above) which involves an explanation by the teacher of a vocabulary item while a grammar sequence involves an explanation of a grammatical point.

The ± binary system of features includes the categories of analysis as listed in Figure 1. If the feature was present in an explanation, a plus (+) value was coded for that sequence. Conversely, if a feature was absent from an explanation, a minus (-) value was coded for that sequence. The features [+ Planned] and [+ Teacher-initiated] are outside of the explanation sequence itself, but are hypothesized to affect the quality and structure of explanations. These and all other features of analysis will be described in this section.

Insert Figure 1

[+ Planned] refers to a sequence which occurs as a pedagogic point of a lesson. In other words, Planned is used to characterize those explanation sequences which the teacher intends to cover in a lesson. The pre-listening activity in AL is an example of a teacher's planned intent to introduce a list of vocabulary and their meanings.

Example 1 [+ Planned]: vocab. seq.

T: First thing I would like to do is introduce you to some new vocabulary...that you will hear...in episodes seven and eight...OK?...some of these words I'm sure you know, and a few of them I think maybe you don't...and uh...these will be important words for your understanding of, of the story.
T: Ok let's take a look at word one. "state"...ahem, excuse me. Julie, what's a "state"?

[- Planned] refers to a sequence which occurs not as a pedagogic point of the lesson, but arises spontaneously during other types of classroom interaction in response to a question, error, misunderstanding or due to the teacher's perceived notion that an explanation is necessary. The following example occurred during a teacher's opening remarks to a class.

Example 2 [- Planned] [+ Teacher-initiated] vocab. seq.

T: Alright, this week, I have to turn in to the registrar, the names of the people who are getting deficiencies. Deficiency means that, currently you have a D or an F in my class. So, they will be sending certain ones of you a notice.

[+ Teacher-initiated] refers to an explanation which is initiated by the teacher. Such a sequence may be either a planned or unplanned explanation (see Ex. 2). [- Teacher-initiated] means that an explanation by the teacher is initiated by a direct question from a student or comment about a vocabulary or grammar point. Few such instances were found in the data, these will be discussed later in this paper.

The definitions for Frame and Focus originate with Coulthard (1977), however, when necessary the researchers adapted these definitions and expanded their meanings. Frame, as defined by Coulthard (1977), is an indication that one transaction/topic/activity has ended and another is beginning. A frame may be a single word utterance (well, good, right, alright, now, okay) which is usually strongly stressed, uttered with falling intonation and followed by a short pause. The normal meaning of these words is suppressed, as they function as topic-initiating moves. The researchers found that a frame may also take the form of a short phrase (by the way, now here, next one) serving the same function as the single word utterance. In the teacher's provision of
a grammar or vocabulary explanation, it is hypothesized that such explanation will be more salient if it is framed. Paralinguistic features such as pauses and intonation change may implicitly identify the beginning and end of a sequence, however, it is questionable whether such paralinguistic features are salient to the NNS.

Grammar and vocabulary sequences were analyzed in terms of [+ Frame]. [+ Frame] means that there is an explicit indication of topic change. [− Frame] means that there is no indication of topic change.

Example 3 [+ Frame]: gram. seq. − frame by a single word utterance

T: (students doing individual work) Alright. One thing I see in a couple of your "sentences ... is ... neither, nor (writes)

Example 4 [− Frame]: gram. seq.

S: (semicolon)

T: comma. If it's not two sentences, if it's just a list, you can't use a semicolon. For example th-th the for example "Milky Ways//{(S: comma optional) comma, Snickers optional or Three Musketeers" period. "As for myself, I like to go to a good restaurant ... and have a steak"

S: comma

T: "a baked potato"

S: comma

T: comma, "a salad"

While a frame serves to identify the beginning or end of a sequence, an explanation can also be made salient by focusing moves. Focus serves the pedagogic function of setting the context for subsequent behavior by either launching or halting/excluding interaction between students and teachers (Coulthard 1977). Teachers launch a class with structuring moves in which they focus attention on the topic or problem to be discussed during that session.
Each explanation sequence was coded for the presence of any focusing move [+ Focus] and for each possible manifestation of the focus (these manifestations were identified by the researchers in the preliminary analysis). In the structure of explanation sequences, [+ Focus] indicates that some focusing device is incorporated into an explanation sequence. Focus can be manifested as (1) a one or two word announcement of the topic item ("state", "parallel structure," "number five") (2) a metastatement which tells the students what the transaction is going to be about ("state has a lot of different meanings, but when you listen to the tape you're going to hear a new one") (3) a solicit by the teacher which serves to focus attention on the teaching point and may or may not be followed by an interactive exchange ("Julie, what's a 'state'?"), or (4) a combination of these manifestations. [- Focus] indicates the absence of any focusing move from an explanation sequence.

Example 5 [- Focus]: gram. seq. - partial repetition by teacher of student utterance immediately followed by grammar explanation.

S: This is a book

T: Is .. a book. "This" is singular .. "is" is singular. (And we need) "a book." singular singular singular .. OK/ N do this one.

Explanation is the only obligatory feature in the structure of explanation sequences. Explanations function to clarify unfamiliar material or to reinforce teaching points. An explanation can be realized in various ways. [+ Explicit definition/rule] and [+ Direct Usage] were employed in the analysis. These manifestations of explanation were coded separately to determine their relative frequency, but could occur together.

Explicit definition or statement of rule of usage [+ Explicit definition/rule] indicates the presence or absence of an explicit explanation. For example, in Ex. 2, "Deficiency means that currently you have a D or an F in my class" constitutes a [+ Explicit definition/rule]
[+ Direct Usage] indicates the presence or absence of explanation by direct usage of the target form by the teacher in a sentence. An example may also be provided by an aside, reference to real events, or story which is related to the teaching point, but does not include the usage of the target form. In instances of [+ Direct Usage], the students must infer meaning or rules of usage. Examples are as follows:

Example 6 [+ Direct Usage]: vocab. seq. - teacher uses target form in example sentences.

T: It's very interesting for teachers, at HPC .. to think about the motives .. of students .. for being at HPC .. sometimes the motive is to come to Hawaii and go surfing all day .. and you can get a student visa .. and go play in Waikiki .. other students have a different motive.

Example 7 [+ Direct Usage]: gram. seq. - teacher models the correct and incorrect target form by using an example from the text.

T: (pause) Ah, parallelism is ah .... ah Michelangelo in the example on page 90 .... Right before faulty parallelism "Michelangelo was both a sculptor and a painter." So you want to make both of those the same kind of (areas). Uhm (writes) "Michelangelo was both a sculptor .. and .... painting." This would not be parallel structure.

The final optional component of explanation structure is the Restatement [+ Restmt]. The researchers found that often, near the end of an explanation sequence, a metastatement concludes or summarizes what the sequence was about or has achieved before the class moves on. This serves to signal the end of the explanation and may be followed by a comprehension check. The restatement may be realized (1) by a paraphrase or an exact or partial repetition of the previously stated topic item, definition and/or usage rule (Ex. 8) (2) by an expansion of the previously stated definition/rule (Ex. 9) and/or (3) by the use of additional examples (Ex. 10).

Example 8 [+ Restmt] [+ Exact/partial repetition]: vocab. seq.

T: number eight we all know, right? "shadow" .. you know "shadow"? ah
... a shadow is a dark place because the light is blocked. Under the chair there's a dark area, (that's) a shadow and you can see a shadow on the building outside the window. So, how can we say that, ah ... an area of darkness caused by light being blocked seems like a silly word, but it's part of episode eight and you want to listen for it (pause)

S: (______)

T: You want it again? OK. An area of darkness caused by light ... being blocked ... shadow ...

Example 9 [+ Restmt] [+ Expansion]: vocab. seq.

T: "We" is that all of them? I, you, he, she, it, me ... right. OK. These are the only words ... the only words you can use with a tag question. You cannot use a name. You cannot use "these" ... right? You cannot use "books." You cannot use "this." You can only use these pronouns ... OK?

Example 10 [+ Restmt] [+ Examples]: vocab. seq.

T: OK? Let's say uh ... well here's a good example, I walked into the classroom 10 minutes ago and there were ... chairs and desks all scattered all over the place, and I would say that the room is in a terrible state, a st-terrible condition OK? So you listen on the tape now to what old Mrs. Bentley says about coke. She uses this word ... OK? Next one ... Any questions on this? You're OK? Physical or mental condition. If I have a headache I'll say "oh, my, my head is in a bad state, a bad condition." Alright?

[- Restmt] indicates the absence of any of these summarizing moves from an explanation sequence. Each explanation sequence was coded for the presence of any possible realization of Restmt and for each possible manifestation of Restmt. It is assumed that the presence of Restmt in an explanation sequence will make that sequence more salient to the listener as s/he processes the discourse. See Ex. 4 and note that immediately after providing the explanation the teacher resumes the exercise review.

RESULTS

Feature Analysis. The number of explanation sequences identified and coded for in each transcript is listed in Table 1.

Insert Table 1
AL accounted for almost half of the vocabulary explanation data (18 out of 39 sequences or 46%). This consisted primarily of a list of 16 words that were introduced and explained as a preparatory activity for a listening exercise. Other vocabulary explanations occurred intermittently in the remaining transcripts except there was no vocabulary data from AL. Grammar explanations were concentrated in the transcripts from BL and AG (21 out of 28 sequences or 75%). No grammar explanations were found in the transcript from BR.

The composite raw tallies and percentile scores resulting from the feature analysis are reported in Tables 2 and 3 respectively. Results are reported for both proficiency levels, for both vocabulary and grammar explanations, and for total explanation sequences.

Insert Table 2

Insert Table 3

A comparison of the percentile scores (Table 3) for Total Vocabulary Sequences (39 sequences) and Total Grammar Sequences (28 sequences) indicates that these two types of explanation are similar in distribution and frequency of structural features. Total Vocabulary Sequences (44%) show a higher percentage of planned explanations than Total Grammar (18%), the vocabulary sequences are primarily accounted for in the AL data. Differences can also be noted in the categories of Frame, Topic Item and Direct Usage with Total Vocabulary exhibiting a higher percentage of frequency of these features than Total Grammar. Statistical analysis remains to be performed to determine if these differences are significant.

Differences may also be seen in a comparison of the percentile scores for Total Basic Vocabulary (14 sequences) and Total Advanced Vocabulary (25 sequences). Total Advanced Vocabulary has a higher percentage of Planned sequences, Teacher-initiated sequences and higher percentile scores in all
categories except Teacher Solicit and Expansions.

In comparison to Total Basic Grammar (15 sequences), Total Advanced Grammar (13 sequences) has a higher percentage of Planned explanations, more focusing moves by Topic Item and Metastatement and Restatements.

Tables 4 and 5 show the results of the feature analysis reported as a comparison between planned and unplanned explanations.

Insert Table 4
Insert Table 5

A comparison of Planned explanations shows that planned explanations more often include a frame, a focus by topic item or metastatement, a direct usage of the teaching point in the explanation, and restatement in the form of exact/partial repetition and examples.

**Unanalyzed Elements.** The basic structure of explanation sequences discussed here does not account for every type of utterance found to occur within an explanation sequence. For example, an explanation sequence might include a directive by the teacher to the students ("so listen on the tape now..."), or the teacher might make a comment which is an expression of feeling or a comment to his/herself ("how can we say that..., "seems like a silly word"). These types of comments were found to occur during the stage of the focus or restatement in the basic structure of explanation sequences. This type of utterance was not considered basic to the discourse structure of explanation sequences.

**Sequential Ordering of Features.** Figure 2 illustrates the realization of the basic structure of explanation sequences.

Insert Figure 2

Each explanation sequence was diagrammed according to its composition and ordering of optional and obligatory structural components. Every different
structural pattern was noted, and a distribution analysis was done to
determine the frequency with which any one pattern occurred. The results of
the analysis of explanation sequence structure are presented in Table 6.

Insert Table 6

Table 6 shows that 10 structural patterns were found to occur. The
structural patterns of Foc-Explan and Explan are the most commonly occurring
in explanation sequences considered overall. For grammar sequences,
Foc-Explan (32%), Explan (32%), and Foc-Explan-Restmt (21%) are the three
dominant patterns. The structure of vocabulary sequences seems more variable,
however, Foc-Explan (28%), Explan (26%), and Foc-Explan-Restmt (13%) are still
the dominant patterns. There are also several examples each of Fr-Foc-Explan
(10%), Fr-Foc-Explan-Restmt (8%), and Foc-Explan-Foc-Restmt (5%). It should
be noted, however, that all but one example (in ER) of these less dominant
patterns occur in AL.

Comprehensibility. No empirical analysis was performed in order to
determine the comprehensibility of explanation sequences or the contribution
towards comprehensibility provided by individual structural features. The
question of comprehensibility will be discussed, however, in the following
section.

DISCUSSION

The results of these analyses show that vocabulary and grammar
explanations have a similar distribution of features and that the explanations
themselves exhibit similar structural patterns.

Feature Analysis. As seen in Table 2, the teacher maintains control over
class activities, resulting in the fact that most explanation sequences were
teacher initiated. Only three instances of [-Teacher-initiated] sequences
were noted in the data. These three instances were vocabulary explanations in
BR, however, as can be seen in Ex. 11, it was difficult to determine whether the student actually initiated this sequence since the student's input (*) was inaudible and [- Teacher-initiated] can only be presumed based on the teacher's response.

Example 11 [- Teacher-initiated]: vocab. seq.

T: (pause) (in the book)
*S: (____)

T: I don't know if it's in here or not... (pause) "trade"..I have a red pencil. I don't like my red pencil. I don't like my red pencil..will anybody trade with me?

S: OK, trade with me

T: Trade with me? OK..now I have (another) yellow pencil. now I'm happy (____) ...my pencil has peanuts on it.

The teacher's intention to teach a particular point was hypothesized to be an important factor in determining the structure of an explanation sequence. In fact, as shown in Tables 4 and 5, [+ Planned] sequences have a more elaborate structure with a higher frequency of frame, focus by topic item or metastatement, direct usage of the teaching point in the explanation, and restatement than occurs in [- Planned] sequences. [+ Explanation] as the sole component of a grammar or vocabulary sequence is considered the simplest structural form that an explanation can take. A structure becomes more elaborate if it contains more of the optional elements designated in the structural analysis (Figure 2).

Planned as a feature of analysis, however, is sometimes a difficult characterization to make, because it is problematic to determine a teacher's forethought intention to teach any particular point. A planned vocabulary activity occurred during AL when the teacher defined a list of vocabulary words and their meanings in preparation for a listening task (see Ex. 1).
Ex. 12 is an illustration of a [+ Planned] grammar sequence.

Example 12 [+ Planned]: gram. seq.

T: So study up through unit 4 and then we'll go ahead now with unit 5 parallel structure. We started talking about this the other day ....

Unplanned vocabulary and grammar sequences, on the other hand, can occur during any type of classroom interaction or activity (see Ex. 2) and because of this include fewer framing and focusing moves. Within ongoing discourse, the teacher may spontaneously provide an explanation with or without any indication (i.e. by means of linguistic/paralinguistic cues) that s/he is doing so. This in turn might make the discourse difficult to process because the students may not be prepared for an explanation. In addition, spontaneously occurring explanations are often very brief and this too may lead to difficulties in students' capturing the pertinent information.

Example 13 [- Planned]: vocab. seq.

T: OK. "the groom's friends visit a bride's house and they hang," you know what a groom is, right?

S: umhmm

T: that's the guy. "They hang the groom by his feet .. by his feet .. and hit him with a piece of wood, until, food comes out .. until he gets .."  

S: uh (I mean the food is uh from the um, um bride's mother .. comes from bride's mother)

For an example of a [- Planned] grammar sequence see Ex. 4.

The focusing move of explanation sequences has several possible manifestations. A statement of topic item or a metastatement serves to focus on the object of explanation. A teacher solicit serves the same purpose, but may also stimulate an interactive exchange between teacher and student(s). Several examples may illustrate the possibilities for interaction following a teacher solicit in a focusing move. A teacher may make a general solicit
which often was immediately followed with the teacher answering his/her own question (Ex. 8) and/or with additional solicit(s). In other sequences, however, a teacher solicit would elicit a student response. The teacher then provides an explanation, giving a definition or information about usage of a vocabulary or grammar term after the student response.

Differences in teacher's style can be seen. Within the context of an exercise review, the AG teacher typically solicited the answers to the exercise review questions from the students. When the students failed to provide the right answer, however, the teacher provided an explanation (as a subsequence of the larger activity) and then returned directly to the exercise review.

Example 14: gram. seq. - teacher continues from explanation into exercise review.

T: Parallel would be even using the same words. Like of, of, of. Or (disability one, disability two, disability three) It's parallel words, the same words, used again ... number six ... N?

S: (____)

T: not is like ... works like a conjunction here (though) so "not" should be circled. ("not ____ , but sometimes so") ... It's like ah number two. You have "not only, but also." It's sort of like that. Number 7? Ah, N?

Other teachers solicit not only for the answers to exercise questions, but when the exercise drill breaks down, they also solicit for a rule or explanation from the student which, if provided, the teacher usually repeats, expands upon, or summarizes. Note in Ex. 15 how the teacher repeatedly solicits the students for the correct response.

Example 15: vocab. seq. - teacher solicits for definition/rule.

T: how can you? ahhh/

S: (  )

T: what's the difference? huh?
S: ( )

T: what's the difference here? (writes)

S: ( )

T: yeah. they're different but, what's the difference? What's the meaning here? How can you go to school? How do you go to school?

S: ( )

T: hmm?

S: ( )

T: hmm. ye - ah. you could use "get" .. but .. I want to know, I want you to tell me .. what's the difference between these?

S: ( )

T: ok .. ok. yeah. I think you've got the idea .. here when you say, how can you go .. I can walk, I can drive, I can go by bus .. anything .. I can go by taxi .. any kind .. of transportation .. but how do you ... which way do you take? I go by bus .. now I can, do other things, but I don't ... I go .. by bus .... alright ...

With the incorporation of an interactive exchange, the focusing move may become complex and lengthy. Furthermore, solicits to promote an exercise review or oral drill, solicits to focus student attention on an explanation, and other solicits occurring within the explanation or restatement may all be used together. Thus, a focusing solicit may draw student attention to the teaching point making the explanation more salient. However, depending on the type of interactive exchange which ensues, the explanation may be confused by the intervening transaction.

In the structure of explanation sequences, the explanation is the only obligatory component. [+ Explicit definition/rule] grammar explanations are generally concerned with rules of usage while [+ Explicit definition/rule] vocabulary explanations may be either definitions or statements about usage. There is greater variation in the sentence structures of the explicit grammar
explanations than the explicit vocabulary explanations. The following realizations of \([+\text{Explicit definition/rule}]\) were identified in the data:

**Vocabulary**

X means ...  It's a word to describe ...
X is ...  For example, I would say ...
X is used for/to talk about ...  If ..., I would say ...
It's a word for ...  When you ..., it's an X

**Grammar**

The rule is ...  You can/can't say ...
You can/can't use/have ...  You have to ...
It's got to be ...  You don't need ...
It has to be ... because  X would be ...
X is like ...  This would not be ...
That's not ...  Put a ... there because ...
This is ... (negative, singular, etc)  If you use ... then ...
If you have ... then you use ...

Grammar rules/definitions may be either positively or negatively stated, both forms being commonly used. In vocabulary explanations, however, only one instance of a negatively stated explicit definition/rule was found (see Ex. 16). This phenomenon may be related to the fact that grammar explanations are often concerned with rules of usage. Thus, the teacher may point out what is or is not common usage (Ex. 17).

Example 16: vocab. seq. - negatively stated explanation.

T: By the way, uncle, uncle is not old and frisky. Dogs ... are frisky.

Example 17: gram. seq. - example of what is not common usage.

T: It's very, its not common at all to begin a sentence with "and." It's not a good word to begin a sentence with (with and ...) You see it
... in stylistic writing, but in general the rule is not to begin a sentence with and. And belongs inside the sentence (that has) one or two ideas.

Furthermore, in explanations by direct usage, correct as well as incorrect models were given by the teacher in grammar explanations (see Ex. 7 where the teacher provides a correct and incorrect example of parallel structure). This would be unlikely to happen in a vocabulary explanation because it would be inappropriate to use a word in context incorrectly.

**Sequential Ordering of Features.** The basic structure of explanation sequences has been described, but it should be noted that there may be deviations from this basic structure. Explanation sequences may occur within other types of classroom discourse or may overlap with each other. Such overlaps between sequences or types of classroom discourse may cause the addition or omission of optional components, but generally the ordering of the structural components is constant. As reported in Table 6, however, there were four examples (out of 67 sequences) of deviant ordering found in the data. These were: 1 example of Explan-Foc-Restmt, 1 example of Foc-Fr-Foc-Explan-Restmt, and 2 examples of Foc-Explan-Foc-Restmt. All of these examples are vocabulary explanations (no explanation why the deviations are only in vocab is forthcoming at this time) and each deviation concerns the focus move. Overlap between sequences may account for the deviation in ordering of structural components.

The structure of overlapping sequences is variable, depending on the number of sequences involved in the overlap. Frequently, the subsequence(s) consist of only the obligatory explanation. Sometimes, however, a focus move or restatement is included. The relationship between overlapping sequences was diagrammed as follows:
Example 18

Transcript:

T: Number six. Oh, now look at this one. You see there are two prepositions there, "for" and "to" ... the reason why I put two prepositions there is, when you switch prepositions, you have, a completely different meaning and you kind of have to be careful with this one when you listen to the tape. "To be no good for" ... means to be ah, not useable, useless ... OK. useless ... didn't I tell you last week I was gonna try to go on a diet (because I'm getting too fat)?

S: umhm

T: OK ... this is embarassing to tell you, but, about a year and a half ago .. I could wear, blue jeans with a waist size of 30 .. small .. now, my blue jeans are not good .. they're no good .. they're too small. now it's 33 .. (class laughs) most of this is beer .. Budweiser .. OK. "to be no good for." Now .. the other one that I would like you to remember .. which is also used in the tape .. is "to be no good to" someone and that just means to be unkind .. to be unkind to someone ... lots of times the wife will complain .. to the neighbor, "oh, my husband is no good to me" ...

This example is from five instances of overlapping sequences found in the data. Although other manifestations may certainly be possible, some regularity of structure can be noted. However, these samples of overlapping sequences represent complex explanation sequences which the researchers sometimes found difficult to sort out and identify. The complexity and ambiguity of overlapping sequences may obliterate their explanatory function.

The development and progression through the basic structural stages of an explanation might be interrupted at any point by: (1) interaction between the students and teacher including comprehension checks by the teacher, questions by the students, solicit/response/react exchanges or (2) by side comments (directives, expressives, asides) by the teacher. Such an interruption might cause a recycling through the stages of the explanation sequence. The
vocabulary sequence in Ex. 15 illustrates this recycling process with a series of four focusing moves by solicit in which the teacher asks the difference between "can" and "do" before providing an explanation himself. As stated before, most interactive exchanges occur during the focus move by solicit. These interactive exchanges may involve comprehension checks, clarification requests, confirmation checks, and repetition - features of communicative language use. However, because the structure of explanations may become so complex with overlaps, interactive exchanges, and recycling through the explanation sequence structure, it is not clear how comprehensible the explanations will be to the students.

**Comprehensibility.** The presence of optional features in an explanation sequence was assumed to make such explanation more salient and comprehensible for the learner. This, however, did not always seem to be the case. Sometimes the explanations provided by the teacher were ambiguous or suggested a marked usage of the teaching point (Ex. 19). Also, see Ex. 18 where the students are required to infer from the teacher's story that the consumption of beer has made the teacher's jeans "no good for" him.

Example 19:vocab. seq. - marked usage. Teacher defining the word "state"

T: Oh my, my head is in a bad state a bad condition."

Unfortunately, the teachers' explanations were sometimes confusing. Referents were ellipted and expansions were made without indication of what was being expanded upon.

Example 20:gram. seq. - ellipted referent

T: Ah. I want ah X or Y or Z. (writes) If these things are short, usually you don't use anything. But if you have long .. items, then usually you use .. commas. In number 12, I show you another kind. OK?

Solicits and prompts often took the form of display questions, requiring the student to guess what response was desired by the teacher. Although the
context of situation may have provided clues to aid the students' understanding, it is unclear how adequate these were. Furthermore, although the researchers could generally make the inferences required by the teacher's explanation, it is uncertain whether a NNS could do the same. In fact, in one instance the explanation sequence broke down and after trying to clarify a point by eliciting the answer from the students, the teacher finally gave up.

Example 21: vocab. seq. - unsuccessful explanation

T: OK, what do you do before class? and/.. if you're a student .. and/
S: (what time does your classroom starting?)
T: what? again?
S: (what time do you start to study?)
T: wait a minute .. let's take a look at that huh/ (writes) OK. what about that sentence huh/ what does that mean?
S: (several responses)
T: OK, yeah .... well .... your class starts ... at ah 8:50 .. but now, here we have this.
S: ( )
T: infinitive right ... but now .. who studies?
S: ( )
T: can the class .. study?
S: yes
T: hmm-hmm. OK
S: ( )
T: there ... but ah .. we'll talk about .. writing in class .. class is the time .. not the people. we're not talking about people here .. so .. the class only people. can study. right/ .. so ..

T: when we talk about class in this sententce wh-what's the meaning?
CONCLUSION

As two classroom activities concerned with the teacher's expression of information to students, vocabulary and grammar explanations have been examined in order to provide a description and characterization of these aspects of TT.

Despite difficulties in defining and categorizing features of analysis, the researchers feel the model presented here is sufficient to address the realization of explanations. While the model does not account for every phenomenon of explanation sequences, certain patterns of structure and distribution of features are revealed. 1) Vocabulary and grammar explanations can occur at any time during a class period within vocabulary and grammar
reviews conducted by the teacher, within other types of class activities, in response to problems in the students' written classwork or homework, in response to a student error or comment, or due to the teacher's perceived notion that students might be unfamiliar with a particular item, thus making clarification and explanation of that item necessary. 2) Explanation sequences are most often initiated by the teacher. 3) As can be seen in the examples cited, the manifestations of explanation structure are variable. However, based on the collected data, only 10 different structural sequences were found. Among these 10, 3 patterns (Expan, Foc-Explan, Foc-Explan-Restmt) accounted for the patterning of 75% of the total sequences coded leading the researchers to conclude that although great variability is possible, it may not in fact occur. 4) When providing explanations, teachers employ a variety of framing and focusing devices which function to draw the students' attention to the explanation. For both grammar and vocabulary explanations, a framing and focusing device occurred with greater frequency in planned explanation sequences that in unplanned sequences. The researchers feel that frame and focus may be essential in determining how successful students are in processing and comprehending teacher speech. In addition, restatement, which also occurred with higher frequency in planned sequences, is believed to contribute to the saliency of explanations. 5) The distribution of features within vocabulary sequences as compared to grammar sequences is similar, as mentioned in the Discussion section of this paper. Dissimilarities can be accounted for due to the nature of the class activity in which the explanation occurred, and due to differences in teacher style. 6) The addition of optional components to the explanation structure is assumed to make the explanation more salient and thus easier to process and comprehend for the learner. And yet, as can be seen in Ex. 21, despite the presence of
structural features believed to make explanations more salient, explanation sequences do break down and can become quite confusing. Chaudron suggests that teachers face a conflict between having to simplify and make adjustments to the students' linguistic level. He concludes, "the pressure to ensure communication appears to lead at times to ambiguous over-simplification on the one hand, and confusingly redundant over-elaboration on the other" (1983:142).

Further research utilizing a larger data base to verify these findings is needed. Data collection with video equipment to capture paralinguistic cues and other features of classroom interaction is recommended. In addition, the researchers feel that having access to the students' responses would be valuable in refining a description of explanation sequences.

In view of the fact that the language of the SL classroom represents a complex of variables - the participants, the activity type, the linguistic variables - several further questions need to be addressed. Considering the current focus in ESL on communicative language use and comprehensible input, do grammar and vocabulary explanations constitute communicative language use and/or provide comprehensible input for the learner? How does the discourse structure of vocabulary and grammar explanations compare with other types of classroom discourse? And finally, what would be the implications for teacher training?
APPENDIX A : Key to transcription

/ = rising intonation
// = The double oblique indicates the point at which a current speaker's talk is overlapped by the talk of another.
: = Colons indicate that the prior syllable is prolonged.
--- = Underscoring indicates various forms of stressing and may involve pitch or volume
{} = Matched pairs of parenthesis indicate not merely two possible hearings, but address the equivocality of each.
() = Single parenthesis indicate that transcribers are not sure about the words contained therein
... = Dots indicate hesitation, short pause
(pause) = The word "pause" in brackets indicates a pause of more than 5 seconds.
[ ] = Square brackets indicate comments and notes of the transcribers.
**...** = Asterisks indicate comments and notes of the transcribers.
N. = indicates a student's name
FIGURE 1: DYNAMIC SYSTEM OF ANALYSIS

± Planned
± Teacher-initiated
± Frame

± Focus

± Topic Item
± Metastatement
± Teacher Solicit

Explanation

± Explicit Definition/rule
± Direct Usage

± Exact/Partial Repetition

± Restatement

± Expansions
± Examples
FIGURE 2: EXPLANATION SEQUENCE STRUCTURE

FRAME (optional)

↓

FOCUS (optional)

↓

student input

EXPLANATION (obligatory)

↓

comprehension check (optional)

↓

RESTATEMENT (optional)

↓

student input

comprehension check (optional)

↓

FRAME (next sequence/topic) (optional)

*This figure illustrates the basic structural ordering of component parts of an explanation sequence. Explanation is the only obligatory component. Recycling through the structure may occur at any point as indicated by the arrows.*
### TABLE 1: Frequency of Vocabulary and Grammar Explanations

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<th># of Gram. Explan</th>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>BL - Basic Oral/Listening</td>
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<td>BR - Basic Reading</td>
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<td>AW - Advanced Writing</td>
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*For each reported fraction, the numerator represents the number of sequences assigned a (+) value and the denominator represents the number of sequences assigned a (-) value. Thus, the sum of the numerator and denominator is the total number of sequences from a particular transcript.

**Sub-category represents the possible manifestations of particular super-category features.
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*Percent of (+) features. The percentile score represents the number of explanation sequences assigned a (+) value divided by the total number of sequences for each particular transcript.
### TABLE 4: Planned vs Unplanned Feature Analysis - Composite Tallies*

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*For each reported fraction, the numerator represents the number of sequences assigned a (+) value and the denominator represents the number of sequences assigned a (-) value. Thus, the sum of the numerator and denominator is the total number of sequences from a particular transcript.
| SUPER CATEGORY | Planned Frame | Focus | FOCUS | EXILN | RESTIT | SUPER CATEGORY | Planned Frame | Focus | FOCUS | EXILN | RESTIT | SUPER CATEGORY | Planned Frame | Focus | FOCUS | EXILN | RESTIT | SUPER CATEGORY | Planned Frame | Focus | FOCUS | EXILN | RESTIT | SUPER CATEGORY | Planned Frame | Focus | FOCUS | EXILN | RESTIT |
|----------------|---------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|----------------|---------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|----------------|---------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|----------------|---------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|----------------|---------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|----------------|---------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Gram Planned  | 100 100 20 100 20 80 20 100 20 40 40 0 0 | | | | | Gram Unplanned | 0 100 9 57 0 26 39 96 9 35 22 17 0 | | | | | | Vocab Planned | 100 100 35 94 71 47 41 94 59 59 59 0 12 | | | | | Vocab Unplanned | 0 86 14 50 18 9 36 77 36 14 9 9 0 | | | | | | Total Planned | 100 100 32 95 59 55 36 95 50 55 55 0 9 | | | | | Total Unplanned | 0 93 11 53 9 18 38 87 22 24 16 13 0 | | | | |

*The percentile scores represent the number of explanation sequences assigned a (+) value divided by the total number of sequences for each particular transcript.*
TABLE 6: Explanation Sequence Structural Realizations*

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</table>

*The numbers given here indicate the number of sequences which followed each particular pattern. Only the raw figures are provided. No statistical analysis was performed.*
REFERENCES


