An Analysis of the English Class Discourse in the Iranian High Schools

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Abstract

One of the decisive factors of students' success in second language learning is employing interactive strategies related to Bakhtin's notion of dialogic discourse. Following Bakhtin's conceptualization of discourse (1981), monologic and dialogic patterns can be considered as the opposing ends of the teacher's discourse continuum. Given this, the current research intended to find out whether the Iranian high school teachers maintain a monologic discourse in their classes or a dialogic one. To accomplish this goal, a comprehensive exploration of the related literature carried out to identify the features differentiating monologic and dialogic discourse, which proved to be around thirteen. Afterwards, based upon the enumerated characteristics of the two discourse patterns, structured interviews were conducted with ten high school English teachers. Moreover, one case study was conducted to boost the reliability of interview's findings in which a teacher's classes were observed, video-taped, transcribed, and analyzed for recognizing the type of discourse pattern used by the teacher. The analysis of the findings from both interviews and the case study using grounded theory and conversation analysis revealed that the teachers used a monologic discourse pattern in their classes. Implications are provided in terms of the Iranian EFL context.

Keywords

Classroom Discourse; Discourse Pattern; Monologic Discourse; Dialogic Discourse

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One of the decisive factors of students' success in second language learning is employing interactive strategies related to Bakhtin's notion of dialogic discourse. Following Bakhtin's conceptualization of discourse (1981), monologic and dialogic patterns can be considered as the opposing ends of the teacher's discourse continuum. Given this, the current research intended to find out whether the Iranian high school teachers maintain a monologic discourse in their classes or a dialogic one. To accomplish this goal, a comprehensive exploration of the related literature carried out to identify the features differentiating monologic and dialogic discourse, which proved to be around thirteen. Afterwards, based upon the enumerated characteristics of the two discourse patterns, structured interviews were conducted with ten high school English teachers. Moreover, one case study was conducted to boost the reliability of interview's findings in which a teacher's classes were observed, video-taped, transcribed, and analyzed for recognizing the type of discourse pattern used by the teacher. The analysis of the findings from both interviews and the case study using grounded theory and conversation analysis revealed that the teachers used a monologic discourse pattern in their classes. Implications are provided in terms of the Iranian EFL context. Keywords: Classroom Discourse; Discourse Pattern; Monologic Discourse; Dialogic Discourse

The most important problem in teaching English in an English as a foreign language (EFL) context is how to prepare learners to use language in order to make them capable of participating in conversations inside and outside the class. At first sight, classrooms are full of dialogue, observable in the frequent back and forth between students and teachers in everyday formal and informal talk. However, as O'Connor and Michaels (2007) argue, most of these class activities are more indicative of a monologic stance. In fact, as Bakhtin (1981) has widely discussed, a distinction shall be made between dialogic and monologic discourse. A monologic teacher is concerned with the transmission of knowledge and in doing so s/he firmly controls the class. In contrast, during dialogic teaching, the teacher makes every effort to help pupils share and create meanings.

Whether the teachers use a monologic discourse pattern or a dialogic one can highly contribute to the learners' various capabilities. Given this, the present paper aims at firstly identifying the distinguishing characteristics of each discourse pattern and secondly investigating the situation of Iran in terms of the type of EFL teachers' classroom discourse pattern which is one of the main causes of the students' linguistic lacks and achievements. The current study can, accordingly, fill a gap in the Iranian literature on the teacher-student interactions using monologic and dialogic discourse. Among the few studies along this line situated in the Iranian context, qualitative data in particular is very thin. Besides, far too little attention has been paid to teacher-student interactions from this perspective in the public schools and this will add to the body of knowledge at the high school level.

Thus, this paper seeks to investigate how the teachers use the language in the class and recognize their type of discourse pattern. To arrive at this overall aim, we had two research questions:

1. What is /are the difference(s) between monologic and dialogic discourse pattern in EFL classes?
2. Do the teachers use monologic discourse pattern in their classes or a dialogic one?

Literature Review

This section incorporates the exploration of the major issues that guides the current inquiry. As we aspire to analyze how English is used in the classes in terms of teachers' discourse pattern, we firstly examine the status of EFL in Iran schools. Then, we briefly take a look at the teachers' roles in EFL classes. Putting a step forward, we then, investigate how the literature defines discourse and its analysis in the classroom. Lastly, the two types of discourse patterns used in the classrooms are deeply put into consideration (i.e., monologic discourse pattern and dialogic discourse pattern).

The Situation of EFL in Iranian Public Schools

According to Dahmardeh (2009) in countries like Iran, there is a constant pressure on teachers to prepare their pupils for school exams. However, given the fact that the vast majority of language exams in Iran fail to assess students' real communicative abilities, teaching communicative skills remains as a neglected component in most Iranian EFL classes in public schools. The variety of English institutes in Iran signifies the great tendency to learn English. However, English instruction that happens in Iran schools mostly focuses on learning and memorizing grammatical rules and does not lead to the development of oral abilities. As cited in Talebinezhad and AliAkbari (2001) "the dominant trend in ELT context in Iran is toward more, not less, language teaching" (p. 21). Although there are many language institutes outside the classroom giving way for students to attend and learn the language, the time devoted to language instruction in Iran schools is mostly wasted because even the memorized rules are forgotten after a while.

Among the important reasons of students' lacks in English performance are the syllabus and textbooks imposed to the teachers in schools giving no room for any creativity and innovation. As Dahmardeh (2009) maintains,

> all the textbooks for the schools are produced by the Ministry of Education and no alternatives are available. These course books are taught in both private and public schools and all the teachers follow the same syllabus. A secondary school in Iran includes 4 years of studying and in each level there is one book for Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). English language teachers are supposed to cover one book during each educational year. (p. 46)

The Role of the Teacher in the EFL Classes

Ellis (1990) asserts that the reality of most classrooms demonstrates the teachers' power of controlling most of the interactions which happen in the class. This is reflected in the preponderance of teacher acts over student acts. Teachers elicit and students supply

responses. However, the teachers can elect not to use this power or only use part of it. Also, teachers open and close interactional exchanges, while students are restricted to replying.

Jonson (1995) suggests that the teachers establish and maintain classroom discourse patterns. In her research, she concluded that the teachers are responsible for establishing and maintaining discourse patterns and that the discourse patterns are a reflection of the teachers' beliefs. Many other researchers have concentrated on the teachers in establishing different instructional discursive patterns in the classroom such as Cullen (2002), Webb, Franke, Ing, Chan, De, Freund, and Battey (2008) and Hermans (2007), to name a few.

Classroom Discourse Analysis

One of the recent approaches in studying language in various aspects of use is discourse analysis. Discourse analysts examine spoken, signed and written language, and may concentrate on any aspect of linguistic behavior, from the study of particular patterns of pronunciation, through word choice, syntactic and semantic representation, to the pragmatic analysis of how we organize our speech. In fact, discourse analysis is the examination of language which is used by members of a speech community. It involves language form and function and studies both spoken interaction and written texts. It identifies linguistic features that aid in our interpretation and understanding of different texts and types of talk (Demo, 2001).

A classroom setting can be called a discourse in which different interactive exchanges may occur between the teacher and learners and among the learners themselves. As cited in Behnam and PourIran (2009),

> classroom discourse is a special type of discourse that occurs in classrooms. Special features of classroom discourse include: unequal power relationships, turn-taking at speaking, patterns of interaction, etc. Classroom discourse is often different in form and function from language used in other situations because of particular social roles which learners and teachers have in classrooms and the kind of activities they usually carry out there. (p. 118)

The research focusing on classroom discourse aims at recognizing what actually happens in the classroom that can make a difference to the learners' progress in learning EFL. As an instance of this type of research, Hardman, Abd-kadir, and Smith (2007) reported on an investigation of classroom interaction and discourse to determine the key issues which affect patterns of teacher–pupil interaction and discourse.

Monologic and Dialogic Discourse Patterns

Bakhtin (1981) makes distinctions between the two types of discourse including monologic and dialogic discourse. Bakhtin (1984) deplores the typical organization of most of the classes as a nonproductive monologism:

> In an environment of . . . monologism, the genuine interaction of consciousness is impossible, and thus genuine dialogue is impossible as well. In essence idealism knows only a single mode of cognitive interaction among consciousness: someone who knows and possesses the truth instructs someone who is ignorant of it and in error; that is, it is the interaction of a teacher and a pupil, which, it follows, can only be a pedagogical dialogue. (p. 81)

For Bakhtin, this form of discourse is similar to a communication disorder. In its most basic form, monologic discourse resists communication: "Monologism, at its extreme," Bakhtin (1984) writes:

> denies the existence outside itself of another consciousness with equal rights and responsibilities. … Monologue is finalized and deaf to the other's response, does not expect it and does not acknowledge in it any *decisive* force. … Monologue pretends to be the *ultimate word* (pp. 292-93).

The studies conducted by Nystrand, Wu, Gamoran, Zeiser, and Long (2001), Molinari and Mameli (2010), Innes (2007), Pishghadam, Hashemi, and Adel (2010) suggest that monologic discourse is the dominant discourse pattern in different parts of the world. According to Nystrand et al. (2001) "repeated empirical findings that show monologic discourse is prevalent *across* American classrooms clearly suggest that monologic discourse dominates *within* the classroom" (p.6). Indeed, monologic discourse is a prevalent pattern in most of the classes unless the teacher does something to change it.

In a more practical framework, we provide Nystrand's distinctions (1997) of monologic and dialogic discourse patterns which can offer a general overview of the two patterns. What Nystrand et al. (1997) call monologic, Gutierrez' (1993) characterizes as follows:

1. Classroom talk follows strict IRE (initiation, response, and evaluation) discourse patterns.
2. Teacher selects student speakers.
3. Teacher shows little or no acknowledgment of students' self- selections.
4. Teacher initiates subtopics.
5. Teacher discourages or ignores students' attempts to introduce other subtopics.
6. Student responses tend to be short (one word/phrase); teacher does not encourage response elaboration, and there is minimal expansion of students' responses by teacher.
7. Teacher initiates test-like questions for which there is generally only one correct answer and indicates implied goal is to contribute specific right answers to teacher's questions. (Nystrand et al., 1997, p. 26)

This is while a dialogic exchange has the following features:

1. Activity and discourse boundaries are significantly relaxed with more student responses between teacher initiation and evaluation; also student responses occasionally build on previous responses (chained) and contributes to the construction of shared knowledge.
2. Teacher frames and facilitates the activity and can respond at any time, but keeps utterances and intervention to a minimum.
3. There is a minimal teacher selection of students; students either self-elect or select other students.
4. Teacher and students negotiate subtopics of discussion.
5. Teacher indicates implied goal as developing shared knowledge, but still includes a prefernce for correct information.
6. Teacher and students initiate questions for which there are no specific correct answers as well as questions that are constructed from students' previous responses.

7. Teacher sometimes acknowledges students' topic expansions as well as teacher's and other students' incorporation of these expansions into the ongoing lesson. (Nystrand et al., 1997, pp. 26-27)

Overall, taking into consideration the current EFL situation in Iran and the significant role of the teacher, the question that needs to be asked is how the teachers use language in the classroom that can make the situation even worse. As a matter of fact, in order to improve the instructional environment and the learners' amount and quality of learning, understanding the classroom discourse seems to be a recognized necessity for researchers as well as teachers. As EFL teachers in the Iranian context, we could easily touch students' problems in learning English after many years of attending school classes. As we were the product of the same educational system, we intended to explicate how teachers behave in the class in terms of their interactions with the learners that can contribute to learners' incapability of efficient use of language. This made us more invested in the current research project to ascertain teachers' discourse pattern and, in future studies, provide solutions to improve the current situation.

Methodology

Participants

In the interview phase, ten high school English teachers were recruited for interview based on convenient sampling. From among the interviewees, one teacher was selected as the case study teacher based on the location criterion and her willingness. The other criterion in selecting the teacher was her ability in engaging the students in English language use in the class, albeit very little. The teacher was informed of the research steps and the main foci of the study. For observing and video-taping the classes, the permission of the chief of education office of Tarom town, the principal of the school, and all the students was obtained. 27 pre-university students from Fatemieh high school in Tarom town cooperated in the study. Moreover, to protect participants' privacy and confidentiality, all the participants including the teachers and the students signed a consent letter to show their satisfaction in participating in the study. They were also informed about the purpose, nature, time range for the research, the study procedures, any foreseeable risks and benefits to the research, and how their confidentiality will be maintained.

Instruments

To minimize subjectivity and bias in the data collection, we used the strategy of triangulation or obtaining data using multiple methods. Indeed, multiple data sources were used through triangulation of multiple data sets. For example, the evidence obtained from the class observation of the case study teacher's actual practices was used to complement the evidence gathered from our interview.

Regarding the interview instrument, we chose to use a structured interview as it suited best to our research purpose. To find which discourse pattern is used by the EFL teachers, we prepared ten interview questions based on the basic distinctions between the monologic and dialogic discourse patterns (the response to the first research question) and major goals of the study.

Our case study including a one person case incorporated the study of one English teacher in Tarom town teaching in high school level. The case study process involved the observation and video-recording of classes of the teacher, and transcriptions of the events using a less structured observation. A less structured observation is a type of data collection

in which the researcher may not follow fixed criteria to observe the classes rather relies on description notes of the phenomena being observed, or transcripts of tapes of those events (Mackey & Gass, 2005).

Procedure

We used a structured interview to examine some representative teachers' responses in deeper detail and to find out exactly what their classroom discourse was (The interview questions are provided in appendix A.). We emailed the interview questions to a variety of experts in Applied Linguistics and scholars in our study field including Dr. Martin Nystrand and informed them of the interview objectives and bases to remove any problems and ambiguities. Applying the experts' comments and suggestions, we developed ten questions and included some sub-questions. Having been aware of the research focus in advance, the ten teachers were interviewed and the interviews were recorded and transcribed for an in-depth analysis.

Then, the case study teacher and her respective classes were observed and video-taped in turn for a ten week period resulting in a total of 10 observational visits each constituting one session of one hour and thirty minutes. Through both case study and interviews we intended to make sure of the teacher's discourse pattern.

Data Analysis

In the present study, the approach to data analysis was "unstructured" in the sense that it was data-driven and inductive, that is, no hypothesis was formed prior to data collection and analysis. Generally, in analyzing our data, we used a combination of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) for analyzing the interviews and fine grained conversation analysis using Nystrand's (1997) attributes of monologic and dialogic discourse as the reference for the analysis of classroom observation transcripts.

Interviews Analysis. The process of analyzing the data derived from the interviews through grounded theory involved different steps. After transcribing the recorded files of interviews, the three phases of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) were exactly followed. In the first phase of *open coding* all the interviews were segmented into paragraphs and the main ideas of each paragraph were noted as the codes. Then, during *axial coding*, the interconnected codes were regarded as being under the same subcategory. Finally, in the third phase of *selective coding*, a core category was identified based on the interlinked subcategories which guided us to write the grounded theory. An example of a partial transcript is provided in table 1.

Table 1
A Partial Transcript of a Teacher Interview (16/8/2012)

A partial interview
I: interviewer
T: teacher
I: When teaching English, which language do you prefer to use? English or Persian?
T: I really prefer to use English, but I can't. Most of the time, the students don't like to communicate in English because they think they are unable to use English and understand it. The second reason is that we haven't enough time to communicate in English. If I do that I lose the time for my other works and the students don't like that. They always want to cover everything exactly and carefully.
I: Do you prefer to have control and power in teaching or in class management? Do you let your

students air their views too? How much do you usually intervene in the class activities?
T: In class settings with a large number of students and crowded desks, I prefer to have power in class management but sometimes when the classes are not populated, I ask for the students' ideas and views in class management but again I have the authority to control the class. Most of the time, I let the students to air their views but I am always who makes the last decision. Usually I intervene in the class activities a lot. I decide homework and class activities and nearly everything that happens in the class.

From the partial transcript above, six codes were obtained. The total analysis of the ten interviews provided a total of 120 codes. The irrelevant codes to the research purpose were eliminated and the codes that were nearly identical in meaning were combined under one code. The coding of the partial transcript is given in table 2.

Table 2
Coding of Partial Teacher Interview

Codes of the partial interview

Code 1: not to use English language because the students think they are unable to communicate in English

Code 2: not to use English language because communicating in English makes the teacher lose the time of the class for other activities

Code 3: to have power and authority in populated classes

Code 4: to ask the students' ideas in less populated classes though making the last decision herself

Code 5: to intervene in the class activities most of the times (to decide homework and class activities)

Code 6: to guide the class in a way the teacher wants

As shown in table 3, in the process of forming subcategories, codes that contained similar properties were combined to form subcategories, as shown below. During the whole process of repetitive analysis, seventeen subcategories and nine core categories were emerged.

Table 3
Forming Subcategories of the Codes from the Partial Teacher Interview

Subcategories of the codes

Subcategory 1: Teachers use Persian due to students' low English proficiency.(code1)

Subcategory 2: Teachers use Persian due to time constraint.(code 2)

Subcategory 3: Teachers have Control over the class activities to a great extent. (codes 3 &6)

Subcategory 4: Teachers seldom ask about students' ideas.(code 4)

Subcategory 5: Teachers intervene in the class activities a lot.(code 5)

Class Transcripts Analysis. The analysis of the transcripts, through conversation analysis, was done having the teacher and students utterances as the unit of analysis and characterizing discourse based on the Gutierrez'(1993) attributes of the monologic and dialogic discourse. The choice for characterizing the utterances according to Gutierrez'(1993) properties of monologic and dialogic discourse was made in light of the fact that the features listed characterize not only discourse patterns but also teachers' beliefs about learning and teaching as interpreted by Nystrand et al. (1997).

To show how the transcripts are analyzed, we provide a partial transcript of one of the randomly selected transcripts of class videos. The following excerpt is taken from a pre-reading activity a ranking exercise in the textbook.

> T: "What's the topic of the lesson?"
> Ss: "Giving speech"
> T: "Ok, please open your books on page 12. There are some pre-reading questions here. The first question is "Does standing up in front of a group make you nervous?" "Nervous" means?"
> Ss: "stressful, concerned"
> S1: "No, it doesn't. We are not anxious when we stand up in front of a group."
> T: "Thank you. The next question is "How about having to talk to that group as well?" What do you feel? Do you get nervous?"
> S2: "Could we say "I speak very well in front of a group"?"
> T: "Ok, you can say "I don't feel stressful so I can speak very well." Or you can say "talking to that group doesn't make me nervous"."
> S3: "Or because I have self-confidence, I don't feel anxious."
> T: "Very good. The next question: "Do you remember the last time you gave a lecture?" two weeks ago, two of you had lectures, how did you feel? Were you concerned? [saying in Persian]"
> S4: "I hadn't confidence."
> S5: "But I was relaxed."
> T: "Ok, now please answer the second exercise. Rank the sentences from the most important to the least important about giving speech."
> [Students work individually and then the teacher checks the answers]
> (Class video, 25/10/2012)

In our analysis, each sentence is quantified as one utterance. As influenced by Brown's (2001) conceptualization of question types, the teacher and student questions are classified as *display* (for which the teacher knows the response) and *referential* questions (for which the teacher does not know the response). The analysis of the partial transcript resulted in 9 teacher initiated questions, 5 teacher initiated statements, 1 student initiated question, 0 student initiated statement, and 7 student initiated responses. Setting the total transcripts of class videos against an analysis of the types of utterances that prevail in the classroom engenders table 4.

Table 4
Classroom Discourse Pattern for the Whole Transcripts

Utterance	Number of occurrences	Topic
Teacher initiated question	70	Display questions about reading, new vocabulary and grammar
Teacher initiated statement	68	Comments about reading, grammar, homework and book exercises
Student initiated question	9	Questions about homework and misunderstanding of meaning of a sentence or a

		word or a grammar point
Student initiated statement	0	
Student initiated response	75	Answers to display questions about reading, vocabulary and grammar

Results

In this section, we will review the research questions one more time and discuss our findings in light of the research questions.

Research question 1: **"***What is /are the difference(s) between monologic and dialogic discourse pattern in EFL classes?***"**

To meet this research objective, a comprehensive exploration of the previous research was conducted and the fundamental ideas of significant figures were carefully put into consideration. In result, a number of thirteen basic distinctions between the two discourse patterns were obtained.

Overall, in the monologic discourse pattern, the teacher's and the textbook's voice are the only or the dominant voices. In contrast, in a dialogic discourse pattern, the teacher's voice is still an important voice but it is only one of the many voices. In the following, we offer a list of the aspects of such a difference.

1. In a monologic discourse pattern, the teacher formulates the questions to be asked from the students in such a way that a short answer is required. So, student responses tend to be short (one word/phrase). By contrast, in a dialogic discourse pattern the teacher asks questions which require longer answers and waits enough till the student gives the response.
2. In the monologic discourse pattern, the teacher does not take into consideration the students' ideas, needs, desires and contributions while in the dialogic one the teacher considers students' needs and contributions in his/her lesson plan and organization of the class activities.
3. In the monologic discourse pattern, there are a low number of student- initiated questions and statements while in the dialogic one, the teacher lets the students initiate the talk and ask as many questions as possible. Moreover, sometimes the number of questions asked by students is more than the number of questions asked by the teacher.
4. In the monologic discourse pattern, the teacher does not follow up on students' questions. She/he also does not encourage response elaboration, and there is minimal expansion of students' responses by teacher. So, the responses provided by students don't lead to further discussion. By contrast, classroom discourse is dialogic when the teacher follows up on students' contributions to modify or expand on them. In addition, the teacher asks questions that are constructed from students' previous responses.
5. In the monologic discourse pattern, students do not listen to other students very well and can't continue their talk whereas in a dialogic discourse pattern, *uptake* is generated in the class trough student responses and questions occasionally building on

previous responses (chained) and contributing to the construction of shared knowledge.

6. In the monologic discourse pattern, either the teacher initiates subtopics or the topics are based on the textbook. Moreover, the teacher discourages or ignores students' attempts to introduce other subtopics. While in a dialogic one the teacher and students negotiate subtopics of discussion and the teacher sometimes acknowledges students' topic expansions as well as teacher's and other students' incorporation of these expansions into the ongoing lesson.

7. In a monologic discourse pattern, there is a high frequency of calls on students for answers to questions and a low number of student volunteers. Most of the times, the only students participating in the class are those called by the teacher. While in the dialogic one, there is a minimal teacher selection of students; students either self-elect or select other students.

8. In the monologic discourse pattern, the teacher initiates test-like questions for which there is generally only one correct answer. In other words, the teacher has a pre-determined response in the mind for the question s/he asks. Whereas, in the dialogic discourse pattern the teacher initiates *authentic questions* for which there are no specific correct answers in the teacher's mind.

9. In the monologic discourse pattern, all the class activities are organized and controlled by the teacher and authority of the teacher is clear. s/he prescribes the directions and boundaries and acts as a greatspeaker in the classroom. While in the dialogic discourse pattern, the teacher almost assumes a nuetral position and only frames and facilitates the activities and respond at any time, but keeps utterances and intervention to a minimum.

10. In the monologic discourse pattern, the teacher indicates implied goal as to contribute specific right answers to teacher's questions while in the dialogic one the teacher indicates implied goal as developing shared knowledge, but still includes a prefernce for correct information.

11. In the monologic discourse pattern, the teacher asks questions with low cognitive level which requires a mere reporting or replication of another's voice rather the teacher, in the dialogic discourse pattern, asks questions with *high cognitive level which* can't be answered neither by reporting an event or reciting others' voices nor using the students' own prior knowledge. These questions need more critical thinking involving students' own voice and perspectives.

12. In the monologic discourse pattern, the teacher asks display questions, the answers for which are known to the teacher and need short responses; whereas in the dialogic discourse pattern most of the teacher's questions are referential for which the teacher does not know the answer and they are answered through negotiation and exploration of the topic. "Why" and "how" questions are of this type and require more justification.

13. In the monologic discourse pattern, the teacher gives feedbacks of low level evaluation to students' responses. For example, s/he gives feedbacks like "very good" or" you are right" and gets back to the lesson; whereas in the dialogic discourse pattern, the feedbacks are of *high-level evaluation. In this way, the teacher* evaluates the students' responses by making them explain more, clarify or give more information. Furthermore, the teacher gives feedback to the content of the student's response rather than to its form.

Table 5 briefly explicates the distinctions between the two discourse patterns to enhance smoothness of the explanations.

Table 5
Distinctions between Monologic and Dialogic Discourse Patterns

	monologic discourse pattern	dialogic discourse pattern
1	Asking questions demanding short responses	Asking questions demanding longer responses
2	Neglecting students' contributions	Considering students' needs and concerns
3	A low number of student- initiated questions and statements	More student- initiated questions and statements
4	Minimal expansion of students' responses by teacher	Following up on students' contributions
5	No uptake	Maintaining uptake
6	Discussing on the teacher selected or textbook based topics	Negotiating subtopics of discussion
7	A high frequency of calls on students	A minimal teacher selection of students
8	Asking test-like questions	Asking authentic questions
9	The teacher as the controller and authority	The teacher as the facilitator of the activities
10	Regarding implied goal as the right answers to teacher's questions	Regarding implied goal as developing shared knowledge
11	Asking questions with low cognitive level	Asking questions with high cognitive level
12	Asking display questions	Asking referential questions
13	Providing low-level evaluation	Providing high-level evaluation

Research question 2: "*Do the teachers use monologic discourse pattern in their classes or a dialogic one*"?

To answer this research question, firstly, structured interviews were conducted and then they were analyzed in connection with the case study to maximize the validity of the findings. The following includes the interpretation of the results concerning these instruments.

Interpretation of the Interviews

The analysis of interviews using grounded theory resulted in nine core categories, each to be discussed in the following.

Core category 1: Using Persian in the Class

With respect to this core category, there are two subcategories driven from twelve codes. From the two subcategories, it can be inferred that the *teachers use Persian language most of the times* in their classes and regard students' low English proficiency as well as the lack of time as the main reasons for not speaking in English.

> *I prefer English, of course. But as the students are very weak and unable to make anything out of what I say, so I teach in Persian.*

Indeed, they maintain that if there was sufficient time for all the class activities and the students were at the right level of English proficiency, they certainly used more English language in their teaching.

Core Category 2: Having Control and Power in the Class

The analysis of the interviews resulted in three subcategories and eighteen codes related to core category two. Considering the subcategories and their consisting codes, three points can be interpreted:

1. About all the teachers prefer to have control, power, and authority in their class management, activities and so on. They believe the reasons are the large number of students in the classes and problems in effective teaching.
2. Although the teachers respect their students' ideas if there is any, they seldom ask about their ideas regarding class topics and subtopics of discussion and almost never let their students choose the topics.
3. The teachers intervene in all the class activites and control almost everything that happens in the classes. They maintain the reasons as: students' low level of proficiency, measuring students' progress exactly, helping them to go further and time limit.

The three points confidently account for a monologic discourse pattern. The following sentences represent a teacher's ideas about class control and power.

> *I'm generally considered as a strict teacher and my high school classes seldom happen to be democratic! I control and closely observe and manage almost everything. However, I do respect some suggestions at times, especially those offered by studious pupils, if I believe they are going to be helpful.*

Core Category 3: Cooperating With the Learners

Regarding this core category, we obtained two subcategories and ten codes. The analysis of the subcategories and codes shows that although the teachers cooperate with their students in most of the class activities, they involve their students in some mechanical activities like doing exercises on the board, providing materials, doing the teaching themselves and the like.

> *The students mostly help me when doing (checking) homework in class by coming to the board and answering written or oral questions and sometimes also by distributing and collecting exam/quiz papers during the semester. But,*

> *I can't depend on them for cooperation in terms of better instruction or class management.*

These activities certainly do not make them speak in English and can't improve the learners' speaking ability. Therefore, though a dialogic discourse pattern may be used while doing activities cooperatively, the English language definitely is not applied in a dialogic way.

Core Category 4: Deciding on the Lesson Plan, Syllabus and Class Management

Concerning core category 4, we had two subcategories obtained from twelve codes. Taking these subcategories and codes into account, it can be generalized that teachers highly follow the book topics and syllabi decided by the ministry of education and very rarely take the students' needs, contributions and concerns into consideration in their lesson plans and class management. Yet, some teachers maintain that the main reason for not considering all the students' needs and concerns in deciding upon the lesson plans is that the school syllabi imposed by the ministry don't allow for any spontaneity or creativity.

> *Topics are normally chosen based on the books. I haven't a role in designing my own syllabus but I have a role in designing my own lesson plan. There is no planning before getting to know what the learners' levels are and what exactly their needs and goals are.*

Core Category 5: Managing the Learning Tasks and Activities

From the analysis of the whole interviews, related to managing the learning tasks and activities, six codes were emerged which led to one subcategory. The analysis revealed that the teachers mostly manage the learning tasks and activities to be done individually and sometimes group work is used depending on the type of activity and the class time. As one of them mentions,

> *Although I don't believe the existing activities in high school books as tasks, I manage them mostly individually and sometimes in groups.*

It is generally conceived that for most of the learning tasks and activities, individual work is preferred by the teachers. However, for a dialogic discourse to be established in the classroom, learning tasks must be managed to be done in groups or as a class.

Core Category 6: Making Students Cooperate With Each Other

Related to this core category, eight codes were obtained which led to one subcategory. Considering the obtained information, it is self-evident that most of the teachers prefer their students to cooperate with each other and assign activities for the students to work on in groups.

> *I ask my students to cooperate doing some exercises in the book or solving a problem in groups. I do ask most of them to follow the best students as their models, but even the best students seldom manage to produce something creatively in English.*

Nevertheless, all this cooperation happens in Persian and the teachers do not ask their students to speak in English and give comments to each other using English language. If the students' cooperation happened in English, the establishment of a dialogic discourse pattern while using the language could be heightened.

Core Category 7: Asking Questions in the Class

Related to core category 7, the interviews analysis generally resulted in twenty codes which led to three subcategories. Based on three points resulting from the analysis of the subcategories and codes, it can be highly recognized that the teachers' questioning behaviors bring about a monologic discourse pattern to a great extent.

1. The teachers mostly ask "display questions" which are questions for which the teachers know the answer and usually demand a single or short response. The questions mentioned by the teachers are raised with the intention of check students' understanding, elicit examples, and arouse interest for a new topic. All the questions of this sort are display questions.

   In some parts of my class, I ask questions. Examples are: for introducing a new topic and arousing the students' interest, for checking the students' knowledge about something (a new word, grammar point or topic).

2. Teachers often ask questions which need short responses and these questions are usually followed by single responses and are not followed up by the other students. As one of them says,

   Very rarely I may ask questions for which I have no response in mind. Since the students are not able to answer questions with long answers. I often ask questions with short answers. The typical examples are:
   - *Do you know the meaning of the sentence/ word/structure?*
   - *What happened in the reading?*

3. Teachers seldom ask "authentic questions" which refer to questions for which the asker has not a pre-specified response and allows a range of responses, unlike recitation (or test) questions, in which a teacher asks a question with a prescribed answer in mind. The example questions given by the teachers in response to one of the interview questions are not authentic at all.

Core Category 8: Managing Students' Questions

Through analyzing the interviews about managing students' questions, we obtained eight codes leading to two subcategories. The analysis showed that most of the teachers give importance to the students' questions; nevertheless, most of the students' questions are related to the lesson contents. One of the teachers says that,

   Only very active learners sometimes ask questions in English. Of course their questions are important for me if they ask any question. They sometimes ask questions that need my explanations about the lesson.

We also found that the teachers very rarely follow up the students' questions. This means that the teachers in some way finish the talk raised by the students' questions and get

back to the lesson. They do not let the other students follow what the students have said or asked about and the classroom talk does not move in directions prompted by the students' questions. In the other words, there is no "uptake" in the class.

Core Category 9: Giving Feedback to the Learners

Concerning the core category of "giving feedback to the learners," the two subcategories were emerged from nineteen codes. Through their analysis, we arrived at three outcomes, all implying that the teachers use a monologic discourse in their classes.

1. The teachers often give "low level evaluation" to the students' responses. In other words, the kinds of feedbacks they give to the learners don't make them continue their talk or think more and say how they think or why they give such responses.

    When they say something correctly, I say loudly "very good" or "that's right". When they say something wrong, I repeat the question or clarify it in other words. If one student can't give the correct response I turn to another student to get the response. The sentences I might use are "that's wrong" or "not true, think more."

2. The teachers focus on the form more than the content. The feedback sentences which they give to the students confirm their high attention to the form and grammar. To put it in better words, the teachers very rarely provide students with "content feedback."

    Most of the time I notice the form but when the students try to convey a meaning I listen to them but when they finish their talk I make them aware of the grammatical error. So I give feedback to both the form and content.

3. From the teachers' example sentences for the feedbacks they give, it can be inferred that they seldom offer enough "wait time" which is the time the teacher allows the students to answer questions.

Interpretation of the Case Study

The transcription and analysis of the data in accordance with the attributes of monologic and dialogic discourse indicates that the class discourse pattern is characterized by factors associated with monologic discourse as defined by Gutierrez (1993). Table 7 indicates the features of the teacher's discourse.

Table 7
Traits of the Case Study Teacher's Class Discourse

	Traits of the case study teacher's class discourse
1	There is a significant difference between the number of utterances made by the teacher in comparison to the number made by the students.
2	There are a high number of display questions asked by the teacher, none of which are referential.
3	There are a low number of student- initiated questions or statements. The ones that were made remained at a factual level as they related to topics like homework and grammar which were made in Persian and those related to the meaning of a sentence or word which were made in English.

4	There is a high frequency of calls on students for answers to questions and a low student volunteers. Most of the times, the only students participating in the class are those called by the teacher.
5	All the topics to be discussed in the class are based on the textbook and there is no possibility for the student's selections of topics or subtopics.
6	The responses provided by the students don't lead to further discussion and the teacher does not follow up on the student's responses.
7	The answers provided by the students consist of only one or a few couple of words and the longer answers are the ones which are directly from the book and the students say what they have memorized.
8	There is a significant difference between the number of utterances made by the teacher in comparison to the number made by the students.

Discussion

Our data confirm that teaching in Iran schools is very much a matter of teachers' talking and directing children's talk and controlling the class events. In line with the most recent studies on learning and teaching (Fisher & Larkin, 2008; O'Connor & Michaels, 2007), our study also gives evidence to the presence of a type of monologic discourse in Iran classes. This has been done through conducting interviews and case study. The analysis of interviews revealed that:

1. The teachers use more Persian language in the class.
2. They have control, power, and authority in their classes.
3. They almost never let their students choose the topics.
4. They intervene in all the class activites to a great extent.
5. They cooperate with their students in most of the class mechanical activities.
6. They highly follow the book topics and imposed syllabi.
7. They seldom consider students' needs, contributions and concerns in their lesson plans and class management.
8. They mostly manage the class activities to be done individually but sometimes group work is used depending on the type of activity and the class time.
9. They assign activities for the students to work on in groups but this cooperation happens in Persian.
10. They mostly ask "display questions."
11. They often ask questions which need short responses.
12. There is no uptake in the class.
13. They seldom ask "authentic questions."
14. They don't follow up on students' questions.
15. They often give "low level evaluation" to the students' responses.
16. They very rarely provide students with "content feedback."
17. They seldom offer enough "wait time.

Based on these findings, it can be widely concluded that the teachers use a monologic discourse pattern in their classes. These findings are all significant in the Iranian EFL context where most of the learning is defined in terms of rote memorization and grammar learning. This signifies the important role of the teachers in setting the school classes in a way that boosts the students' communicative opportunities and creative language use.

The analysis of classroom observation transcripts of our case study teacher had also the objective of affirming whether a monologic discourse pattern is used in the classes or a

dialogic one. We found that classroom practices are dominated by a class discourse which concern with teacher telling and controlling the interaction, using display questions with pre-specified answers or test questions rather than referential, authentic questions of high cognitive level. Furthermore, there are very few student-initiated statements or questions, and they never lead to further discussion in the class. Moreover, all the class discussion is around the book topics. All these results correlate with the basic traits of the monologic discourse and they lead us to this conclusion that the teacher uses a monologic discourse pattern in the class.

Notwithstanding the paucity of meaningful interaction and initiative use of language which can be easily observed in Iranian public schools, these findings reflect the Iranian EFL teachers' significant role in avoiding traditional teacher-controlled transmission mode of teaching which focuses on rote learning of vocabulary and grammar, mechanical practice, recalling from memory and knowledge. The students taught through this didactic way never meet these requirements. Their responses fit to the teachers' standards and are based on the book contents.

Conclusions

In this study, we aimed to recognize the Iranian EFL teachers' discourse pattern and provide a more precise understanding of what occurs in the classroom in terms of teacher and student acts and interactions. In result, based upon all teacher interviews and the traits resulting from the analysis of the case study teacher's class videos, we found that the teachers use a monologic discourse pattern in their classes rather than a dialogic one. These findings enrich our understanding of the contribution of EFL teachers' acts to the type of their discourse pattern in the class. Accordingly, we suggest that, due to the unavoidable importance of the teachers' classroom discourse, syllabus designers, language programmers, and EFL teachers, need to identify how they can establish a dialogic discourse in school classes to ensure more satisfactory outcomes.

Due to the inherent limitations of the case study research approach, in this case being directed towards one English teacher and her classrooms in our own town, findings here might not be generalized to the wider English teaching community in Iran. Additionally, regional disparities make any such attempt to generalize to other EFL classrooms even less reliable.

Therefore, future research should aim to gather more data from more EFL settings. Moreover, the current study could be replicated to see the results in places other than public schools like language institutes and universities which either teach English as a general course or for specific proposes.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

• When teaching English, which language do you prefer to use? English or Persian?
• Do you prefer to have power in teaching or in class management? Do you let your students air their views too? How much do you *usually* intervene in the class activities?

• Do you like to get help from your learners and cooperate with your pupils? How do you do that?
• Who decides on the topics taught in the class? Do you have a role in designing your own syllabus and lesson plan? Do you consider your students' needs, concerns and contributions, in that respect? What do you do exactly? Can you clarify your response with some examples?
• How do you *normally* manage the learning tasks to be done? (Individually or group work or any other).
• How do you make your students help each other, work together, and share ideas in the class? Do you ask your students to listen to their friends in order to follow their talk when they say something in English?
• Do you ask questions when you are teaching? When do you normally ask questions?
• Do you ask questions for which you have no pre-determined response in mind? How often do you ask your students questions that need longer answers? Can you exemplify the typical questions you usually ask your students at different steps of you teaching?
• Do your students ask questions using English language? Are their questions important for you? And can they influence the choice of your class topics and contents? How often do you ask your students' ideas about the topics for discussion in the class?
• How do you give feedback or evaluate your students' responses? (Exemplify the sentences you use when your students say something right or wrong.) How often do you give feedback to what the student really tries (its content) to say rather than its grammar?

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