



Investigating the Effects of using Conversation Analysis in Understanding Advice-Giving at St. Martin's College

Salah M. O. Elhassan *, Mahmoud Ali Ahmed

Sudan University of Science and Technology, College of Languages, Sudan

***Corresponding Author:** Salah M. O. Elhassan, Sudan University of Science and Technology, College of Languages, Sudan

Abstract: This study aimed at investigating the content of advice-giving and receiving between supervisors and student teachers within the Post-Lesson Conference in Teaching Practice in Teacher Education. The study adopted the descriptive analytical method, the researcher collected data through analysis of conversations between supervisors and student-teachers with the focus put on the content of advice. To analyze the data, the researcher has used the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The researcher noticed that very few attempts are found in the topic under investigation. Those research attempts seem to stop investigation when it comes to addressing the content of advice within the post-lesson conference. Looking for other similar attempts in other institutional settings seems to be the logical step to take in search of advice content research investigations.

Keywords: advice-giving and receiving-content of advice-post-lesson conference.

1. INTRODUCTION

Most Educationists, researchers, teacher trainers, practicing teachers, and student-teachers would agree that Teaching Practice (TP henceforth) is a very important part of student-teacher development as professional qualified teachers. Teaching Practice is the time that student-teachers spend in schools practicing teaching in classrooms as well as participating in all kinds of activities, learning, and acquiring a wealth of skills and experiences. Personally, having had the privilege of experiencing TP as student-teacher, practicing teacher, trainer-trainer, and researcher.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Throughout the years, supervision, as an area of study and practice, has always been in the centre of the continuous debate and discussion generated by the research and interest in the study of the theory and practice of Teacher Education and its Teaching Practice. Supervision has also been in very close contact with Curriculum and Inspection Directorates in Government Education Departments in many countries. The UK (e.g., OFSTED)¹ and the USA are examples where we can find supervision not only in close contact but, also, as a main part of the process of Administration of Education, Curriculum Development, and in the heart of Schooling and Teacher Education.

A lot has been written on the topic of supervision ranging from government education departments reports on school inspection, school-based placement teacher training, in-service teacher development programmes, Teacher Education, and to universities' research departments publications on supervision.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The context of this study takes place during the Teaching Practice *experience* of a group of a 3rd. Year BA/BSC Honours from St. Martin University College in the North West of England, doing their final teaching practice in a number of neighbouring primary schools. The main focus of this research is the *Post-Lesson Conference Conversational Interactions* experienced by student-teachers and their *College Supervisors*. Audio-recorded conference talk, student-teacher notes, and college documents

are the main sources for this research, So, this study intends to pursue and review what other researchers have done to make sense, understand, learn, and find more about *advice* and its *content-language-practices* within certain contexts.

4. QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY

The following research questions formed the basis of the study:

- (1) Assuming that the practice of advice-giving during TP Post-Lesson Conferences (Post-LCs henceforth) is similar in many ways to other kinds of institutionalised advice-giving practices such as in health-visiting's FT (First-Time mothers) and HV (Health Visitors) meetings; *is there any evidence that supports that similarity?*
- (2) Assuming the existence of similarities between the practice of TP Post-LCs and the practice of other kinds of institutionalised conferences; *are there any differences?*

5. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The following hypotheses are postulated:

1. There are some evidences that support the similarities between the practice of advice-giving during TP Post-LCs and other kinds of institutionalised advice-giving practices such as in health-visiting's FT and HV meetings.
2. there are some differences between the practice of TP Post-LCs and the practice of other kinds of institutionalised conferences.

6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Generally, we can say that this study owes its importance to the vital and important place of supervisory conferences in the supervision of teacher education, experienced by college tutors, student-teachers, classroom teachers as well as pupils, during the teaching practice. One mostly affected group, that's by supervisory conferences, is the student-teacher group and that's for a number of reasons. It is hoped, by addressing these reasons, we might come to have some sort of understanding of those driving forces behind the investigation.

7. LIMITS OF THE STUDY

The researcher collected data through analysis of conversations between supervisors and student-teachers with the focus put on the content of advice at St. Martin's College.

8. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The researcher analyses conversations between experienced /new cooperating teachers and student teachers during advice meetings. All meetings were audio-taped recordings of cooperating teacher and student-teacher advice. Eight pair of cooperating teacher/ student teacher meetings recorded. Each cooperating teacher/student-teacher pair recorded their advice meetings.

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During their first two weeks, student-teachers are expected to get acquainted with the Primary School environment, daily routines, staff roles and names, the class and the children with whom they're going to spend the whole of their *nine weeks teaching experience*. About the children class, they need to know things like e.g. names, test scores, abilities, activities and curricular learning experiences they have had recently with their class teacher. Also, time tables and organization of such things as group work facilities, resources and materials inside the classroom.

Every student-teacher is visited five times by her/his "college supervisor" (college tutor or else) and definitely visited once by the "area supervisor". The "area supervisor" might visit a student-teacher more than once, but that could only happen in exceptional cases, e.g., where the student's

performance is reported by his/her college supervisor as "giving a cause for concern". Each of the five visits by the college supervisor should include a full classroom unit or activity taught or performed by the student-teacher. This observation of a student's class teaching, should be followed by, immediately by a *supervisory conference* between the *supervisor* and the *student-teacher* and sometimes, where appropriate, includes the *class teacher*. Usually, separate discussions with *class teachers*, i.e. excluding student-teacher take place either before or after the student's observation. *Conversations* between *supervisors* and the school's *class teachers* are usually concerned about Student-teacher's:

- *progress.*
- *Coping with everyday classroom teaching.*
- *Understanding children.*
- *coping with staff and the school's system.*

9. ADVICE DEFINITIONS

According to De Capua and Dunham (1993), the notion of *Advice* has been defined as "...opinion or counsel given by people who perceive themselves as knowledgeable, and/ or who the advice seeker may think are credible, trustworthy, and reliable."

In defining advice, Heritage & Sefi (1992) divided advice as follows:

(a) Future oriented Advice

a.1: Advice "...explicitly future oriented and delivered in strongly prescriptive terms". Mostly given by HV as:

- Overt recommendations, e.g., "I would recommend giving her a bath every day".
- In the imperative mode, e.g., "No always be very very quiet at night".
- Expressed using verbs of obligation, e.g., "And I think you should involve your husband as much as possible now".

a.2: Advice explicitly authoritative and future oriented, delivered, and

"...expressed as a factual generalization, ..."; e.g., "...lots of mums do:

progress to the (8) terries when they are a bit older".

(b) Mother-initiated Advice

b.1: Requesting advice (establishes the problem area, establishes requesters need for advice, and establish mother's alignment as a prospective advice recipient), e.g., "...how long should I leave him on the other side () ?".

b.2: Soliciting advice more *indirect, cautious*, detailing and describing an *unpleasant state of affairs*.

(c) Heath Visitor-initiated Advice

c.1: Stepwise entry advice

Stepwise entry advice is an advice procedure that helps developing a problem search/ identification in a step by step manner leading to advice-giving at the end. The relevant steps may be:

- Step 1: **HV:** *initial inquiry.*
- Step 2: **FM:** *problem-indicative response.*
- Step 3: **HV:** *focusing inquiry into the problem.*
- Step 4: **FM:** *responsive detailing.*
- Step 5: **HV:** *advice-giving.*

Dunn & Taylor (1993) remarked Advice is "...a recommendation for decision or course of action coming from a cooperating teacher and directed toward the student teacher."

10. PREVIOUS RELATED STUDIES

Holland, P.E. (1989) looked at the literature on the Supervisory conference in Teacher Education (TEd. henceforth) over a period of 20 years back. As she puts it, her aim was "...to provide a representative basis for looking at assumptions about the conference underlying current thought and practice and to consider how these assumptions have historically been incorporated and interpreted in the literature.". She divided the conference into three components: the *perceived purpose*, the *relationship between supervisor and teacher*, and the *use of data during the conference*. Holland found a general agreement on the purpose and that, quoting Sergiovanni and Starrat (1988) to sum-up her views, "The conference is an opportunity and setting for teacher and supervisor to exchange information about what was intended in a given lesson or unit and what actually happened". There were also some differences over the best strategies to use in helping supervisees, e.g., journal

In terms of supervisor-teacher relationships, Holland took a cynical view that "...on the surface, the assumption is generally made that interactions during the conference are pleasant for both parties and beneficial to the teacher...(looking closer would show)...distinctions that affect the likelihood the two would consider the conference a mutually rewarding experience.". Blumberg (1987), quoted by Holland, was more cynical on describing the reality of supervisor-teacher relationships "...as a private cold war..." reflecting the critical issue of struggle for power and control within the "...the context of supervisory conference". Also, Holland discussed the issue of "collaborative problem solving" relationships advocated by Cogan (1973) who termed it "colleagueship" and "engagement" by Blumberg and Weber (1968) considering it as an alternative that would help smooth relations between supervisors and teachers within the conference and outside the conference *as well*. That reflects their agreement with the belief that all relations whether inside or outside are considered as conferences.

On the issue of the use of data in the conference, Holland (1989), found that in most cases use of data in the conference merely reflects the kind of supervisor-teacher relationships discussed earlier in her section on data use during the conference. Reviewing the literature, she found that some supervisors come with their already prepared plan for observing the lesson as well as their agenda for the use of data during the conference. Others believe that being in the conference itself, even before starting any talk, would help teachers realise their own practice and teaching experience and actively reflecting on it while discussing the lesson. The collaborative strand of supervisors were found sharing data during the conference while exploring possible solutions and together arriving at an agreed decision. Holland says that "much of the discussion about using...comes from early...clinical supervision" focusing on supervisor's organisation and analysis of data, and according to Goldhammer use it "in the treatable issues" on the teaching.

According to her review findings, Holland observed "relative imbalance of theory versus solid research studies on the conference" and that there is "much to be done..." in conference data analysis. In conclusion, she gave "...the use of qualitative methods such as discourse analysis to explore the interpretive aspects of the supervisory conference..." as an example of such areas in need of solid research studies.

Since 1989, Holland's recommendation seemed to have had triggered, or at least contributed to, research concerned about the less studies done in the area of Supervisory Post-Lesson Conference (SPLC henceforth) data use moving towards more qualitative research methods applications. Throughout the nineties up to 2000's good efforts were taken contributing to more applications of qualitative methods in data analysis and interpretation of SPLC data. Critical Discourse analysis, Pragmatics, and Conversation Analysis are examples of such methods.

(titles on SPLC data analysis to add here from SPLC title tables: to be reviewed as well).

Dunn and Taylor (1993) purpose of study was to "...investigate more directly the advice that cooperating teachers give to student teachers.". All their research data was collected in Elementary School classrooms situated somewhere in North West Ohio. They found out that Advice is "...a

recommendation for decision or course of action coming from a cooperating teacher and directed toward the student teacher.”

Teacher advice is “...advice that encouraged positive transfer on the part of the student teacher (also ‘mindful’ or ‘reflectively’)”(PositiveTransfer:

horizontal positive transfer “...using what one already knows in new

contexts”/vertical positive transfer “...lower-level skills facilitating the acquisition of higher-level skills”), they collected data using conversations between experienced /new cooperating teachers and student teachers during advice meetings.

11. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Table1. lists most of the data collected during the final teaching practice block visits.

data collected (in relation to the supervisory visits during the final block teaching practice experience).	kind of data (Corroborative/ peripheral)+number of items collected	participants(sv: Supervisors E,B,P&XI s.t.: student-teachers G &S/ c.t.: class-children C &etc. /h.t.: head-teachers Y&Z/oth:others									various contexts and situations involved (classroom ,college, office ,andetc./noisy/quiet,crowded etc.).
		Cor	open	sv.	s.t.	c.t.	rs.	ch.	h.t.	oth	
1)Post-lesson supervisory conferences(audio-taped).											
2)Supervisor's notes on observed teaching(SNOOT).											
3)Supervisor's mid-practice report.											
4)Student's mid-practice report.											
5)Confidential school report.											
6)Final report by supervisor.											
7)Evaluation sheet.											
8)Previous teaching practice SNOOT(s)											
9) College's documentation on teaching practice.											
10)Students' own perspectives on supervision and on being supervised(hand-written).											
11) Supervisors' own perspectives on supervising student-teachers(hand-written).											
12)Supervisors' own perspectives on supervising student-											

teachers(audio-taped interviews).											
13)Researcher's own field notes(diary).											

It aims to give an overview description by giving a comprehensive picture of data collected. Table 1 treats the data according to its kind, participants and contexts.

The 'kind of data' refers to whether it or, potentially, is *core*, *corroborative* or of a *peripheral* status to the whole thesis and in particular to the discussions and analyses stages. Core data is the focus of analysis and interpretations. It might consist of not just the transcripts of the audio-tape recorded conferences but also written documents that go directly with them like SNOOTS & Mid Practice reports. The corroborative data is all that I might or could, potentially use to confirm or reject my interpretations of the first core data. The peripheral data is that additional data available for me to have access to it might be needed as further general background information. Of course, changes in the kind and status of data might take place according to the context and process of analysis of each visit.

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AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Mr. Salah M. O. Elhassan is a lecturer and coordinator of Translation Program at the Department of English Language, Buraimi University College, Alburaimi (Sultanate of Oman).

Ph.D. candidate, College of Graduates Studies Sudan University of Science and Technology (Sudan).

Mahmoud Ali Ahmed is Full Professor, College of Languages, University of Sudan for Science and Technology.

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