

ESL 교사-학생간 작문상담의 기관적 대화 특성 연구

김일희*, 조영우**

요약

본 연구는 ESL 교사-학생간 작문 상담에 나타난 기관적 대화의 특성을 분석하였다. 전형적인 교사-학생간의 대화와 달리, 본 연구에서는 대화에 참여한 학생의 교육수준과 지식수준이 ESL 교사보다 더 높았다. 이 대화는 대화분석 방법과 직접관찰기법을 사용하여 분석되었다. 분석 결과, 교사-학생간의 비대칭적 관계와 역전된 지식 수준의 차이에도 불구하고, 작문 상담 목표에 연관된 사회적 인식의 공유를 통해, 교사가 학생의 전문지식을 적극 활용하여 교수목적 달성을 수 있다는 것이 발견되었다. 따라서, 본 연구는 목표 지향성이 기관에서 발생하는 대화의 특성들 중에서 가장 중요한 요소임을 입증한다.

A Study on Institutional Characteristics of a Teacher-Student Dialogue In an ESL Writing Conference

Il-Hee Kim*, Young-Woo Cho**

ABSTRACT

This study investigates institutional characteristics of a teacher-student talk in an ESL writing conference. Unlike a typical institutional talk, the student in this conversation had a higher level of academic status and professional knowledge than the ESL teacher. The talk was analyzed using a conversation analytic method and ethnographic observation. The results showed that despite the atypical knowledge levels and relationships between the teacher and the student, their shared social knowledge regarding the goal of the writing conference helped the teacher successfully utilize the student's knowledge for her pedagogic purpose. Thus, this study demonstrates that orientation toward the core goal is the primary characteristic of institutional talk.

Key Words : institutional talk, conversation, institutionality, teacher-student interaction, teacher-student communication

* Indiana University-Purdue University(✉kimi@ipfw.edu)

** 배재대학교 테솔영어과

· 제1저자(First Author) : 김일희 · 교신저자(Correspondent Author) : 조영우

· 접수일(2010년 11월 5일), 수정일(1차 : 2010년 12월 3일), 게재확정일(2010년 12월 6일)

I. Introduction

Conversation is a fundamental medium for human communication. Recent research on conversation in various social contexts has advanced our understanding of its powerful role in human communication. Conversation Analysis (CA), which utilizes technological tools such as audio and video recording devices, has played a monumental role in deepening our understanding of how information is conveyed and interpreted in the given contexts.

One of the fundamental notions of conversation analytic research is the distinction between ordinary talk and institutional talk[1]. Ordinary talk has relatively few contextual constraints on its topic, organizational structure, and goals, whereas institutional talk is governed by many contextual factors on those aspects.

This distinction between the ordinary and institutional talk should not be regarded as clear-cut, but rather be understood as a continuum of the degree of institutionality[2]. Schegloff, Koshik, Jacoby, and Olsher argued that "there is no sharp segregation between the practices of ordinary talk and interaction and the practices of talk in institutional settings"[3]. It is possible that a conversation occurring in an institutional context may contain a set of features found in ordinary conversation as well as a set of features specific to that institutional context.

The present study examined a teacher-student conversation during an ESL writing conference held at a higher education institution. It explores how the institutionality of a pedagogical talk is manifested through its inherent interactional features that are

distinguished from an ordinary talk. This study is significant in the sense that it evaluate the key institutional features of an ESL writing conference, and also that it reveals how the teacher manages to use the student's knowledge to give advice on his or her writing. The theories about the characteristics of institutional talk are presented first.

II. Theoretical Backgrounds

According to Drew and Heritage, defining features of institutional talk in general are the participants' orientation toward the core goal of the talk, asymmetry of their relationship/status, and differential states of knowledge[4]. First of all, the interlocutors' orientation toward the core goal of the talk can be illustrated by a conversation in a doctor's office. Typically, a doctor-patient dialogue is characterized by its orientation toward medical issues. Their interaction revolves around medical topics such as symptoms of a disease or treatment for the disease. In an educational institution, a teacher-student dialogue usually focuses on academic goals and issues such as grades and assignments.

Another characteristic of institutional talk is the asymmetry of the relationship between interlocutors. In the aforementioned example of a doctor-patient conversation, the doctor is a professional while the patient is a layperson, which renders their relationship asymmetrical. In terms of medical consultation, the doctor has a higher status and authority than the patient. The doctor's higher status helps the doctor control the direction of the talk and

has the authority to make appropriate decisions about the patient's medical issue. Yet another characteristic of institutional talk, which is closely related to the asymmetrical relationship, is differential states of knowledge. In the example above, the doctor is assumed to have highly professional knowledge about medical treatment, whereas the patient, who lacks such knowledge, has to rely on the doctor's knowledge and decision to resolve the medical problem.

Scollon and Scollon stated that in the typical cultural framework of North America, parents and teachers perform the roles of questioners, listeners, and evaluators, while children and students are expected to display their ability by answering the questions and expressing their opinions[5]. This is quite contrary to traditional Asian cultures where the teacher or parent talks most of the time and the child or student is supposed to listen and learn. In Asian sociocultural framework, teacher's question is usually a way of eliciting student's response, which subsequently allows the teacher to evaluate its validity. This showcases the teacher's higher level of social status and knowledge.

A dialogue between an ESL teacher and a student during a writing conference at a higher education institution in North America can be unique as it may display features significantly different from those of typical institutional talk. In some universities in the U.S., an ESL class instructor is a graduate student enrolled in the master's degree program in TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language), whereas a person taking an ESL class is a graduate student in a doctoral program. As Table 1 and 2 show, in this context, the core goal of the talk is the same, but the

status/relationship and level of knowledge between the teacher and student are not the same as those found in typical institutional talk.

표. 1. 전형적인 기관적 대화
Table 1. Typical institutional talk

	Teacher	Student
Goal of the talk	Same	Same
Status/relationship	Higher	Lower
Level of knowledge	Higher	Lower

표. 2. ESL 작문 상담 대화
Table 2. ESL writing conference talk

	Teacher	Student
Goal of the talk	Same	Same
Status/relationship	Lower	Higher
Level of knowledge	Lower	Higher

In an ESL writing conference, the relationship between the teacher and the student is less asymmetrical than that of a typical institutional talk because both the teacher and the student are graduate students at the same institution. What is more intriguing is the fact that the student actually has a higher status than the teacher in graduate school because the student is in the doctoral program and the teacher is enrolled in the master's degree program. In addition, the student has the professional knowledge about the topic of the research paper he/she has written, whereas the teacher has little knowledge about the topic of the paper. This creates an unusual circumstance in which the teacher has to get help from the student first in order to provide advice on the student's paper. Although this kind of teacher-student relationship

may not be considered to be "typical" in the institutional talk, it is not uncommon in higher education institutions in the U.S. In order to identify and generalize the essential characteristics of institutional talk, this seemingly atypical dialogue should be carefully examined.

Using a conversation analytic method and ethnographic observation, the present study investigates such a conversation between a teacher and a student during an ESL writing conference. It closely examines the characteristics of the institutional talk and explores whether the institutional nature of the talk can be maintained throughout the writing conference and how the goal of the talk can be achieved.

III. Data and Analysis

The one-on-one writing conference was held as part of an ESL academic writing service course for international graduate students at a large public university in the U.S. The ESL writing course was the first of the graduate-level academic writing courses targeting incoming international graduate students. The writing conference was a crucial element of the course because the instructor did not have enough time to address all her students' writing issues during regular class hours. For this reason, a writing conference was considered an extension of regular classroom instruction.

The instructor (T) was a female American ESL teacher who was pursuing her MA degree in TESL at the university. The student (S), who originally came from South Korea, was a doctoral candidate, specializing in civil engineering. The conference was

held in T's office and their conversation revolved around the issue of who should be the audience for S's research paper.

As mentioned above, this conferencing situation in the ESL writing course deserves special attention because this dialogue is strikingly different from other ordinary teacher-student dialogues in terms of the levels of knowledge and status. On the one hand, this ESL course is designed to help international graduate students improve their English writing skills. T was a native speaker of English whereas S had quite limited English communication skills. On the other hand, S was a doctoral student who possessed professional knowledge about the topic of his paper whereas T knew little about S's field of study.

The researchers observed and videotaped the entire writing conference session. Then, the researchers selected and transcribed the parts of the sessions, which were regarded as worth noting, following the conventions of Conversation Analysis[6]. Finally, the student was interviewed by the researcher. The results of the analyses are presented in the following sections.

IV. Results

4.1 Orientation toward Core Goal of Talk

The dialogue was examined with respect to the aforementioned three characteristics of institutional talk. First of all, the first piece of evidence of their orientation toward the core goal of the conference came from the initial observation that there was a transition stage from the pre-conference sequence to the main talk. More specifically, when S came into

the office, T asked "how are you?" Responding to this greeting, S briefly talked about his broken bicycle. Right after a brief exchange of several conversational turns, T abruptly changed the topic by asking, "Okay. What do you have so far?" At this moment, T started reading S's paper with a serious look, indicating her intention to start talking about S's paper. This moment clearly distinguished the pre-conference sequence from the main conference sequence.

When T initiated the first turn in the main conference sequence quite abruptly that way, S seemed to take her initiation for granted because S also started engaging himself in the discussion about his research paper. The presence of this transitional point suggests that both T and S were oriented toward the core goal of the conference: addressing S's writing problems. Otherwise, there would have been no reason for T to start talking about the paper so abruptly when S seemed to have more to talk about his broken bicycle, which is a good topic for an ordinary conversation. The fact that the small talk in the pre-sequence lasted for such a brief time — because of T's decision to move on — indicates that the goal of the conference constrained the topic choice, the structure, and the turn-taking system of this conversation. This demonstrates that the institutionality was manifested during the conference through their orientation toward their common goal.

Another piece of evidence showing the orientation for T and S to the goal of the conference was a long silence of 90 seconds, which began right after T started reading S's paper. S waited in silence until T finished reading. If it had been an ordinary conversation, S might have felt uncomfortable because his conversation partner suddenly stopped

talking and left him in silence for more than a minute. However, such a situation did not happen. This can be explained by considering S's social knowledge that the purpose of the conference was for T to help him tackle his writing issues, and in order to do so, she needed some time to read his paper. T would not have spent such a relatively long time reading her student's paper if she had not been aware of her responsibility for helping him out. Thus, the institutional demand of the conference shared by T and S influenced the turn-taking, making a long pause, which is quite uncommon in ordinary talk.

Their consistent orientation to the agenda of their talk is illustrated by their discussion about the audience of the paper. This audience issue became the focus of the conversation when T asked, "What type of audience are you writing this paper for?" (line 03-04 in Table 3 below).

표. 3. 교사-학생 대화
Table 3. Teacher-student talk

01	T: hh okay. Can I-well can I-ask you a question?
02	S: um hum?=-
03	T: =um:(0.1) what type of audience are you writing: this paper for.
04	
05	S: [yeah. that's my problem.
06	T: [hhhhhh
07	S: I- (0.3) I just wr[llite to (0.3) structure engineer.
08	T: um hum,
09	S: so (0.5) uh(0.6) but(0.6) how- how do you say.

Notes: '=': contiguous speech; 'T': simultaneous speech; '()': a pause

In this conversation, T's question is not for seeking completely new information because she seems to already know what would be the answer of her question. This type of question, which is known as a display question, is often asked by teachers and parents in North American culture to check the current state of the student's/child's knowledge. This is also an effective way for teachers to provide their students with an opportunity to re-examine and self-correct their problems. In this excerpt, S's answer to this question is key to understanding his perception of the goal of the conference. His answer "yeah, that's my problem" on line 05 was made without hesitation, as shown in the absence of a significant pause following T's question. Also, his response is not a direct answer to T's question. Rather, his affirmative response is an expression of his acknowledgement that the audience issue existed indeed in his paper, even though T did not mention that it was a problem. This suggests that he did not interpret T's question as a real question. S's response to T's question on line 07 and 09 also show that S had been already expecting to ask T for help with this audience issue during the conference. In the interview conducted after the conference, S confirmed this interpretation by stating that he indeed had this expectation, which resulted from his awareness that the conference was an opportunity for T to help him address his writing problems and also for him to ask T for help. Thus, the primary goal of the conference led T to ask this display question to do "being teachers"[7], and on the part of S, the inferential framework operating in this particular context created by the core goal of the conference allowed him to interpret T's question appropriately,

not as a referential question. In other words, the goal of the conference perceived by S enabled him to react to this question as a way of recognizing the teacher's role and his student role. Thus, the core goal of this institutional talk shared by the two had a powerful influence on their choice of an appropriate inferential framework for communication and their respective roles in the conversation.

4.2 Asymmetry of Relationship

In contrast to ordinary talk, a typical institutional talk is characterized by the asymmetric relationship between interlocutors. In this writing conference setting, the relationship between T and S was assumed to be asymmetrical in the first place because one was the teacher, and the other was her student. Drew and Heritage suggested that question-and-answer behaviors of both interlocutors are indicative of the asymmetrical relationship between the expert (teacher) and the novice (student). In other words, the superordinate person can take control of the interaction by having the initiative to ask the subordinate person questions as a way of introducing or shifting topics.

In North American culture, the superordinate person is expected to listen while the subordinate person is expected to display knowledge. Questioning is also an important tool used by American middle-class caregivers to socialize their children into the target culture[8].

During the conference, T displayed this sociocultural norm by asking S some display questions. The question about the audience on line 03-04 enabled T to take control of the topic of the conversation. Throughout the conference, T used

several display questions as a way of drawing S's attention to a new topic and helping him realize his writing problems.

In this conference, however, T spent most of the talk clarifying her point regarding the audience and did not use as many display questions as ESL writing instructors would normally do. Instead, she used more referential or authentic questions particularly before she addressed each writing issue. Her behavior can be explained by the difference between the status of S and typical ESL students.

S was a Ph.D candidate. Even though T was an expert in English academic writing, she knew almost nothing about S's field of research. T could not understand the formulas and technical terms used throughout the paper, which prevented her from using display questions as frequently as expected, which requires sufficient knowledge of the subject matter. Not being able to grasp the meaning of the content of the paper, T resorted to referential questions seeking real information. By using referential questions, T learned about what the paper was about, and then she was able to make helpful comments and give useful suggestions for revision.

This was where S contributed to the conference with his expertise on civil engineering by answering T's questions. Interestingly, S helped T finish her utterance quite often when T could not pronounce some unfamiliar mathematical symbols. At this point, S was doing the role of an expert and T was acting like a novice, a reversal of their statuses. The following excerpt in Table 4 illustrates a situation where S helped T with a mathematical symbol she did not know.

표. 4. 교사-학생 대화
Table 4. Teacher-student talk

31	T: [you know], (0.3) but I'm not an engineer and so I
32	don't know (1.0) what (0.3) epsilon and (0.6) y-you
33	know (0.3) what' (0.1) the uh (0.3) does that?(0.8)
34	S: that's/you/?
35	T: yu? =
36	S = [mm
37	T: [no-. the triangle.
38:	S: uh- gradient?
39	T: gradient? and (0.1) y'see? I don't know what these are.

Notes: '=': contiguous speech; '[': simultaneous speech; '()': a pause

The frequent pauses (e.g., 0.3, 0.6, etc.) indicate T's lack of confidence. The explicit acknowledgement of her lack of understanding on line 39 demonstrates the reversal in their relationship. On the continuum between symmetry and asymmetry, the relationship between T and S may be placed at a point closer to the symmetrical side, unlike in a typical relationship between a teacher and a student.

However, this relatively symmetrical relationship did not undermine the institutional nature of the conference. In other words, a higher status of S as an expert in engineering did not pose a threat to the authority and the role of T in leading the conference. Rather, S's knowledge was used just as a useful knowledge base for T to do her teacher's role. This explains why S did not try to take over the talk. S explained in the interview that he did not consider T as having a lower academic status because he relied on T to improve his English writing skills. This response indicates that he viewed himself as T's

student rather than a person with a higher academic status. This finding suggests that institutional talk is more influenced by the context of the talk than the relationship/status between interlocutors. It challenges the notion that the asymmetry of relationship is a defining feature of institutional talk. Conversation may still be operating within appropriate institutional perimeters even when the relationship between the participants is more symmetrical. This point is further discussed in the following section on the participants' differential states of knowledge.

4.3 Differential Knowledge States

As Drew and Heritage suggest, interlocutors' asymmetrical levels of knowledge may cause communication problems in some highly formal institutional talks. In a pedagogical dialogue like this ESL conference, the teacher had adequate knowledge about the English language and academic writing whereas the student had insufficient knowledge about these areas of learning. This asymmetry of knowledge may determine the turn-taking pattern unique to the dialogue. Display questions, for example, are associated with knowledge discrepancy. As mentioned earlier, a teacher needs to possess sufficient knowledge about the subject matter to use display questions. The problem in the conference between T and S is that S is more knowledgeable than T. T found her way out skillfully by asking S for help. This did not undermine her authority as teacher. Instead of looking down on T's lack of knowledge, S helped her out by explaining unfamiliar terms and concepts throughout the conference. Thus, T and S overcame their problem by

using their differential knowledge states for the sake of accomplishing the goal of the conference. In the interview, S said he was so grateful for T's help with his problems with English composition, and he wanted to help her understand his paper so that he could get necessary help from her. S further mentioned that he tried to respond to her questions with answers as easy to understand as possible. This type of endeavor is often found among teachers, not students. It is worth noting that S's effort was not intended to play a teacher's role, but to help T do her role as a teacher.

Based on this analysis, it can be concluded that the knowledge gap between S and T as well as reversed asymmetry of relationship did not alter the institutionality of the writing conference because its institutional nature had been predetermined by the shared perceptions of the core goal of the conference. Even though relational asymmetry and knowledge discrepancy of this conference deviated from the norms of regular teacher-student conferences, the central goal of the conference was effectively accomplished through both participants' consistent orientation toward the purpose of the conference. If the demand of this institutional talk had not constrained the participants' social identities and respective roles, the conference would have gotten into trouble. Their conference was conducted successfully because orientation toward the goal of the conference constrained the utilization of S's professional knowledge for its purpose.

In summary, the interaction between T and S described thus far shows how both of them focused on the core task of the institutional talk, how their identities and roles were defined, and how they used

a common inferential framework appropriate to the context of the conversation.

V. Discussion and Implications

The discussion about the three fundamental characteristics inherent in the writing conference between T and S provides a profound insight into how to define the nature of an institutional talk. Contextual differences seem to alter the patterns of interaction considerably during the talk. Although the physical settings were ordinary, the T-S conversation was different from a typical teacher-student conversation in several aspects. The differences lied in their relationship and level of knowledge. These differences influenced the trajectory of their interaction during the conference, leading T to rely more on referential questions than display questions. This highlights the point again that institutionality is determined by the participants' shared understanding of their identities appropriate to the context. This also corroborates the point that the participants' perceptions of their identities and roles, whether conscious or not, are largely determined by the communicative demand of the institutional talk. This analysis suggests that the primary element of an institutional talk is the interlocutors' orientation to the core goal of the talk, as represented in Figure 1. Even though asymmetry of relationship and differential states of knowledge may alter the path of interaction, the institutional nature of the talk is always maintained. In this writing conference, the goal of the conference shared by both participants restricted the use of S's expertise to assisting T in performing her teacher's role. In

other words, what enables the teacher and the student to conduct successful communication despite a significant deviation from common expectations regarding the teacher's social and knowledge status is the social knowledge shared by the interlocutors regarding how a conversation in a particular context should be done.

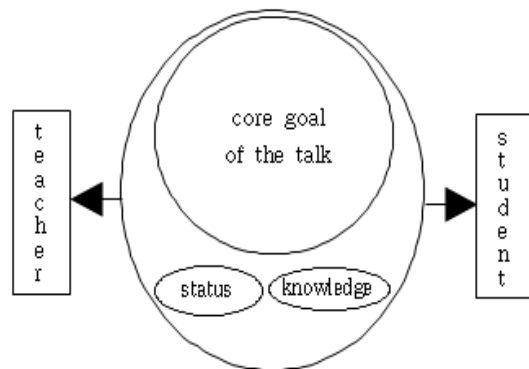


그림 1. 기관적 대화의 구성요소
Fig. 1. Elements of institutional talk

A methodological implication is that videotaping and detailed transcription were significant in understanding the process of the talk. The participants' hesitation or willingness was captured by the identification of the pauses and simultaneous utterances.

The findings of this study shed light on how to understand human communication and how to develop artificial intelligence (AI) which can interpret human communication as appropriate to the subtle communicative context. Researchers working on computer and information technology may benefit from understanding this subtlety of human communication.

VI. Conclusion

This paper examined three major characteristics of institutional talk discussed in the 1992 study by Drew and Heritage. It was found that the core goal of the talk is a key factor defining its institutionality. Asymmetry of relationship and differential states of knowledge are constrained by the goal of the talk and the social identities appropriate to the context. However, it is not clear to what extent these findings are relevant to other pedagogical forms of talk. Further research is needed to find out more about the determinants of other types of institutional talk. Because the data analyzed here came from one particular writing conference, it may be necessary to collect data from other writing conferences. In addition, to gain a deeper understanding of the characteristics of teacher-student interactions, it would be productive to investigate a writing conference between an instructor and a graduate student to see how their interactions are different from interactions between an instructor and an undergraduate student. Taking these limitations into careful consideration, future research would be able to provide an additional helpful insight into the nature of institutional talk and even more valid implications.

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김일희(II-Hee Kim)

1994년: 연세대학교 영어영문학 학사
 1997년: 서울대학교 영어영문학 석사
 2001년: 미국 Univ. of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign 영어교육학석사
 2008년: 미국 Univ. of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign 교육심리학박사

2007년~현재: Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne 교육학과 교수

※ 관심분야: 영어 읽기 & 글쓰기 지도, 독서토론, 사고력 개발, 담화분석



조영우(Young Woo Cho)

2001년 한양대학교 영어영문학 학사
 2001년: 미국 Univ. of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign 영어교육학석사
 2008년: 미국 Univ. of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign 영어교육학박사

2009년~현재 배재대학교 TESOL 영어과 교수

※ 관심분야: 응용언어학, 제2언어습득론, 멀티미디어 활용영어교수법