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The Value of Measuring Interaction Quality in English Language Teaching

What characterise teacher-student
interactions in English language teaching in
Norwegian lower secondary schools?



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Aim

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System Secondary Manual (CLASS-S) is a standardised observation protocol for measuring quality of secondary classroom interactions (Pianta, Hamre, & Mintz, 2012).

No study has exclusively investigated the observed interaction quality in EFL lessons.

The CLASS-S manual has recently been validated in Norway and Finland (Virtanen et al., 2017; Westergård, Ertesvåg, & Rafaelsen, 2018).

There is a need to study interaction quality because learning often happens through interactions in classrooms (Allen et al., 2013).

Theoretical framework

The theoretical background of the CLASS-S manual is the Teaching Through Interactions framework (Hamre et al., 2013).

This framework operationalises classroom interactions as consisting of three broad domains with respective dimensions and behavioural indicators.

Method

65 videotape-recorded English lessons from 13 classrooms in two Norwegian lower secondary schools

CLASS-S dimensions have behavioural markers that must be observed and make the basis for scoring on a 7-point Likert scale with 1-2 expressing low quality, 3-5 expressing medium quality, and 6-7 expressing high quality.

All videos were scored in 15-minute cycles, resulting in 196 observation scores.

Preliminary results

This study found low scores for Quality of Feedback and Instructional Dialogue which means that dialogues are typically characterised by Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) loops (Mehan, 1979).

A lack of follow-up in teacher-student exchanges has been prominent in other studies (e.g., Gamlem & Munthe, 2014)

The mean scores for the three domains show that Emotional Support (4.12) scored in the mid range, Classroom Organisation (6.18) scored in the high range, and Instruction-

al Support (2.81) scored in the low range.

The mean scores for the twelve dimensions ranged from 1.06 (Negative Climate) to 5.85 (Productivity).

The strongest significant correlations among the 12 variables are between the dimensions Quality of Feedback and Instructional Dialogue ($r = .78, p < .01$)

Implications

When dimensions such as Quality of Feedback and Instructional Dialogue score low, it is a possible indication that teachers are not able to capitalise upon "moments of contingency" in their classroom feedback interactions (Black & Wiliam, 2009) or that opportunities for dialogues are not provided by the teachers.

Low scores for Analysis and Inquiry ($M=1.99$) indicates that there is a lack of facilitation of higher-order thinking skills in EFL teaching

Westergård et al. (2018) found similar results, with $M = 2.38$ for Analysis and Inquiry as the lowest score across the dimensions, which could imply that it is a common tendency in Norwegian secondary school classrooms.

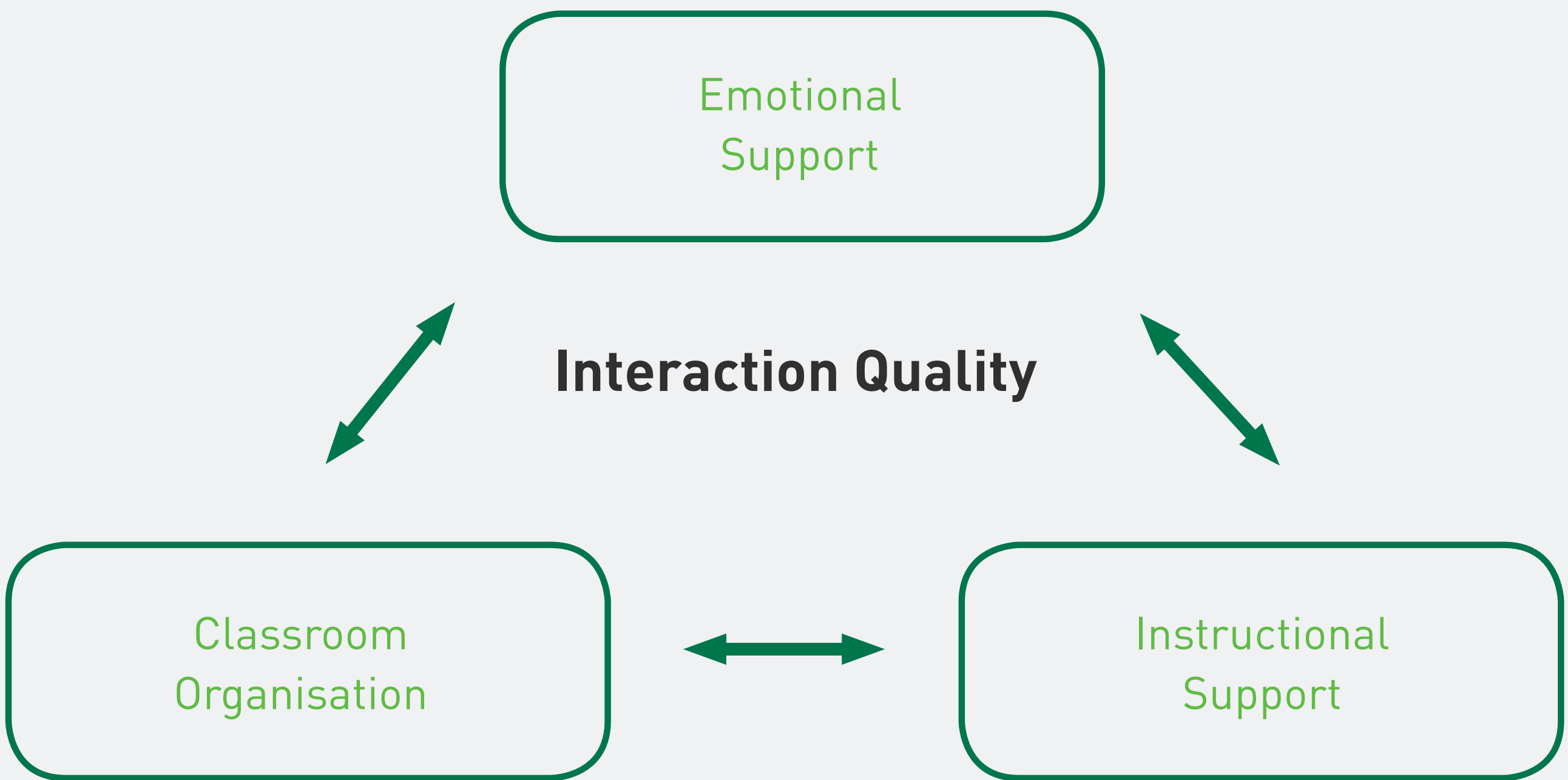


Figure 1: Interaction Quality understood as a reciprocal relationship between Emotional Support, Classroom Organisation, and Instructional Support.