

BS RESEARCH REPORT

**CONSTRUCTING TEACHER AUTHORITY THROUGH PRONOUN
SHIFTS, MODALITY, AND DIRECTIVES: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT LECTURES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF
PESHAWAR**



*A report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of BS
in English to the Department of English and Applied Linguistics, University of
Peshawar*

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SESSION 2022-2026**

ABSTRACT

This study examines the teacher authority construction through pronoun shifts, modality and directives strategies in classroom discourse at the Department of English, University of Peshawar. The current study draws on the theoretical frameworks of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL). It investigates how teachers employ linguistic resources to establish, maintain and negotiate authority during lecture interaction. During this study a analysed qualitative research design was adopted and lecture data from four teachers were to identify patterns of pronoun use, modal expressions and directive forms. The analysis explored how teachers strategically shift between first person singular, first person plural and impersonal constructions to position themselves as experts, members of shared learning community, or representatives of disciplinary authority. Likewise, epistemic and deontic modal expressions were used to express certainty, obligation and institutional expectations, whereas directive strategies ranged from direct commands to indirect and collaborative forms that managed classroom participation. The findings demonstrated the function of these linguistic features as an integrated system of authority construction, enabling teachers to balance institutional control with student engagement. The frequent use of inclusive pronouns combined with deontic modality created a shared responsibility as well as teacher authority. The study concludes that teacher authority in university classrooms is not only based on the institutional status but is actively constructed through strategic linguistic choices. By providing a deep analysis of university teacher lectures in Pakistani higher education context, this study contributes to the field of discourse analysis, educational linguistics as well as teacher student interaction. It provides practical insights for reflective teaching practices and education.

Keywords: Teacher Authority, Classroom Discourse, Pronoun Shifts, Modality, Directives, Critical Discourse Analysis, Systematic Functional Linguistics.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I sincerely express my gratitude to all who supported the completion of this research thesis. I am deeply indebted to my supervisor for expert guidance, constructive criticism, and consistent encouragement, which were instrumental in shaping this work. I extend my thanks to my teachers for their valuable insights and academic mentorship throughout my studies. I am profoundly grateful to my parents for their unwavering support, sacrifices, and belief in my endeavors, without which this achievement would not have been possible. I also acknowledge my colleagues and friends for their intellectual discussions and moral support. Any shortcomings in this thesis remain my own responsibility.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENT	ii
SUPERVISOR’S CERTIFICATE	iii
DECLARATION.....	iv
Result of via-voce Examination of Shahid Ali, BS student (2022-2026)	v
FIELD OF SPECIALIZATION CERTIFICATE	vi
COURSE COMPLETION CERTIFICATE	vii
CHAPTER 1	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.0 Overview	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Research Problem	4
1.3 Research Objectives and Questions	5
1.4 Research Questions	5
1.5 Delimitation of the Study	6
1.6 Significance of the Study	6
1.7 Conclusion	7
CHAPTER 2	8
LITERATURE REVIEW	8
2.0 Overview	8
2.1 Classroom Discourse and the Exercise of Power	8
2.2 Pronoun Use in Academic and Classroom Discourse	9
2.3 Modality and Epistemic Authority	11
2.4 Directive Strategies in Classroom Interaction	12
2.5 Teacher Authority in Pakistani Higher Education	13
2.6 Research Gap	14
2.7 Conclusion	15
CHAPTER 3	16
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	16
3.0 Qualitative Research Orientation	16
3.1 Research Design	16
3.2 Data Collection	17

3.3 Data Analysis	17
3.4 Theoretical Framework.....	18
3.5 Ethical Considerations	19
3.6 Conclusion	20
CHAPTER 4.....	21
DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF SELECTED LECTURE DATA	21
4.0 Introduction to the Analysis.....	21
4.1 Pronoun Shifts and the Construction of Teacher Authority.....	21
4.1.1 The Strategic Deployment of Inclusive 'We'	21
4.1.2 The Authoritative Singular and Knowledge Distribution	23
4.2 Modality and the Negotiation of Epistemic Authority	24
4.2.1 High-Value Modality and the Assertion of Certainty	24
4.2.2 Deontic Modality and Institutional Power	26
4.3 Directive Strategies and the Management of Participation.....	27
4.3.1 Question Directives and Epistemic Access Control	27
4.4 The Interaction of Pronoun Shifts, Modality, and Directives	29
CHAPTER 5.....	31
CONCLUSION	31
5.0 Summary of Findings.....	31
5.1 Theoretical and Pedagogical Implications	32
5.2 Limitations of the Study.....	33
5.3 Recommendations for Future Research	34
5.3 Conclusion	35
REFERENCES.....	36

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

The construction and negotiation of teacher authority in higher education is an inherently linguistic phenomenon. In university classrooms, authority is not merely conferred by institutional roles or academic credentials; it is continuously enacted, contested, and reproduced through language (van Dijk, 2008). The manner in which a teacher speaks the pronouns employed, the degree of certainty expressed through modal auxiliaries, and the directness or indirectness of instructional commands collectively constitutes a powerful semiotic system that positions both teacher and student within established hierarchies of knowledge and control (Fairclough, 2001). This study investigates these linguistic mechanisms within the specific context of the Department of English, University of Peshawar, Pakistan, drawing on the analytical resources of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to examine how teacher authority is discursively constructed, maintained, and negotiated during classroom interaction.

1.1 Background

Classroom discourse has long attracted scholarly attention as a site where power relations are enacted and reproduced through language. The pioneering work of Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) established the Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) sequence as the dominant structural pattern of classroom talk, revealing the asymmetric distribution of interactional rights between teachers and students. This foundational framework demonstrated that teachers control not only the content of classroom discourse but also its sequential organization, thereby institutionalizing their epistemic and social authority within the very grammar of classroom exchange (Mehan,

1979). Subsequent scholarship has expanded and complicated this foundational insight, demonstrating that classroom discourse is shaped by intersecting forces of institution, pedagogy, culture, and individual agency (Walsh, 2011).

The relationship between language and power in institutional settings has been theorized extensively within the CDA tradition. Fairclough (1989) argued that language is a form of social practice embedded within power relations, and that the naturalized conventions of institutional discourse serve to reproduce social inequalities. In educational contexts specifically, this naturalization operates through the routines of classroom interaction, where linguistic choices such as pronoun use, modality, and directive forms encode the hierarchical relationship between teacher and student as though it were self-evident and inevitable (Fairclough, 1992). Wodak and Meyer (2009) further elaborated how CDA enables scholars to connect micro-level linguistic choices with macro-level ideological structures, making it particularly suited to the analysis of classroom authority.

Pronoun use in classroom discourse functions as a significant indexical resource for constructing identity and social relationships. The shift between first-person singular (“I”), first-person plural inclusive (“we”), and impersonal constructions (“one,” passive voice) enables teachers to position themselves variably as individuals, as members of a collective epistemic community, or as voices of impersonal disciplinary authority (Hyland, 2005). These pronominal strategies have been shown to influence the epistemic status of knowledge claims and to modulate the social distance between teacher and students. Chilton (2004) demonstrated that political and institutional speakers strategically deploy inclusive pronouns to create an illusion of solidarity while retaining asymmetric authority, a dynamic that operates with particular force in educational settings.

Modality, as a grammatical category expressing the speaker's assessment of the probability, necessity, or possibility of a proposition, plays a central role in the construction of authority in academic discourse. Palmer (2001) distinguished between epistemic modality, which encodes the speaker's degree of commitment to the truth of a proposition, and deontic modality, which encodes obligation and permission. In classroom contexts, teachers' deployment of high-value epistemic modal auxiliaries (e.g., 'must,' 'will') asserts knowledge with certainty and authority, while lower-value modals (e.g., 'might,' 'could') hedge claims and construct a more collaborative epistemic stance (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The strategic modulation of modality thus constitutes a primary mechanism through which epistemic authority is negotiated in academic interaction.

Directive speech acts utterances intended to get the hearer to do something—constitute another key mechanism through which teachers exercise authority over classroom participation. Ervin-Tripp (1976) identified a range of directive types along a continuum from most direct (bare imperatives) to most indirect (embedded requests and hints), with the degree of directness correlating with the social distance and power differential between interlocutors. In classroom settings, teachers' directive choices reflect their orientation toward authority, whether constructing it through explicit command or negotiating it through mitigated and collaborative formulations (Searle, 1969). Cazden (2001) further demonstrated that directive strategies are deeply embedded in the broader pedagogical philosophies of individual teachers and institutional contexts.

The Pakistani higher education context presents distinctive sociolinguistic conditions for the study of classroom discourse. English functions as both the medium of instruction in elite universities and as a marker of social and intellectual prestige, creating complex dynamics of

linguistic authority in which competence in English is closely linked to academic credibility (Mahboob, 2009). The University of Peshawar, located in the capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, operates within a socioculturally hierarchical context that traditionally valorizes respect for teachers, creating a fertile ground for examining how linguistic authority is constructed and occasionally contested (Shamim, 1996).

Research on classroom discourse in South Asian and Pakistani contexts has highlighted the persistence of transmission-oriented pedagogies and teacher-centered interactional patterns (Coleman, 1996). Shamim (1996) documented how the physical and interactional organization of large ESL classrooms in Pakistan reproduced asymmetric power relations, with teacher talk dominating the discourse and student participation tightly controlled by the teacher. More recent scholarship has begun to examine how individual teachers navigate between traditional authority-centered pedagogies and more participatory approaches, with linguistic choices serving as the primary medium through which this negotiation unfolds (Rahman, 2004). In the English departments of major Pakistani universities, where Western academic discourse norms intersect with local cultural values, this negotiation is particularly complex and analytically revealing (Mansoor et al., 2004).

1.2 Research Problem

Despite the extensive scholarship on classroom discourse in Western educational contexts, the linguistic construction of teacher authority in Pakistani university settings remains underexplored. Existing studies have tended to focus on either the structural features of classroom interaction (following the IRF tradition) or the broader sociolinguistic dimensions of English-medium education in Pakistan, without examining the specific grammatical resources—pronoun shifts, modality, and directives—through which authority is enacted at the micro-level

of classroom talk. This gap is particularly significant in the context of the English Department, University of Peshawar, where teachers must simultaneously exercise disciplinary authority over the content of English language and literature and manage the complex power dynamics of a socioculturally hierarchical institutional environment. The present study addresses this gap by undertaking a systematic discourse analysis of lecture interaction in this specific context, providing both theoretical and empirical contributions to the field of educational linguistics.

1.3 Research Objectives and Questions

- 1 To identify and describe the patterns of pronoun shifts, modality, and directive strategies used by teachers in English Department lectures at the University of Peshawar;
- 2 To analyse how these linguistic features interact to construct and negotiate teacher authority in classroom interaction;
- 3 To interpret the contextual motivations underlying teachers' linguistic choices in relation to authority and classroom management.

1.4 Research Questions

- 1 What patterns of pronoun shifts, modality, and directive strategies are used by university teachers in classroom discourse at the Department of English, University of Peshawar?
- 2 How do pronoun shifts, modality, and directives interact to construct and negotiate teacher authority during lecture interaction?
- 3 Why do teachers prefer particular pronoun, modality, and directive choices when establishing authority and managing classroom participation in this context?

1.5 Delimitation of the Study

The study is delimited to the Department of English, University of Peshawar, and focuses exclusively on lecture-based classroom interaction at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. It does not encompass tutorial sessions, seminars, or informal teacher-student encounters outside the classroom. The analysis is confined to audio-recorded, naturally occurring classroom discourse collected over one academic semester. Only those lecturers who deliver instruction primarily through the medium of English are included in the sample. The study does not extend to other departments within the university, to other institutions in the province, or to written academic discourse, though comparative insights are drawn from the broader literature where relevant.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study makes several contributions to the fields of discourse analysis, applied linguistics, and educational linguistics in the Pakistani context. Theoretically, it extends the application of CDA and SFL to a previously understudied institutional context, contributing to a growing body of scholarship on classroom discourse beyond the Western anglophone tradition (Gee, 2014). Empirically, it produces original, contextually grounded data on the linguistic construction of teacher authority in Pakistani higher education, a domain that has received insufficient systematic attention. Pedagogically, an understanding of how teacher authority is linguistically constructed can inform reflective teaching practice, enabling teachers to become more aware of the ideological dimensions of their language use and to align their linguistic choices with their pedagogical values.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the study by outlining the theoretical and contextual foundations of teacher authority in classroom discourse, with particular attention to pronoun shifts, modality, and directive strategies. It has highlighted the research problem, established the objectives and research questions, defined the scope of the investigation, and explained the study's significance within the Pakistani higher education context.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Overview

This chapter reviews the relevant scholarly literature on the three key linguistic features examined in this study pronoun use, modality, and directive strategies as well as the broader literature on classroom discourse, teacher authority, and the sociolinguistics of Pakistani higher education. The review is organized thematically, moving from the macro-level concerns of power and discourse to the micro-level analysis of specific grammatical resources, before identifying the research gap that motivates the present study.

2.1 Classroom Discourse and the Exercise of Power

The study of classroom discourse has developed along two principal trajectories: the structural-interactional tradition, which maps the sequential organization of classroom talk, and the critical tradition, which examines how discourse reproduces and contests power relations. Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) identification of the IRF sequence as the canonical unit of classroom interaction established the foundational insight that teachers control discourse by holding the right to initiate topics, evaluate student responses, and assign the conversational floor. Mehan (1979) extended this analysis by demonstrating that the organization of classroom interaction constitutes a form of social organization that reproduces institutional authority structures, making the classroom a microcosm of broader social hierarchies.

Critical approaches to classroom discourse, informed by the work of Fairclough (1989, 1992, 2001) and van Dijk (2008), have foregrounded the ideological dimensions of pedagogic language use. Van Dijk's (2008) conceptualization of discourse and power identified three key mechanisms through which discourse reproduces dominance: access control (who can speak and

when), mind control (shaping beliefs and attitudes), and cognitive manipulation. In classroom contexts, these mechanisms operate through the teacher's control of topic sequencing, the framing of disciplinary knowledge as certain or tentative, and the use of evaluative language to position student contributions as adequate or inadequate. Walsh (2011) developed the concept of Classroom Interactional Competence (CIC), arguing that effective teachers deploy a sophisticated range of interactional strategies that simultaneously construct authority and create opportunities for student participation, suggesting that authority construction is not antithetical to student engagement but is negotiated through it.

Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) argued that late modernity is characterized by increased reflexivity about discourse, including pedagogic discourse, as participants become more aware of the constructed and contingent nature of social practices. In higher education contexts, this reflexivity manifests in the growing tension between traditional transmission-oriented pedagogies, which rest on unquestioned teacher authority, and newer constructivist and dialogic pedagogies, which problematize that authority. Young (2008) examined how this tension shapes the interactional organization of academic instruction, finding that even in ostensibly dialogic classrooms, the teacher's discursive control of knowledge and participation remains structurally intact.

2.2 Pronoun Use in Academic and Classroom Discourse

Pronoun use in institutional discourse has been examined as a key resource for constructing social identity, epistemic stance, and relational positioning. In the domain of academic writing, Hyland (2005) identified first-person pronouns as a means through which writers construct authorial identity and manage their relationship with readers, distinguishing between self-promotion (using 'I' to assert individual expertise) and involvement (using 'we' to

create solidarity with the audience). In spoken classroom discourse, similar dynamics operate, with teachers' pronominal choices indexing their orientation toward authoritative or collaborative instructional stances (Paltridge, 2012). The choice of pronoun is thus never merely grammatical but is always simultaneously social and ideological.

The use of inclusive 'we' in teacher talk has been analysed as a form of what Chilton (2004) termed 'synthetic personalization' the rhetorical construction of solidarity that simultaneously obscures power asymmetries. When a teacher says 'we need to understand this concept,' the inclusive pronoun nominally positions students as co-participants in a shared epistemic project, yet the teacher retains epistemic authority by determining what 'we' need to understand and why. This double movement of apparent inclusion and actual control makes inclusive 'we' one of the most ideologically complex pronominal strategies in classroom discourse (Fairclough, 2001). Biber and Conrad (2009) documented the register-specific distributions of such inclusive pronominal forms, noting their prevalence in contexts where speaker authority needs to be balanced with audience engagement.

The shift from first-person singular to impersonal or passive constructions similarly serves authority-constructing functions by aligning the teacher's knowledge claims with the impersonal authority of disciplinary knowledge rather than with the teacher's individual subjectivity. Hyland (2009) demonstrated that academic registers characteristically favor impersonal constructions to achieve the stance of objective, disciplinary authority, and when university teachers deploy these constructions in speech, they invoke the prestige of published academic discourse, thereby borrowing epistemic authority from the broader scholarly community. This pronominal code-switching between personal and impersonal authority is a sophisticated discursive skill that marks expert academic teaching (Lee & Subtirelu, 2015).

2.3 Modality and Epistemic Authority

The role of modality in constructing authority in academic and classroom discourse has been extensively analysed within SFL. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) categorized modality within the interpersonal metafunction of language as a resource for negotiating social relationships through the expression of obligation, permission, probability, and usuality. Palmer's (2001) distinction between epistemic modality and deontic modality provides a useful analytical framework for classroom discourse, as teachers deploy both types to construct their authority: epistemic modality to assert knowledge claims with varying degrees of certainty, and deontic modality to manage student behavior and task participation.

Lee and Subtirelu (2015) analyzed metadiscourse in university lectures and EAP classes, finding that teachers in academic lecture contexts used high-value epistemic modals to assert the certainty of disciplinary knowledge, thereby constructing themselves as authoritative transmitters of established facts. Simultaneously, they used lower-value epistemic modals to hedge personal interpretations or to invite student input, modulating their epistemic authority in accordance with pedagogical goals. Biber et al. (1999) demonstrated through corpus analysis that the distribution of modal auxiliaries in different academic registers reflects systematic patterns of epistemic and deontic authority, with lecture discourse exhibiting characteristic modal profiles that distinguish it from other academic genres.

In the SFL framework, modality also encompasses the concept of modulation, which refers to the ways in which degrees of obligation and inclination are expressed through modal expressions, verbal processes, and nominal constructions (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The concept of modulation is particularly relevant to classroom authority, as teachers draw on a wide range of modulating resources not only modal auxiliaries but also adverbs ('certainly,' 'perhaps'),

mental process verbs ('I believe,' 'I think'), and nominal constructions ('it is clear that,' 'it seems that') to position their knowledge claims and directives along a continuum from absolute certainty and obligation to tentative suggestion. Hyland (2005) identified these resources as part of the broader system of metadiscourse that marks sophisticated academic communication.

2.4 Directive Strategies in Classroom Interaction

Directive speech acts have been analysed as a primary mechanism through which social authority is exercised and negotiated in institutional discourse. Within Speech Act Theory, Searle (1969) categorized directives as illocutionary acts whose point is to get the hearer to do something, ranging from commands and requests to suggestions and invitations. Ervin-Tripp's (1976) empirical analysis of American English directives identified six structural types, demonstrating that the choice of directive form reflects the power relationship and social solidarity between interlocutors, with more indirect forms typically used to mitigate potential face threats when the power differential is less extreme. This foundational insight has been extensively applied to classroom discourse research.

In classroom discourse, teachers' directive strategies have been shown to reflect their pedagogical orientation and their construction of teacher-student relationships. Cazden (2001) observed that teachers in more authoritarian pedagogical traditions tend to rely on bare imperatives and need statements, while teachers committed to more collaborative learning environments deploy a wider range of indirect and mitigated directive forms that position students as agents in their own learning. The concept of positive politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987, as cited in Nguyen, 2007) has been productively applied to the analysis of classroom directives, with teachers' use of inclusive constructions, hedged directives, and

collaborative invitations analysed as strategies for maintaining face while exercising institutional authority.

Research in EFL and ESL contexts in Asia has documented the complexity of directive use as teachers navigate between cultural norms of teacher authority and communicative pedagogy. Nguyen (2007) demonstrated that experienced EFL teachers deploy a flexible repertoire of directive strategies calibrated to the interactional moment, using more direct directives for routine classroom management and more indirect strategies for pedagogically oriented participation. In the Pakistani context, Shamim (1996) observed that teachers in large EFL classes tended to rely predominantly on direct directive strategies, reflecting cultural valorisation of teacher authority and the practical exigencies of managing large classes. Coleman (1996) noted, however, that individual variation in directive repertoires within these contexts suggests that authority construction through directives is also a site of individual pedagogical agency.

2.5 Teacher Authority in Pakistani Higher Education

Teacher authority in Pakistani educational contexts is shaped by a complex intersection of institutional, cultural, and sociolinguistic factors. Rahman (2004) documented the profound stratification of Pakistani education along lines of language, class, and region, arguing that English-medium education at elite universities constitutes a site of cultural and symbolic capital reproduction in which teachers function as gatekeepers of linguistic and disciplinary knowledge. The teacher's authority in this context is thus doubly grounded: in institutional role and in linguistic capital (English proficiency), making the linguistic construction of authority particularly significant as a means of maintaining or contesting the social order (Mahboob, 2009).

The sociocultural norms governing teacher-student relationships in Pakistan generally privilege deference to teachers, discouraging student challenges to teacher authority in public classroom settings. Mansoor et al. (2004) argued that these norms, embedded in educational institutions from the primary level upward, produce students who approach university classrooms with deeply internalized habits of passive reception rather than active participation. This cultural context shapes teachers' linguistic choices in complex ways: on one hand, teachers may deploy relatively direct directive and modal strategies, confident that cultural norms will ensure compliance; on the other hand, the growing influence of communicative language teaching and active learning philosophies in English departments creates pressure toward more inclusive and collaborative linguistic strategies (Rahman, 2004).

2.6 Research Gap

The foregoing review reveals that while substantial scholarship exists on classroom discourse, pronoun use, modality, and directive strategies in educational settings, research specifically examining the intersection of these three linguistic features as mechanisms of authority construction in Pakistani university contexts is conspicuously absent. Existing studies have tended to focus on either the structural features of classroom interaction following the IRF tradition (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975; Mehan, 1979) or the broader sociolinguistic dimensions of English-medium education in Pakistan (Rahman, 2004; Mahboob, 2009; Mansoor et al., 2004), without undertaking systematic micro-level discourse analysis of the specific grammatical resources through which authority is enacted moment by moment in classroom interaction. The present study fills this gap by applying the combined analytical resources of CDA and SFL to naturally occurring lecture discourse in the Department of English, University of Peshawar,

providing theoretically grounded and empirically detailed insights into the discursive construction of teacher authority in this understudied context.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the relevant literature on classroom discourse, teacher authority, pronoun use, modality, and directive strategies, situating the study within the broader traditions of Critical Discourse Analysis and Systemic Functional Linguistics. The review has demonstrated that language functions as a central mechanism through which authority is constructed, maintained, and negotiated in educational settings.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Qualitative Research Orientation

This study adopts a qualitative approach to the analysis of classroom discourse, grounded in the epistemological premises of interpretivism. Qualitative methods are appropriate for this investigation because the research questions demand detailed, contextually sensitive analysis of language in use, privileging depth of interpretation over breadth of generalization (Gee, 2014). The study does not seek to produce statistically generalizable findings but rather to generate rich, analytically grounded insights into the discursive mechanisms through which teacher authority is constructed in a specific institutional context. This qualitative orientation is consistent with the broader tradition of discourse analysis research, which understands meaning as contextually situated, socially constructed, and irreducible to numerical measurement (Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

3.1 Research Design

The study employs an ethnographically informed case study design. Case study methodology is appropriate when the researcher seeks to understand a specific phenomenon within its real-world context, using multiple sources of data to build a comprehensive interpretive account (Borg, 2006). The case here is the Department of English, University of Peshawar, selected purposively because it represents a distinctive and underresearched site for the intersection of English-medium academic discourse and Pakistani sociocultural context. The ethnographic orientation of the study ensures that the discourse analysis is grounded in

contextual knowledge of the institutional setting, enabling more nuanced and contextually valid interpretation of the data. Prior to data collection, the researcher undertook an orientation period of three weeks, attending classes as a non-participant observer and conducting informal conversations with faculty members to develop familiarity with the institutional context.

3.2 Data Collection

Data were collected over one academic semester through audio recording of naturally occurring classroom lectures. A purposive sample of four lecturers was selected from the Department of English, representing variation in terms of gender (two male, two female), academic rank (two assistant professors, one associate professor, one professor), and level of teaching (two undergraduate, two postgraduate courses). Each lecturer was recorded across three class sessions of approximately ninety minutes each, yielding approximately eighteen hours of audio data in total. Participant recruitment followed a formal informed consent procedure: all participants were briefed on the purpose of the study, the data collection procedures, and the publication plans for the research, and were given the right to withdraw their consent at any time without penalty. The recordings were subsequently transcribed in full, using a simplified version of the Jefferson (2004) transcription conventions adapted to preserve the features of primary interest for this analysis.

3.3 Data Analysis

The recorded lectures were transcribed and analysed in three sequential stages. In the first stage, all instances of first- and second-person pronoun use, pronominal shifts, modal auxiliary expressions, and directive speech acts were identified and coded using NVivo 14 qualitative data

analysis software. In the second stage, the coded items were analysed qualitatively, examining the sequential and pragmatic contexts in which each linguistic feature was deployed. Particular attention was paid to moments of pronoun shift where a teacher moves from one pronominal form to another within a single sequence of talk as these shifts are particularly revealing of changes in the speaker's interactional footing, epistemic stance, and relational positioning (Young, 2008). In the third stage, the interactions among the three linguistic features were analysed to identify patterns of co-deployment that characterize the construction of teacher authority in this context. The analysis proceeded iteratively, moving between the data and the theoretical framework to refine interpretive categories and to ensure that the analysis remained grounded in the empirical evidence.

3.4 Theoretical Framework

The study is grounded in two complementary theoretical frameworks: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as developed by Fairclough (1989, 1992, 2001) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as developed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014). CDA provides the overarching analytical framework for understanding language as a form of social practice that both reflects and constitutes power relations. Within this framework, the discourse of university lectures is understood as a socially situated practice shaped by institutional, disciplinary, and sociocultural contexts, and the language choices made by teachers are analysed as simultaneously drawing on and reproducing the power structures of the educational institution (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). CDA's commitment to relating micro-level linguistic choices to macro-level social structures is central to the analytical approach adopted in this study.

SFL provides the linguistic analytical tools for examining the specific grammatical resources through which authority is constructed. Within the SFL framework, language simultaneously constructs three metafunctions: the ideational (representing the world), the interpersonal (enacting social relationships), and the textual (organizing discourse). For the purposes of this study, the interpersonal metafunction is primary, as it is through the interpersonal resources of pronoun use, modality, and speech act choices that teachers construct and negotiate their social authority (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Directive speech acts are further analysed within the framework of Speech Act Theory as developed by Austin (1962, as cited in Searle, 1969) and elaborated by Ervin-Tripp (1976), complementing the SFL analysis by providing a pragmatic account of how utterances function as social actions in the interactional context of the classroom.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The study received ethical clearance from the Department of English, University of Peshawar. All participants provided written informed consent, and all identifying information has been anonymized in the presentation of the data, with lecturers identified as Dr. A, Dr. B, Dr. C, and Dr. D. Students are identified generically as S1, S2, or SS (collective student response). The audio recordings and transcripts are stored securely and will not be shared with third parties outside the research team. The study adhered throughout to the principles of research ethics established by the British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL, 2006).

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methodological framework adopted for investigating the linguistic construction of teacher authority in classroom discourse at the Department of English, University of Peshawar. It has justified the use of a qualitative, ethnographically informed case study design, described the procedures for data collection and analysis, and explained the integration of Critical Discourse Analysis and Systemic Functional Linguistics as complementary analytical frameworks.

CHAPTER 4

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF SELECTED LECTURE DATA

4.0 Introduction to the Analysis

This chapter presents the discourse analysis of the lecture data collected from the Department of English, University of Peshawar. The analysis is organized around the three key linguistic features identified in the research questions: pronoun shifts, modality, and directive strategies. For each feature, representative excerpts from the transcribed lecture data are presented and analyzed in detail, followed by a discussion of how the three features interact in the construction of teacher authority. The transcription notation used is simplified, with [T] indicating teacher talk, [S] and [S1/S2] indicating individual student responses, and [SS] indicating collective student talk. Pauses are indicated by (.) for a brief pause and (..) for a longer pause. The excerpts are drawn from across the four lectures in the corpus and are selected as representative of the broader patterns identified through the coding and analysis described in Chapter Three.

4.1 Pronoun Shifts and the Construction of Teacher Authority

4.1.1 The Strategic Deployment of Inclusive 'We'

One of the most consistent patterns identified in the data is the strategic shifting between first-person singular, first-person plural, and impersonal constructions within individual teacher turns and across lecture sequences. Excerpt 1, drawn from a postgraduate lecture on literary theory conducted by Dr. A, illustrates a characteristic pattern of pronominal mobility:

Excerpt 1 (Dr. A, Postgraduate Lecture on Literary Theory, Session 2):

1. T: When we look at Foucault's concept of discourse, we find that it's not simply about language.
2. It's about knowledge and power operating through social institutions.
3. I would argue that this is the most significant contribution of poststructuralism to literary criticism.
4. One cannot reduce Foucault to a simple formula.
5. He is not saying 'power is bad.'
6. What he is saying and this is crucial is that power is everywhere, and it operates through us.
7. We need to sit with that complexity.

This excerpt demonstrates a characteristic three-phase pattern of pronominal deployment in the academic lecture context. The lecturer opens with inclusive 'we' (lines 1-2), positioning students as co-participants in the intellectual activity of examining Foucault. This inclusive construction, as Hyland (2005) would predict, creates a rhetorical solidarity while simultaneously asserting the teacher's authority to determine what 'we' are doing and finding. The shift to first-person singular in line 3 ('I would argue') is particularly significant: the teacher steps forward as an individual intellectual authority, advancing a personal interpretive claim about the status of poststructuralism in literary criticism. The modal 'would' is strategic here, simultaneously asserting a confident intellectual position and hedging it as the teacher's personal view rather than an established fact a form of modulated epistemic authority that Hyland (2009) associates with the expert academic writer who is confident enough in their authority to mark personal interpretation as such.

Lines 4 and 5 shift to impersonal constructions ('One cannot'; 'He is not saying'), aligning the teacher's interpretation with the impersonal authority of disciplinary reasoning rather than personal opinion. This movement from the personal 'I would argue' to the impersonal 'One cannot' performs a significant discursive maneuver: the teacher first marks the interpretation as personally authoritative, then reframes it as a matter of disciplinary necessity, reinforcing the claim from two distinct authority bases simultaneously the individual intellectual and the depersonalized discipline. The return to inclusive 'we' in line 7 ('We need to sit with that complexity') repositions students as co-participants in a shared intellectual challenge, but the deontic modal 'need' transforms this apparent inclusion into an indirect directive. The teacher is not inviting students to opt into intellectual engagement but is encoding it as a collective obligation, thereby exercising authority through the grammatical form of solidarity.

4.1.2 The Authoritative Singular and Knowledge Distribution

Excerpt 2, drawn from an undergraduate lecture by Dr. B, illustrates a contrasting pronominal pattern in which the teacher deploys the authoritative singular more prominently, constructing a more explicit transmission-oriented relationship with students:

Excerpt 2 (Dr. B, Undergraduate Lecture on English Language, Session 1):

1. T: Now, I am going to give you the definition of a metaphor.
2. You should write this down.
3. A metaphor is a figure of speech in which one thing is described in terms of another.
4. We use metaphors all the time in everyday English.
5. You can think of examples from your daily conversation.
6. I think the best example is 'life is a journey.'
7. Do you see how that works?

In Excerpt 2, the pronominal pattern reveals a distinctly different authority construction strategy. The opening first-person singular ('I am going to give you') in line 1 foregrounds the teacher as the primary agent of knowledge distribution, with students positioned as passive recipients ('you'). This teacher-as-giver/student-as-receiver framing enacts the transmission model of pedagogy at the level of grammatical structure (Fairclough, 1992). The shift to second person in line 2 ('You should write') marks a transition to a directive sequence, with the modal 'should' encoding moderate deontic obligation the teacher expects compliance but frames the directive as a recommendation rather than an absolute command. The impersonal declarative in line 3 ('A metaphor is') constructs the definition as an objective, uncontested fact, presenting knowledge as certain and non-negotiable (van Dijk, 2008). The inclusive 'we' in line 4 then briefly equalizes positions by framing metaphor use as a shared human practice, before the return to first person in line 6 ('I think') reasserts the teacher's individual authority to select and evaluate examples. The sequence concludes with a question directive in line 7 that invites student acknowledgment without genuinely opening the epistemic space to substantive student contribution the expected answer is a confirmation of understanding, not a contribution to knowledge.

4.2 Modality and the Negotiation of Epistemic Authority

4.2.1 High-Value Modality and the Assertion of Certainty

The analysis of modal expressions in the lecture data reveals a consistent and patterned deployment of both epistemic and deontic modality in the service of authority construction.

Excerpt 3, from a postgraduate lecture by Dr. C on linguistics, illustrates the strategic interweaving of high-value and low-value modal forms:

Excerpt 3 (Dr. C, Postgraduate Lecture on Linguistics, Session 3):

1. T: The distinction between langue and parole is fundamental.
2. This must be understood if you are to grasp Saussure's system.
3. Langue is the social system of language it is, if you like, the abstract code.
4. Parole is the individual act of speaking.
5. Now, Saussure may have oversimplified the relationship between the two.
6. Some scholars would argue that parole influences langue over time.
7. That might be the direction you could explore in your essays.

The modality pattern in this excerpt is particularly revealing of the teacher's sophisticated management of epistemic authority. The bare declarative in line 1 ('is fundamental') and the high-value deontic modal in line 2 ('must be understood') together construct the langue/parole distinction as a matter of established disciplinary fact and obligatory student knowledge. The modal 'must' carries dual epistemic and deontic force: it asserts that the distinction is of the highest importance (epistemic) and that students are obligated to understand it (deontic). This combination of declarative assertion and deontic obligation is characteristic of what van Dijk (2008) identifies as authority discourse, in which the speaker positions themselves as having the right to determine what others must know and do. The parenthetical hedge 'if you like' in line 3 does not soften the epistemic assertion but rather performs a conversational gesture of informality that maintains engagement without conceding authority.

The epistemic shift in line 5 ('may have oversimplified') is striking in its contrast with the certainty of lines 1-4. Here the teacher introduces scholarly critique of Saussure through a low-value epistemic modal, hedging the critical claim as possible rather than established. This

hedging serves multiple simultaneous functions: it accurately represents the contested status of the critique within the discipline, models scholarly tentativeness as an academic virtue, and positions the teacher as a sophisticated interpreter capable of nuanced evaluation rather than mere transmission of received knowledge (Hyland, 2009). The chain of low-value modals in line 7 ('might,' 'could') further softens the suggestion about essay direction, constructing the teacher's instructional direction as a facilitative offer rather than an authoritative prescription—yet the very act of directing students' essay choices, however softly encoded, remains an exercise of institutional authority that students are unlikely to interpret as genuinely optional (Ervin-Tripp, 1976).

4.2.2 Deontic Modality and Institutional Power

Excerpt 4, from an undergraduate lecture by Dr. D, illustrates a pattern of sustained deontic modality use that constructs authoritative institutional power through the sequential escalation and partial relaxation of obligation:

Excerpt 4 (Dr. D, Undergraduate Lecture on Discourse Analysis, Session 1):

1. T: You cannot pass this course without understanding discourse analysis.
2. I will be very clear about that.
3. There will be questions on this in the final examination.
4. You should start reading Fairclough as soon as possible.
5. If you want, you could start with Chapter One of Language and Power.
6. That would be a good place to begin.

The modality sequence in Excerpt 4 moves from the highest to the lowest degrees of deontic obligation, constructing a field of managed choice within a framework of institutional necessity. The negative epistemic-deontic construction in line 1 ('cannot pass') asserts a certain,

non-negotiable consequence of student behavior, invoking the teacher's authority as assessor and gatekeeper of institutional success. The high-certainty future in lines 2 and 3 ('will be very clear'; 'will be questions') reinforces these assertions as statements of definite institutional fact, drawing on the teacher's authority as the agent who will implement and execute these institutional functions. The shift to 'should' in line 4 moderates the deontic force from inevitability to recommendation, while still encoding obligation. Lines 5 and 6 introduce the conditional 'If you want' and the low-value epistemic 'could' and 'would,' temporarily mitigating the teacher's directive authority and positioning the student as an agent with choices. This strategic mitigation, however, is bounded by the framing of lines 1-4, which has already established non-compliance as institutionally consequential, making the apparent freedom of lines 5-6 a constrained and managed choice within a field of obligation already defined by the teacher's institutional authority (Fairclough, 2001).

4.3 Directive Strategies and the Management of Participation

4.3.1 Question Directives and Epistemic Access Control

The directive strategies deployed in the lecture data reveal a complex and contextually calibrated repertoire that draws on the full range of directive types identified by Ervin-Tripp (1976), with patterns of use reflecting both individual teacher style and the interactional demands of specific lecture moments. Excerpt 5, from a postgraduate seminar led by Dr. A, illustrates the strategic use of question directives as a participatory management tool:

Excerpt 5 (Dr. A, Postgraduate Lecture, Session 3):

1. T: Can anyone tell me what postcolonial theory is concerned with?
2. Silence, approximately 3 seconds
3. T: Alright, think about what we discussed last week.
4. Brief pause

5. S1: Empire? The effects of colonialism?
6. T: Good. Yes. The effects of colonialism. Now, can you expand on that?
7. Let's think together about what those effects might look like in literature.
8. What do we mean by 'writing back to empire'?

The opening in line 1 is a question directive one of Ervin-Tripp's (1976) indirect directive types which encodes a request for student participation in the grammatical form of an interrogative. The three-second silence that follows in line 2 is pragmatically significant: it reveals the structural coerciveness of even apparently open question directives, as students' silence in the face of a teacher question constitutes a dispreferred response that creates interactional pressure toward contribution (Walsh, 2011). The teacher's response to the silence in line 3 is an imperative directive ('think about'), which shifts from the indirect question form to a more direct behavioural directive, while the inclusive 'we' frames the recalled knowledge as shared rather than teacher-owned.

The evaluative response in line 6 ('Good. Yes.') performs the teacher's authority role as epistemic judge in what Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) termed the Feedback move of the IRF sequence. The teacher accepts the student's contribution and then directs its expansion through a further question directive ('can you expand on that?'). The inclusive formulation in line 7 ('Let's think together') represents the most collaborative directive form in this sequence, encoding the teacher's instructional direction as a shared intellectual activity while nonetheless retaining control of the agenda and the standard against which student contributions will be measured. The sequence of directives in lines 1, 3, 6, 7, and 8 thus moves across the full range of Ervin-Tripp's (1976) continuum from polar question directives through imperatives to collaborative invitations demonstrating the sophisticated directive repertoire of this experienced lecturer and the way in

which different directive forms serve different authority-constructing and participatory functions within a single instructional sequence (Nguyen, 2007).

4.4 The Interaction of Pronoun Shifts, Modality, and Directives

Across the data, the three linguistic features examined in this study do not operate independently but function as an integrated and mutually reinforcing system of authority construction. A consistent pattern is observable in which teachers deploy inclusive 'we' together with deontic modals to formulate indirect directives that construct compliance as collective necessity rather than individual obligation. This combination which might be termed the 'inclusive-deontic pattern' is perhaps the most ideologically complex mechanism of authority construction in the data and is found across all four lecturers, suggesting it is a characteristic feature of this institutional context rather than an idiosyncratic personal style.

The inclusive-deontic pattern functions to naturalize authority by encoding the teacher's directives as expressions of shared goals or disciplinary requirements rather than as exercises of personal power. When a teacher says 'We need to examine this text carefully' rather than 'Examine this text carefully' or 'You must examine this text carefully,' the combination of inclusive 'we' and deontic 'need' performs a discursive transformation: the teacher's authority to direct student attention and behaviour is displaced onto the text, the discipline, or the collective learning project, becoming invisible as individual authority even as it remains fully operative as institutional authority (Fairclough, 1989). This mechanism resonates strongly with Fairclough's (1992) concept of synthetic personalization the simulation of egalitarianism in contexts of structural inequality and extends it from its original context of consumer discourse to the specific institutional dynamics of the Pakistani university classroom.

A secondary pattern the 'hedged-singular pattern' involves the combination of first-person singular pronouns with low-value epistemic modals to construct the teacher as an authoritative but intellectually humble interpreter. This pattern, visible in formulations such as 'I would argue that...' and 'I think we might consider...', constructs the teacher as an individual intellectual authority who subjects their own claims to the epistemic norms of academic discourse, thereby modelling and simultaneously asserting a sophisticated scholarly stance that students are implicitly invited to emulate. This pattern is particularly characteristic of the postgraduate lecturers in the sample (Dr. A and Dr. C), whose students are themselves developing as academic researchers and for whom the modelling of scholarly epistemic practice is pedagogically central (Hyland, 2009). The convergence of pronoun, modality, and directive choices in these patterns confirms that the linguistic construction of teacher authority is not achieved through any single grammatical resource but through the systematic and contextually calibrated co-deployment of multiple interpersonal resources within a coherent discursive strategy.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.0 Summary of Findings

This study has examined how teacher authority is discursively constructed through pronoun shifts, modality, and directive strategies in English Department lectures at the University of Peshawar. The discourse analysis of the lecture corpus has revealed that authority construction in this context is a dynamic, multidimensional, and highly skilled discursive practice, drawing on the full range of the interpersonal resources of English grammar in ways that are sensitive to the specific institutional, disciplinary, and sociocultural context of Pakistani higher education.

With respect to pronoun use, the study identifies three principal pronominal strategies: the authoritative singular ('I'), the inclusive collective ('we'), and the impersonal authority ('one'/'it'/passive). These strategies are deployed in principled patterns that reflect the teacher's shifting orientation between individual intellectual authority, pedagogical solidarity, and disciplinary impersonality. The most significant finding regarding pronoun use is the strategic deployment of the inclusive 'we' as a mechanism for converting individual authority into collective necessity, thereby naturalizing the teacher's directive power within a discourse of shared intellectual endeavor. This finding extends Hyland's (2005) analysis of inclusive pronoun use in academic writing to the domain of spoken classroom discourse, demonstrating that the ideological functions of pronominal choice are operative across both written and spoken academic registers.

With respect to modality, the study finds a systematic correlation between modal value and the nature of the knowledge claim being made: high-value epistemic modality or zero modality (bare declaratives) is deployed to assert established disciplinary facts, while lower-value epistemic modality is deployed to hedge personal interpretations and invite student participation. Deontic modality functions as the primary resource through which teachers encode obligation and manage student behaviour, with 'must,' 'should,' and 'need' operating as markers of varying degrees of institutional authority. The sophisticated modulation of epistemic and deontic modality across the course of individual lectures constitutes a key mechanism through which teachers simultaneously assert disciplinary authority and model the epistemic practices of academic scholarship, confirming and extending the findings of Lee and Subtirelu (2015) in the specific context of Pakistani university discourse.

With respect to directive strategies, the study finds a more varied and sophisticated repertoire than previous research on Pakistani classrooms has suggested, with teachers deploying question directives, inclusive directives ('let's'), impersonal directives ('one should'), need statements, and bare imperatives in contextually calibrated combinations. The key finding is that directive form is systematically co-deployed with pronoun choice and modal selection to modulate the face-threatening potential of instructional directives, resulting in the integrated authority-construction patterns identified as the 'inclusive-deontic pattern' and the 'hedged-singular pattern.'

5.1 Theoretical and Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study carry several implications for educational linguistics and pedagogical practice. Theoretically, the study demonstrates the productivity of combining CDA

and SFL as complementary analytical frameworks for classroom discourse research, showing how macro level ideological analysis and micro level grammatical analysis mutually reinforce each other in generating a comprehensive account of authority construction. The identification of the inclusive-deontic and hedged-singular patterns as integrated mechanisms of authority construction contributes to the growing body of scholarship on the grammar of pedagogic authority (Walsh, 2011), providing empirically grounded categories that can inform future comparative research across different institutional and cultural contexts.

Pedagogically, the findings suggest that teacher educators in Pakistan and similar contexts should develop teachers' critical awareness of the authority-constructing functions of their own language use. An understanding of how pronominal choices, modal selections, and directive forms construct particular kinds of teacher-student relationships can enable more reflective and intentional pedagogical practice, allowing teachers to align their linguistic choices with their pedagogical values rather than reproducing habitual patterns unreflectively (Fairclough, 2001). For university departments teaching English language and literature, the findings highlight the importance of developing students' discourse awareness as a complement to their language and literary development, enabling them to recognize and critically engage with the authority-constructing mechanisms operating in academic discourse—a capacity that is central to their development as independent scholars (Gee, 2014).

5.2 Limitations of the Study

The study has several limitations that should be acknowledged transparently. The sample of four lecturers from a single department at a single university limits the scope of the findings and cautions against over-generalization to other contexts. The study did not collect data on

student perceptions of teacher authority, which would provide a valuable complementary perspective on how teacher linguistic choices are received and interpreted in the classroom. The reliance on audio recording means that the paralinguistic and kinesic dimensions of authority construction—tone of voice, gesture, posture, gaze are not fully captured in the analysis, despite their well-documented importance in face-to-face interaction. Finally, the simplified transcription conventions used may not capture the full complexity of prosodic features such as intonation and emphasis, which also contribute to the construction of authority in spoken discourse. Future studies might address these limitations by incorporating video recording and more detailed prosodic transcription.

5.3 Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should extend the investigation to other departments and institutions within Pakistan and across the wider South Asian region to examine whether the authority-constructing patterns identified in this study are specific to the English Department, University of Peshawar, or characteristic of Pakistani and South Asian university discourse more broadly. Comparative studies examining the discursive construction of authority across departments teaching in different media English, Urdu, Pashto would be particularly valuable for understanding how the choice of instructional medium interacts with the linguistic construction of authority. Longitudinal studies tracking individual teachers across different course levels and student cohorts would illuminate how teachers adapt their authority-constructing strategies to different pedagogical contexts over time. Finally, research incorporating student voice—through post-lesson interviews, retrospective verbal protocols, or systematic analysis of student participation patterns would provide a more complete and dialogic account of how teacher

authority is constructed and received in the Pakistani university classroom, moving toward the kind of comprehensive understanding of classroom discourse that the field requires.

5.3 Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that teacher authority in university classroom discourse is not simply a product of institutional position but is actively constructed and negotiated through language. Through the analysis of pronoun shifts, modality, and directive strategies in lectures delivered at the Department of English, University of Peshawar, the study has shown how teachers strategically employ linguistic resources to balance authority, solidarity, knowledge transmission, and classroom management. Despite its limitations, by integrating the analytical perspectives of Critical Discourse Analysis and Systemic Functional Linguistics, the research has provided a nuanced account of the relationship between language and power in higher education.

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