

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

Different student-strategies for interactional power  
in the IRF pattern in an EFL classroom

A Pro Gradu Thesis

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DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES

2007

HUMANISTINEN TIEDEKUNTA  
KIELTEN LAITOS

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Different student strategies for power in the IRF pattern in an EFL classroom

Pro gradu -tutkielma

Englannin kieli

Elokuu 2007

87 sivua + liite

Abstract

Tämä tutkimus pyrkii selvittämään oppilaan vallan käyttöä luokahuonevuorovaikutuksessa tarkastelemalla mitä strategioita oppilas käyttää ilmaistakseen omaa valtaansa ja vastustaakseen opettajan suunnitelmia puheessaan IRF -mallin (kysymys (initiation)-vastaus (response)-palaute (follow-up)) sisällä, jonka on todettu olevan yksi tyypillisimmistä rakenteista luokahuonevuorovaikutuksessa. Tutkimuksen aineistona on kaksi lukiotason englannin oppituntia jotka on kerätty osana laajempaa tutkimusta Jyväskylän yliopistossa toimivalle huippututkimusyksikölle (VARIENG). Tutkimus keskittyy tutkimaan yhden oppilaan ja opettajan välisiä vuorovaikutustilanteita, joissa oppilaan vuorovaikutuksellista vallankäyttöä esiintyy.

Kyseessä on laadullinen tutkimus, jonka tarkoituksena on syvemmin tarkastella tiettyjä aineistosta nousseita vuorovaikutustilanteita mahdollisimman kattavan ja monipuolisen kuvan antamiseksi oppilaan vallasta luokahuonevuorovaikutuksessa. Tutkimus on diskurssianalyttinen ja se hyödyntää keskusteluanalyttistä ja etnografista otetta opettajan ja oppilaan diskurssin tutkimisessa.

Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat oppilaan käyttävän suoria sekä epäsuoria strategioita sekä huumoria keinoina ilmaista valtaansa vuorovaikutuksessa opettajan kanssa. Oppilas pystyy myös ilmentämään valtaansa kussakin IRF -mallin osiossa esimerkiksi tehden kysymyksiä, vastustaen opettajan suunnitelmia vastauksessaan, tai ilmentäen omia mielipiteitään tai kommentoiden opettajan puhetta sekä ehdottaen eri vaihtoehtoja 'palaute' vuorossaan. Oppilas pystyy myös toimillaan jatkamaan IRF -mallia ylimääräisillä vuoroilla, tai jopa häivyttämään IRF -mallin rakenteen taka-alalle, jolloin vuorovaikutus muuttuu keskustelullisemmaksi.

Tutkimus keskittyy vain itse henkilöiden välisten suhteiden ja roolien tarkasteluun, eikä pyri osoittamaan mitään yhteyksiä esimerkiksi kielen oppimiseen. Tulokset kuitenkin osoittavat, että oppilaan valta vieraan kielen luokahuonevuorovaikutuksessa vaatisi lisätutkimusta, jotta sen mahdolliset yhteydet itse oppimiseen sekä kulttuurin ja iän vaikutus ilmiöön voitaisiin paremmin selvittää.

Asiasanat: classroom discourse, classroom interaction, student's power, interactional and institutional power, IRF pattern

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### APPENDIX 1

# 1 INTRODUCTION

The teacher has traditionally been seen as the one who exercises power in a classroom setting because of his/her institutional position. Being the one who decides on the content and aim of a lesson, the teacher has been assumed to be the one who controls classroom interaction and steers it to the pre-determined direction. However, the institutional position that places the teacher in a more powerful position in a classroom compared to students should be separated from the discursive power that is enacted in the interaction between the teacher and students. This is shown in studies (Thornborrow 2002, Manke 1997) which argue that the institutional position does not automatically allow the teacher to control the interaction in a classroom, but rather that the power relations in a classroom are constantly being negotiated through interaction. These studies show that discursive power is not a static phenomenon that someone can possess; rather it is created through the contributions that every participant makes to the interaction. Thus, since the interaction in the classroom is shaped by both the teacher and students, also the latter should be seen as important contributors to classroom power relations.

Both the institutional setting and the interaction in the classroom have to be taken into consideration when examining the construction of power relations through classroom interaction, since the institutional setting greatly influences the interactional context (Thornborrow 2002). Thus, even though institutional and interactional power can be seen as two separate factors, both views are important in constructing the overall picture of classroom power relations and having an influence on each other.

The IRF pattern (teacher initiation - student response - teacher follow-up or feedback), also called the 'triadic dialogue' that has proven to be a dominant form of interaction in a classroom setting (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975, Mehan 1979, Cazden 2001, Lemke 1990, Nassaji and Wells 2000) has been thought to be an exchange system that allows the teacher to control classroom interaction and thus, to hold the power in the classroom (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975, Cazden 2001). Even if the IRF pattern has previously been seen as a feature of teacher-dominant interaction in the classroom, the IRF pattern has shown to have different functions, and the different turns in the IRF can take a variety of

forms and meanings and be deployed by both the teacher or a student depending on the situation (Nassaji and Wells 2000). The IRF pattern can sometimes be initiated by a student (Sunderland 2001). The student may also provide the follow-up move (Sunderland 2001), which have usually been seen as actions made by the teacher where the student response is squeezed in between the teacher's discourse moves. Students can also use different tactics in the IRF pattern to intervene with the teacher's plans (Candela 1999). These findings suggest that the IRF pattern does not automatically allow the teacher to control the interaction and that the constantly changing power relations negotiated in the interaction (Thornborrow 2002, Manke 1997) could be seen in classroom interaction even when the IRF pattern is the most frequently used form of interaction. Thus, students' power in classroom interaction can be examined through the IRF pattern since it can be seen as also contributing to student talk (Sunderland 2001). Considering the frequent use of the IRF pattern in classroom interaction, it most likely will be a good starting point to a closer examination of the phenomenon.

The purpose of this study is to try to fill the gap in the research of students' power in classroom interaction. The student's perspective in classroom interaction has been a greatly neglected area of investigation (Sunderland 2001). Not many studies have examined students' power in the classroom and even fewer situated in a foreign language classroom. Since the co-construction of knowledge and students' opportunities to impact interaction in the classroom has been shown to have an effect on the actual learning of students (Nystrand 1997, van Lier 1996, Mercer 1998) and on their motivation (Rampton 2002), it is also important to acknowledge the importance of students' power in classroom interaction. Power relations in a classroom setting in this study are not, however, viewed in the light of learning, even though some connections to language learning will be made. The main purpose of this study is to examine power as a social phenomenon in the classroom and see what kind of roles and relationships can be established in the interaction between the teacher and a student, the main concern being the student's interactional power. The IRF pattern is taken as the starting point of examining the power relations constructed in the interaction because of its frequent use in classroom interaction (Nassaji and Wells 2000) and in the EFL classroom (Nikula 2007).

This case study, which focuses on one male student's discursive actions during four lessons, examines power relations in an EFL (English as a foreign language) classroom through the IRF pattern and more precisely, it concentrates on the student's opportunities of exercising power in classroom interaction in the IRF pattern. The data of the study are four EFL lessons (two double lessons) from upper secondary school (lukio). The purpose of the study is to see how the student makes his own contributions to the power relations in the classroom by examining the interaction between the teacher and the student. The main focus of the study is to examine how the student establishes his power in interaction with the teacher. Situations where power is exercised, experienced and resisted (Thornborrow 2002) are analyzed to see if there are certain strategies that the student uses to gain a more powerful position in the interaction than is given to him in the institutional setting. More specifically, the main research question focuses on examining the student's powerful discursive moves in the IRF pattern and to see how the student can utilize the different moves in the IRF pattern to establish his discursive power and what kind of strategies he uses to do that. The analysis of the data is complemented with three sub-questions that specify the main research question and allow a more multi-layered examination of the phenomenon. Firstly, the use of indirect and direct discourse is examined on both the teacher's and student's part to see if it has an effect on the actions of the other participant. This includes e.g. examining, if direct discourse by the teacher perhaps leads to more resistance on the student's part. The second sub-question examines which one of the two participants in the interaction, the teacher or the student, seems to get 'the last word' (Sunderland 2001) in the interactional situations where power relations are being negotiated. The third sub-question focuses on examining whether or not the student's resistance in these interactional situations can be seen as resistance to learning. A discourse analytical approach utilizing ethnography of communication and conversation analysis as tools to analyze the data are the methods of analyzing the data in this study.

The aim of the study is to deepen the understanding of the creation of classroom power relations through classroom interaction and to shed more light to the students' role in the creation of those relationships. The study also seeks to increase the knowledge about the IRF pattern in an EFL classroom as a way for a student to establish his power in the interaction. By adding to the studies of students' power in classroom interaction, this study can hopefully also bring new insights to the actual aim of classroom interaction,

the learning of the students. Even though the purpose of the study is not to view student's power in interaction from the learning perspective, it might, however, present new views also to the learning of the students, since classroom interaction plays an important role in the actual learning (see Hall and Verplaetse 2000).

## **2 POWER IN CLASSROOM DISCOURSE**

As Thornborrow (2002) points out, the theoretical aspect of power is a question that can take many forms, from being something that can be observed empirically to something that is mostly ideological. According to Thornborrow (2002), power can also be viewed in a quantitative manner, which is usually the case in more non-theoretical situations where there are different amounts of power that can be possessed and used.

Thornborrow further argues that power can also be something qualitative when it is not so much the amount of power that is important and makes someone powerful, but it is the nature and the quality of the power that are more important in determining who is powerful.

The issue of power in a classroom setting can be seen as consisting of two different approaches to power. Classroom power relations are to some extent determined by the institutional setting in the classroom (Cazden 2001, Sinclair and Coulthard 1975). The institutional setting gives the teacher certain rights to ensure the learning of the students. At the same time, the power relations in a classroom are being constantly negotiated in the interaction between the individuals in the classroom (Thornborrow 2002, Manke 1997). The theoretical view on power that is relevant to this study is to view power as a linguistic and interactional phenomenon and to see what power is and how it is constructed in discourse. To examine this interactional approach to power it is also necessary to explore the institutional power relations, since the institutional context cannot be overlooked when examining classroom discourse (Thornborrow 2002). These two different approaches to classroom power relations will now be discussed in more detail to see how they contribute to the study of students' power in the classroom.

### ***2.1 Institutional power***

When issues of power in a classroom are at issue, a wider perspective of social hierarchies surrounding the 'mini-society' of the classroom has to be taken into consideration. According to Fairclough (1989), discourse should be viewed based on the



institutional conventions in that situation, structured by wider social norms and beliefs about power relations. Fairclough (1989) further argues that there are power relations in the surrounding society, which have an impact on discourse and interaction that people are not always even aware of, and these hierarchies and relations have an effect on the institutional power relations that are sometimes clearly determined and stated, like in schools, or in situations which are not normally seen as institutional settings like a family meeting, but are still shaped by certain norms or intrinsic rules of 'proper' conduct. Classroom power relations can thus be seen as a multidimensional phenomenon of institutional and social relations of power that are then enacted in classroom discourse. As will be shown later, these power relations will, in addition, be shaped by the actual interaction that takes place in the classroom setting, but first, the institutional aspect of classroom power will be discussed.

Power in classroom discourse has often been regarded as something that is rather restricted by the norms the classroom setting poses to the teacher and the students. The teacher has traditionally been seen as the one who has the power in the classroom and can therefore dominate classroom interaction. The effect that the institutional setting in the classroom has on classroom interaction is pointed out by van Lier (1996:157):

Within a setting such as the school, the power does not in the first instance come from the language itself, but rather it is an institutional power which is embodied in the language and given to the persons who carry out the institutional tasks.

The teacher is the one who is supposed to carry out the institutional task in the classroom, i.e. the teaching of students. The school as an institution provides the teacher a position where he/she has more power in the classroom than the students and can decide on the curricular topics that will be taught. The teacher's superior institutional position is established to ensure the learning by the students.

The classroom is indeed an institutional setting and therefore the interaction between a teacher and a student has certain characteristics that would not seem natural e.g. in a conversation between two friends. The distinction between institutional discourse and 'natural' social discourse is not, however, that easy to make as one might assume. As

Thornborrow (2002) points out, even though institutional discourse is often separated from non-institutional discourse based on the equality and inequality between the participants in the interaction, the individuals taking part in non-institutional discourse may still often have unequal stances to power. According to Levinson (1992), there are, however, certain features that separate institutional discourse from non-institutional discourse. Levinson (1992) states that institutional discourse has a specific goal, it poses certain constraints to what can be seen as contributing to that specific goal and it provides the unique circumstances based on which the speakers will interpret and handle talk in that institutional setting. Examining classroom interaction through these distinguishing features, the goal of classroom interaction is the learning by the students and the teacher's and students' talk should be organized so that it facilitates learning. In addition, both the teacher and the students are expected to respect the norms that guide classroom interaction even if it means that the rights to talk are more limited with some participants (students) than with others (the teacher).

Drew and Heritage (1992:49) discuss further characteristics of institutional interaction as constituting of "role-structured, institutionalized, and omnirelevant asymmetries between participants in terms of such matters as differential distribution of knowledge, rights to knowledge, access to conversational resources, and to participation in the interaction." In a classroom these characteristics of institutional interaction can be seen from the roles as the 'primary knower' and 'manager' (Nassaji and Wells 2000) that the teacher can take on, which allow the teacher to decide on what will count as knowledge in the classroom and how the interactional events are managed in a way that classroom interaction proceeds in a desired manner. The students have their own role as being the ones who are the actual beneficiaries of classroom interaction even though their participation in the interaction is usually seen as being more limited than the discursive rights of the teacher.

Further, Thornborrow (2002:4) states that "...institutional discourse can be described as talk which sets up positions for people to talk from and restricts some speakers' access to certain kinds of discursive actions." This shows how indeed, the aspect of power as a "contextually relative phenomenon" (Thornborrow 2002:35) has to be taken into consideration when examining power in institutional settings such as the classroom,

because the resources the different participants are able to use in their discourse is greatly determined by the surrounding norms and institutional roles they have.

According to a number of previous studies on classroom interaction (Mehan 1979, Sinclair and Coulthard 1975), this institutional position that the teacher has compared to the students is considered to be something that allows the teacher to exercise the power in the classroom. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) see the teacher as being the one who is in control of what happens in the classroom. They argue that by being the one who decides on who is allowed to talk and by nominating the topic of the talk and even judging whether or not the contributions of others (the students) in the class are appropriate, the teacher can control the interaction in the classroom. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) discovered a re-occurring pattern that was typical of the classroom setting (the IRF pattern that will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3). This pattern is characterised by the teacher initiating interactional sequences where he/she poses display questions in which the teacher already knows the answer. The uneven division of knowledge and interactional rights and the teacher's institutional position are seen as factors that result in an imbalance of power in the classroom. This seems, however to be quite a simplistic view considering that there are many individuals in the classroom who probably will not only "sit and listen" while the one who has more interactional rights based on his/her institutional position talks and gives orders. The interactional aspect of classroom power relations has also been acknowledged in many recent studies (see Thornborrow 2002, Manke 1997) as being an important part in the construction of power in a classroom.

## ***2.2 Interactional power***

In addition to the institutional power relations in a classroom, power can be seen as being constructed in talk in the classroom. As Thornborrow (2002:7) points out, discourse can be seen as "an important site for both constructing and maintaining power relations". The division that van Lier (1996) makes between 'equality' and 'symmetry' in an institutional setting with its restrictions and rules clarifies the duality of classroom power relations. Van Lier (1996:175) resolves the dilemma of true teacher-student conversation as being impossible to achieve due to the institutional setting by making a

distinction between ‘equality’ and ‘symmetry’. According to van Lier (1996:175), ‘equality’ refers to factors like status, role and age that are external to actual discourse. These factors often shape the social situation so that a person can be regarded as being more powerful or more important than another person in that setting. In the classroom these ‘equality’ factors would be determined by the institutional norms and constraints that place the teacher in a more powerful position compared to the students. ‘Symmetry’, on the other hand, refers to the actual interaction and talk (van Lier 1996:175) that is produced by the teacher and the students. Van Lier (1996:175) concludes that ‘symmetry’ in classroom interaction can be achieved despite the institutional norms in the classroom. Thus, the teacher and the students can bring themselves to a more ‘symmetrical’ position through their interaction in terms of classroom power relations, even though the institutional setting would not place the participants in an ‘equal’ position.

Similar ideas have also been brought up in recent studies on classroom power relations. Thornborrow (2002) and Manke (1997) have both challenged the rather one-sided view of power relations in the classroom where only the institutional position is taken into consideration. Drawing on Foucault’s theory and idea of power, both Thornborrow and Manke see power relations in a classroom as being constantly changing and negotiated between all the participants in a classroom. They both argue that the teacher does not automatically control classroom interaction all the time and that power is rather being constantly negotiated in the interaction. According to Manke (1997:2),

Understanding power as a matter of relationships implies that power in the classroom cannot be constructed by the teacher alone. How can one individual build relationships? They must be the work of all who participate – both teachers and students.

Both Thornborrow (2002) and Manke (1997) acknowledge that the teacher has certain interactional rights and privileges in the classroom compared to the students because of his/her institutional position and role. In fact, they see those rules to be present in the classroom to give students the best possible opportunities for learning. However, neither Thornborrow nor Manke assumes that those rights would allow the teacher to hold the power in classroom interaction. According to Manke (1997), every individual brings

his/her own needs, experiences and information to the classroom and together they build the interactional space in a classroom. She further stresses that even though interaction in a classroom is affected by the surrounding culture and society, curricula and institutional rules that shape the beliefs and thoughts of the individuals who act in the classroom, it is, however, the teacher and the students who only can make these rules reality through their actions in the classroom. Therefore, the power relations in a classroom define in their own part how these outside norms will be executed in any specific classroom.

Manke (1997) points out that the teacher has the power to decide what kind of activities will be done, what material will be used and so forth, but that students have the power to shape these actions planned by the teacher with their own actions. All the participants in the classroom have their own 'agendas' that all affect the interaction and the power relations in the classroom. Thornborrow (2002:131) found that even though there are cases when the teacher can be seen as controlling the talk in the classroom, "in many instances it (power) can also be observed in the hands of the pupils." Candela (1999) has also pointed out different strategies that students can use to interfere with the teacher's plans. Candela found that they can deny the teacher's orientation, refuse to participate in the desired manner or present alternative aspects on topics to "break away from the teacher's control" (p.156).

According to Manke (1997), the teacher should accept the fact that students will and do make their own contributions to the power relations in the classroom even if the teacher tried to prevent it by exercising very tight control over classroom practices and classroom interaction. In fact, she emphasises that the teacher should not try to have a very tight control over the classroom at any cost, since it probably will not be possible for anyone to alone have the power in the classroom. The teacher should preferably concentrate on building an atmosphere that will facilitate learning. As Manke (1997:135) points out, "...schooling – is about learning, not about behaviour control."

Manke (1997) points out how this kind of a constructivist view on power relations in a classroom shifts some of the responsibility on the students' learning away from the teacher. Students can and should be seen as active participants in classroom interaction because of the important role classroom interaction plays in

foreign language learning (see Hall and Verplaetse 2000). This is also one of the reasons why the students' contributions to classroom power relations should be more widely examined.

### ***2.3 The concept of power in this study***

As the previous sections have shown, institutional power and interactional power can be seen as two different things that both construct the actual concept of power in the classroom. The institutional position gives the teacher a lot of power over classroom interaction, but it is indeed in the actual interaction where also students can contribute to the power relations and make "powerful" discursive moves. Thus, the institutional power that the teacher is given in the classroom does not allow the teacher to automatically control the interaction in the classroom and therefore both the interactional events and the institutional setting have to be taken into consideration when examining classroom power relations.

Taking these points into consideration, Thornborrow (2002:4) states that "...institutional discourse can be described as talk which sets up positions for people to talk from and restricts some speakers' access to certain kinds of discursive actions." This shows how indeed, the aspect of power as a 'contextually relative phenomenon' (Thornborrow 2002:35) has to be taken into consideration when examining power in institutional settings such as the classroom, because the resources the different participants are able to use in their discourse is greatly determined by the surrounding norms and institutional roles the participants have.

The purpose of this study is to examine students' power in classroom interaction, to view power as a linguistic and interactional phenomenon and to see what power is and how it is constructed in discourse. The definition of power in discourse and in interaction that I will use in this study is the definition presented by Thornborrow (2002). According to Thornborrow (2002:8),

...power is accomplished in discourse both on a structural level, through the turn and type of space speakers are given or can get access to, and, on an interactional level, through what they can effectively accomplish on that space.

Thornborrow (2002:8) further points out that by linguistic means participants can try to “accomplish actions in talk”, but it is the interactional context, including the actual talk and the changing relations that the participants have in the interaction along with the institutional settings that all determine the function and effects of the talk. Thus, all of these factors have to be taken into consideration when examining the power relations in classroom interaction. Thornborrow (2002:7) draws on Foucault’s theory of power as “a complex and continuously evolving web of social and discursive relations”. These relationships are never static and therefore power cannot be possessed by any individual, but it is rather a constantly on-going negotiation of power relationships where the participants exercise, experience and resist power. According to Thornborrow (2002), it is indeed these three elements that emerge from the discourse in interactional situations that allow us to depict and analyse power and “being powerful” in interaction.

### 3 THE IRF PATTERN

Now that the concept of power that is relevant to this study has been established, it is important to take a closer look at the IRF pattern that will be the starting point to the analysis of the interaction where a student's opportunities for power in the IRF pattern will be examined. This chapter will reveal the complexity of power relations in a classroom setting even if the IRF pattern is the dominant form of interaction.

#### ***3.1 The IRF pattern: a teacher-dominant form of classroom interaction?***

As van Lier (1996) states, the IRF structure is probably the element that best symbolizes classroom interaction. It has been shown to be a widely used form of interaction in the classroom setting (Nassaji and Wells 2000, Cazden 2001, Mehan 1979, Sinclair and Coulthard 1975). The IRF sequence, also referred to as 'exchange', was presented by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) in their discourse analytical study where the I stands for Initiation, R for Response and F for Feedback (or follow-up). Mehan (1979) and Cazden (2001) use the term IRE where the last E stands for Evaluate. Lemke (1990), in turn, uses the term 'triadic dialogue' of this interactional structure. In this study, this frequently occurring classroom discourse pattern will be referred to as the IRF pattern since as Nassaji and Wells (2000) point out, the F that stands for Feedback or Follow-up does not restrict the nature of the third move beforehand as much as the term Evaluate does.

The IRF pattern, as van Lier (1996:149) states, has certain classroom-specific features that are "designed for instruction". According to Cazden (2001), Initiation is nearly always performed by the teacher and the student(s) are supposed to provide the Response to the teacher's elicitation. The last part of the IRF pattern comes from the teacher who provides Feedback (or Follow-up or Evaluation) to the student's response. Traditionally, the teacher is also regarded as 'the primary knower', which allows the teacher to evaluate or give feedback on the student's response and make the student aware whether or not the response was the one the teacher was aiming for with his/her



Initiation. This form of interaction is seen suitable for the classroom setting, since the teacher can check the “knowledge” and progress of the students and the students get immediate feedback on their answers. It also enables the connection of sentences into a coherent interaction as will now be shown.

The importance of the IRF pattern as a three-part structure can be seen from a study by Mori (2002) where she examined the interaction between students and native speakers in a Japanese classroom. Even if the IRF pattern was not the actual target of the study, it revealed interesting issues about the structure of classroom interaction. The students were able to prepare for the conversation beforehand by planning the questions they would ask from the native speakers. This preparation did not, however, result in a natural and coherent conversation. On the contrary, the students posed the questions that the native speakers responded, but no ‘third move’ followed from the students’ part, which made the interaction resemble a structured interview. Thus, the study shows that the third move in the interaction is essential in making the interaction more natural by commenting on others’ answers or asking for clarification and connecting the interactional sequences so that the interaction is not built on separate question-answer-pairs. The importance of the Follow-up turn is also shown by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), who found that when a teacher did not give any Feedback on students’ Response to emphasize that there are not always right answers, the students’ participation collapsed since they did not see the use of such questions. The importance of the Follow-up turn in the IRF pattern will be discussed more closely in the next section.

This form of interaction, the teacher-led IRF pattern where the student’s response is seen as being squeezed in between the teacher’s interactional turns (van Lier 1996) is often thought to lead to the teacher’s dominance in the interaction. As Nassaji and Wells (2000) point out, the questions teachers use in classroom interaction (Initiation in the IRF sequence) are most often questions that elicit expected information, i.e. information that the teacher already knows as ‘the primary knower’ (display questions). This form of questioning and the unequal division of knowledge in the IRF pattern is often regarded as resulting in teacher’s power in the IRF pattern (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975). According to Markee (2000:71), “teachers maintain control over the moment-by-moment content and direction of classroom talk by reserving the right to ask questions. Students are thereby sequentially obligated to respond with answers.” Thus, Markee

(2000) sees classroom discourse as not being an ‘open-ended speech exchange system’ as an ordinary conversation is.

The frequent use of display questions is seen as not leaving much room for students to answer in any unexpected way to the teacher’s elicitation or for producing long or complex discourse actions. This is also the reason why the IRF pattern has been criticized as not providing the best possible opportunities for learning. Mercer (1998) states that the common discourse patterns in classroom interaction enable a situation where the teacher is responsible for handing out most of the speaking turns during the lesson. Mercer (1998) sees this as not leaving much room for the students to influence the contents of classroom interaction by e.g. suggesting the topic of the talk. The IRF pattern is usually seen as allowing the teacher to lead the lesson to a planned direction and to be able to hand out speaking turns so that she/he can control classroom interaction (van Lier 1996). Van Lier (1996:151) also criticizes the traditional IRF structure as not representing “true joint construction of discourse” because it does not allow exploring ideas or thoughts presented by students. Van Lier (1996:156) further argues about the usefulness of the IRF pattern in foreign language teaching:

...the IRF sequence, while it is effective in maintaining order, regulating participation, and leading the students in a certain predetermined direction, often reduces the student’s initiative, independent thinking, clarity of expression, the development of conversational skills (including turn taking, planning ahead, negotiating and arguing), and self-determination. Its prominent status in the teacher-controlled class, and the notion of teacher control in general, must therefore be carefully examined and constantly reevaluated.

Thus, the IRF pattern is criticized since it is thought to be a form of interaction that suppresses the student under the teacher’s control and therefore reduces his/her opportunities to utilize classroom interaction the best possible way. It is not, however, complete ignorance on the teacher’s part to use interaction that fosters teacher control. Myhill and Dunkin (2005:426), who found in their study that the discourse in the classrooms they examined was dominated by ‘teacher-framed discourse’, acknowledged the teacher’s efforts towards a more reflective and cooperative teaching where many factual questions were in fact proposed so that they would “elicit thinking”. Myhill and Dunkin (2005:426) saw this inconsistency between the teacher’s efforts towards more cooperative teaching and the actual teacher-led discourse that dominated the interaction

in the classroom as such: "...it is as though teachers want to open up pupils' thinking and reflection but cannot relinquish the control of discourse afforded by factual questions". As Myhill and Dunkin (2005) also point out, factual questions enable the teaching situations to proceed more rapidly and help in maintaining order in the classroom. According to these findings, teachers are aware that they perhaps should make discursive moves that would lead towards a more open form of discourse, but they see factual questions as an effective way to remain in control of the interaction in the classroom. The power relations in a classroom setting are not, however, that simply maintained or constructed as has been shown by Thornborrow (2002) and Manke (1997) and therefore also the use of the IRF structure in classroom discourse as a mean of teacher control should probably be more critically examined.

### ***3.2 The IRF pattern: new insights***

A great amount of teacher control has shown to have negative effects on students' motivation and learning. Rampton (2002) found that the way of teaching and classroom control had an effect on students' motivation and attitudes in the foreign language classroom. The foreign language lessons he examined were highly teacher-directed, which left very little room for contributions by the students. The students were quite unmotivated in the highly teacher-dominated German lessons, but seemed to use German (which was referred to as 'Deutsch' to make a distinction between the formal German and the informal Deutsch) in other, less formal situations. These findings suggest that the students did not resist or abandon the language itself, since they used 'Deutsch', but were unmotivated to use the language when the teacher elicited it because of the teacher-control in the German lessons. Van Lier (1996) also stresses the importance of motivation in foreign language learning. He emphasizes that if students find the IRF patterns used in the classroom to be very controlling, it reduces their motivation and their orientation towards autonomy in their foreign language learning. According to Alpert (1991), teacher-led forms of interaction are likely to create resistance among students. Thus, teacher control can lead to unwanted results in the classroom, but at this point it is important to emphasize that the IRF pattern as a structure of interaction is not as one-dimensional a phenomenon that could be assumed based on quite a number of previous studies (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975, Mehan 1979,

Cazden 2001), which will now be shown. Therefore also the power structures within the IRF pattern should be reconsidered.

Kachur and Prendergast (1997:85) point out that teachers can exercise positive control in classroom interaction that does not totally silence the student and their contributions to classroom interaction. They are aware of the beneficial sides of the teacher-dominated interaction from the teacher's perspective that have also been mentioned above. That is, teachers often hold on to their power in classroom interaction too eagerly, afraid that if they begin to share control of the classroom with students, the educational side would suffer. Thus, Kachur and Prendergast (1997:85) state, "The felt need to adopt an all-or-nothing attitude towards taking control of the classroom, however, is a misperception. Teachers must channel their authority productively by choosing to exert the kind of control that stimulates learning." The IRF pattern has often been seen as suppressing contributions by students to classroom interaction and being a teacher-dominant form of interaction. However, the IRF pattern has been shown to have different functions and forms (Nassaji and Wells 2000, van Lier 1996) that facilitate students' learning and increase the 'symmetry' in classroom interaction. The importance of true interactivity in the classroom where the teacher and students both contribute to classroom interaction in a way that facilitates learning has been widely acknowledged (see Nassaji and Wells 2000, Radford et al. 2006, Rampton 2002, Myhill and Dunkin 2005) and there are now forms of interaction that can lead to more open-ended discourse (van Lier 1996, Nassaji and Wells 2000). These different forms of the IRF pattern will, however, now be mainly discussed in the light of classroom power relations, since the purpose of the study is to concentrate on the actual power relations and on their creation rather than on language learning.

Nassaji and Wells (2000, see also Radford et al. 2006) have proposed different opportunities in the IRF sequence to make it as versatile and student-oriented as possible. They stress the importance of the initiation in the IRF sequence (or the 'triadic dialogue' as they refer to it) as it can steer the sequence to a variety of directions. Nassaji and Wells (2000:400) argue: "questions that introduce issues as for negotiation are more likely than known information questions to elicit substantive student contributions and to encourage a variety of perspectives". However, they regard the follow-up (or feedback) move as even more important to the co-construction of knowledge and understanding.

Nassaji and Wells conclude from their study that when the follow-up was an evaluative one, it did not facilitate further student contribution. However, in cases when the initiation was a negotiatory question, also the follow-up tended to be “encouraging rather than evaluating” (p. 400). Thus, the initiation can be seen as having an effect on the follow-up move. Nassaji and Wells do not, however, see the initiation part as strictly determining the whole nature of the IRF sequence. Even if the initiation was a question eliciting known information, the teacher can steer it to the direction of a “more equal dialogue” if the follow-up is not evaluation, but rather something that requires “justifications, connections or counter-arguments” (p. 401) and gives more freedom to the students’ contributions. In these cases the IRF usually also transforms to a more conversational discourse. Thus, it could be argued that the follow-up move has an important role in making the IRF pattern more conversational and presenting a more symmetrical form of interaction in terms of classroom power relations.

Van Lier (1996) has also distinguished different orientations and functions of the IRF pattern. The two different pedagogical orientations in which ways the teacher can use the IRF pattern are the ‘display/assessment’ orientation and the ‘participation’ orientation. The former is used when the teacher wants students to show their learning for the teacher so that he/she can evaluate it and the latter is used when the teacher wants the students’ active participation in classroom discussion. There are also four different functions that the Response in the IRF pattern can serve according to van Lier (1996:154): Repetition, Recitation, Cognition and Expression. The complexity of the student’s answer and how much it demands from the student depends on whether the teacher’s initiation is made to make the student repeat something, to answer to a recitation, to show his/her knowledge on something or to express his/herself more freely by giving a more complex Response.

Van Lier (1996 see also Nystrand 1997) stresses the importance of more conversational form of interaction in the foreign language classroom to provide better learning opportunities for students. As these findings suggest, the teacher can try to make the interaction in the classroom more conversational by using different forms of Initiation and Follow-up sequences. However, it may still be a bit limited to see the teacher as occupying the Initiation and Follow-up turns and the students providing the Response in the interaction. Nassaji and Wells (2000) suggest that there are three roles in the IRF

pattern that can be occupied in different variations, the role of the 'primary knower' the role of the 'manager' and the role of the 'sequence initiator'. The role of the manager is quite often occupied by the teacher, but the role of the primary knower can be assigned to a student, the teacher (as it quite often is) or to no specific individual, in which case all participants have a chance to make their own contributions to the construction of knowledge.

According to Nassaji and Wells (2000), it is, however, the teacher who chooses the different roles in the beginning of every IRF sequence and assigns the different roles to individuals in the class. While this may be mostly true considering the institutional position of the teacher, it does not, however, take sufficiently into account the points that Manke (1997) and Thornborrow (2002) make about the constantly negotiated power relations in the classroom where students have various resources to make their own contributions to the interaction despite the teacher's pre-determined plans. After all, the students do have many alternative ways of responding to the teacher's agendas.

This is also shown by Candela (1999:156), who found in her study that "students can break away from the teacher's control even when the discursive structure has the IRE form". According to Candela (1999:156), the students were able to intervene with the teacher's plans by "denying the teacher's orientation, by refusing to participate, or by defending alternative versions of particular topics" in their response. It was not, however, only the Response move that allowed the students to impact the power relations in the classroom. The students also took different roles in the IRF pattern: they asked questions and evaluated answers. Thus, the students can occupy any of the three moves in the IRF pattern. Sunderland (2001) similarly found in her study that students can make the Initiation and produce the Follow-up in the IRF. In her study, the teacher more frequently made the Initiations, but students did, however, start some of the IRF patterns and in few occasions also produced the Follow-up to the teacher's Response. Ohta and Nakaone (2004) have also examined students' questions in a foreign language classroom. These studies show that Markee's (2000) point about teachers being able to control the interaction in the classroom because they reserve the right to ask question which students are then obligated to answer, is perhaps a bit one-dimensional. As shown in the studies by Candela (1999), Sunderland (2001) and Ohta and Nakaone (2004) it is not always the teacher who asks the questions in the classroom, even if it quite often is

the case. Students can also ask questions in the classroom and thus initiate the IRF pattern.

As mentioned, van Lier (1996) stresses the importance of a more conversational form of interaction in the classroom. This is because the IRF pattern has often been seen as highly restricting the students' contributions to classroom interaction. Different functions of the IRF pattern have been suggested (van Lier 1996, Nassaji and Wells 2000) to find more conversational forms and uses of the IRF pattern that would increase the students' contributions and opportunities to participate in classroom discourse. However, the negative connections made between learning and the IRF pattern, as Sunderland (2001:1) points out, may be caused by the oversimplification of the pattern and because they are often seen as "contributing only to teacher talk". These misperceptions about the IRF pattern are also pointed out by Nikula (2007:183), who states that "it would obviously be a simplification to say that the IRF pattern always leads to closed rather than open-ended classroom conversation."

Candela's and Sunderland's studies clearly show that the turns in the IRF pattern are not that fixed. Students can take on various roles in the IRF pattern and not just the ones the teacher has assigned to them, but also roles that they as active participants in the interaction want to take on, whether or not it is made according to the teacher's plans about the interactional 'exchange' in that situation. The students' active role is also pointed out by Rampton (2002:500), who found that in the teacher-dominated German lessons, the students "used a range of tactics...to assert themselves as individuals unwilling to submit unquestioningly to the current regime".

The complexity of the interactional relations in the classroom is visible also from the structure of the conversational floor. As Jones and Thornborrow (2004) point out, the concept of floor, i.e. the notion of who has the right to speak in a classroom is not as pre-determined as has been previously thought of. Jones and Thornborrow argue that the floor is not something that someone can "hold" in classroom discourse, but it is rather something that the participants in classroom discourse can participate in. They found there to be instances of multiple floors, interruptions and simultaneous talk that show that even if classroom discourse is thought to be highly structured, there is still room for the participants to affect the organization of classroom interaction. This suggests that

even when an exchange structure like the IRF that is usually thought to be rather a restricted form of interaction proceeding through certain turns is examined, the complex construction of the conversational floor has to be borne in mind. There are many participants in the classroom who all shape the interaction in the classroom and thus, can change the direction of the IRF pattern from the planned direction or even momentarily break the IRF pattern (see also Lemke 1990). Therefore, it would be simplistic to say that one person in the classroom can determine the flow of interaction and “hold” the floor and strictly organize the form of interaction in the classroom.

To conclude, as Nikula (2007) points out, there is nothing in the actual structure of the IRF pattern that would lead to teacher dominance in classroom interaction. The IRF pattern can have many different functions (Nassaji and Wells 2000, van Lier 1996) that also shape the teacher’s and students’ contributions to the interaction. However, the roles taken in the IRF cannot be strictly determined beforehand, since the interaction in the classroom does not merely proceed in a planned manner, but is shaped by the contributions of all the participants in classroom interaction. Taking these points into consideration, the power relations in a classroom cannot be seen as being controlled by someone or by some structure of interaction and therefore, even the IRF pattern that has usually been seen as oppressing students’ interactional rights in the classroom, can provide opportunities for students to contribute to classroom power relations.



## 4 PREVIOUS STUDIES

There are not many previous studies on students' power in classroom interaction since, as Nikula (2007) and Sunderland (2001) point out, studies on classroom interaction have usually taken the teacher's perspective. There are, however, some studies that have revealed interesting aspects about students' power in the classroom. Candela (1999) studied interaction in a science classroom based on the IRF pattern to see how students occupied positions of power in classroom interaction. As mentioned above, Candela found that students did have different possibilities in the IRF pattern to intervene with the teacher's plans and that the students can take on different roles in the IRF. The students were found to have various alternatives to establish power in the interaction and were not merely forced under the teacher's agenda. Candela's findings show that the students should be seen as actively contributing to the power relations in the classroom.

Similar findings are presented by Manke (1997) and Thornborrow (2002). Both Manke (1997) and Thornborrow (2002) have examined how power relations in a classroom are produced, but they both have concentrated on younger learners (Manke on 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders, Thornborrow on 10-11 year-old students). Manke (1997) found in her study that positions of power were created through indirect discourse as well as through very direct discursive actions, and by both the teacher and the students. According to Manke, the students' actions constantly shape the power relations in the classroom as well as the definition of what will count as knowledge in the classroom, whether or not the teacher invites the students as a part of that process. Thus, Manke (1997) states that teachers should not try to prevent students from taking part in the co-construction of knowledge and classroom power relations, since it will not be possible to totally prevent the students from making their own contribution to these things. In fact, Manke found in her study that if the teacher tried to assert her own power and restrict the students' power heavily, it made them resist and intervene with the teacher's plans even more. Based on her findings, Manke challenges the common assumption that the teacher is the (only) source of power in the classroom. She sees power as being jointly constructed by the teacher and students and that it arises from the interaction these participants in the classroom create together.

Thornborrow's (2002) study has similar findings. She examined a more conversational side of classroom interaction, a classroom discussion where students were allowed to express themselves in a situation that was not as highly structured as classroom activities usually are. The teacher seemed to be the one who was "in control" of the classroom interaction by nominating speakers, handing out speaking turns and steering the situation back to the orderly form of classroom interaction if there were e.g. too many students talking at the same time. However, the students could still challenge the teacher's institutional role by resisting the teacher's actions and displaying unco-operative strategies. Like Manke (1997), Thornborrow (2002: 131) concluded that through their active participation and their contributions to talk, the students "play a collaborative role in shaping the discussion as an orderly event within its institutional context".

There are some studies that are situated in the foreign language classroom that have examined the IRF pattern, but which at the same time reveal something about classroom power relations. Sunderland (2001) examined the IRF pattern in the light of student Initiations and student Follow-up turns, which have usually been thought of being provided by the teacher. Sunderland's study shows that the IRF pattern cannot be categorized as being a form of teacher empowerment since it does not necessarily construct of teacher Initiation and Follow-up and student Response. Sunderland points out the oversimplification of the IRF pattern and the fact that even if the IRF pattern is usually thought as contributing to teacher talk, it can also "refer to student talk as much as teacher talk" (p. 35). Sunderland found that students do make Initiations in classroom interaction and sometimes even provide the Follow-up, even though the teacher more often occupies these roles. The students' Initiations were often successful, since they received a teacher Response and in some of these cases the student also provided the third step of the IRF pattern, which, according to Sunderland (2001:34) could be seen "as a form of student empowerment". Thus, this study also shows the importance of the Follow-up turn in the construction of classroom power relations (see also Nassaji and Wells 2000).

Ohta and Nakaone (2004) have also studied students' questions in a foreign language classroom. They found that the questions students posed to the teacher were answered by using "a direct answering strategy" (p. 235) and the teacher used counter-questions to "obtain information needed in order to answer a question, show alignment, or to build

intersubjectivity between the teacher and learners” (p. 235). They found that this direct approach to students’ questions resulted in more opportunities for students to participate in classroom interaction as equal partners. The direct answers from the teacher did not lead to the students relying too much on the teacher’s help, but “provided a useful resource to students” (p. 235).

Ohta and Nakaone’s findings were different from the findings of Markee (2000), who had studied students’ questions in an American ESL classroom and found that the teacher used strategies to steer the interaction back to a teacher-led speech exchange system. Markee’s findings were also different from the findings of a study of students’ questions in a Dutch classroom. The differences between these findings made Ohta and Nakaone (2004) to conclude that a different cultural background may affect the way the teacher responds to students’ questions. This implies that issues related to classroom power relations should also be seen as culturally shaped even though certain institutional rules are thought to be quite similar in classrooms across the industrialized countries.

Nikula’s (2007) study examines the IRF pattern in Finnish EFL and CLIL classrooms. Nikula compares the IRF patterns in EFL and CLIL classrooms to see if there are any differences in the use of IRFs in these two settings. Nikula found that the IRF patterns were used both in CLIL and EFL classrooms, but the form of discourse in CLIL classrooms uses looser forms of the IRF pattern, at times turning into ‘instructional dialogue’. In CLIL classrooms, the student initiated IRF patterns were also more common than in the IRF patterns used in the EFL classrooms. According to Nikula (2007), these findings suggest that the interaction in CLIL classrooms is more symmetrically constructed than the interaction in EFL classrooms. Nikula points out possible reasons for this. She stresses the dominant role the teaching materials play in language classrooms and that the materials usually present the tasks and exercises in a form that favors the use of the IRF pattern, although she also points out that the choice of using a strict form of the IRF pattern instead of a more open form of interaction can also be based purely on teacher preference. The second reason for the use of such IRFs in EFL classrooms, is the actual subject and how the construction of knowledge is treated in an EFL classroom. Nikula sees the IRF pattern as a useful tool when the language that is being studied can be seen as a combination of different grammatical structures, sentences and words and that will also have to be analyzed and studied on

their own. These points made by Nikula (2007) show that the nature of the subject that is being taught has to be taken into consideration when examining the interaction in a classroom and the construction of interactional relations.

All these studies show the importance of examining students' power in classroom interaction. The students should be seen as active contributors in classroom power relations and their power can indeed be examined through the IRF pattern, even though it has often been oversimplified to contribute only to teacher talk and leading to teacher-dominance in classroom interaction. Based on these previous studies, the effect that the surrounding culture, as well as the subject that is being taught have on the classroom power relations, cannot be ignored.

## 5 THE PRESENT STUDY

Now that the theoretical framework in examining student's power in classroom interaction has been presented, the starting points to the present study will be outlined before conducting the actual analysis of the data. The research gap in examining students' interactional power that was partly discussed in chapter 4 will now be more closely introduced. The data of the present study, as well as the methods of analyzing the data and most importantly, the research questions guiding the analysis, will also be discussed.

### 5.1 *Motivation of the study*

This study examines the power relations in an EFL classroom from a student's perspective. Not many studies have concentrated on students' power in classroom interaction and even fewer situated in the foreign language classroom as shown in chapter 4. Students' power is, however, an important area in the field of classroom interaction that requires more investigation since, as the previous studies (Manke 1997, Candela 1999, Thornborrow 2002) have shown, students make their own contributions to classroom power relations which are not determined by the teacher's institutional power, but are being constantly negotiated by all the participants in classroom interaction. Students' contributions to classroom interaction on the whole, have been a greatly neglected area of investigation. As Sunderland (2001:2) points out,

“...while student-talk may be relatively rare, this does not mean that it should be of little research interest. On the contrary, since students are the intended ‘beneficiaries’ of education, and, more controversially, precisely because their talk is less evident, student-talk should arguably be of *greater* research interest than that of the teacher.”

Many of the studies that have examined the power relations in classrooms have concentrated on viewing the phenomenon from the perspective of learning (Ohta and Nakaone 2004, Manke 1997). The purpose of this study, however, is to view classroom power relations and students' power as a social and interactional phenomenon that can be depicted from the relationships and roles the participants

create in their interaction in the classroom. The analysis and findings will not therefore be tightly connected to the actual learning of the students, since power in interaction and its creation and use will be the main focus of the study.

Apart from Nikula's study (2007), which touches the issue of students' power in classroom interaction, not have there been any studies about students' power in a foreign language classroom in a Finnish context. However, the surrounding culture most likely affects the interactional relations and actions in the classroom, as Ohta and Nakaone's (2004) study shows. As mentioned above (Fairclough 1989), it is not only the institutional setting that has an effect on the power relations, but also the power relations that work inside the society have to be taken into account. That is why it is important to study this phenomenon in our cultural setting to get the true picture of students' power in an EFL classroom in a Finnish school.

Candela's study (1999) examined students' power in the IRF pattern and this study concentrates on the IRF pattern in classroom interaction as well. The use of the IRF pattern as a starting point for the analysis of the data is based on its vast use in classroom interaction (e.g. Nassaji and Wells 2000) and that it can also contribute to students talk (Sunderland 2001, Candela 1999). Even if there are certain similarities to Candela's study (1999), it, however, was situated in science classes, and as Nikula (2007) points out, the subject being studied can also have an effect on the construction of interaction and how much space it leaves for student contributions. Candela's (1999) data is also from a different cultural background (Mexico), which can also affect the construction of power relations.

One more gap in the research of students' power in classroom interaction is that studies on classroom power relations have mostly concentrated on younger learners (Manke 1997, Thornborrow 2002, Candela 1999). This study examines EFL lessons from upper secondary school. The reason for examining students from upper secondary school is that students at this point of their studies have probably more knowledge about the subject they are studying and because the resistance or negotiation of power relations by the students is probably a more conscious act than it might be in the case of younger learners. As Sunderland

(2001:8) points out, students in a foreign language classroom do not probably know much of the language they are studying, and that with younger learners the type of questions they might ask is limited by “their lack of intellectual maturity in general” and their “lack of metalinguistic knowledge”. This is why I believe that by analyzing more advanced students, their behavior will not be too limited because of their lack of knowledge and that in some cases it might be just because of their previous knowledge why they choose to challenge the teacher and her authority/ place as ‘a primary knower’. This situation could be enabled because of the spread of English into a lingua franca, and its wide use in our every-day-lives (adds, games, television) has increased our English skills, which could enable a situation where a student may have more knowledge in some areas of English than the teacher.

The research questions of the present study will be introduced in the next section. Before listing the actual research questions, it is important to point out that there are certain constraints that have to be borne in mind when analyzing the data. All of the research questions will be examined from the data and viewed based on the institutional setting and the power relations that are partly determined by the school as an institution. This means that even though the student’s discursive moves do not always seem to be very powerful, the institutional context where the teacher has more interactional rights has to be kept in mind. However, as has been shown, the institutional roles do not determine the power relations in a classroom even though they restrict the nature and quantity of different participants discursive actions. By looking at the different aspects of classroom interaction between the teacher and the student that will now be introduced in the research questions, the study tries to shed more light to the creation of students’ power in classroom interaction and how it is established in the IRF pattern.

## **5.2 Research questions**

The main research question of this study is: What kind of strategies does the student use in the IRF pattern to gain a more powerful position in classroom interaction in an EFL classroom than is assigned to him in the institutional

setting? The different strategies used by a student to gain interactional power in the classroom will be examined in interactional situations where power can most notably be depicted according to Thornborrow (2002): situations where power is exercised, experienced and resisted. The student's discursive actions for gaining a more powerful interactional position will then be examined in such situations with the IRF pattern being the dominant form of interaction. If possible, the different ways for the student to make powerful discursive moves in the IRF pattern will then be categorized into different student-strategies for interactional power based on the similarities between the different occasions where the student strives towards a more powerful position in classroom interaction.

In addition to examining the different ways and possibilities for a student to make powerful discursive moves in the IRF pattern to be able to point out different student-strategies for interactional power, this study also examines three sub-questions concerning student's power in classroom interaction. The purpose of these additional research questions is to give a more multi-dimensional view on student's power in an EFL classroom.

The first sub-question examines the teacher's, as well as the student's use of indirect and direct discourse strategies in situations where power relations are being negotiated. Manke (1997) found in her study that the teachers often used indirect discourse strategies and this could be seen as protecting the "face" or the self-esteem of the students. Manke saw this strategy effective in facilitating the learning of the students when the students felt they had choices and were not just forced to study something. This relates to the question about indirect discourse strategies I want to examine. Firstly, could the teacher's actions, in this case the use of direct or indirect discourse strategies have an effect on how the student reacts to the teacher's discourse? If the teacher uses direct discourse and e.g. "orders" the student to do something, could it lead to more resistance from the student's part than if the teacher disguises her demand to a more "asking" form? Secondly, how does the student's use of indirect and direct discourse affect the teacher's actions?



The second sub-question focuses on examining whether the teacher or the student gets ‘the last word’ in their negotiations of power. Even though powerful discursive moves can be made in all of the moves in the IRF pattern (Candela 1999), “the last word” that closes the exchange can, according to Sunderland (2001), be seen as a powerful discursive move. Also other studies have shown the importance of the last move in the IRF pattern (Nassaji and Wells 2000). If the student is able to get the “last word”, it can be interpreted as a powerful act on the student’s part.

The third sub-question examines if the student’s resistance in the classroom can be seen as resistance to learning. Candela (1999) found in her study that student-resistance in classrooms was not necessarily resistance to learning, which shows that students’ contributions to classroom power relations in terms of student-resistance are not necessarily always negative contributions. Even though the purpose of this study is not to view student’s power in an EFL classroom in terms of learning or opportunities for learning, by examining student-resistance more closely, the study will hopefully be able to shed more light to the phenomenon and the complexity of student’s power in classroom interaction.

### **5.3 Data**

The data of the study are four upper secondary school EFL lessons (1<sup>st</sup> graders). All the lessons are from the same English course with the same teacher and the students participating in these two double lessons that have been recorded on two consecutive days. The study is a case study where the interactional contributions of only one male student during these four EFL lessons are being examined to see how he establishes his discursive power. From the four EFL lessons, the interaction between the teacher (an older female teacher) and the male student will be analyzed to see if there are opportunities for the student to gain interactional power in the IRF pattern and also to analyze what kind of strategies the student uses in instances where the power relations are being negotiated. The reason why this study concentrates on examining the interaction between the teacher and only one student is because the majority of situations where the

teacher and a pupil negotiate their power relations (situations where power is exercised, experienced and resisted, see Thornborrow 2002) are interactions between the teacher and this particular student. Therefore, it was interesting to concentrate just on this particular student to see how he constructed the power relations with the teacher in their interactional discussions. Further, the study thus gives a more truthful picture of the negotiated power relations, as it was easier to make connections between earlier events between the teacher and the student and the later interactional situations that followed. As Sunderland (2001:33) points out, individuals are indeed important when examining classroom interaction because “totals and averages often do not give a true flavour of what is happening in any one classroom”. The reason for examining older students was already explained in section 5.1.

The data are from a larger pool of data, consisting of EFL and CLIL lessons gathered by Tarja Nikula in 2003 for VARIENG, (the Centre of Excellence for the Study of Variation, Contacts and Change in English, for further information see [www.jyu.fi/hum/laitokset/kielet/varieng](http://www.jyu.fi/hum/laitokset/kielet/varieng)) in the University of Jyväskylä. The data are on a DVD-format and there are transcripts of all the four lessons that are being examined in this study (see Appendix 1 for transcription conventions). From the events where positions of power can be depicted (the three aspects presented by Thornborrow (2002) above), the discourse between the teacher and the student will be analyzed, as well as the non-verbal gestures that can be observed from the DVD that are relevant to the situation.

The student's name has been changed to 'Ville' for the sake of anonymity and he will be referred to as Ville both in the analysis and in the transcripts. The teacher's turns in the transcripts are marked by a capital T. In parts where other students' names are used in the interaction, their names have also been altered. The different turns in the IRF pattern are marked on the right-hand-side of the transcripts. The methods of analyzing the discourse will now be introduced.

## **5.4 Methods of analysis**

This case study focuses on examining a single student's power in classroom interaction. The purpose of the study is to examine how power is established in discourse and that is why the method of analyzing the data is to use discourse analysis that focuses on the discourse between the teacher and the student and which utilizes certain views from conversation analysis and the ethnography of communication. As Rampton et al. (2002) point out, different methods of discourse analysis can provide better opportunities for analyzing classroom discourse in combination than one method can on its own. That is why a more eclectic approach is chosen to analyze the data.

The reason why ethnography of communication and conversation analysis are utilized in the analysis is because of the different levels in which power can be depicted. As mentioned in chapter 2, the concept of power relates to wider social and cultural settings (Fairclough 1989), as well as to specific details of talk as a part of an interactional situation where power relations are negotiated (Thornborrow 2002).

The ethnography of communication draws on social and cultural anthropology, sociology, linguistics and education (Duff 2002) and as Schiffrin (1994) points out, it is suitable for qualitative and interpretive research in different settings. As Schiffrin (1994:408) states, "the ethnography of communication ... offers a contextual approach to the analysis of utterances ... what is said is always constitutive of a larger social and cultural reality." And that "the analysis of any single aspect of form or function can only be part of the overall framework of understanding and interpretation through which actions and beliefs are created." Thus, Schiffrin (1994) points out that in the ethnography of communication it is the culture or social surroundings in which communication becomes meaningful. This aspect is important to my analysis since the social construction of a classroom and the relationship between the teacher and the students created by the institutional setting, as well as the larger cultural setting, has to be taken into consideration when the linguistically constructed power relations in an EFL classroom are examined.

According to Thornborrow (2002), classroom power relations are being constantly negotiated in the interaction between the teacher and the students. The reason why conversation analysis is used in this study as an analytical tool is to be able to concentrate also on the small details of talk in situations where the teacher and the student “negotiate” their power relations. Thornborrow (2002:23) has discussed the use of conversation analysis when examining power in interaction, arguing that even though conversation analysis is thought to be a methodology that does not deal with the concept of power in interaction, recent conversation analysis research has shown this to be untrue and that “...it is in fact possible to begin to approach the discursive construction and negotiation of power through attending closely to the details of talk”. There are, however, some constraints in the use of conversation analysis as the starting point for analysing power in classroom, which is why conversation analysis is used only as providing specific tools in the analysis. Concepts like ‘asymmetry’, ‘floor’ and ‘turn’ that are issues presented in conversation analysis, will be used to examine the power relations in classroom interaction in more detail. As Drew and Heritage (1992) point out, these are parts of interaction in which the difference between ordinary conversation and interaction in an institutional setting can be seen.

According to Drew and Heritage (1992:27), turn taking in an institutional setting such as the classroom, is “strongly constrained within quite sharply defined procedures” and that “departures from these procedures systematically attract overt sanctions”. In a classroom, the turns of speaking are usually handed out by the teacher and the one-at-a-time rule (Sacks, Scheloff and Jefferson 1974) should be obeyed. As can be seen from the turn-taking system, asymmetry seems to be one of the features that characterise classroom discourse. As Thornborrow (2002:22) points out, conversation analysis usually refers to ‘asymmetries’ in discourse instead of assuming that there are certain roles or positions that might restrict the participant discursive resources, as is usually the case in institutional settings. However, in this study, the asymmetry in speech is also seen as stemming from the institutional context the participants are in even if it is not displayed in the actual discourse. According to Thornborrow (2002:22), recent conversation analytical studies have shown that the concept of context could to some degree be applied to

conversation analysis. However, as Markee (2000) points out, conversation analysis and the ethnography of communication see context in a slightly different manner and that conversation analysis usually does not assume there to be a certain context to the talk unless it is pointed out in the actual discourse. Thus, in this study, the ethnography of communication gives the needed theoretical background to fully take the context of the interaction into consideration when examining the student's powerful discursive moves.

The concept of 'floor' in conversation analysis refers to who has the right to speak at a given moment, and which has previously been seen as something someone can "hold" (Jones and Thornborrow 2004:403). The floor in a classroom setting has often been seen as quite restricted by the institutional norms and the teacher is thought to be able to control or take the floor when needed. Jones and Thornborrow (2004) point out, however, that the floor in classroom discourse should be seen as open to all participants in the classroom, in which they can participate. As mentioned in chapter three, this more flexible view on the conversational floor in a classroom context shows that the interaction in classrooms may not, after all, be that structured and that tightly 'managed'. The certain constraints in classroom interaction in terms of turns, floor and asymmetry will therefore have to be viewed on the basis of the constantly changing interactional position and relationships of power. The study does not, however, concentrate on any of these tools taken from conversation analysis specifically because, by concentrating on some specific details like the organization of floor, the analysis might become too limited, since the main reason for doing this study is to find ways how a student can establish his power linguistically in the IRF pattern. The ethnography of communication is therefore needed to concentrate on the phenomenon on a more broad level. That is why the analysis will be predominantly descriptive so that it will take into account all the possible details but also the bigger context that may reveal something new in the power relations between a teacher and a student.

The issue of combining the ethnography of communication and conversation analysis in this discourse analytical approach seems natural considering the multiple dimensions of classroom power relations. The ethnography of communication and conversation analysis also share some similar features even though they might

easily be interpreted as representing competing views of analysing discourse, one concentrating on the small details of talk, while the other seeks to find also larger connections. As Markee (2000:26) points out, these approaches are actually rather close to one another epistemologically, since both the ethnography of communication and conversation analysis “focus on the particular rather than the general and also seek to develop a participant’s rather than a researcher’s perspective on whatever phenomenon is being studied”. The connections between these two approaches are also pointed out by Rampton et al. (2002:374), who state that both conversation analysis and the ethnography of communication share features that are essential to produce a “trustworthy” qualitative analysis, including “the whole relationship between claims, evidence, inference, and interpretation”.

To sum up, there are certain factors that will guide the analysis of the study. The three aspects where power can most notably be depicted in interaction according to Thornborrow (2002), situations where the participants exercise, experience and resist power, are the starting points of my analysis. The situations where these factors are present in the interaction between the teacher and the student are then taken into a closer examination. These situations will then be analysed with the help of the tools from conversation analysis, but also viewed from an ethnographic stance. The main research question and the three sub-questions specifying the main research question will then give a more detailed frame of what the main focus of the study is.

## **6 DIFFERENT STUDENT-STRATEGIES FOR INTERACTIONAL POWER**

There seemed to be three different strategies that the student used in his discourse to gain a more powerful stance on the interaction when the parts of the interaction between the teacher and the student where power was experienced, exercised and resisted were examined. The examination of the use of indirect and direct discourse by both the teacher and the student (sub-question 1) also guided the division of the three different strategies. The strategies were divided into ‘indirect strategies’, ‘direct strategies’ and to ‘humor as a powerful strategy’. These strategies are not as clear-cut as the division might imply and there may be different strategies used in one particular situation. That is why it has to be kept in mind that the division was partly made to categorize the data and therefore there may be some overlapping between these different strategies. This categorizing should neither be seen as simplifying the phenomenon of constructing power relations in classroom interaction, since the interactional situations where the student’s power can be depicted will be analyzed more deeply than just presented as excerpts of different strategies for power.

All the four EFL lessons, i.e. the entire data, were examined and all the interactional situations between the teacher and the student (Ville) where power relations were being negotiated during these four lessons are analyzed in the upcoming sections. The analysis constructs of the examination of few longer excerpts taken from the data, which clearly show the power relations as a “negotiation of power”. The shorter excerpts are analyzed to deepen the understanding of the diversity of classroom power relations and student’s power.

### ***6.1 Indirect strategies for power***

First, the student’s use of indirect strategies as a powerful discursive move will be examined. As mentioned, the categorizing of these strategies should not be seen as strictly determining the nature of the interaction, since there may be various different strategies used during one excerpt. The analysis of the excerpts in this section will, in

addition to analyzing indirect strategies as a form of student empowerment, discuss the sub-questions presented in section 5.2. The aspect of whether or not Ville's resistance is resistance to learning will be discussed in all of the three excerpts as well as the issue of who gets 'the last word' in these situations. The teacher's and Ville's use of indirect and direct discourse and its effect on the other participant's actions will, however, be thoroughly examined only in excerpt 1 since the other two excerpts are not from situations where the use of indirect and direct discourse and its effects could be adequately analyzed.

Excerpt 1 is from a situation where the students are supposed to check the answers to a homework assignment from an OHP-transparent. Ville has not been checking the answers and when he starts doing something totally unrelated to the matter, the teacher tries to get him to start working.

### Excerpt 1

201	T	hhhh Ville	I
202	Ville	sorry (0.9) what	R
203	T	have you done this exercise	I
204	Ville	no (0.7)	R
205		[no e] ((Fin))	
206	T	[why] not	F
207		(1.4)	
208	Ville	Because I feel that (.) I don't have to practise these	R
209	T	£ HHH (0.6) we'll see	F
210		£ we'll see	
211	LM	rietas=	
212	T	£ = <b>we'll see</b>	
213		(1.1)	
214	Ville	yes we will see (0.2)	F
215		°we will see°	
216	T	we'll see	F
217		°what you have to do or what you° (0.5) <b>don't</b> have to do	
218		(7.8) ((there's quiet talk))	

The teacher expresses her disappointment with Ville's actions by sighing loudly and calling Ville by name (line 201), which gets Ville's attention *sorry what* (line 202). The teacher has waited for some time to see if Ville would start checking the right answers, but he has not. It is possible that the teacher perhaps has a bit negative assumptions about Ville's commitment to doing his homework (maybe from previous experiences),



when she in her Initiation asks whether or not Ville has even done the exercise the students are supposed to be checking (*have you done this exercise*)(line 203). In his Response *no* (line 204), *no e (well no)*<sup>1</sup> (line 205) Ville does not even try to conceal the fact that he has not done his homework. It is probably a good thing, not to lie about it, but at the same time he is perhaps too eager to admit his negligence and thus, does not seem to be very sorry about it. The teacher understandably, enabled by her position, asks for an explanation in the Follow-up *why not* (line 206) to Ville's Response. In the Response move, the explanation that Ville gives to the teacher for not doing his homework *I feel that I don't have to practise these* (line 208) can be interpreted as a very arrogant and smug statement in the light of classroom rules. The classroom is supposed to be a place where students get information and learn new things, but Ville's statement in line 208 indicates that Ville feels that he already knows the things that are being practised and therefore, the common rules of teaching and learning and classroom procedures do not concern him. The teacher's reaction at first seems to be a bit negligent (*HHH* on line 209), which might indicate that the teacher has heard similar comments from Ville before and therefore this comment does not upset her greatly. However, the teacher challenges Ville's arrogant but bold and powerful statement (considering the institutional setting) in a new Follow-up move by indicating that it is not for Ville to decide what he will have to do in the classroom *we'll see what you have to do and what you **don't** have to do* (lines 209-10, lines 216-7) and thus claiming her institutional power as a teacher and indicating that she has the power to make Ville do the things he is "supposed" to do. This "stepping out of line" on Ville's part (line 208) is noticed and slightly disapproved by another student as well (line 211), which shows that Ville's statement on line 208 really is against the common classroom rules of how students are supposed to behave.

The fact that makes Ville's contributions even more challenging to the teacher's powerful position in the classroom is that he does not seem to be intimidated by the teacher's follow-up *we'll see* (lines 209, 212) which is probably said to make him go "back in line", but rather, Ville provokes the situation even more by imitating the teacher and repeating her words *yes we will see, we will see* (lines 214-5) and extending the exchange with another follow-up move. This might also be an indication from Ville that

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<sup>1</sup> when the original discourse is in Finnish the English translation is given in parentheses after the direct quote from the data

it has not in his opinion been decided on who ultimately has the power to decide on what he has to do in the classroom. The negotiations of power concerning this situation end at the teacher's statement (a new Follow-up from the teacher) *we'll see what you have to do or what you **don't** have to do* (lines 216-7), which indicates that she will not back down on this matter. The teacher, thus, seems to have the "last word" in this excerpt, but as mentioned above, since the power relations are on constant movement, it would be too simple to interpret this as a sign of the teacher being more powerful than Ville. The institutional setting concerning power relations is to the teacher's advantage so that she can rely on it to some extent and "close" the matter, but the student still has his own ways of contributing to the power relations as has also been shown by Manke (1997) and Thornborrow (2002). The IRF pattern in this situation is extended to a form IRIRFRFFF (see Excerpt 1), which shows that Ville is also able to make powerful contributions to the interaction when the IRF pattern is used and even to change the form of the IRF pattern.

The question of how powerful the teacher's contributions in this situation truly are even though she gets the "last word", and how much the student can affect the power relations in a classroom could be interpreted at the end of this situation where Ville is still not participating in checking the answers. This shows that the teacher cannot force Ville to do something in this situation even if she in her discourse implies that she has the power to decide what Ville will and will not have to do. Manke (1997) has made similar findings and pointed out that even if the teacher tries to control classroom interaction, it is never totally possible unless the teacher wants to be "a drill-sergeant" strictly monitoring everything, because then, most likely, also the educational side would suffer, and still students have their own resources to strive towards their own individual goals. In this case, Ville is also able to demonstrate his power through his actions by not participating in the given task.

One of the aspects I also wanted to examine was Candela's notion that students' resistance in classrooms is not necessarily resistance to learning. Ville's response (line 208), which is a strong statement that challenges the common idea about power relations in classroom interaction, could be seen as resistance to learning, since he does not want to do the exercises that probably would facilitate his learning. However, this conclusion might be a bit simplistic. It is true that Ville does not participate in the action that the

teacher has assigned to the students and he is not doing anything else that might facilitate his learning. However, there are parts in the data of this study that could make an outside observer to conclude that Ville is indeed quite good in English and therefore, when he claims that he does not need to practise the matter in question, it might be because he partly feels unchallenged in that matter, which does not improve his motivation. Thus, the statement from Ville could indicate his desire to be able to take a more active part in his own learning where he himself could participate in the content of the lesson. However, it is impossible to say if Ville already knows the matter being checked or whether he is just lazy. His comment, *Because I feel that I don't have to practise these* (line 208) can also be interpreted in two ways. Either he does not even want to learn the matter, when it is purely a question of resistance, or maybe he already knows enough of the matter, which then, is not truly resistance to learning, but can rather be triggered by the unchallenging situation and few opportunities to affect the content of the lesson.

When this situation is examined based on the teacher's use of indirect discourse strategies to see if it might have an effect on the student's behavior, there is not any clear evidence to point out a straight relation between these two issues. However, the teacher does not seem to use very indirect forms of communicating. This is evident from the start of this excerpt when the teacher sighs loudly and does not start the interaction in a very positive manner and makes her discontent clear. It is understandable that the teacher is frustrated and disappointed since Ville does not seem to concentrate on the given task at all, but still, the teacher does not try to get Ville to participate in a more positive manner, for example, by asking "Could you concentrate on your work?". The teacher makes her frustration and discontent quite clear (line 201) from the beginning and that might make Ville even less willing to co-operate with the teacher.

Excerpt 2 is from a situation where the teacher elicits the use of adjectives from the students to teach them their use in different situations. The teacher asks another student to provide the Response, but Ville makes his contribution to the interaction even though not invited to participate.

### Excerpt 2

1563	T	aivan liian suulas	I
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1564		(1.9)	
1565	T	mites tähä laittasitte	
...			
1574	T	Janne	I
1575	Janne	muts too	R
1576	T	joo-o	F
1577	Janne	mikä se oli se	I
1578	T	much too talkative	R
1579	Janne	Nii	F
1580	Ville	or way too	R
1581	T	ni- se on puhekieltä much too	F
1582	Ville	[mitä paha o]	I
1583	LM6	[(mite se o) ]	
1584	Ville	puhekielessä	
1585	T	No mä en kirjota °nii°	R
1586		(2.3)	
1587	T	(se tais [olla kirjoitettaessaki])	
1588	Ville	[(xx) ] kokeessa jos pistää	I
1589	T	se riippuu minkä tyyline on (.)	R
1590		Jos sulla dialogi sielä esimerkiks	
1591		kadunmiehet keskustelee nii se=	
1592	Ville	=(x)	
1593	T	Or:-	
1594		tässä on toinen mahdollisuus vielä (1.0)	I
1595		much too talkative tai	
1596		(1.7)	
1597	T	mikä toinen sana käy tähän paikalle?	
1598	Ville	(laitat) way	R
1599		(1.0)	
1600	T	No nii ku mä en kirjota sitä ku se on muutenki nii=	F
1601	Ville	=joo joo=	F
1602	T	=far (1.1) far too talkative	F

The teacher's Initiation is made on lines 1563-5 where she asks in Finnish how the students would say *aivan liian suulas* (*much too talkative*) in English. The teacher nominates Janne to give the Response (line 1574), which Janne does (*muts too* on line 1575) and the teacher gives feedback on Janne's answer *joo-o* (*yeah*)(line 1576) and also helps with the adjective when Janne does not remember it (lines 1577-9). At this point, Ville gives an alternative Response to the teacher's Initiation (*or way too* on line 1580). The teacher does not accept Ville's Response in her Follow-up since she does not write it down and explains that it is used only in speech, not in writing, and thus, it is not a "correct" answer (line 1581). Ville does not settle for this explanation, but comments the

teacher's Follow-up by asking *mitä paha o puhekielessä (what's wrong with spoken English)* (lines 1582, 1584) and initiates a new IRF pattern.

In addition to being a powerful move since it initiates a new exchange, Ville's comment (lines 1582, 1584) can be seen as challenging the teacher's position as 'a primary knower', since he does not accept the teacher's explanation why such a form is not "appropriate" in this situation and indicating that also spoken English should be accepted as being "correct" English. The teacher's Response to Ville's question is to state that she will not write it like that (*no mä en kirjota nii* on line 1585) and the teacher perhaps starts to give further explanation *se tais olla kirjoitettaessaki (I think it was also in writing)*(line 1587), but Ville interrupts her with his question (line 1588). In his Initiation, Ville wants to know if the form from spoken language will be judged as correct in an exam (*kokeessa jos pistää* on line 1588) and the teacher responds that it will be correct if the situation is from a more every-day, spoken discourse (1589-91). Ville's question (line 1588) shows that Ville is aware that the teacher is given the role of 'a primary knower' in her institutional position and therefore wants to know how the teacher will "judge" the use of a certain word in an exam, since she has the right to decide such matters, even though Ville would disagree. The teacher gives the norms of what is correct in a specific situation in her answer *se riippuu minkä tyyline on. Jos sulla dialogi esimerkiksi kadunmiehet keskustelelee nii se (it depends on the situation. If you for example have a situation where people are talking to each other in the street so then)*(lines 1589-91).

Even though Ville seems to start to "remember" the rules of classroom conduct based on this inquiry from the teacher about what is "correct" English, the next IRF initiated by the teacher, however, shows that even though Ville wants to know what is considered correct knowledge by the teacher, he does not necessarily agree with her. In a new Initiation, the teacher wants to know the alternative for the use of 'much too' or *tässä on toinen mahdollisuus vielä much too talkative tai mikä toinen sana käy tähän paikalle (or there is another possibility much too talkative or what other word would be suitable in this situation)* (lines 1593-7). Ville's Response *laitat way (put way)*(line 1598) can be interpreted as again challenging the teacher's position and even more so now that the teacher has explained why that word is not appropriate. Ville's proposition to use the word *way* (line 1598), which was already once dismissed can be seen as him defending

his own view on what should be considered knowledge in a classroom. Ville's actions indicate that even though he asks the teacher's opinion whether or not the word *way* is judged as correct in an exam, he does this because he is aware of the institutional position where the teacher is allowed to decide such things and not because he would agree with her view. The teacher seems to get a bit annoyed by Ville's response and her Follow-up is to consistently refuse to **write** it down since it is not written English (*no nii ku mä en kirjota sitä ku se on muuteki nii* on line 1600). The teacher might get frustrated because Ville's act to try and get the teacher to accept his proposal, which she had just dismissed, can be seen as Ville not respecting the teacher's position as the 'primary knower'.

After the teacher's Follow-up (line 1600), in which the teacher does not accept Ville's Response, Ville still provides a Follow-up *joo joo (okay okay)*(line 1601) to the teacher's Follow-up, which in that situation can be seen as another powerful move, since Ville continues after the teacher's Follow-up, and in a situation where he already has "pushed the institutional limits" of who has the right to decide what is classroom knowledge. The teacher shows her position as 'a primary knower' in her Follow-up move (line 1602) where she herself gives the "correct" answer to the question. The interactional exchange between the teacher and Ville that begins after Ville's additional Response (line 1580) extends to a form of RFIRIRIRFFF with student-Initiations and additional student-Follow-up to the teacher's Follow-up.

In this case, the teacher could be seen as the one who gets the "last word" when she, enabled by her position as the 'primary knower', ultimately decides on what the correct answer in this situation is. However, Ville's actions suggest that he does not necessarily agree with the teacher on this matter, but realizes his position as being the one who is only a 'secondary knower' according to the classroom rules. Even if Ville ultimately "caves in" on this matter, it does not necessarily mean that he accepts the teacher's view. Ville's resistance to the teacher's view is probably not resistance to learning in this case. More likely, it is Ville's desire to be able to contribute to the construction of knowledge in the classroom that might make him to challenge the teacher's position as a 'primary knower' this strongly.

In excerpt 3 the teacher suggests that they have a quiz about nationalities on the next lesson after they have just learned about different nationalities in English. The teacher's proposition, however, meets some objection. There are different strategies that Ville uses in this interactional event, such as powerful humorous discursive moves, so it cannot be purely categorized as illustrating only indirect strategies to establish power.

### Excerpt 3

1699	T	miettikää näitä kansallisuus (0.6)	
1700		otetaanko kansallisuusvisa ens kerralla	I
1701	LF	ei:	R
1702	T	kuka muist[aa eni]ten [kansal]lisuuksia	I
1703	LM	[joo ]	R
1704	LM	[joo ]	R
1705	LM	ei=	
1706	(Ville)	=ei	R
1707	T	miksei (0.5)	F
1708		pelkääät sä häviäväs	(I)
1709	Ville	pelkään (.) [mutta sen li]säks mä en jaksa (.) lukee	R
1710	T	[niinpäs ]	F
1711	T	otetaan visa tästä	F
1712		kuka (muut) eniten euroopan kansoja ja ja (1.7)	
1713		ehkä me nii[tä afrikkalaisia]	
1714	Ville	[(okei) tehää sil]lee	F
1715		et sää kirjoitat jonku (0.2) kirjaimen	
1716		ja sit me kirjoitetaan niin paljo sanoja ku me pystytää	
1717		puolessa tunnissa (0.2) katotaa kuka voittaa	
1718	LM	puolessa [tunnissa] ((there's someone else talking too))	
1719	T	[no kato]taan ny [(minkälainen täsä se on) ]	F

In her Initiation, the teacher asks the students if they would like to have a quiz about nationalities on the next English lesson (*otetaanko kansallisuusvisa ens kerralla, kuka muistaa eniten kansallisuuksia* on lines 1700, 1702). This question is not necessarily a “true” question, since the teacher might pose the question to make the students aware that they **may** have a quiz about the nationalities to make them study the different nationalities. The teacher's suggestion is opposed before she even finishes her question *ei (no)*(line 1701). Some favor the idea (lines 1703-4), and others are against it (line 1705). However, it is Ville's objection to the idea (line 1706) that the teacher reacts to. This shows that the teacher can choose whose contribution will be treated as the

Response to her Initiation. The teacher asks for reasons why Ville is against the idea (line 1707) and presents her own guess why Ville might be reluctant to participate in a quiz (line 1708). The teacher's comment *pelkääät sä häviäväs (are you afraid that you will loose)* (line 1708) is perhaps made to provoke Ville, but he responds with humor to her question by admitting that he indeed is afraid of that, but in addition, he does not feel like studying for the quiz (*pelkään.mutta sen lisäksi mä en jaksa lukee* line 1709). With his comment on line 1709, Ville very openly admits perhaps the main reason to his objection, the fact that he does not feel like studying for the quiz. It can be seen as an act of honesty to admit the real reason to his objection about doing a quiz, but another reason why Ville makes such a comment could be to show his negligence towards studying and towards the teacher's propositions and plans as a representative of the school as an institution. By making such a comment, Ville shows that he is not very interested in making an effort to participate in the tasks in the classroom. Ville might also make the comment to explain his possible weak performance in advance. This could be made to defend his poor achievement should the teacher comment his achievements in public like in the forthcoming excerpt 4 (a comment about Ville's word test) as a means of control (and perhaps to justify his possible underachievement to himself).

Ville's response does not seem to disturb the teacher greatly when looking at the teacher's Follow-up *niinpäs (yeah indeed)* on line 1710. As pointed out in excerpt 1, the teacher's mild reaction to Ville's comments where he shows his negligent attitude towards studying and the school's expectations might be because the teacher is used to hearing such comments from Ville. When choosing Ville's objection as the Response in this IRF pattern (line 1707), the teacher might have even expected to hear such an explanation for his objection. In her Follow-up, the teacher makes her institutional power clear, when she announces that they will have a quiz about nationalities next time (lines 1711-13). This shows how the teacher is able to make decisions concerning the contents of the lesson without negotiating them with the other participants in the classroom even though her Initiation on line 1700 shows that she wanted to hear the students' opinions about having the quiz. However, as mentioned above, the teacher's question can have been posed just to make the student's aware that they will/might have a quiz and the teacher's question in that case is not an actual question so that the students' opinions would affect the teacher's decision in any way.



Ville's reaction to the teacher's announcement of the quiz, which shows that the teacher ignored Ville's objection, does not resist the teacher's plans in any way, but agrees with the teacher's plans (line 1714). However, Ville's discursive moves on lines 1714-17 can be seen as a more indirect approach to contribute to the contents of the quiz. Ville suggests that they should have a quiz where the teacher chooses a letter and the students should write as many words as possible starting with that letter in 30 minutes (lines 1715-17). This might imply that Ville is aware that he cannot change the teacher's decision because of the institutional setting, so he tries to influence the content of the quiz by proposing an alternative way of doing a quiz. If Ville were successful in getting his proposition accepted, it could be seen as a form of student empowerment to be able to affect the contents of a test in a school context. The teacher does not accept Ville's proposition, but in her Follow-up comments it only by saying *no katotaan ny* (*let's see* line 1719) and moves on to other things. However, the teacher does not automatically dismiss Ville's proposition either.

The interaction between the teacher and Ville proceeds according to the IRF pattern at first. The teacher chooses Ville's comment as the Response to her Initiation (lines 1699-1706) and provides a Follow-up, which turns into a new Initiation where the teacher wants an explanation to Ville's Response (lines 1707-8). Ville responds, not perhaps showing proper commitment to his studies (line 1709), and the teacher again gives the Follow-up (line 1710). The teacher's follow-up turn, where she states that there will be a quiz about nationalities, receives an additional Follow-up from Ville where he "accepts" the teacher's announcement and gives further suggestions of the contents of the test (lines 1714-17). This can be seen as a powerful move from Ville, extending the IRF pattern after the teacher and in his Follow-up, proposing an alternative to the teacher's plan. The teacher does close the interaction in this situation with her Follow-up, but she does not straight away dismiss Ville's idea (line 1719). The teacher was able to establish her position as being the one who ultimately decides what will be done during the lessons despite the students' wishes. However, Ville did still show his power in the interaction by extending the IRF pattern and starting to negotiate about the test. Thus, the exchange between the teacher and Ville extends to the form of IRFRFFFF.

Ville's resistance (lines 1706, 1709) in this excerpt could be seen as resistance to learning, since he quite openly admits that the reason why he is against the teacher's

suggestion *otetaanko kansallisuusvisa ens kerralla (should we have a quiz about nationalities on the next lesson)* (line 1700) is because he does not feel like studying for the quiz *mutta sen lisäksi mä en jaksa lukee (but in addition, I don't feel like studying for the quiz)* (line 1709). However, Ville also makes his own suggestion about what kind of quiz they could have on the next lesson *tehää silleen et sää kirjoitat jonku kirjaimen ja sit me kirjoitetaan niin paljo sanoja ku me pystytää puolessa tunnissa, katotaa kuka voittaa (if you would write a letter down and then we will write as many words as we can starting with that letter in thirty minutes)* (lines 1714-17), which could be interpreted as wanting to contribute to the contents of the lesson in a way that might even facilitate his own learning. Ville's proposition on lines 1714-17 could, however, also be made to get the teacher perhaps abandon her plan about the quiz about nationalities so that Ville would not have to study for the quiz.

Ville's suggestion on lines 1714-17 could also be interpreted as trying to get 'the last word' in this exchange when he proposes an alternative for the teacher's announcement about the quiz (lines 1711-12). The teacher, however, shows her institutional position of being the one who decides on the contents of the lessons by stating *no katotaan ny (well, let's see)* (line 1719) and thus leaving Ville's proposition without any clear answer even though she gives 'the last word' on this matter.

As mentioned, the teacher's Follow-up/Initiation to Ville's Response *pelkääät sä häviäväs (are you afraid that you will lose)* (line 1708) could be seen as provoking Ville to perhaps resist the teacher's plans even more. Ville, however, gives a humorous Response (line 1709) to the teacher's comment. The use of rather direct discourse action on the teacher's part (line 1708) could easily be thought of resulting in more student-resistance, but in this case, since the following comment (line 1709) after the teacher's direct discursive act on line 1708 should probably be interpreted as humorous remarks, any clear connections between the teacher's use of direct discourse and student-resistance cannot therefore be made.

## 6.2 Direct strategies

In the previous excerpts, Ville has challenged the institutional power relations in his interaction with the teacher. In those cases he has, however, done it by using more indirect strategies in his discourse to establish his interactional power. The next excerpts show that in some cases Ville uses quite direct forms of resisting the teacher's plans and requests. The issues concerning the three additional questions made to specify the analysis will also be discussed. These three aspects were: 1) the use of indirect and direct discourse and its effects on the other participants actions, 2) the battle for 'the last word' and 3) student-resistance in terms of whether or not it is resistance to learning.

Excerpt 4, like excerpt 1, is also from a situation where the students are supposed to check answers to their homework from the OHP-transparent, and Ville is still not participating.

### Excerpt 4

257	T	°(etköhän) sää Ville vähä <b>jotain</b> voisit tehdä°	I
258		(1.2)	
259	Ville	hmmm (1.2) ehhhh	R
260	T	ei tuo sun sanakoe ainakaan vakuuttanu	F
261	Ville	Eikö	I
262	T	@ <b>ei todellakaan</b> @	R
263	Ville	no hyvä tämmösiä et sit on iha (0.4) <b>outo</b> ja sanoja	F
264	T	niinpä näitä outoja(ha) täälä opiskellaan	F
265		[(x) ei me tuttuja opiskella ]	
266	Ville	[nii joita mä en tuu koskaan käy]ttämää enää	F
267	T	<b>höh höh</b> (1.2) no ei ehkä niitä väkivalta videossa (°ole mut°)	F
268	Ville	hhh fnii-I	F
269	T	mm muual↑la	F
270		(4.4)	
271	T	(ois) se <b>nöyryys</b> Ville se nöyryys	I
272	Ville	(niinku ois)	R
273	T	hmm KU OLIS	F
274		(3.8)	
275	Ville	kuka tietää mitä on nöyryys englanniks?	I
276		(1.3)	
277	T	°no nii°	I
278	Ville	humility ((pronounced in Finnish like fashion))	R
279	T	°hm↑m°	F
280	Ville	nii kukaan muu ei tienny	F

281		(1.6)	
282	LM(1)	mää oisin tienny	F
283	Ville	>oisitko<	I
284	LM(1)	°oisin°	R
285	Ville	>mikä se [oli<	I
286	LM(1)	[(en vaan viittiny sanoa)	R
287	LM	ehhehheh	
288		(3.5)	
289	T	°ei riitä kato et tietää sen° (1.2) sanana nii	I
290		kannattas toteuttaa ° (sitä)°	
291	Ville	°ehhh (0.4) (x) °	R
292	T	°hmm°	F
293		(2.8) ((there's quiet talk))	

It was mentioned in excerpt 1 that ‘the last word’ does not necessarily show that the one who gets it is more powerful (even though getting the last word can be interpreted as a powerful move in classroom interaction (Sunderland 2001)), since the power relations are constantly changed by the contributions by the participants to the interaction and therefore, power is not a static, stable thing that someone can possess (Thornborrow 2002). This situation is a good example of this kind of a changing of power relations where both previous and expected future happenings shape the interactional event. This excerpt is connected to excerpt 1 in a way that the class continues checking the right answers to their homework and the happenings in the previous interactional events (excerpt 1) can be seen as shaping the interaction in this excerpt. Even though the teacher got ‘the last word’ in the previous “battle” for power (excerpt 1), this situation shows that the teacher still is not able to make Ville start checking his homework (homework, which he apparently has not done), which indicates that the teacher may not have been very powerful after all in the interaction of excerpt 1.

In excerpt 4, the negotiation of power between Ville and the teacher is again initiated by the teacher, when she says to Ville *etköhän sää Ville jotain voisit tehdä* (Ville you could do a little bit of something) (line 257). The form of the request the teacher makes to Ville is much more indirect than the discourse strategies the teacher used in excerpt 1. In this case the teacher’s Initiation could indeed be seen as a request when in the first excerpt it was made in a more negative manner. The teacher uses the form *voisit* (could) which can be seen as a more polite way of asking something, not telling and also the *vähä* (a little bit) which indicates that the teacher is not asking for a lot, just for Ville to do *something*.

By these choices of words the teacher perhaps tries to make the request (or a disguised demand) less threatening to the student's 'face' and thus, get Ville to cooperate (see Manke (1997), the teacher's use of indirect discourse strategies can be seen as protecting the 'face' of the student). The teacher's request is not made in a apologizing manner and it is quite clear that the teacher is frustrated by the fact that Ville continues to ignore the task the class is assigned to do. Thus, the teacher does make her institutional position clear by indicating to Ville that his behavior of not participating is not appropriate in the classroom, but does this in a more indirect manner.

The teacher's indirect discourse act can also be viewed in the light of the previous situation (excerpt 1) where Ville resisted the teacher's contributions to the interaction. Although the teacher had 'the last word' in that situation, in this similar situation (checking homework from a OHP-transparent) few minutes later, Ville shows no signs of obeying the teacher's demands that he should participate and check his homework or do something educational. The teacher may fear that Ville will not again be willing to "do as he is told" and therefore tries to make the Initiation to get him to do something as less face-threatening as possible by using indirect discourse and also to protect her own 'face' as well. As mentioned above, according to Manke (1997), the indirect discourse strategies the teacher uses may be used to protect the "face" of the pupil, but another reason for this that Manke (1997:90) points out, could be that "teachers do not feel so superior to their students, but in fact live in fear of an outbreak of student opposition, and use politeness formulas to steer clear of confrontations that they fear they may lose". In this case the teacher has earlier (excerpt 1) made quite powerful statements indicating that she would have the power (enabled by her institutional position) to make Ville do the things he is assigned to do in the classroom (lines 216-7). Now that Ville is still not participating, the teacher may feel that her institutional power might not be enough to make Ville "obey". The teacher might feel that an indirect request could make Ville more willing to participate and thus prevent a new confrontation where her powerful institutional position would again be challenged and perhaps, even to a greater extent.

If the teacher's use of indirect discourse (line 257) is interpreted as a way to make Ville more willing to cooperate, it does not appear to be very successful, since Ville's Response (line 259) shows no signs of cooperation. Ville's direct resistance to the teacher's request seems to provoke the teacher and her next discourse act *ei tuo sun*

*sanakoe ainakaan vakuuttanu* (*your word-test did not impress me*) (line 260) is no longer indirect or in anyway protecting the student's 'face'. In fact, the teacher's comment seems quite offensive since it can be seen as a direct remark on Ville's English skills and it is made public knowledge since the teacher makes the remark about Ville's word test in front of the class. This comment by the teacher could be interpreted as some kind of attack against the student and maybe the teacher wants to make Ville aware of the classroom setting and the power relations in it, remind Ville that she is the 'primary knower' in the classroom and that she has the right to evaluate the student's performance. This quite direct face-threatening act from the teacher might be done because the teacher might feel her institutional position being even more threatened since Ville openly resists her disguised command again (line 259) after the situation in excerpt 1 and therefore the teacher may feel that she has to make a powerful discursive move so that the situation would not develop any further. The teacher also steers the attention away from the original matter and shifts the focus of the interaction to Ville's success in the English class.

Ville seems a bit confused by the teacher's statement, since he does not react in a very strong manner at first *eikö (no?)* (line 261), but does not, however, become speechless. The teacher's previous comment is quite threatening considering the institutional setting and it might explain Ville's cautious first reaction, but many of the conversations or interactions between the teacher and Ville can be seen partly been said as a joke and both the teacher and Ville often make quite direct remarks disguised as some kind of joke and maybe that is why the teacher is comfortable in making such an face-threatening comment and even repeating it even more forcefully *ei todellakaan (it really did not)* (line 262).

After the teacher's even more face-threatening comment (line 262), Ville starts defending himself by saying that the words asked were really odd, *no hyvä tämmösiä et sit iha outoja sanoja* (*well great that this kind of odd words*) (line 263), indicating that he sees no point in learning such words or that it would even be useful, *joita mä en tuu koskaan käyttämään enää* (*which I will never use again*) (line 266). The teacher very quickly responds to Ville's every comment where he tries to defend his actions (of not studying) (lines 264-5). She comments how the whole point of learning is to learn unfamiliar words, not words that are already known, *niinpä näitä outojaha täällä*

*opiskellaan, ei me tuttuja opiskella (that's right, we study the odd words here, not those we already know)* (lines 264-5). When Ville makes the point of not seeing the words important in everyday use outside the classroom (line 266), which is a very strong statement questioning the importance of schooling, or the things that are being studied at school, the teacher again makes a comment that can be interpreted as some form of attack against Ville's personal characteristics. The teacher's comment *höh höh no ei ehkä niitä väkivalta videossa ole mut mm muualla (uhhuh maybe they are not that common in violent films but elsewhere)* (lines 267, 269) can be seen as an indication from the teacher that Ville's use of English will probably limit to watching violent films, which does not give a very flattering picture of the teacher's opinion about Ville. Ville resists the teacher's actions all the way; he even goes along with the teacher's comment about the action films (*hhh nii-i, (hh exactly)*) (line 268) so that he can back up his argument about the uselessness of the words being studied in the classroom.

In this section (lines 257-269) the teacher and Ville seem to be very defensive about their position in the power hierarchy. Both most likely interpret this situation as being an important contribution to the power relations and neither one wants to back down. Ville's comments can be seen quite powerful, since he systematically resists the teacher's institutional position as being the one who can decide on what will be done during the lesson. As this situation shows, every individual has his/her own resources to resist the given "orders" and the institution and thus, the one who is the representative of the institution. This quite intense change of words between the teacher and Ville makes the teacher use quite face-threatening statements which she probably uses to make Ville start behaving according to the classroom rules, i.e. obeying the teacher. The teacher has more to lose if this negotiation for power does not end in her favor and therefore she is ready to use quite direct methods to get Ville back down. Ville, however, shows no signs of caving in.

There is a short pause in the interaction (line 270), which might indicate that the matter is closed, but that is not the case. The teacher continues the interaction with a new Initiation *ois se nöyryys Ville se nöyryys (I wish you had the humility Ville, the humility)* (line 271) indicating that Ville's behavior and attitude is not humble enough. The teacher can easily make such a comment because of her institutional position and in this way criticize Ville for his actions (he has not shown the proper amount of respect towards the

teacher and the classroom rules). Ville gives a quite "cheeky" response to the teacher's reprimands by stating *niinku olis* (*yeah if I only had it*) (line 272), but when the teacher reinforces her disapproval by emphatically repeating Ville's words (line 273), indicating that she will not back down, Ville stays silent for a while. The next Initiation move comes from Ville, who changes the situation into a typical classroom elicitation when he asks the other students if they know the word *nöyryys* (*humility*) in English (line 275). Ville's action can be seen powerful since it is usually the teacher who elicits information from students in the classroom and performs the Initiation in the IRF sequence. Thus, Ville is assuming the role of the teacher when he elicits information from the other students. The teacher allows Ville's question, since she wants to hear the answer *no nii* (*okay*) (line 277). However, the teacher looks at Ville, when she asks for the answer, which indicates that she wants Ville to give the answer to his own question and prove that he himself knows the answer (since the teacher is supposed to know the answers to display questions she poses) when nobody else has given a response right away. At this point the teacher turns the power relations in the IRF sequence to their "normal" order and takes charge. The teacher makes the Initiation when she asks for the answer to Ville's question (line 277) and Ville gives the Response (line 278) and the teacher gives 'feedback' (in this case accepts the answer) (line 279). The similar phenomenon is also pointed out by Markee (2004), who found that the teacher used 'counter questions' between the Initiation and the Response in situations where the student made the Initiation to regain control over the interaction.

Even though the teacher takes her role back, this case can be seen as a powerful contribution to the classroom power relations on Ville's part. As Thornborrow (2002:30) points out, "getting a topic raised successfully is a powerful discursive action" and Ville was successful in it even though the situation was becoming quite intense because of Ville's disobedience and the teacher might have ignored Ville's question to show him that he is still inferior to her in the classroom. The teacher, however, allowed the question that was truly associated to learning English, which shows that the teacher does not in this case put disciplinary matters before learning.

It was pointed out earlier how the teacher took control of the conversation by turning the interaction to a common IRF sequence after Ville's Initiation turn (lines 275-279). However, this excerpt also shows how the IRF sequence is not necessarily a closed



pattern that ends to the teacher's Follow-up move. After the teacher has evaluated Ville's response to be correct *hmm* (line 279), Ville still makes his own contribution *nii kukaan muu ei tienny (nobody else knew that)* (line 280) and thus, extends the IRF sequence. His remark on how he was the only one who knew the specific word can be seen as "showing off" and at the same time proving the point that he does know English words, just not the ones that are not very common in everyday speech (and thus, useless). The question Ville proposed can now be interpreted as being a way to show the teacher that he was right in criticizing the content of the planned curriculum. Ville has in his opinion made his point and got 'the last word'.

There is another student who steps up at this point and claims that he would have also known the answer, but did not feel like saying it, *en vaan viittiny sanoa* (line 282). Doubting his classmate's claim, Ville seems to again assume the role of the teacher that has the right to pose questions that require an answer when he asks the other student to repeat the answer to see if he really knew the word (lines 283-285). Candela (1999) has made similar findings where she points out that students can take on the role of evaluating others' turns and posing evaluative questions.

Ville seems to feel that he has made his point and got 'the last word' in this interactional situation, but the teacher makes her own contribution to this matter when she again criticizes Ville's behavior by stating *ei kato riitä et tietää sen sanana nii kannattas toteuttaa sitä (it is not enough to know the word it is also important to behave accordingly)* (lines 289-290). Ville does not make any clear statement to the teacher's comment (line 291), which might indicate that it was the teacher after all, who got 'the last word' in this situation and maintained her powerful institutional position in the classroom. However, if the actual contents of these contributions to the power relations are examined, the teacher's last comment seems to merely comment Ville's behavior and how it is not suitable in the particular setting. It might then indicate that since the teacher has nothing else to add to the actual conversation (about the words they study at school and how useful they are in the real world and whether or not Ville should study more actively), she settles for commenting Ville's behavior and in that way emphasizes her institutional position to show that she ultimately has the power in the classroom. The short pause (line 288) before the teacher's comment might also indicate that the teacher needs a little time to think how she could make the situation turn to her advantage and

decides to point out the institutional inequality between the teacher and the students by making clear that she has the power to comment (and judge) the student's actions. If the situation is seen as such, then Ville's short response (line 291) could also be interpreted so that he feels that he has proven his point and therefore feels that he does not need to continue the conversation any further.

In this excerpt Ville was shown to take on different roles in the IRF pattern. In addition to the finding that the IRF pattern extended to various forms of structures constructed from Initiations, Response and Follow-up turns, the interaction in this excerpt also started in some parts to resemble a conversation more than a structure of IRF patterns. Thus, this seems to show that the IRF pattern can fade into the background when the teacher and Ville negotiate their power relations, which suggests that it is not just inside the different roles in the IRF that a student can establish his discursive power, but that the student can also "break" the IRF structure with his contributions and participate in constructing a more conversational situation.

The resistance aspect in this case is clearly shown in Ville's direct opposition to the teacher's requests, but whether or not it is resistance to learning, is again a more complex issue. Ville's discursive moves do not straight away seem to be resistance to learning, since he seems to present his own views about the usefulness of certain issues taught in school, which could be interpreted as a desire to influence the contents of lessons. This could be seen as a wish to contribute to the co-construction of classroom knowledge and the wish to steer the teaching to a direction that would facilitate or motivate Ville's own learning. Ville also initiated a situation that can be seen as educational for all the students, when he asked what is *nöyryys* in English. However, this initiation appeared to be made to "show off" and to prove Ville's point that he already knows enough words. Ville's attitude that he already knows enough English so that he does not need to participate will probably not facilitate his learning. Then, considering the situation where this interactional situation started from (Ville did not participate in the classroom tasks), it seems that Ville's actions can indeed be also resistance to learning and not just resistance to e.g. the teacher's institutional role.

Excerpt 5 presents a longer situation where the answers to a listening comprehension exercise are being checked, following a teacher-led IRF pattern. Again, this excerpt does

not only present the student's direct strategies in gaining power in the IRF pattern since also more indirect strategies as well as humor are used to resist the teacher's authority. However, Ville uses some quite direct strategies during this interaction to gain a more powerful position in classroom interaction.

### Excerpt 5

836	T	.hh do you think this could happen in Finland? (0.3)	I
837		that there are	
838	Ville	no=	R
839	T	=>can you-<	
840		yeah why not?	F/(I)
841		(1.2)	
842	Ville	because (0.4) Finnish people are shy	R
843	T	hm↑m (0.2)	F
844		an would it be okay in Finland to to go an talk to (0.4) strangers?=-	I
845	Ville	=no (0.9)	R
846		they'll probably kick you [in the nu]ts	
847	LF	[(yeah) ]	
848	T	you think s- (0.2) Jouni	I
849	Jouni	[yeah ]	R
850	T	[you thi]nk it would be okay.	
851	Ville	yes it would=	R
852	LM	=(not without the [ecstasy) ]	R
853	Jouni	[>yeah it would be<]	
854		(2.0)	
855	T	shu'dup (0.5)	F
856		okay but if you practise (x)	I
857		do you often (0.2) talk with strangers=	
858	Ville	=no	R
859	T	in cafes an	I
860		how 'bout you girls	
861		(2.1) ((there's talk))	
862	T	I don't think it's very Finnish (0.5)	R
863	T	Okay	
864		why was Declan out of work	I
865		did you get that?	
866		(1.1)	
867	T	Riina whaddo you say?	
868	Riina	(I don't know that)	R
869		(1.1)	
870	T	mm↑m (0.2)	
871		Emilia?	I
872		any idea?	
873	Emilia	°no°	R
874	T	[Ville]	I

875	LM	[((co)ug[hing)))]	
876	Ville	[he got] fired (0.5) (directly)=	R
877	LM	=((coughs))	
878		(1.1)	
879	T	uh- not exactly=	F
880	Ville	=yes (0.2) he said something very very bad to the (0.3)	F
881		to his [employee] an <i>then</i> he said	
882	LM	[(x) ]	
883	T	(what) do you think he was <b>fired</b>	I/F
884		(1.7)	
885	LM	Eiköhä se	
886	(Ville)	(xx[x] )	
887	T	[uhh]	
888	(Ville)	(xx[x] )	
889	T	[what was] the reas'n	I
890		(1.6)	
891	Ville	he wasn't very polite to his boss	R
892	T	mm why not?	I
893		(1.0)	
894	LM(7)	>he didn't get paid enough<	R
895	T	that's it	F
896		An he- they didn't even uhh (0.3) <b>intent</b> to pay his (0.4)	
897		last wage check an so [on ]	
898	Ville	[(after)] he had said that	F
899	T	yeah	
900	Ville	(bad thing)	
901	T	okay (0.2)	

The interactional situation starts with the teacher's Initiation where she asks the students' opinion whether the situation they had heard on the tape could be situated in Finland (lines 836-7). Ville responds to the teacher's elicitation straight away so that there is some overlap between the teacher and Ville (lines 838-9). The teacher accepts Ville's response and asks for further explanation for the answer in her follow-up *yeah why not?* (line 840). Ville responds that *because Finnish people are shy* (line 842), the situation they just heard on the tape would not probably be a typical situation in Finland. The teacher then gives her Follow-up and indicates that Ville has given a suitable answer in this situation (line 843). However, the next IRF pattern does not proceed as smoothly and according to the common classroom rules as this one.

The teacher continues with another Initiation where she wants to know what the students think about the appropriateness of certain kind of behavior in a Finnish context *an would*

*it be okay in Finland to go and talk to strangers?* (line 844). Ville gives a Response *no they'll probably kick you in the nuts* (lines 845-6), but it is not a very appropriate answer in this situation and it is more likely made to make the other students laugh and to perhaps annoy the teacher. Whatever the reason is why Ville gives such a Response, he must know that it is not in any way suitable for the situation and therefore Ville's response can be seen as challenging the norms of proper classroom conduct. In the previous elicitation, the teacher accepted Ville's Response even though he was not nominated to answer (lines 836-843). In this case, since the Response Ville gives is not suitable for the interactional situation in the classroom, the teacher ignores Ville's suggestion for a Response and asks Jouni to give the Response (line 848). Jouni responds *yeah* (line 849) and the teacher treats Jouni's answer as the actual answer, even though Jouni perhaps did not give the response the teacher was looking for, since the teacher does not actually accept the answer in her Follow-up (line 850). At this point, Ville tries to contribute to the interaction by stating *yes it would* (line 851) and agreeing with Jouni, but it is another student's response (line 852) that the teacher reacts to, and in a very direct manner (line 855). The other student who adds that it would not be okay to go and talk to strangers *without the ecstasy* (line 852) does not behave according to the classroom rules, and he gets reprimanded in the teacher's very direct follow-up where she tells him to *shu'dup* (line 855). This shows that also other students start to give inappropriate answers that are perhaps supposed to be entertaining to the other students. The teacher continues her elicitation *okay but if you practise (x) do you often talk with strangers* (lines 856-7). Ville again tries to give the Response *no* on line 858 to the teacher's elicitation, but the teacher ignores it and continues with her elicitation (lines 859-60). The teacher continues the IRF pattern with the other students but when she receives no Response, she herself gives the answer (line 862).

The interactional situation on lines 844-873 shows how the teacher starts to ignore Ville's contributions to the interaction after Ville's inappropriate answer (line 846). She ignores Ville's answers and asks other students for the Response. This shows how the teacher, even if she cannot stop Ville from talking, she can use her institutional position to leave Ville's contributions to the interaction outside the 'actual' interaction in the classroom because of her right to hand out speaking turns. The teacher's tactic to make Ville "get back in line" and start to follow the classroom rules seems to be effective. Ville probably notices that the teacher is ignoring his discursive actions and he starts to

behave according to the classroom rules by raising his hand to get the right to speak. The teacher elicits an answer from Ville straight away when he raises his hand (can be seen from the DVD line 874) after Riina and Emilia have not found the right answer (lines 867-8, 871-2). Thus, the teacher immediately rewards Ville for his behavior when he starts to obey the rules of “proper” conduct in the classroom setting.

As this situation demonstrates, the teacher is able to make Ville “get back in line” after his inappropriate answer and start participating in classroom interaction by following the institutional norms. However, now that the teacher has invited Ville to take part in the interaction (line 874), Ville can contribute to what could be seen as the “main floor” (see Jones and Thornborrow (2004) for multiple floors) with the teacher and make his own contributions to classroom power relations in the IRF pattern. Ville’s attempts for power in the IRF pattern will now be examined in the ‘exchanges’ (lines 874-901) that follow after the teacher gives Ville the chance to take part in the “actual” interaction.

The teacher’s Initiation (line 874) gives Ville the floor and Ville gives his Response *he got fired directly* (line 876). The teacher does not, however, evaluate Ville’s response as being correct in her Follow-up *uh- not exactly* (line 879). Since the teacher’s Initiation was a display question where she elicited known information, the teacher can judge the answer as being correct or incorrect. Ville, however, does not accept the teacher’s evaluation and challenges her authority as the ‘primary knower’ when he very quickly after the teacher’s Follow-up, and rather directly states *yes. he said something very very bad to the to his employee and then he said* (lines 880-1). In addition to challenging the teacher’s Follow-up, Ville also starts to explain why his answer should be seen as “correct”. Ville’s Follow-up to the teacher’s Follow-up can be seen as a powerful student contribution to the classroom power relations since it very directly opposes the teacher’s opinion as the ‘primary knower’ in a setting where the student is seen as the ‘secondary knower’. In addition, Ville starts resisting the teacher’s plans right away after the teacher has shown him his place in the institutional hierarchy by excluding Ville from the actual interaction after Ville’s inappropriate answer (lines 844-873). Ville’s immediate and direct resistance could also be caused by the previous situation that was most likely quite frustrating to Ville, since his discursive actions were totally ignored, and Ville might want to gain a more powerful position in the interaction after that incident. However, Ville’s resistance (line 880) to the teacher’s evaluation (line 879)

seems to be caused by his belief that he indeed is right in this matter, since he immediately starts to give reasons why he gave the answer he did (lines 880-1).

The teacher does not seem very threatened by Ville's opposition to her position as the 'primary knower', but questions Ville's explanation by asking him (*what*) *do you think he was fired* (line 883), indicating that Ville is not right in claiming that the man in the exercise (Declan) was fired. The teacher's question seems to make Ville question his own answer, since he does not defend his own Response as eagerly as after the teacher's evaluation (lines 880-1) and only comments something to his friend that is not audible from the tape (lines 886, 888). After the teacher's new Initiation *what was the reason* (line 889) where she asks for further explanation of the situation, Ville gives a new Response *he wasn't very polite to his boss* (line 891). It is still not the actual answer that the teacher is expecting, so she asks for more clarification (line 892). Another student gives the Response the teacher is waiting for *he didn't get paid enough* (line 894) and the teacher accepts this answer and gives a more thorough explanation on the matter herself (lines 895-7). Ville seems to want to get 'the last word' in this matter, since he adds to the teacher's explanation with a new Follow-up where he says that it was *after he had said that bad thing* (lines 898, 900) that they did not intend to pay his last wage check (which was the "correct" answer). Thus, Ville tries to make it look as he were partly correct in his answer and was not therefore totally wrong when objecting the teacher's evaluation of his Response (lines 879-81). As Sunderland (2001) points out, getting 'the last word' can be seen as a powerful discursive action and in this case, when the teacher has questioned Ville's responses and explanations during this exchange, Ville's attempts to get 'the last word' could be seen as even more powerful contributions to classroom power relations than if his opinions had not been questioned by the teacher and her authoritative position as the 'primary knower'.

The teacher does not seem to participate in this battle for 'the last word' with Ville, since she just closes the interactional situation with *okay* (line 901) and moves on to another question. The teacher may not feel that threatened in her position as the 'primary knower' now that she has shown who actually was right on this matter and lets Ville give his explanation without paying too much attention to it.

The teacher's use of indirect discourse in this excerpt seems to be more frequent than in some other situations where she has used rather direct discourse that could be seen as threatening the student's 'face' (excerpt 4). In this situation, the use of more indirect discourse could be interpreted as being used as a face-saving act. The teacher does not directly declare that Ville's response is incorrect, but expresses it in a more polite manner by saying *uh- not exactly* (line 879). When Ville questions the teacher's evaluation (line 880-1), the teacher tries to point out that Ville is on the wrong track in this matter with her question *do you think he was **fired*** (line 883) rather than giving the "right" answer straight away and pointing out that Ville is wrong. The teacher also tries to help Ville to find the "right" answer by posing additional questions (lines 889, 892). The reason why the teacher uses more indirect discourse that could be seen as protecting the student's 'face' (Manke 1997) could be because of the situation where the teacher clearly is the 'primary knower' and therefore she does not want to discourage the student by very directly dismissing his answers or stating that his answer is totally wrong. The teacher may feel more secure in her institutional position as the 'primary knower' in this excerpt than she perhaps felt in excerpt 4 (as the one who decides what will be done in the classroom), and therefore she may not see the need to defend her position with very direct discourse that could be interpreted as face-threatening. This could be also why the teacher does not try to get "the last word" and merely closes the exchange after Ville's comment on lines 896-7.

Even if the teacher does not seem very threatened by Ville's direct opposition to her evaluation or with Ville trying to get "the last word" in this matter, it does not mean that Ville's discursive actions should not be seen as powerful interactional moves. The teacher most likely feels her position as the 'primary knower' quite secured in this matter, since she knows the right answer to her display question, so that she probably feels that Ville cannot actually challenge her institutional position. However, considering the institutional setting, Ville's Follow-up (line 880), which opposes the teacher's Follow-up (line 879) in a situation where the teacher is the 'primary knower', can be seen as a powerful move from a student in a setting where the IRF pattern is used to elicit known information. In addition to this situation, Ville also extends an IRF pattern with an additional Follow-up after the teacher's Follow-up at the end of excerpt 5 where Ville wants to get 'the last word' and defend his argument (lines 898, 900) that he was partly right when questioning the teacher's Follow-up where she evaluated Ville's



Response to be incorrect. The whole exchange extends to a form of IRFFIRFRFF. At the end of the exchange, Ville seems to also get ‘the last word’, even if the teacher’s neutral reaction (line 901) might be caused because of her desire to move on to other things and not to start debating over the matter with Ville.

In the beginning of excerpt 5 (lines 844-6), Ville’s response (line 845-6) in no way contributes to the actual exercise and learning, so it can be seen as resistance to learning, since it is probably said to “show off” and since it only prolongs the finding of the actual answer. The situation where Ville disagrees with the teacher’s Follow-up (lines 876-895) does not, however, seem to stem from resistance to learning. Ville’s attempts to explain and justify his answer more likely suggest that Ville indeed believes that he is right in this matter and therefore wants to defend his view despite the institutional setting.

### **6.3 *Humor as a “powerful” strategy in interaction***

These next excerpts present situations where Ville uses humor as a means to establish power, to resist the teacher’s plans or to disguise attempts for power with humor. Of the three sub-questions presented in section 5.2, the aspect of who gets ‘the last word’ is most widely examined in these upcoming excerpts. The two other sub-questions relating to student’s power, the use of indirect and direct discourse by both the teacher and Ville and its effect on the other participant, as well as the phenomenon of student-resistance and whether or not it can be seen as resistance to learning will not be directly dealt with. This is because the interactional situations in the forthcoming excerpts do not consist of such interactional moves that would allow a trustworthy analysis of these phenomena. Further, the use of indirect and direct discourse and its effects is also rather difficult to point out in situations where the different discursive actions are made as part of a joke, in a humorous manner.

Ville has expressed his dissatisfaction with the contents of the English lessons as not being challenging enough or teaching useful information (excerpts 1 and 4). In excerpt 6, the teacher asks Ville to show his skills, and give an answer to an exercise where the given words should be put in the right order, after she has asked another student who was not able to give the right answer.

## Excerpt 6

1264	LM2	emmää kyllä saa tästä mitää järkevää hah	
1265		(1.5)	
1266	T	no kuka saa (0.6) no Ville siinä on sulle haastetta nyt [(sit)]	I
1267	Ville	[on ] °vai°	R
1268	T	on	F
1269	Ville	six (2.1) /vuuden/ (0.3) /antikue/ kitchen chairs	R
1270	T	six wooden antique (0.2) kitchen	F
1271	LM	ei siinä oo (pilkkuja välisä)	
1272	T	ootappas nyt (0.4) >eiks siellä oli i↑kä< (0.7)	(F)
1273		tä- tän JÄRJESTYKSEN mukaan meni väärin	
1274		ikä ja ma- ikä oli ensin [(x)]	
1275	Ville	[voi] mun maailma musertui [(nyt iha)]	F
1276	T	[nii ei] kö	F
1277	T	elikkä six	
1278	LM	((laughs?))	
1279		(3.8)	
1280	T	määki laittasin tollai niinku sää	(F)
1281		mun korva sa[nos tol]lai	
1282	Ville	[niinpä ]	F
1283	T	£mutta tän säännön mukaan se ei menis£	F
1284		sitä mää ihmettelin tätä ku .hh	
1285		<six	
1286	LF	((coughi[ng]) ) ((still minor coughing))	
1287	T	[antique]	
1288	T	wooden> (0.2) kitchen chairs (.) on KIELIOPin mukaan	
1289		oikea järjestys	
1290	LM	(x[x] ]	
1291	T	[nii]	

The other student's Response *emmää kyllä saa tästä mitää järkevää* (*I can't make anything sensible out of this*) (line 1264) opens the floor to other student-responses. The teacher asks Ville to give the answer in her Initiation *no kuka saa. no Ville siinä on sulle haastetta nyt sit* (*well who can. well Ville this exercise is now challenging enough for you*) (line 1266). Ville seems to doubt that based on his comment *oh really* (line 1267), which can also be interpreted as made to challenge the teacher. The teacher's Follow-up *on* (*yes*) on line 1268 indicates that the teacher believes it to really be challenging enough for Ville. Ville gives his Response *six vuuden antikue kitchen chairs* (line 1269), which the teacher repeats (line 1270). In the Follow-up *ootappas nyt. Eiks siellä oli ikä tä-tän JÄRJESTYKSEN mukaan meni väärin. ikä ja ma- ikä oli ensin* (*wait a minute. so there was according to this ORDER it wasn't correct. age and – age was*

*first*) (lines 1272-4) the teacher explains that Ville's response was not correct according to the grammar rules in the textbook. Ville again continues the IRF pattern with a new Follow-up where he makes a sarcastic remark *voi mun maailma musertui nyt iha (oh that crushed my world)* (line 1275), indicating that he is not greatly upset by his failure in the task. This comment can be seen as a powerful move from Ville when he challenges the common classroom rules where students are supposed to listen and learn from the evaluation that the teacher gives after their answer, not to comment the evaluation in an indifferent manner. However, the teacher does not seem too offended by Ville's additional Follow-up, and "plays along" with Ville's humorous remark by stating *nii eikö (yeah, didn't it)* (line 1276). Even though Ville does not seem to care about his error based on his remark (line 1275), the teacher still makes further comments in her Follow-up *määki laittasin tollai niinku sää mun korva sanos tollai (I would also say it like that. it sounds right)* (lines 1280-1), which could be seen as a face-saving act, admitting that she would also have put the words in that order. In this Follow-up, the teacher shows Ville that it was indeed a good try, even though Ville did not seem to care whether or not he got the answer right, or at least did not want to show that he cared. Ville probably sees this as an opportunity to challenge the teacher's evaluation and he quickly makes a comment *niinpä (exactly)* (line 1282) to the teacher's Follow-up indicating that his answer was not perhaps totally wrong after all. However, the teacher continues her Follow-up by adding that according to the grammar rule, the order of the words was not, however, correct (lines 1283-5, 1287-9).

When examining the structure of the IRF pattern in this excerpt, Ville again makes a new Follow-up (line 1275) commenting the teacher's Follow-up, where he makes a humorous remark trying to diminish his failure (and the importance of the these exercises). Ville's comment is made in a situation where students are usually not supposed to make remarks after the teacher's evaluative Follow-up. However, the teacher goes along with Ville's joking (line 1276) and does not seem to mind Ville's sarcastic attitude. Ville's powerful discursive moves can be also found in his comment on line 1282, where he comments the teacher's face-saving Follow-up (line 1280-1) indicating that his Response may not have been that incorrect after all, which could be seen as an attempt to get 'the last word' in this exchange. The teacher, however, quickly points out in a new Follow-up (lines 1283-5, 1287-9) that even if she herself had given the same Response as Ville did, it would still not be correct according to the

grammatical rule. The teacher seems to get ‘the last word’ in this excerpt being the ‘primary knower’ who can decide on what is correct. Ville, however, makes various additional Follow-up moves to the teacher’s ‘follow-ups’, extending the exchange to IRFRFFFFFF. This can be seen as powerful student contribution to the classroom interaction.

Excerpt 7 is from a situation where the teacher begins the teaching of the grammar point (adjectives) by first making sure everyone knows what an adjective is.

**Excerpt 7**

870	T	NO POJAT (1.1)	I
871		tiedättekö te ees mikä on adjektiivi	
872	Ville	Joo	R
873	T	no mikä	I
874	Ville	esimerkiksi poika tai aurinko	R
875	LMs	((the whole class laughs))	
876	T	nyt Ville hei	F
877		ei tartte esittää välttämättä	
878		mihi kysymykseen adjektiivi vastaa	I
879		(1.1)	

The teacher’s Initiation that is addressed to the boys in the class is made in a rather diminishing manner when the teacher asks, *NO POJAT tiedättekö te ees mikä on adjektiivi* (*WELL BOYS, do you even know what an adjective is*) (lines 870-1) suggesting that the boys might not even know such a simple grammatical term as the adjective. Ville’s Response is intentionally wrong when he explains what a noun is *esimerkiksi poika tai aurinko* (*for example a boy or the sun*) (line 874) probably to entertain the rest of the class, in which he is successful since *the whole class laughs* (line 875). Ville’s Response might be partly caused by the teacher’s diminishing Initiation, but it might also be done just to show off, in which case the presence of the cameras and the researchers should not be forgotten as possibly “triggering” such behavior. The teacher seems to see Ville’s actions as “showing off”, since she reprimands him in her Follow-up by saying *ei tartte esittää välttämättä* (*no need necessarily to show off*) (line 877). The teacher then makes a new Initiation *mihi kysymykseen adjektiivi vastaa* (*what question does an adjective answer to*) (line 878) to get a proper answer to her question.

In this excerpt, Ville uses humor to establish his power in the discourse by intervening with the teacher's plans of how the interaction should proceed, by deliberately giving a Response that is totally wrong. This shows how, even if the form of the exchange is merely a teacher Initiation - student Response - teacher Follow-up, the student can establish his power in the Response move. In this case, the teacher had to make a new Initiation after the Follow-up to Ville's unsuitable Response to get the wanted answer and to proceed with the topic.

Excerpt 8 is connected to the previous excerpt (excerpt 7) and shows how previous situations in the interaction affect later interactional events. A few minutes after the situation in excerpt 7, the teacher is teaching the comparison of adjectives with sentences where they are used.

### Excerpt 8

1413	T	no niin otetaas ensin ne vertailusanat HHH	I
1414		miten tämmöne (0.6) perusesimerkki kun	
1415		<b>Ville</b> on yhtä komea kuin Tom Cruise	
1416		(4.2)	
1417	T	tulee Ville esimerkkejä kaikki	
1418		(1.7)	
1419	T	Ville on yhtä komea kuin Tom Cruise	
1420		(1.9)	
1421	T	Helppo	
1422		(3.6)	
1423	T	sanokko Riina	
1424	Riina	aa Ville is as <ha:ndshome [as]> Tom Cruise	R
1425	T	[as]	F
1426	T	<handsome (0.5) as (1.3) Tom> (0.8) Cruise	
1427		(2.7)	
1428	T	<yhtä komea kuin>	
1429		(2.0)	
1430	Ville	Kostatsä ny vielä sitä (.)	I
1431		[mun kommenttia]	
1432	T	[kostan ] koko loppu kurssin	R
1433	LMs	((boys make laughing noises))	
1434	LM2	tosi (fiksu)	
1435	Ville	ei mitää (.)	F
1436		mää kestän kyllä	
1437	T	<b>minä en ole yhtä pitkä kuin Ville</b>	I

The teacher makes the Initiation *miten tämmöne perusesimerkki kun **Ville** on yhtä komea kuin Tom Cruise* (what about such a basic example like **Ville** is as handsome as Tom

*Cruise*) (lines 1414-5) where she elicits the use of adjectives in English and adds that *tulee Ville esimerkkejä kaikki* (*all the examples will be about Ville*) (line 1417). There is one IRF pattern where the teacher elicits the answer from Riina who gives the Response (lines 1419-28). After this IRF, Ville asks the teacher *kostatsä ny vielä sitä mun kommenttia* (*are you still trying to get back at me because of my comment*) (lines 1430-1) referring to the incident in excerpt 7 where Ville intentionally gave an incorrect Response. The teacher quite directly responds that she indeed is going to get back at him for his comment for the rest of the course (*kostan koko loppu kurssin*) (line 1432). Ville bravely states *ei mitää. mää kestän kyllä* (*it doesn't matter. I can handle it*) (lines 1435-6) and the teacher straight away continues with a new example sentence about Ville (line 1437). Even if the issue is treated as a joke by both the teacher and Ville (since it is so overdramatically presented), the actual negotiations of power relations can be seen as being disguised beneath the jokes.

The teacher shows her institutional power when she starts using statements about Ville as examples for teaching the grammar point and even emphasizes that all the examples will be about Ville (lines 1415, 1417). This could be seen as a way for the teacher to show that she can “punish” Ville for his unwanted behavior even after the actual situation where he was “out of line” (excerpt 7). Ville directly confronts the teacher for her “indirect punishment” in his Initiation (lines 1430-1), which can be seen as a powerful move from Ville, initiating an exchange and posing a direct, although partly a humorous question to the teacher. The teacher makes it a joke by over-exaggerating the situation in her Response (line 1432), since it otherwise would be a very threatening statement from the teacher, to say that she will use her institutional power to get back at Ville. However, in her comment (line 1432), the teacher points out her power to get back at Ville as long as she wants or sees it necessary to do so, which could be seen as a disguised warning to Ville to start behaving according to the classroom rules.

Ville makes his own powerful interactional move, when he makes a Follow-up to the teacher’s Response by continuing the “joke” and stating that *I can handle it* (line 1436). Ville’s Follow-up could be seen as resisting the teacher’s authority by indicating that he is not intimidated by the teacher’s possible punishment to use him as an example. The teacher quickly makes a new Initiation (line 1437) with an authoritative voice. The Initiation is a new sentence/example about Ville. The teacher’s Initiation could be

interpreted as being a response to Ville's disregard of the teacher's "punishment" and it might be made to show that the teacher can and will continue to use her institutional power and use Ville as an example in the grammar exercises. Thus, the teacher might want to show that she does have resources because of her institutional power to get back at Ville, even though Ville at this point indicates that the teacher's actions will not bother him.

In this excerpt, the power relations between the teacher and Ville are being negotiated rather directly, even if they are disguised as a joke. It shows that Ville as a student can also use humor as a strategy in making powerful discursive actions. Ville makes an Initiation in which the teacher answers and Ville also provides the Follow-up to the teacher's Response. This IRF pattern can be seen as a form of student empowerment, even if the teacher might be seen as getting 'the last word' when she continues with the examples about Ville. Ville still makes his own powerful discursive moves, mainly by bringing the teacher's agendas to the surface with his direct Initiation (line 1430-1) so that he can then make his own comments concerning the teacher's agenda (lines 1435-6). Manke (1997) has made similar findings in her study, where she found that the students used different strategies to force the teachers' hidden agendas to the surface so that they could then resist her plans.

Excerpt 9 shows how Ville uses humor to extend the IRF pattern and to continue the interaction after the teacher's Follow-up. The situation starts with an IRF pattern where the teacher elicits answers with different forms of adjectives.

### Excerpt 9

1485	T	mm↑m (1.1) meidän koiramme ovat yhtä (1.3) karvaisi↑a	I
1486		(3.4)	
1487	T	Ville	
1488	Ville	häh (1.0) our dogs (0.7) are (0.8) mikä oli (.) se	R
1489	T	yhtä karvaisia	F
1490	Ville	ash	R
1491	T	ei voi sanoa <b>as</b>	F
1492	Ville	täh?	F
1493	LM6	tuli moka	
1494	Ville	nii equally (0.5) furry	R
1495	T	hm↑m (.)	F

1496		do you have a dog?	I
1497	Ville	Nouhh	R
1498	T	mh↑mh	F
1499	Ville	but I do have a (.) very hairy little sister	F
1500	T	aha	F
1501		(1.6)	
1502	T	does it run in the family	I
1503	Ville	Yes	R
1504		(1.5)	

The teacher starts the exchange with her Initiation *meidän koiramme ovat yhtä karvaisia* (*our dogs are equally furry*) (line 1485) and nominates Ville to produce the sentence in English (line 1487). Ville gives his Response (lines 1488, 1490), which is not correct, and the teacher points out what is wrong with Ville's answer in her Follow-up *ei voi sanoa as* (*you can't say as*) (line 1491), so that Ville finds the correct answer *nii equally furry* (*yeah equally furry*) (line 1494). In her Follow-up, the teacher evaluates Ville's Response as being correct (line 1495) and also makes a new question *do you have a dog?* (line 1496) that could be seen as an effort from the teacher to make the interaction more conversational.

Ville's Response does not lead the interaction any further, since he does not have a dog (line 1497), but after the teacher's Follow-up (line 1498), Ville makes a humorous Follow-up move about his little sister *but I do have a very hairy little sister* (line 1499), which allows him to continue the interaction after the teacher's Follow-up. The teacher does not at first come up with anything to say but *aha* (*okay*) and a pause (lines 1500-1), which might indicate that she is a bit surprised that Ville continued with another Follow-up in a situation where she was perhaps ready to move on to another question. The teacher, however, continues with a humorous question *does it run in the family* (line 1502). This kind of question from the teacher could be interpreted as an offensive remark, and even more so because of the institutional setting, but since it is made as a joke which Ville himself started, the teacher can pose such a question to him. Ville "plays along" and answers the teacher's question by making fun of himself at the same time (line 1503). It might be that Ville does not want to seem surprised or offended by the teacher's question and wants to get 'the last word', so he is willing to make fun of himself in order to achieve that.



As shown, Ville was able to use humor as a strategy to be able to continue after the teacher's Follow-up and lead the interaction to a direction that the teacher had probably not planned when she asked if Ville had a dog. The teacher posed quite an offensive question to Ville, which might have been made to "punish" Ville for his extra comment (which was probably made to entertain the rest of the class and to show off), so that he would not continue with such humorous comments. Ville did not, however, get upset by the teacher's question, but gave a response and got "the last word" in this interactional situation.

Finally, excerpt 10 is a situation where Ville uses humor to show of and to participate in the conversational floor. The teacher has asked the students to tell about their skills and now it is Ville's turn to present his skills.

#### Excerpt 10

50	T	no ↑skills	
51	LM2	no skills	
52	T	but we have (.)	I
53		fortunately we have (.)	
54		<one perfect pupil here> (.)	
55	Ville	Yes=	R
56	LMs	=((boys laugh [at this point]) )	
57	T	[tell us about your ] skills	I
58	Ville	of course	R
59	T	so=	I
60	Ville	=well (0.8) I know a lot (0.5)	R
61		I know (.) a whole (0.5 ) buns of (.) skills (1.1)	
62		I <u>have</u> a whole bunch of skills	
63	T	such ↑as=	F
64	Ville	=FIRST of all I can ride a bi↑cycle (1.1)	R
65		>second of all< (.) second of all	
66		I can (.) ride a (.) tri↑cycle (0.9)	
67	T	what's that	F
68	Ls	((there is a spell of laughter from the class))	
69	Ville	That's a little thing but children (.) drove	R
70		You know (.) <b>tree</b> (0.8) kykles	
71	LMs	((there is a laughter from some of the boys))	
72	Ville	And th-en (0.9) on the <b>thirdess</b> of- (.) <b>thirdes-ss of</b> all	R
73		I know how to ↑ <b>rite</b> (0.8)	
74		I know [how to listen]	
75	T	[speak English] please	F
76	LM(4)	(( a boy laughs))	

77	Ville	↑what	F
78	T	[speak english please ]	F
79	LM(4)	[((the same boy laughs again))]	
80	Ville	okay (0.7)	R
81		<b>ten</b> I: mmm (1.9) <b>ten</b> (.) I: (1.7)	
82	T	okay that's enough [°I think° ]	F
83	LMs	[((laughter))]	
84	Ville	Yes	F
85	T	okay yo- you seem to be very skilful	F

The teacher's Initiation *but we have fortunately we have one perfect pupil here* (lines 52-4) is rather sarcastic when she refers to Ville as the *perfect pupil*. The teacher's comment probably refers to Ville's own attitude and statements during these lessons (in previous excerpts Ville has e.g. mentioned that he knows enough English and that the things taught in these EFL lessons are not useful in every-day-life), which might also indicate that such comments from Ville are not that uncommon during these EFL lessons. The teacher's comment could also be seen as using her institutional position to place Ville in a situation where he now has to show his "superiority" and skills (line 57), which is a quite challenging situation to put a student in.

Ville goes along with the teacher's joke, admitting his excellence (lines 55, 58). When the teacher then asks Ville to tell about his skills (line 57, 59), Ville gives a rather vague answer *well I know a lot. I know a whole buns of skills. I have a whole bunch of skills* (lines 60-2). The teacher does not allow Ville to "get away" from this situation that easily, so she asks for further explanations in her Follow-up *such as* (line 63). At this point, Ville uses humor to get away from what could be interpreted as a face-threatening situation, since the teacher has put so much pressure on Ville with her Initiation that Ville may feel he has to show his excellence in his Response. Ville presents bike riding as one of his skills (line 64), when other pupils have presented actual skills like playing an instrument in their responses, not a "skill" that almost everyone has. He continues his humorous Response by stating *second of all I can ride a tricycle* (lines 65-6). The teacher still does not let Ville to "get away" from this challenging situation too easily, and asks for clarification in her Follow-up *what's that* (line 67). At this point, the other students react to Ville's humorous act (line 68). Ville gives a Response *that's a little thing but children drove you know tree kykles* (lines 69-70) to the teacher's question and continues to list his skills *and th-en on the thirdess of- thirds-ss of all I know how to rite*

*I know how to listen* (lines 72-4). Ville lists other every-day-skills such as listening as his skills (line 73-4) to entertain the other students. He also starts to pronounce English in a Finnish manner (lines 70, 72-3), which is most likely also intended to be a humorous act. The teacher gives a Follow-up *speak English please* (lines 75, 78), referring to Ville's pronunciation. Ville agrees with the teacher's request (line 80), but he actually disregards it, by continuing to pronounce English in a Finnish manner *ten I mmm ten I* (line 81).

The teacher probably feels that Ville's humorous act has gone far enough and it will not probably contribute to the actual interaction in a way that would facilitate learning, so she does not allow Ville to continue it any further and states *okay that's enough I think* (line 82). Ville does not seem very disappointed when he is asked to stop and agrees with the teacher (line 84). Ville might more likely be relieved because he has been able to use humor as a strategy to get out of a challenging situation that could have resulted in the "loss of face" if he had not been able to show how "skillful" he is. The teacher makes a Follow-up to Ville's Response where she says Ville to be very skillful (line 85), but which can be seen as one more comment continuing this "joke".

The teacher made an Initiation which might have been made to put pressure on Ville to show his skills and his "excellence", so, in a way it could then be interpreted as a "punishment" for Ville's unwanted behavior where he has resisted the teacher's plans. The teacher's Initiation can be interpreted as face-threatening to Ville, which might have been done to show Ville the "true" order of power relations, since the teacher puts Ville in a situation where he has to show how skillful he actually is and to "put his money where his mouth is" in proving that all the resistance to doing assigned exercises and intervening with the teacher's plans has truly been done because of the unchallenging content of the EFL lessons. The Response that Ville has to make is then evaluated by the teacher enabled by her institutional position, which can be seen as making the situation even more challenging to Ville. The teacher's "pressure" that she puts on Ville can also be seen from her first Follow-up where she wants actual skills to be presented (line 63) when Ville first gives a vague response (lines 60-2). Ville makes his Response a joke and in that way is able to get away from the situation, which could have developed into even a more demanding situation, if the teacher had posed additional questions and in the end, given a true evaluation on Ville's Response. Since

Ville does not give a serious Response, the teacher cannot give an actual evaluation in her Follow-up (line 85) about Ville's skills, or more importantly, about Ville's English skills.

Ville is also able to "hold the floor" in the interactional setting with his humorous response, when he comes up with new things that he is good at (lines 72-3). However, the teacher uses her institutional position and stops Ville's Response with her Follow-up (line 82) when she feels that the joke has gone far enough. Even though the teacher seems to decide on the interactional turns in this excerpt, Ville is still able to resolve a face-threatening situation to his favor with humor and construct the situation into something else than what the teacher had probably planned.

## 7 CONCLUSION

The last chapter sums up the main findings of the study and also discusses them in the light of previous studies. Even if the findings of the present study contribute to the examination of students' power in classroom interaction, there are certain limitations that will be more thoroughly discussed in section 7.2 and suggestions for further studies will also be made.

### 7.1 *Summary of findings*

The analysis of the data, which examined all the situations where a student got to exercise power in the IRF pattern, situations where power was experienced, exercised and resisted (Thornborrow 2002), has shown there to be different strategies that the student can use to gain a more powerful position in the interaction with the teacher. The student was on some occasions more indirect in his attempts to power when resisting the teacher's plans or requests, but on others very openly disagreed with the teacher. Both the teacher and the student used humor to make powerful interactional moves and to disguise those moves as a joke. Humor was often used to be able to make rather direct and face-threatening discursive moves.

The study revealed that a student can establish his institutional power in the IRF pattern. The student was able to extend the IRF pattern after the Follow-up turn and even to change the structure of the IRF pattern, so that the interaction between the teacher and the student started to resemble a conversation more than a question-answer-feedback structure. The student was also able to use any of the three moves in the IRF pattern to gain a more powerful position in the interaction and on some occasions seemed to take on the role of the teacher in those moves.

The student was able to resist the teacher's plans in his Response, but he also made the Initiation in the IRF pattern on a couple of occasions. In one of his Initiations the student was able to raise a new topic to the interaction and in another Initiation, made the teacher bring her hidden agenda in the open. Thus, both of these student Initiations can

be seen as making a powerful contribution to the interaction. In addition, the student quite often made an additional Follow-up after the teacher's Follow-up, commenting or resisting the teacher's discourse action or introducing alternative possibilities to the teacher's plans. On some occasions the student was able to extend the pattern with his additional Follow-up to a form IRFRFFF. As Sunderland (2001) points out, if the student is able to continue after the teacher's turn, it can be regarded as a powerful move from the student. Thus, the student seemed to be able to make powerful discursive moves in any of the three moves in the IRF pattern.

The student's contributions to the power relations in the IRF pattern in this EFL classroom were not, however, very frequent since the data were four EFL lessons and there were only ten occasions (excerpts 1-10) when this particular student could be seen as making powerful discursive moves in the IRF pattern. However, considering the institutional setting where the power relations are not in the student's favor, this particular student was still able to establish his discursive power, which on some occasions led to rather long negotiations of power.

The three sub-questions posed to specify the analysis of the phenomenon could not be examined in all of the excerpts since in all of the cases there were no clear connections to these issues. Based on the findings made from some of the excerpts (see chapter 6), findings of the three sub-questions will now be discussed.

One of the aspects that were examined in this study was to see whether the teacher or the student got "the last word" in these interactional situations where they negotiated their power relations, since closing the 'exchange' can be seen as a powerful discursive move (Sunderland 2001). However, the interactional situations in this study suggest that 'the last word' does not automatically show who is more powerful in a certain situation. The constantly negotiated power relations in classroom interaction seem to also affect the interpretation of 'the last word' in a classroom setting, since on many of the occasions where either the teacher or the student seemed to get "the last word", it did not necessarily show that that participant was more powerful in the situation. For example, in excerpt 1, the teacher seemed to get 'the last word', but was still not able to make Ville participate in the given task, so that the outcome of the situation did not automatically turn into the teacher's favor even though she got 'the last word' in the

interaction. Thus, the concept of ‘the last word’ in interaction when negotiating classroom power relations is not perhaps as simple as interpreting the one getting ‘the last word’ as being more powerful, and that the whole idea of the constantly changing classroom power relations has to be taken into consideration when examining the phenomenon on specific occasions.

The aspect of whether or not the student’s resistance was resistance to learning also revealed interesting points about the power relations in the classroom. The student used indirect strategies as well as very direct discourse and sometimes also humor to resist the teacher’s plans and to challenge the teacher’s institutional position as the ‘primary knower’ or as the one who can decide on what will be done during EFL lessons. On some occasions the student’s actions could be interpreted as being resistance to learning, but there were also situations where the student’s resistance could be seen as stemming from a desire to contribute to the construction of classroom knowledge or to be able to affect the contents of the lessons in some way. These findings were similar to Candela’s (1999) study where she found that students’ resistance is not necessarily resistance to learning.

One of the factors that seemed to increase student resistance in this set of data was the teacher’s actions. On many such occasions it was the teacher’s direct discourse where she rather directly expressed her plans or requests that made the student resist her plans even more. However, there were situations where the teacher’s discourse could be interpreted as almost provoking the student to resist her plans, but where the student did not, however, get provoked by her actions. At times, the teacher’s direct discourse could be interpreted as quite “face-threatening” to the student, considering the institutional setting. However, the teacher seemed to use more direct discourse in situations where she perhaps felt her powerful institutional position being threatened by the student’s discursive actions, which sometimes also were rather direct. On such occasions, the teacher’s direct discourse actions could be seen as a way to emphasize her institutional position to regain a more powerful stance on the interaction.

One area of investigation in this study was also the student’s and teacher’s use of indirect and direct discourse. The form of discourse was examined to see if the teacher’s use of direct discourse might lead to more resistance on the student’s part. Based on the

findings, the teacher's direct discourse in some cases seemed to lead to more student resistance, but there were also instances where the teacher's rather provoking actions did not create any further student resistance. Therefore, it cannot be concluded that certain discursive actions would automatically lead to resistance on the student's part even if it in some cases appeared to be so.

Manke's (1997) findings concerning the use of indirect discourse by the teacher to protect the "face" of the student is also a multi-layered phenomenon based on the findings of this study. There were instances where the teacher used more indirect discourse that could be interpreted as protecting the student's "face", but there were also occasions when the teacher used very direct discourse that could be seen as quite "face-threatening" to the student, considering the institutional setting (e.g. in excerpt 4 where the teacher comments Ville's word test). As mentioned above, the teacher seemed to take a more aggressive approach and use direct discourse in situations where she perhaps felt her powerful position being threatened by the student's discursive actions that in some occasions were very direct and openly resisted the teacher's agenda. Considering the institutional context of the classroom, the student's direct resistance to the teacher's plans, even if they were not that common, showed that there is room in classroom interaction and the IRF pattern for students to very directly contribute to the classroom power relations in the interaction. However, the present study is rather a narrow sample of student's power in classroom interaction since it examined the actions of only one student during four EFL lessons. Therefore the phenomenon should be more widely examined and suggestions for further studies will be made in the upcoming section.

## **7.2 Discussion**

There appears to be different strategies that a student can use to make powerful discursive moves in classroom interaction despite the institutional setting where the teacher has certain privileges compared to the students. The student used indirect strategies as well as direct strategies and in many cases also humor to gain a more powerful position in classroom interaction. The findings of the study also confirm Sunderland's (2001) remark about the IRF pattern and how it should not be oversimplified as contributing only to teacher talk. This should be kept in mind when



examining the role of the IRF pattern in creating power relations through interaction in the classroom. The findings of the study show that a student does have different resources to contribute to the classroom power relations through classroom interaction and even in situations where the IRF pattern is used. The student was able to make powerful discursive moves in any of the turns in the IRF pattern and sometimes changed the form of the pattern by extending it with additional turns or otherwise making the interaction more conversational. Thus, the student's active role as a contributor to the classroom power relations that had been pointed out in previous studies (Thornborrow 2002, Manke 1997), as well as the possibilities for a student to establish power in the IRF pattern (Candela 1999), was now also shown in a Finnish school context, in a foreign language classroom and with older learners.

The cultural aspect did not seem to create any considerable differences in the student's position as an active participant in creating classroom power relations, since the student seemed to be able to take part in the construction of power in the classroom as previous studies had also concluded (see Thornborrow 2002, Manke 1997 for comparison) and do it in situations where the IRF pattern was the main form of interaction (see Candela 1999). However, it would be important to study the phenomenon in the Finnish context more widely, since this was only rather a limited sample of student's power in classroom interaction. Further, the cultural aspect was not a specific area of investigation in this study, and the influence that the cultural setting might have on the investigated phenomenon was concluded merely by comparing the results of studies conducted in different cultural settings to see if there were any differences in the findings of these studies from different cultural settings. Therefore, the cultural aspect in students' power in classroom interaction should be more thoroughly examined to be able to make any actual conclusions of the role of the surrounding culture to this phenomenon.

The student examined in this study was somewhat older (16-17 years old) than the students examined in previous studies concentrating on classroom power relations (see Thornborrow 2002, Candela 1999, Manke 1997). The reason why older students were studied was to prevent their "lack of intellectual maturity" or their "lack of metalinguistic knowledge" (Sunderland 2001:8) from too greatly limiting their contributions to the negotiation of classroom power relations. The longer negotiations of power, where the student truly challenged the institutional power relations and the

teacher's position as the 'primary knower' or as the one who decides on what is done during the lesson, would probably not have been very common in a classroom with younger learners. In a foreign language classroom, the skills in the target language can affect the actual contributions that the student is able to make in the interaction. In this study, in some of the interactional situations where the power relations were being negotiated, Finnish was used as the form of communication, so that the language itself did not limit the student's contributions. However, even if the language used in the interaction would not be a problem, the student in this study pointed out possible defects in the contents of the lessons, showed interest in contributing to the construction of knowledge in the classroom and defended his own views even in educational matters. These are aspects of student power that would probably not have been negotiated or resisted in the interaction as powerfully as they did in the data if the student had been e.g. five years younger. Since the teacher and the student were more equal in terms of "intellectual maturity" than an adult and a child would have been, it most likely enabled more complex interactional events where also the student's discursive actions were more consciously made to resist the teacher's institutional position. The student's age and maturity might have also been the reason why the teacher could not always straight away turn to the institutional norms of the classroom, but had to come up with "better" ways of and reasons for striving towards her agenda in the classroom. However, the teacher still leaned on to her institutional position rather directly in some situations, but with younger learners it might have been even more common. Taking these points into consideration, it would be important to more widely examine students' power in classrooms with older students to see if their knowledge and maturity have an effect on their contributions to classroom power relations.

The present study is too narrow a sample to draw any wider conclusions about students' interactional power in an EFL classroom based on the findings of this study. The present study has touched the issue of students' power in a foreign language classroom and examined the phenomenon in a Finnish cultural context and with more mature learners. However, the older learners, as well as younger learners contributions to this matter should be more widely examined in the Finnish context in foreign language classrooms to get more insights on the matter. One further area of investigation would be to examine students' power also in Finnish CLIL classrooms since as Nikula (2007:184) points out, even though CLIL education is not at the moment very common in Finnish schools, it

most likely “has come to stay”. Since classroom interaction in Finnish CLIL classrooms has not been widely examined (Nikula 2007), the power relations negotiated in classroom interaction would probably increase the knowledge about the interactional relations in CLIL classrooms.

The student’s power in an EFL classroom was not examined from the learning perspective in this study, but considering the important role classroom interaction has in the actual learning of the students (see Hall and Verplaetse 2000), it would be useful to examine classroom power relations in a foreign language classroom in terms of providing opportunities for learning. As mentioned, different functions of the IRF pattern have been introduced to lead the interaction in the classroom towards a more conversational form of communication (Nassaji and Wells 2000, van Lier 1996). The importance of such interaction in the foreign language classroom has also been emphasized (van Lier 1996). However, the student’s active role in the IRF pattern in terms of being able to take on roles and positions that are not necessarily “assigned” to the student in that situation should also be taken into consideration when examining the IRF pattern as providing opportunities for foreign language learning. For example, a student’s attempts for power in classroom interaction might also bring the student more opportunities to practice the language in the interaction even if the teacher had not “assigned” a more conversational form of interaction to be carried out. The students’ active participation in the construction of power relations in the classroom could therefore possibly have an effect on the learning of the students. Thus, students’ power in classroom interaction in a foreign language classroom should therefore also be examined from the point of view of learning.

The study has revealed new aspects about students’ power in the EFL classroom by introducing different strategies that a student may use in order to gain more power in classroom interaction and in the IRF pattern. As mentioned, there are, however, many areas of study in examining students’ power in the classroom that should be more widely investigated to be able to understand the complexity and consequences of the phenomenon.

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## APPENDIX 1

### TRANSCRIPTION SYMBOLS

[ text ]	overlapping speech
[text]2	
(.)	a pause, shorter than 0.4 seconds
(0.7)	a pause, timed in tenths of a second
(2.0)	a pause, timed in seconds
(~2.2.)	estimated length of a pause
text=	
=text	latching speech
CAPITALS	loud speech
<b>bold</b>	prominence, via pitch and/or amplitude
exte:nsio:n	noticeable extension of the sound or syllable with the colon
cut off wo-	cut of word or a sentence
◦ high circles◦	soft speech
.	falling intonation
↑	rising intonation
↑↓	falling-rising intonation
,	continuing intonation
<u>marked</u>	marked pronunciation
<i>mispronounced</i>	mispronunciation
((coughs))	transcriber's comments
(x)	incomprehensible item, probably one word only
(xx)	incomprehensible item of phrase length
(xxx)	incomprehensible item beyond phrase length
(text)	uncertain transcription
Ÿ laughingŸ	laughing production of an utterance
(h) (h)	laugh tokens
@	altered tone of voice
<tekstiä>	slow speech
>tekstiä<	fast speech
♪singing♪	singing production of an utterance
*whispering*	whispering production of speech
h h	outbreath
◦hh	inbreath

### SYMBOLS TO IDENTIFY WHO IS SPEAKING

T	teacher
LM1	identified male learner, using numbers (M1, M2, etc)
LF1	identified female learner, using numbers (F1, F2, etc.)
LM	unidentified male learner
LF	unidentified female learner
LF(3)	uncertain identification of speaker
LL	unidentified subgroup of class
Ls	learners
LMs	male learners
LFs	female learners