

Teacher Talk in the Case Study Approach: Observations from a Case Study

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Abstract

This working paper looks at the activity of classroom discussion. It focuses on teacher talk within the context of a case discussion in a content class. The discussion in this paper is exploratory and mostly descriptive, based on observations from a single classroom discussion. The purpose is to highlight some features of a class that is highly participatory and engaging for students, and in which the teacher plays a crucial role through his questioning within the framework of a specific methodological approach. On the basis of these features, implications are drawn briefly for second language teaching.

Key words: Teacher talk, classroom discussion, case study,
content-based teaching

1. INTRODUCTION

Certain assumptions about second language teaching--some obvious and some not so obvious--motivate this paper. First, the case study approach is a powerful tool to make classes interactive; second, teacher talk plays a crucial role in making the classroom discussions interactive; and, third, content-based teaching enhances the effectiveness of second language learning. Let me briefly explain these assumptions.

It is widely agreed that an interactive classroom environment, in which learners show a high degree of participation, is conducive to second language development. Such interactive features as turn taking, exchanges in terms of questions and responses, negotiations of meaning, etc., strengthen the meaningfulness of classroom discourse for and the involvement of the students. In L2 research, these features are seen as contributing to second language development in terms of, for example, comprehensible input (Long 1981), output (Swain 1985), and scaffolding (Hatch 1978). In this context, teacher talk, particularly the questioning approach adopted by a teacher, plays a crucial role, positively or negatively. In other words, depending on the nature of the approach, a class could be highly teacher fronted, with the teacher dominating the class and the students being merely passive listeners; on the other hand, it could be highly interactive with the students demonstrating a high level of participation.

By adopting the case study approach, teacher talk can become highly effective in making the classroom discourse interactive. In other words, this approach provides strategies to the teacher to raise the participation level of the students. Finally, underlying all these elements is the assumption that content-based language instruction provides a meaningful context for language learning (Mohan 1986; Brinton et al., 1989). In this approach to instruction, content, or subject matter, is seen as providing the starting point and the framework within which language learning objectives can be more effectively achieved.

This paper looks at a case discussion activity that took place in a content (not second language) course in an MBA program at an English-medium university in Japan. It focuses on teacher talk, particularly the questioning approach adopted by an experienced teacher in the case study approach. By carefully analyzing his talk and questioning approach, it is possible to identify features that make the classes interactive and could be applied to second language classes.

Accordingly, the discussion in this paper is organized as follows. It first introduces the main elements of the case study approach to classroom discussions in an MBA program, and the teacher's role in terms of his questioning behavior. Next, it introduces some details about the particular class and data. It then describes some overt features of the classroom dynamics in terms of teacher-student interactions and discusses some characteristics of teacher talk, including the questioning approach. In conclusion, the paper briefly draws attention to some features that could be applicable to second language teaching.

2. THE CASE STUDY APPROACH

The focal point in this approach, which has developed from educational practices in business and management studies, is the case discussion in the classroom setting. Students need to come fully prepared by reading and understanding the case materials, usually through group discussions. Unlike the traditional, lecture-oriented classes, a case discussion method "creates a classroom culture in which active, rather aggressive participation, on the part of the students individually...becomes a prerequisite for successful performance in the course" (Ahmed 1990:477).¹

The contents of a case normally focus on some dramatic situations in an organizational or company setting, posing challenging problems that need to be

resolved. Usually, the text of a case consists of 'Introduction' in the form of a dramatic presentation of a problem faced by the central character(s) in the case; 'Background information' about the organization; 'Information about the main characters'; 'Long and short range options'; and 'Conclusion' that gives some final details in relation to the decisions to be made. There may be other reading materials in addition the case reading itself; these additional materials provide, for example, some conceptual framework or additional background information pertinent to the case.²

A case discussion has two major goals: to analyze the nature of a problem (or problems) and to recommend solutions. Usually, the problems are complex and the discussion aims at finding out their underlying dimensions and sources. At the same time, there is no single solution, and each solution has its own consequences and implications. The discussion thus aims at covering problems, solutions, and implications.

The role of the teacher in a case discussion is: "...primarily as a facilitator, who pushes students (more or less gently) to explore fully the avenues of investigation down which they have begun and to direct them toward relevant areas they have missed" (Hammond 1980, quoted in Sawyer 1989:139). In this context, this paper will argue that the teacher remains in full control of the flow of discussion, although the classroom environment is not teacher-fronted as understood traditionally. The teacher exercises this control in subtle ways primarily through his/her questioning approach.

3. DATA

The data for this paper comes from a 'Business Environment' course in an MBA program. The case (called the "International Bank of Malaysia") deals with, as mentioned at the beginning of the case reading, "a serious personnel problem" in the form of conflict between two department heads, "causing serious disruptions to morale and performance through their efforts to discredit each other." The branch manager of the Kuala Lumpur office of the bank finds himself facing this problem and needs to resolve it effectively.³

The class, which provides data for this study, consisted of 38 students, including both native and non-native speakers of English from various countries. The majority of the students were NNSs, the Japanese being the largest group. The proficiency level of the non-native speakers ranged from intermediate to advanced.⁴

The entire classroom discussion (90 minutes long) was videotaped. For the purpose of this study, however, a portion of the discussion (34 minutes long) was transcribed. This portion covered the discussion from the beginning of the class and constituted a logical portion in that it ended with the teacher synthesizing the discussion up to that point. (See Appendix I for some important details and selected parts of the transcribed data.)

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Second language research focusing on the classroom setting has been important since the early 1980s (Seliger and Long 1983). In this context, teacher talk, as part of classroom talk, has been a widely researched area. It includes such topics as direct and explicit instruction to students, instructions for classroom management, feedback, error correction, and different types of questions and questioning skills. Under questions, such types as display and referential questions, open and closed questions, and procedural, convergent, and divergent questions have been investigated. Under questioning skills, such features as the amount of teacher talk, wait time, distribution of questions, range of the types of questions, and opening, pacing, and closure of classroom activity, etc., have been important issues.⁵

With reference to this kind of research, the data for this study was scrutinized with the following kinds of questions in mind:

1. How much did the teacher talk?
2. How many students participated in the discussion?
3. What were the interactional patterns (i.e., teacher-student, student-student)?
4. What types of questions did the teacher ask?
5. What kinds of questioning skills did he demonstrate?
6. How did the teacher react to students' responses in terms of feedback?
7. How did the teacher organize the discussion from the beginning?

In the following sub-sections, the data is analyzed in two ways. In sub-section A, an attempt is made to quantify in general terms some overt features that show some important characteristics of classroom interactions. In sub-section B, selected examples from the transcribed data are presented to draw attention to some important characteristics of teacher talk. The examples are discussed by means of a simple discourse analysis of the content.

A. Some overt features of the classroom dynamics

The data revealed the following features that may be considered as significant: the amount of teacher talk; the number of interactional episodes, the number of students taking part in the discussion, the number of students the teacher called on, the number of students who could draw the attention of the teacher, the number of students who took the floor, the frequency of student-student interactions, the frequency of topic shifts by the students.

Some of these categories need clarification. 'Interactional episode' is a convenient label here to refer to a cycle of exchanges between the teacher and a particular student before the teacher moved on to another student. The cycle typically consists of the teacher asking a question, the student responding to the question, and the teacher reacting with comments and follow-up questions.⁶

In the following three features, the nonverbal behaviors observed on the videotape provided helpful information. 'Students who were called on by the teacher' refers to those students who were picked up rather exclusively by the teacher, while 'Students who could draw the teacher's attention' means these students raised their hands along with many others and were able to catch the attention of the teacher. Finally, 'Students who took the floor' means those students raised their hands while others were not, and took the initiative to volunteer their responses and comments actively.

'Topic shifts' simply means the students either shifted the discussion to a slightly or radically different topic from the one that was just being discussed in the preceding interactional episode.

Given this framework, the following summarizes the features:

1. The amount of teacher talk was 42%.⁷
2. There were 14 'teacher-student interactional episodes' in 34 minutes. An episode ranged from 1 to 5 minutes.⁸
3. In these 14 episodes, 13 different students took part in the discussion. Nine of them were NNSs of English, and 3 were female students.⁹
4. In these 14 episodes, the teacher called on 3 students in the early part of the discussion; 5 students were able to 'draw the teacher's attention; and 5 students were able to 'take the floor'.¹⁰
5. Out of these 14 episodes, one turned into a brief debate between two students. All the others were teacher-student exchanges.¹¹

6. Out of 13 participants, 11 showed various degrees of topic shifts.¹²

To summarize, a high level of student participation can be seen in these overt features. In fact, in addition to these students, a number of other students had raised their hands and wanted to get the attention of the teacher, but the teacher did not pick them up. This would of course be a function of constraints imposed by class size. Furthermore, the data in this paper covers only approximately one-third of the entire discussion process.

The teacher distributed his questions among many students quite well. A certain pattern characterized his questioning approach: at first he called on a few students; then, he picked up from among those students who raised their hands; finally, he gave the floor to some students who actively wanted to present their opinions.

In this context, his use of the wait time was significant. In the transition from Episode 2 to Episode 3, there was hardly any wait time. However, between Episodes 3 and 4, he gave an 8-second wait time with an open-ended question. Many students raised their hands. Later, between Episodes 4 and 5, there was a 5-second wait time during which many students raised their hands again.

Finally, the topic shifts were significant. They were a function of the nature of the case discussion method which induces different opinions. However, they also show that students kept expressing individual opinions and the discussion kept moving in several directions.

B. Characteristics of teacher talk

This sub-section, as mentioned earlier, provides a simple discourse analysis of some selected excerpts from the data to illustrate some important characteristics of teacher talk. These characteristics are categorized as follows:

i) Conceptual organizer for discussion

An important feature was the teacher's approach towards opening the discussion. The following excerpt (from Episode 1) shows how he started:

(EXCERPT 1)

"All right? We're set. The first thing I want to do is review one of the important points that we talked about yesterday, in terms of problems and causes.

[Calls on a student by name. A native speaker of English.]

Using this matrix *[points at a diagram on the board]*, help us run through one of the important points."

The student made a short presentation. The teacher then emphasizes the following:

(EXCERPT II)

“{...}the important thing is {...} do I have different problems ... with the same cause {...}or do I have similar looking problems ... but they are really coming from different sources {...} so I want to just reemphasize that ...”

In terms of analyzing the underlying dimensions of the problem, this set up a framework that became a standard reference in the teacher's questioning during the discussion, and this framework conceptually organized students' responses. An example of this can be seen early on in Episode 2 (Appendix I). When the student pointed out different cultural backgrounds as the source of the conflict (see 2.D), the teacher's responses (see 2.E, 2.L) in fact drew the student's attention to the basic principles in analyzing problems.

ii) Types of questions and the questioning strategy

There were very few closed-type (or convergent questions). In other words, the teacher did not ask very many questions that focused exclusively on specific factual details. When they were asked, they were embedded within open-ended questions. An example can be seen early on in Episode 2 (see 2.C). The question “Who were they?” was just a quick reference to reconfirm the identity of the main characters in conflict. In fact, the student's mind was more focused on answering the question “What's the most serious problem?” (see 2.A-D).

More complex factual questions also came up, but they came up to answer the deeper level question about the nature of the problem. This can be seen in Episode 4 (see the teacher's questions in F-P). The questions about the responsibilities of a particular department were actually embedded within the context of the nature of the conflict.

While embedding the factual questions within the context of problem analysis, the teacher adopted a questioning strategy that turned out to be quite effective. The initial question may be classified as open-ended, broad, divergent, and fundamental: “What's the most serious problem?” (2.A). This initial question was followed by a series of questions along the same line, asking students to focus on the specifics of their responses. The questions listed below illustrate this point:

- “So, what is it specifically then that is causing conflict in their cultural backgrounds?” (2.G)

- “What I am curious is what you think the specific differences are.” (2.L)
- “Why is that causing a conflict though?” (3.E)
- “Why does that create conflict between the two?” (3.K)
- “Why are the credit and administration in conflict?” (4.D)

Later, in Episode 6, the questions were:

- “Let me push that same issue again...what are the differences that are adding to the conflict?”
- “Now, I am asking you again ... what are the cultural specifics?”

In short, these kinds of questions were used in a recurrent manner, prodding students into more specific and deeper analysis of the problem(s).

iii) Teacher reactions to students' responses

This is a significant aspect of teacher talk in this analysis. Four kinds of teacher reactions could be identified: (1) repeating and paraphrasing details in student's responses, (3) adding important details, (3) personalizing, and (4) occasionally evaluating the response. In fact, the teacher's questions themselves were embedded in these reactions. In other words, most of the time the teacher developed a student's response in various ways and then posed the next question.

A couple of examples might help. In Episode 2 (see 2.E), the teacher first personalized the student's response, then posed the question. In J, the teacher chose 'thinking' and 'doing business' (not 'action') from the student's response for his next question. In Episode 3 (see 2.G and 2.K), the teacher paraphrased the student's response and in fact added a few words before posing the next question. This approach became more significant in Episode 4, which contains the evaluative comment “I think you are on to something” (4.F). These characteristics lead to yet another, and more important, aspect as follows.

iv) Elaboration and categorization of student's responses

The teacher in his reactions further developed and categorized students' responses. This can be seen in a significant manner in Episode 4. The evaluative comment in 4.F is indicative of the importance of the point made by the student (i.e., interdepartmental conflict). In 4.H, the teacher added the term 'group'; in 4.L,

the phrase 'generate income'; in 4.P, 'balance of loans vs. capital...performance rates'; and in 4.T, there was a lengthy elaboration of the point made by the student.

There was not only elaboration, but more significantly, categorization of students' responses. In a later episode (Episode 6), after the student had made a few points about the Chinese and the Malays, the teacher said:

(EXCERPT III)

"So far I have heard a lot about ethnic background {...} nothing about culture per se yet... right?"

The term 'ethnic' was provided by the teacher; it was not in the student's comment. The teacher was skillfully categorizing the contents of students' responses. In fact, in Episode 15, the teacher brought the discussion to a logical culmination by summarizing students' responses:

(EXCERPT IV)

"So ... if I were to sum up .. what you all have presented .. you got a conflict because of personal differences ... independent of culture {...} then .. there's sort of ethnical .. historical issues .. {...} there are cultural ... religious issues .. about behavior and interpretations ... and it's sort of task and organizational structure ... builds into competing interests .. that adds to the conflict. ... and those are the sort of four basic sources ... for this conflict .. that I have heard."

When the teacher synthesized the discussion as above, more than 30 minutes of discussion had taken place, 13 students had taken turns, and multiple perspectives had been offered about the conflict between the two characters in the case. A final point needs to be mentioned.

v) The mediating functions of teacher talk

In this case, teacher talk, including the questioning approach, served to mediate students' responses and participation. In other words, apart from inducing responses from the students to specific questions, teacher talk helped develop and categorize the specific details presented by the students. In this activity, the use of the classroom board assumed a strategic function. Throughout the discussion, the teacher skillfully made use of the board, listing and categorizing specific details from the student responses. It would be interesting to note that the teacher used the board for 10% of the discussion time.¹³ When, at the end, the teacher summarized the discussion

(Excerpt IV), he had first listed the following key terms on the board: “personal, ethnical/historical, cult./religious, task/org.”

It could be argued that the entire case discussion was constructed collaboratively by the teacher’s conceptual organizer, teacher questions, students’ responses, and the categorization of different pieces of information through the skillful use of the board.

5. CONCLUSION

Several principles emerge from this discussion, which could be applied to second language teaching. Most of these principles relate to pedagogical goals that give priority to enhancing the participation level of the students in a classroom discussion situation. They also relate to issues of course design and methodological approaches.

First, teacher talk plays a crucial role. As discussed in this paper, a teacher needs to be skillful in:

- (a) asking open-ended but focused questions;
- (b) distributing the questions among the students in a balanced manner, providing wait-times at strategic points;
- (c) varying questioning strategies in terms of ‘calling on some students,’ ‘picking up some others,’ and ‘giving the floor to those asking for it’;
- (d) reacting to students’ responses through careful repetitions, paraphrases, and additional details;
- (e) skillfully building up on students’ responses to further develop and categorize various details into coherent explanations; and
- (f) using some effective form of visual aid such as the classroom board to categorize and synthesize students’ responses.

Underlying these skills is the use of a conceptual framework, or a conceptual organizer. The problem-solving activity leads to a greater understanding of principles and criteria for analyzing and solving problems. A teacher has to have adequate content expertise in using the case study method. Content-based teaching in second language classes becomes crucial for these reasons.

In addition to these implications for pedagogical goals, issues of course design and methodology in terms of the case study approach are important. In such a design, a discussion activity has to be one that is concerned with problem solving. Students need to look at the activity in terms of exploring problems, offering solutions, and

understanding various implications. This is where the case study approach, with reading materials organized in a systematic manner, becomes important.

The case discussion method also becomes important in another way: orienting the perceptions of the students about the discussion activity. It propagates a classroom culture in which aggressive participation becomes a standard prerequisite to successful performance.

As mentioned at the beginning, this paper is exploratory and mostly descriptive. It obviously has some important limitations. The database is limited to just one teacher and one portion of a case discussion activity. Obviously, it does not take into account individual variability that would normally be found when the classes of two experienced teachers conducting case discussions are compared. This variability may exist in the frequency of teacher-student vs. student-student interactions, amount of personalizing through role-play, etc.

Furthermore, in spite of the limited data in this paper, there are dimensions that have not been covered. One such dimension is teacher feedback. In the data presented here, no explicit feedback was found, except for some evaluative comments. However, a careful content analysis would reveal important differences in the teacher reactions in Episode 4 and Episode 5 in terms of positive and negative feedback.

Finally, this paper introduces some ideas about 'mediating functions' at the end of its discussion. In fact, the concept of 'mediation' is an extremely important one in certain approaches to second language research, and the data presented here could be interpreted with much more explanatory depth in light of this concept.¹⁴ However, such a discussion is beyond the scope of this paper.

¹ See Sawyer (1989) for some important details about the case study method in the context of second language classes.

² For example, the case reading material referred to in this paper ("International Bank of Malaysia) consists of: the 'Introduction' (dramatic presentation of a problem faced by the central character in the case); 'Background' (details about the organization); 'About the Men Involved' (details about the main characters); 'The Government Position' (details about the political situation in the country and government policies); 'Long and Short Range Problems' (immediate and long term options available to the central character to solve the problematic situation); and 'Conclusion' (some final details about the decisions to be made).

³ The case begins as follows:

Near the end of a four week management development course in Hong Kong, Mr. Ian Dankworth, Branch Manager of the Kuala Lumpur office of the International Bank of Malaysia, was reflecting on a serious personnel problem in his own office. Two of his department heads, Mr. Wong Chin Poh (Credit) and Mr. Zainuddin Bin Abdul Wahab (Administration), were causing serious disruptions to morale and performance through their efforts to discredit each other. Under ordinary circumstances Mr. Dankworth might have dealt with the situation as a "simple personality conflict between two managers". But in this case the problem was complicated by the fact that Wong was of Chinese ancestry while Zainuddin was Malay.

⁴ Out of the 38 students, there were: 27 NNSs of English, 21 Japanese, and 7 female. In addition to Japan, students came from the U.S., the U.K., India, Thailand, Bangladesh, the Phillipines, Malaysia, Iran, and Latin America. The teacher was a native speaker of English.

⁵ See relevant parts in Chaudron (1988); Richards and Lockhart (1994); Nunan and Lamb (1996).

⁶ The transcribed data in the appendix is divided in terms of this definition of an episode. Episodes 2-5 form a continuous series of exchanges between the teacher and the students. Episode 1, which is not included in the appendix, actually is a short presentation by a student who was asked to review some important points from the previous class.

⁷ This amount roughly refers to the time (in terms of minutes & seconds) when the teacher spoke to the students while reacting to their responses. It does not include such expressions as 'OK', 'uh..um' that he used when listening to a student's response. The teacher spoke for a total of about 14 minutes and 30 seconds (including his summarizing of students' responses at the end.

⁸ Episode 1 was actually a short presentation by a student, who reviewed some important points from the previous class discussion. Towards the end, the teacher summarized the discussion up to that point; this is not counted as an interactional episode in this paper.

⁹ One student participated twice, in Episodes 8 and 11.

¹⁰ In one episode the teacher returned to a student who had taken the floor earlier (see note 9).

¹¹ See Episode 5 in the appendix. It shows disagreement between S4 and S5. The teacher turns it into a direct student-student exchange briefly. See exchanges 5.Q-T.

¹² The following summarizes partially topic shifts: Topics in Episode 2: cultural conflict; in Episode: personality differences; in Episode 4: interdepartmental conflict; in Episode 5: corporate strategy. Episode 5 would represent a radical topic-shift.

¹³ This was calculated roughly in terms of seconds. It includes the moments when the teacher wrote or drew arrows, circles, and arrows on the board. The use of the board overlapped to some extent with the amount of teacher talk.

¹⁴ This refers to research done within the framework of Vygotskian psycholinguistic theory. See Lantolf and Appel (1994), for example.

Notes:

- This paper is based on a presentation made at the Thai TESOL 15th Annual Convention, Bangkok, January 12-14, 1995.
- This is working paper at this time. It will be developed and revised for possible publication in a journal later.
- I would like to thank my colleague at IUJ, Donna Fujimoto, for reviewing an earlier draft of this paper and giving helpful comments. Any mistakes or inaccuracies, however, are mine.

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APPENDIX I

NOTES & NOTATIONS FOR THE TRANSCRIBED DATA

1. The transcribed data below is divided into several episodes, i.e., Episodes 2-5. These episodes form a continuous portion of the discussion from the beginning (except for the very first episode—Episode 1—which is not included here).
2. The following notations have been used. Their meanings are given accordingly.

T	=	Teacher
S2, S3, etc.	=	Student 2, Student 3, etc.
A, B, C, etc	=	Used in the paper for referring to specific exchanges.
...	=	A rough indicator of pause in speech.
{...}	=	Means some words or phrases have been left out.
[]	=	Notes some nonverbal behavior.

TRANSCRIBED DATA

EPISODE 2

- A. (T): Mr. Dankworth has a problem, right Mr...
[calls on Student 2 (S2) by name]
 What's the most serious problem?
- B. (S2): ...the serious problem is conflict between the top managers
- C. (T): Who are they?
- D. (S2): One is Wong Chin Poh...the other is Zainuddin Win...Abdul...Wahab
[struggles with pronouncing the name. Laughter among the students.]
 {...}
 The cause of conflict is that...different cultural backgrounds...
 I think that is the most important part...
- E. (T): OK, now help me with this...You are from a different cultural background than *[mentions a student's name]*...Does that mean you are necessarily going to have a conflict.
- F. (S2): Not necessarily...
- G. (T): OK, so what is it specifically then that is causing conflict in their different cultural backgrounds?
- H. (S2): Specifically, way of thinking...the way of doing business...
 the way of action ... in a specific organization
- J. (T): Well, it's a little more specific...Now become even more specific than that...specifically about thinking or doing business. Do they have different opinions...or different ideas on this...causing this conflict...
- K. (S2): Uh ... they are not trying ... they are not trying to find a clue to cooperation
 ...

- L. (T): OK ..
[writes on the board].
 Now this is just a small point...this is a similar... a similarity between them.. rather than a difference. Right?
 They are both not trying to resolve the conflict...
 So I am still curious about ... what it is that's different about the way they think...about the way they do business...that's causing a conflict...right?
 You're right...you have a conflict...you have differences...
 what I am curious is what you think the specific differences are.....

EPISODE 3

- A. (T): So, Mr....
[calls another student (S3) by name].
 do you have any ideas?
- B. (S3): I think that ...
 {...}
 Zain is liked by everybody...but Wong is not so well liked by everybody...
 but Wong is competent...and Zainuddin is rather idle ... lazy...
- C. (T): So...Wong is a hard worker.. and Zainuddin is lazy...
- D. (S): yeah
- E. (T): Why is that causing a conflict though? ... I mean ...some people work hard.. and some people don't...
- F. (S3): because their salary is almost the same ...
 so ... I think Wong envy that ... Zainuddin don't work hard...
- G. (T): OK ... *[writes on the board]* ... OK ... so he's jealous or envious .. or feels treated unfairly because he is working harder ... not getting paid more ...
 so that's unfair ...
- H. (S3): yeah
- K. (T): OK ... so he feels treated badly ... why does that create conflict between the two? ... I mean ... if you make more money than I do .. why should we be in conflict .. maybe I won't like you ... maybe I'll feel about it... but why would we be in conflict? ...
 just because you make more money than I do ... & I think I work harder
[Pauses ... looks around. 8 seconds of pause. Many students raise their hands.]
 see what I am driving at? What do you think ...
[Picks up student 4 (S4). Calls the student by name.]

EPISODE 4

- A. (S4): Yes ... I don't think .. different culture is the problem ... this kind of thing happen in general ... in any bank ... because ... Wong is responsible for .. credit department.. and Zain is responsible for administration .. this kind of thing always happen ... it's a conflict between department ...

- B. (T): OK ... so ... it's a conflict between these two departments ...
- C. (S4): yeah ... which is general
- D. (T): OK ... and these just happen to be the managers .. of those two departments .. but it could be anybody .. and that would still be a conflict .. right? ... that's what you are saying ... OK? ... what's the conflict between the two departments .. why are the credit and the administration in conflict?
- E. (S4): because credit department has to have information from administration ... and ... maybe this is not ..uh.. the rest is not direct responsibility for administration ...
to provide information to credit department ... because administration will focus on operations ... building relationships with customers ..
maybe this is additional work for them
- F. (T): OK ... so the credit department ... uh ... what do they do?
Let's go through this quickly ... because I think you are on to something ...
What do they do? ... What's their responsibility?
- G. (S4): Loans ... give loans ... loans to customers ..
- H. (T): Loans ... so as a group what are they trying to do?
What's their objective as a department ...
- K. (S?) Offer them money ...
[Actually another student volunteers this response. T continues with S4 though.]
- L. (T): yeah .. they want to generate income .. through giving out loans ...right?
That's how they are going to make money ... so they want to give loans ...
OK ... and the administration ... what are their main responsibilities?
- M. (S4): Providing loans ... business ...
[T is writing on the board]
- N. (T): You mentioned information before ... I mean how are these two linked ...
people ask for loans ... credit department approves the loans ...
what has that got to do with the administration?
- O. (S4): they have to consider all the figures ...
- P. (T): OK ... there are figures that they provide .. right?
Balance of loans .. vs. capital ... performance rates ... all sorts of
information ... that they collect .. right? ... because one of their big things
... is accounting .. OK? they collect ... all the numbers for everybody ...
- Q. (S4): Yeah .. the credit department have to think about the margin ... the interest
rates to give to the customers ..
- R. (T): OK
- S. (S4): and they need to know information about the costs .. that which
administration should give ...
- T. (T): yeah ... so they have direct contact with the customer .. they are trying to
help the customer put .. the administration in terms of profile .. is trying to
decide whether there is other information about the customer .. about the
situation .. which is relevant to the risk of the loan ... right?
So their interest is in ... reducing bad loans .. as well...

[Pauses. Looks around. 5-second pause. Many hands go up. Picks up another student (S5).]

EPISODE 5

- A. (S5): Still now I don't understand the inherent relationship...I mean the conflict between ... credit department and the administration department ...
- B. (T): uh..um...
- C. (S5): I think ...uh... so ... these two departments ... have ... must have a close relationship ..
- D. (T): right
- E. (S5): in terms of daily business
- F. (T): right
- G. (S5): And in this case I think the background of this conflict ... is not necessarily means that ... uh ... conflict between department and department ...
- H. (T) uh..um..
- J. (S5): there must be some reason ... some key issue ... behind the conflict ... between two departments ... and if normal banks ...
- K. (T): uh..um...
- L (S5): in terms of the functions of banks ... I think credit department and administration department must have a close and intimate relationship ...
- M. (T): right
- N. (S5): so ... uh ... since ... the department are different ...
- O. (T): uh..um...
- P. (S5): cannot be a real cause ... in this case ...
- Q. (T): OK [calls on S4 by name] explain ... you understand his question ... right?
- R. (S4): [*turns around and looks at S5 who is in the back of the class*] ... if you work for credit department ... you will like to give more loans to the customer ... you have to generate a lot of loan ... but if you work for administration ... you have to control that loan ...
- S. (T): OK ... so she is saying that her interests ... are opposite in each other ... these [*points at a diagram on the board*] guys want to give money .. these [*points at a diagram on the board*] guys want to make sure not too much money is given out ... and these guys want to satisfy the customer ... customers are satisfied when they get money and good rates .. right? OK? and these guys want to control things ... so her argument then is simply that ... they have opposing opposing interests .. one wants to give money ... one wants to keep money ... OK? ... [*S5 raises hand and wants to comment*] go ahead ..
- T. (S5): I don't think it is a conflict .. it's under the corporate strategy ... it's arrangement ... not conflict ... so although some compromise is necessary .. but this can't be called conflict ... it's arrangement under the corporate strategy ..
- U. (S4): yeah
- V. (T): OK ... let's bring some others into this debate ... because this is an important thing to work on