
Teacher Talk in Junior Level Classes of Atma English Course

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the types of teacher talk and the reasons of teacher talk in the classroom. The data were collected from the junior level classes in Atma English Course Surabaya. Two English teachers led the junior of primary level classes for two weeks. The classroom interactions between the teachers and students in the two classrooms were observed and audio-recorded. The teachers were also interviewed. The data were then analyzed using the types of teacher talk in the classroom based on Brown (2001). The study found that the most frequently type used by the teachers was asking questions. Other types included giving information, giving instructions, and dealing with feelings. The result of this study also indicates that teacher utterances have different purposes. Besides, the teachers would use their utterances for specific purpose to help students increase their English. It was concluded that the use of appropriate utterances in creating an interactive learning classroom, types of teacher talk, could develop students' English proficiency.

Keywords: Teacher Talk; Types of Teacher Talk; Utterances

1. Introduction

Teaching is one of important things in learning process because through teaching a teacher can help the students to understand the lesson given. According to Brown, "Teaching is showing or helping someone to learn how to do something, giving instruction, guiding in the study of something, providing with knowledge, causing to know or understand" (2007, p. 8). Teaching process in learning English as a foreign language is an interesting process. The teaching process in the classroom has many factors to make it successful. One of these factors is the condition of classroom. Classroom is a place where the teacher and students interact.

Teachers have an important role to make the class more alive and make students interested in learning. This statement means that a good teacher should control the class and give motivation to make their students interested in studying. In addition, the success of teaching also depends to a large extent on the way teachers talk and interactions that occur between teachers and students. The role of the teachers in the class includes teacher talk that will help students understand the lesson. Besides, teacher talk also helps to build good condition, especially for young learners who should have fun and enjoy the English lesson. This means that every utterance that the teacher uses during the learning process can make the students feel comfortable or not. The interaction between teachers and students in the classroom should be built in right way; in this process teacher talk plays an important role.

There are some previous studies about teacher talk that are related with this study. Cullen (2002) investigated a particular aspect of teacher talk – the teacher's provision of feedback or follow up – and examined the role it plays in EFL/ESL classroom discourse. Xiao Yan (2006) did a study about the teacher talk and EFL in University Classrooms. Yanfen and Zhao Yuqin (2010) investigated the ways in which teacher talk was preferred respectively by teachers and students. Faruji (2011) did a study on certain aspects of classroom verbal interaction with a focus on description and analysis of questions in teacher talk. Another study (Rianawati, 2011) investigated questions used by an English teacher in a junior high school.

The purpose of this study was identifying the types of teacher talk and the reasons of teacher talk used by the English teachers. In this study, the writer made limitation to types of teachers talk and the reasons of the teachers for using the utterances in the classroom. This study used Brown theory (2001)

to find out the types of teacher talk by English teachers of junior level classes at Atma English Course Surabaya.

2. Literature Review

One of important factors to get success in the process of teaching is the condition of classroom. For foreign language learners, classroom is the main place where they are frequently exposed to the target language and also a place where students and teacher interact. And one of important aspects of classroom interaction is teacher talk. There are some definitions of teachers' talk based on different sources. Having studied the second language acquisition for many years, Rod Ellis (cited in Xiao Yan 2006) has formulated his own view about teacher talk: "Teacher talk is the special language that teachers use when addressing L2 learners in the classroom." Based on the definitions, we can see that teacher talk in English classroom is one of special variety of the English language and special communicative activity. It is because in general the goal is to communicate with students and develop students' foreign language proficiency.

According to Brown (2001, p. 170), teacher talk is divided into two major types: indirect influence and direct influence.

I N D I R E C T	I N F L U E N C E S	Category	Description	
		1.	Deals with feelings	In a non-threatening way, accepting, discussing, referring to, or communicating understanding of past, present, or future feelings of students.
		2.	Praises or encourages	Praising, complimenting, and telling students why what they have said or done is valued. Encouraging students to continue, trying to give them confidence, confirming that answers are correct.
		2a.	Jokes	Intentional joking, kidding, making puns, attempting to be humorous, providing the joking is not at anyone’s expense. (Unintentional humor is not included in this category.)
		3.	Uses ideas of students	Clarifying, using, interpreting, and summarizing the ideas of students. The ideas must be rephrased by the teacher but still be recognized as being student contributions.
		3a.	Repeats students response verbatim	Repeating the exact words of students after they participate.
		4.	Ask questions	Asking questions to which the answer is anticipated. (Rhetorical questions are not included in this category.)
D I R E C T	I N F L U E N C E S	5.	Gives information	Giving information, fact, own opinion, or ideas: lecturing or asking rhetorical questions.
		5a.	Corrects without rejection	Telling students who have made a mistake the correct response without using words or intonation which communicate criticism.
		6.	Gives directions	Giving directions, request, or commands that students are expected to follow; directing various drills; facilitating whole-class and small-group activity.
		7.	Criticizes student behavior	Rejecting the behavior of students; trying to change the non-acceptable behavior, communicating anger, displeasure, annoyance, and dissatisfaction with what students are doing.
		7a.	Criticizes student response	Telling the students his or her response is not correct or acceptable and communicating criticism, displeasure, annoyance, rejection by words or intonation.

Table 1 Types of Teacher Talk (Brown, 2001, p. 170)

3. Method

Qualitative approach was used since the study attempted to identify the types of teacher talk in the classroom and the reasons of the teachers for using English utterances in their talk. The research took place at Atma English Course in Surabaya. This study observed two classes of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in Primary level of junior level classes at the range age of 9-12 years old. The participants of this study were two teachers who taught in Primary level classes.

The data were collected in two stages: in the class during teaching process and after the class. During the teaching process in the class, observation, sound recording and field notes were conducted

to obtain data on the types of teacher talk. In the observation process, the writer recorded the teachers' utterances during the class and took notes. At the end of the class, after observation and recording, the writer conducted interview with the teachers to obtain the data about the reasons of the teachers for using English utterances during class activities.

There were four steps of data analysis. First step was identifying the teachers' utterances based on the transcription. The second step was identifying the types of teacher talk of each teacher's use of utterances. The third was identifying the reasons of the teachers for using English utterances. The last step was drawing conclusions.

4. Discussion

4.1 Teacher Talk Types

In analyzing the collected data, the writer used Brown's theory (2001) about seven types of teacher talk in the classroom during the process of learning English. In this section, the writer gives the examples of teacher talk used by the teachers and also explains each type. The two teachers performed all types of teacher talk. However, one of the classes did not perform any jokes as teacher talk during class activity. Before explaining each type, the writer is going to present the frequency of teacher talk type.

No.	Type of TT	1st Meeting Class A	1st Meeting Class B	2nd Meeting Class A	2nd Meeting Class B	TOTAL	Percentage (%)
1.	Dealing with feelings	4	2	1	2	9	0.53%
2.	Praising or encouraging	36	20	17	30	103	6.06%
2a.	Joking	14	11	0	3	28	1.65%
3.	Using ideas of students	7	12	13	3	35	2.06%
3a.	Repeating student response verbatim	34	33	11	13	91	5.33%
4.	Asking questions	175	189	175	161	700	41.01%
5.	Giving information	25	105	115	96	341	20.06%
5a.	Correcting without rejection	6	5	4	2	17	1.0%
6.	Giving directions	67	98	38	79	282	16.59%
7.	Criticizing student behavior	0	32	0	30	62	3.65%
7a.	Criticizing student response	12	5	6	9	2	1.88%
Total		380	512	380	428	1,700	100%

Table 2 Number of Utterances of Teacher Talk Types

The table above shows the types of teacher talk used by two teachers of two different classes in junior level. It can be seen that both of the teachers used almost all types of teacher talk proposed by Brown (2001). Table 2 shows that the teachers used 1,700 utterances during the four meetings observed. The most frequent teacher talk type was asking questions with 700 utterances, followed by giving information with 341 utterances and giving direction with 282 utterances. Besides that, the smallest frequent type was dealing with feelings with 9 utterances. It can be seen from the table that the most frequent teacher talk among seven types is asking question. It constitutes 41.01% out of 100% of all questions used by the teacher. And then, the smallest frequency of teacher talk types is dealing with feelings (0.53%).

4.2 Teacher's Reasons for Using English Utterances in Their Talk

The results of interview with the teacher are explained below. The results showed that both teachers agreed that teacher talk was important in learning process. According to Yanfen and Zhao Yuqin (2010), teacher talk is an indispensable part of foreign language teaching in organizing activities, and the way teachers talk not only determines how well they make their lectures, but also guarantees how well students will learn. The teachers believed that teacher talk would help students understand more about the lesson. Through teacher talk, the teacher builds interaction among students and makes them used to using English such as giving them many questions, directions and information.

Based on the finding explained previously, among seven types of teacher talk found in this study, asking question appeared to be the most frequent one, that is, 700 times or 41.01%. According to the interview, the two teachers agreed that teacher question was one way to build interaction in the classroom. As Yanfen and Zhao Yuqin (2010) stated, "By asking students some questions, the interaction will be motivated quickly and heatedly." Furthermore, Xiao Yan (2006) stated that the role of teacher's question in facilitating language learning in classroom was very important. He added that teacher used questions for the following purposes: to check or test understanding, knowledge or skill and to get learners to review and practice previously learnt material. In the interview, both teachers often reviewed the previous material by asking questions because they assumed that the students would try to understand every question from the teacher and remember it. Also the teachers often repeated their questions many times until the students could answer them correctly.

One of the teachers gave a question to a student who was the smartest student in the class. She used the smartest student in the class to answer her question because she knew that her student knew the answer and also it could make other students know how to answer that kind of question. This way would be an example of answering the teacher's question, so that other students could answer it correctly. Al-Farsi (2006) stated that questioning is a key tool that teachers use in evaluating learning. The teachers sometimes used questions to evaluate learning or give new information. For example, one of the teachers gave the students new vocabulary that the students did not know before. She did not give them the meaning in Bahasa Indonesia, but she preferred to give them many questions as a clue so that the students could catch the meaning. According to the interview before, the reason of the teacher used this way was to make their students understand the meaning of new word by themselves. The role of the teacher here was a facilitator in learning process in the class. Brown (2001, p. 167) explained that a less directive role might be described as facilitating the process of learning, of making learning easier for students: helping them to clear way roadblocks, to find shortcuts, to negotiate rough terrain.

One of the teachers suggested that giving questions after explaining the text was good because the teacher would know whether their students understand or not about the text. It was supported by Brown (2001) that giving question gives the instruction immediate feedback about students' comprehension. After posing a question, the teacher can use the students' response to diagnose linguistic or content difficulties. The other teacher often asked her students to make a question in a complete sentence because she wanted to make them learn about the complete sentence from the beginning or low level. In other words, the teacher often used questions to help their students able to make complete sentence in every question that they obtained.

Both of the teachers often gave many directions during the classes. They believed that simple comment was one way to make them used to practicing English in daily activities in the classroom. Besides that, they also often repeated their direction if their students did not do the comments. In this case, they thought that their students did not understand the teacher's direction. However, the teachers always made sure that their students had to do their direction. Yanfen and Zhao Yuqin (2010) stated that the teacher is regarded to be the superior and senior one and students are the subordinate and junior ones, so it is natural for students to listen to their teachers and follow the teacher's directions, orders or commands.

During the observation, one of the teachers often gave directions, for example, when the students were going to play a game. She assumed that giving directions in English would make the students

used to knowing the meaning of the directions. If the directions were too long and complicated, the teacher would repeat and translate them into Bahasa Indonesia.

4.3 Interpretation of the Findings

Having explained each type of teacher talk by the two English teachers, the writer would like to interpret the findings. Based on Table 2 displayed above, the types of teacher talk were performed all in the classes. Therefore, the frequency of teacher talk in this study was still dominant in all the classes.

According the data collected, the teachers used asking questions more than giving information, giving directions or others type of teacher talk. The teachers produced the total of 1,700 utterances during four meetings observed. The most common type of teacher talk during the classes was giving questions; witch amounted to 41.01% of all the utterances. The second most common type was 341 utterances of giving information (20.06%). And then the smallest type of teacher talk used by the teacher was dealing with feelings. There were only nine utterances of dealing with feeling during four meetings or about 0.53%.

Asking question is crucial to the way teachers manage the class, engage students with content, encourage participation and increase understanding (Darn & Cetin, 2010). The transcription showed that the teachers were asking questions to check or test students' knowledge. It was supported by Al-Farsi (2006) who states hat the most common function of questions is checking or testing learners' knowledge (accounting for almost 40% of the total). In other situation, asking question was also used by the teachers to get response from the students. In most classrooms, questioning remained the common strategy for eliciting responses from students during the whole class teaching (Yang, 2007). In addition, asking questions was performed to check students' understanding.

Giving information occurred in 341 utterances (20.06%) in the two classes. In line with Yanfen and Zhao Yuqin's study (2010), giving information was also in high number of teacher talk after asking questions. The teachers in the classes explained more about the new material that the students never knew before. For example, in the second meeting of B class, the teacher explained about "to be going to," in this case, the teacher gave them much information to make the studends understand. Yanfen and Zhao Yuqin (2010) explained that the classroom is seen as the place to fulfill a specific purpose and what students should do in the classroom is to listen to the teacher and accept what the teacher says as the truth and knowledge.

The data indicate giving directions by the teachers occurred in all of classes, about 282 utterances of giving directions (16.59%). The number of giving directions in all of the classes was almost similar except in the second meeting of class A about 38 utterances out of 282 utterances of giving directions. In this class, the teacher often used more asking questions and giving information than giving directions. Before the teachers gave directions during teaching process in the class, they often checked students' attention because the students had to do the directions. Xiao Yan (2006) recommends making sure to have all the students' attention before giving instructions and giving them before dividing students into groups or handing out materials. However, when the teachers had the students' attention and their students could not accept the directions, both of the teachers would repeat the directions slowly. The use of repetition or paraphrase as well as the presentation of the instructions in different modes is also proposed (Xiao Yan, 2006). She remarks the need to be brief in explanations, but this should also be considered when giving instructions to children and mainly if these contain a string of directives.

Finally, dealing with feelings was the smallest frequent of teacher talk type during the observation. The type occurred only in nine utterances or 0.53%. All of the utterances were used by the teachers in the beginning of the class. Both teachers often used 'How are you today?' to open the class and to communicate the students' feeling when they were in the class. It was in a line with Zambrano's study (2003) that dealing with feelings showed by the teacher was only 0.48%. It means that dealing with feelings rarely happened in the class.

5. Conclusion

As explained in the previous section, the study found that both teachers used all of teacher talk types. The teacher used a total of 1,700 utterances during four meetings observed. Among those teacher talk types, asking questions were the most frequently (41.01%) used by the teachers, followed by giving information (20.06%) and giving direction (16.59%). And the least frequent teacher talk type in this study was dealing with feelings (0.53%). All of the classes observed showed that teacher-centered was still dominant. Most of the teacher talk types used by the teachers were asking question, giving information and giving direction because the teacher was the center of the class. This is related with the characteristic of junior level class who has little or no prior knowledge of the target language. On the contrary, dealing with feelings was the smallest frequent of teacher talk type. This type of teacher talk happened only in the beginning of the class and both teachers did not use it because they focused on the material and built interaction with the students through asking knowledge questions.

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