CLASSROOM INTERACTION: AN ANALYSIS OF TEACHER TALK AND STUDENT TALK IN ENGLISH FOR YOUNG LEARNERS (EYL)

Rini Triani Pujiastuti∗
rinitriani@yahoo.com
*Rini Graduated in 22 February 2013 from English Education Study Program of Indonesia University of Education

Abstract: This research-based paper presents the investigation on 1) the realization of verbal classroom interaction, 2) types of teacher talk 3) teacher talk implication on student's motivation, 4) student talk and 5) teacher's roles in classroom interaction. Employing a qualitative research design and case study approach, the data for this study were collected in a classroom context where the participants were an English teacher for young leaners and her 15 students in one private primary school in Bandung in the form of observation and interview. The results indicate that all of the teacher talk categories of FIAC were revealed covering giving direction, lecturing, asking questions, using student's ideas, praising, criticizing student's behavior and accepting feelings. However, giving direction and lecturing were found as the most frequently used categories among all. In addition, the teacher mostly adopted a role as controller in the classroom as she frequently led the flow of interaction. In terms of student talk, student's response and initiation were revealed in this study. It is also found that student's initiation plays a significant part in the classroom interaction.

Keywords: Classroom interaction, student talk, teacher talk, young learners.

Introduction

It is assumed that the quality and the quantity of teacher talk have many values in young learner's classroom interaction (Moon, 2000; Richards, 2003). Firstly, it provides language input as language model for children (Pinter, 2006). Secondly, teacher talk supports student talk in practicing the language. Thirdly, the appropriateness of teacher talk can result in a warm classroom atmosphere and informal teacher-student relationship.

However, Nunan (1998) says that many language teachers were surprised of the amount of talk they used in classroom. It is for about 70 to 80 percent out of class time was spent mostly by teacher talk (Nunan, 1998). The dominance of teacher talk in young learner's classroom interaction seems to be irrelevant in

foreign language teaching since it does not provide adequate chances for students to practice the language (Tsui, 1995).

Based on the issues above, the study aims to investigate the practice of EYL verbal classroom interaction of a teacher and students in a primary school in Bandung. It mainly aims to describe characteristics of verbal classroom interaction; teacher talk; and student talk categories. It also aims at investigating teacher's role and its implication on student's motivation.

This study are expected to provide a comprehensive descriptions and basis for future studies related to the practice of verbal classroom interaction theoretically.

From practical view, it also hopefully gives valuable contributions to English teachers in case of they can be better to analyze their own teaching performance, to observe their classroom behavior and then to plan as well as to conduct interactive and child-friendly verbal classroom interactions. In relation to English education program, this study professionally aims to contribute a positive impact to English teaching practices and pedagogical development according to the aforementioned background.

A qualitative method embracing characteristic of a case study was used. Furthermore, two instruments were used to collect the data of the study which they were video-tapping observation and interview guides.

- Teacher Talk and Student Talk Categories of FIAC

Interaction analysis has been made to investigate the performance of teacher and students as well as the role of input and interaction (Richards, 2003). The most famous and widely used one was proposed by Flanders in the 1960s. Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC) is an analysis of teacher and student talk consisting of category system (Tsui, 1995).

Table 2.1 FIAC Category System (Adapted from Flanders, 1970, cited in

Richards, 2003)

FIAC Category System		
Teacher Talk	Direct Influence	1. Accepts Feeling
		2. Praises or Encourages
		3. Accepts or uses ideas of students
		4. Asks questions
	Indirect Influence	5. Lecturing.
		6. Giving Directions
		7. Criticizing or justifying authority.
Student Talk		8. Response
		9. Initiation
Silence or Confusion		

Data Presentation and Discussion

In response to the major question, the result of video recording analysis revealed three main aspects of verbal classroom interactions which were broken down into more aspects of analysis. They are teacher talk, student talk and silence or confusion. The distribution can be seen in the table below.

Tabel 2.1:Summary Result of Classroom Interaction

Observation	Teacher Talk (TT)		Student Talk (ST)		Silence (Sil)	
	Freq	(%)	Freq	(%)	Freq	(%)
Obs 1	380	50,27%	82	11,07%	290	38,67%
Obs 2	222	62%	95	27%	41	11%
Obs 3	323	66,05%	125	25,56%	41	8,38%
Obs 4	488	58,37%	210	25,12%	138	16,51%
Obs 5	375	60,10%	153	24,52%	96	15,38%
Obs 6	237	33,47%	76	10,73%	395	55,79%
Obs 7	507	78,93%	118	18,55%	16	2,52%
Obs 8	258	52,44%	129	26,22%	105	21,34%
Obs 9	412	51,24%	195	24,25%	197	24,50%
Average	355,78	56,99%	131,4	32,56%	146,56	21,57%

(Note: 1) Freq= the frequency of TT, ST and Sil occured in each observation; 2) (%)= the percentage of TT, ST and Sil of each category).

From the data above, the whole picture of classroom interaction reveals teacher talk as the most dominant aspect compared to student talk and silence. The dominance of teacher talk proportion in each meeting happened since the teacher mainly explained grammatical rules and gave instructions on writing tasks. The finding revealed in this study is consistent with other related studies in which proportions of teacher talk were consistent, approximately for about 70% (Nunan, 1998). It is valuable in providing chance for students to actively interact in classroom as Pinter (2006) suggests that quantity of opportunities for students to interact in classroom is crucial in learning language. The explanation of student talk is going to be elaborated in further section.

In terms of silence, the occurence of this category tends to be inconsistent in which the lowest percentage occured in observation seven and the highest one happened in observation six. The highest percentage of silence took place since the classroom activities at that time were writing and workbook activities. Meanwhile, the lowest one was caused by the activities where the teacher previewed learning material and told a story in the end of the lesson.

As revealed from the data, all of teacher talk categories in FIAC system are found throughout the study. The patterns of the data are broken down into two tables according to indirect and direct influences. Indirect influence consists of accepting feelings, praising, using student's ideas and asking questions.

Tabel 2.2 Percentages of Indirect Influence of Teacher Talk

Categories (%)

Obs\ Cat	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Mean
Accepting Feelings (C1)	0	0,56	1,23	0,48	0,48	0	0	0	0	0,48
Praising (C2)	7,20	7,22	8,59	5,50	5,77	1,84	3,46	3,46	1,85	8,58
Using Ss' ideas (C3)	1,07	6,94	9,41	3,47	12,66	1,41	2,04	2,24	1,06	7,25
Asking questions (C4)	2,13	8,06	5,32	0,96	4,49	2,68	9,59	7,93	9,13	9,37

As can be seen from table 2.2, accepting feelings (C1) occured in this study as the least category of teacher talk. It takes extreme percentage compared to the other categories which means that the teacher seldom clarified and accepted student's feelings and attitude in teaching learning processes. Secondly, praising and encouraging students (C2) occured in more frequent times rather than accepting feelings category. The teacher praised the students when they were giving relevant responses and performances. Thirdly, using or accepting student's ideas (C3) appeared in higher amount than accepting feelings but lower than using student's ideas

The next three categories of teacher talk are lecturing, giving directions and criticizing which are involved in direct influence. The description of the result will be presented on table 2.3.

Tabel 2.3 Percentages of Direct Influence of Teacher Talk Categories (%)

Obs\ Cat	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Mean
Lecturing (C5)	1,07	6,11	11,66	26,08	15,38	12,99	53,30	22,56	19,84	34,64
Giving Directions (C6)	37,73	28,61	27,40	19,14	19,55	10,31	8,96	13,21	14,15	35,04
Criticizing (C7)	1,07	4,72	2,45	2,75	1,92	4,24	1,42	3,05	2,65	4,04

In contrast to table 2.2, direct influence of teacher talk exists in more significant percentages than the indirect one. Dominant types in each meeting are giving direction (C6) and lecturing (C5). This variations were affected by the way the teacher led the students to accomplish the learning task, i.e the model of teaching that the teacher adopted.

In regard with the last category of teacher talk, criticizing occurs in persistent number which is always less than five percent in each of observation. Criticizing happened when the teacher critized and corrected the student's unacceptable performance and behavior. Criticizing was found in lower percentage than praising which means the teacher gave positive feedback more than negative feedback to the students.

Regarding direct and indirect categories of teacher talk, it is clear that the teacher empoyed direct teaching more rather than indirect one. The direct influence relies on academic reasons, which affect to more formal classroom atmosphere (Moon, 2000). However, young learner's classroom requires different kind of treatment in which young learner's teachers need to build more intimate and informal relationship with the children. In addition, Brown (2000) asserts that interactive teaching is closely concerned on indirect teaching.

In addition to classroom atmosphere and relationship with the students, direct teaching also gave impact on the role of the teacher as controller rather than tutor (Brown, 2000). This can be seen from the fact that the teacher led the students more to do the tasks and explained materials than accepted student's feelings, praised the student's performance, used student's ideas and asked questions.

The findings of student talk are drawn below.

Tabel 2.4 Percentages of Student Talk Categories (%)

Obs\ Cat	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Mean
Response (C8)	3,33	9,72	5,93	1,32	7,21	1,13	14,47	15,04	18,12	8,47
Initiation (C8)	7,73	16,67	19,63	23,80	17,15	9,60	4,09	11,18	7,28	13,01

In table 2.4, it is evident that student talk takes less significant proportion out of total classroom interaction. The percentage of student talk is in line with what has been found by Tsui (1995) that student talk accounts for less than 30 percent in "teacher-fronted classrooms". However, as the teacher posed many display questions, the students were motivated to respond to them during discussing the student's building knowledge, reading their writing task in front of the other students.

Student's initiation takes big proportion in interaction. The topic chosen in teaching learning processes such as hobbies and favorite meals gave impact on student's motivation both in responding to the teacher's questions and initiating the interaction. It means that the student were brave and confident enough to intiate interaction with the teacher.

Apart from the dominance of teacher talk, the teacher's questions and meaningful contexts have implication to student's motivation which was high in classroom interaction. It is in line with an argument stating that children are keen on talking, tellling stories, sharing ideas and many things they enjoy (Brumfit, 1991; Cameron, 2001; Halliwel, 1992; Harmer, 2001; Moon, 2000). Harmer (2003) also states that good characteristics of learners are those who have

willingness to experiment the language and ask questions in interacting with teacher. Moreover, the student's speaking skill is good enough to actively interact in classroom which is shown by the use of English fully in interaction.

Conclusion

This paper has presented the consistency of the findings from the previous research that teacher talk plays dominant part in classroom interaction as mentioned by Nunan (2001). It is also found that some categories of teacher talk, beginning from the highest percentage to the lowest one: giving directions, lecturing, asking questions, using or accepting ideas of students, praising, criticizing and accepting feelings. Regarding the student talk, this study has shown two types of student talk covering responses and initiation. Many display questions posed by the teacher have motivated the students to give responses.The finding of the study also revealed the role of the teacher that was mostly adopted by the teacher i.e. the controller. It can be shown from the high percentage of giving direction, lecturing and asking question by which the teacher led the flow of interaction.

The following suggestions are offered for EYL teachers and further research.

1. It is advisable for EYL teachers to talk in careful consideration to which their talk can support and invite student talk as much as possible, for example by applying questioning strategies which are meaningful to children' lives and characteristics. Further, they may want to make sure that they use target language as much as possible.

2. For those who are interested in conducting similar research, they are suggested to analyze teacher and student talk using another framework of observation in order to gain various senses of data and to analyse (a) whether student response was given by an individual or by a group, (b) whether interaction takes place between teacher and student or student and student, (c) whether teacher talk or student talk occurred in the target language or the

individual's mother tongue and (d) whether interaction takes place in verbal or non-verbal acts.

References

Brown, H. Douglas. (2001). *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy, Second Edition*. San Fgransisco: Longman.

Brumfit, C.. 1991a. *Introduction: Teaching English to children*. In Brumfit C, Moon, J and Tongue R (eds.) 1991. *Teaching English to Children - From Practice to Principle.* London: HarperCollins Publishers pp iv-viii

Cameron, Lynn. (2001). *Teaching Languages to Young Learners.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Harmer, Jeremy. (2001). *How to Teach English*. Essex: Pearson Educational Limited.

Harmer, Jeremy. (2003). *The Practice of English Language Teaching (3rd Ed.).* London: Pearson Educational Limited.

Halliwel, Susan. (1992). *Teaching English in The Primary Classroom*. New York: Longman Publishing.

Moon, Jane. (2000). *Children Learning English*. Oxford: Macmillan.

Pinter, Anamaria. (2006). *Teaching Young Language Learners*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Richards, Keith. (2003). *Qualitative Inquiry in TESOL*. Aston University: MacMillan.

Tsui, A.B.M. (1995). *Introducing Classroom Interaction.* London: Penguin.