THE ANALYSIS OF TEACHER TALK AND THE CHARACTERISTIC OF CLASSROOM INTERACTION IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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Abstract: The study entitled "The Analysis of Teacher Talk and the Characteristic of Classroom Interaction in English as a Foreign Language Classroom" has objectives to find the type of teacher talk and characteristic of classroom interaction in EFL class of a vocational school in Bandung based on Flanders' Interaction Analysis Categories that consists of indirect and direct influence of teacher, students' initiation and responds, and silent moment. This research employed observation sheet, questionnaire, and video recording in order to reach the objectives. By using observation sheet, it was discovered that all categories of teacher talk existed in the classroom. However, asking questions and lecturing were the dominant ones. Students' perception that were gained by making use of questionnaire supported the finding of the categories of teacher talk in which students perceived that their teacher was more likely to influence them indirectly by asking many questions to involve them in the interaction. Then, this teacher talk type was in line with the characteristic of classroom interaction identified by using video recording which was discovered to be content cross. This kind of interaction indicated that teacher relied hard on asking and lecturing the students.

Keywords: teacher talk, classroom interaction, indirect influence

Introduction

Teacher talk is undeniably essential feature in relation to classroom interaction. Nunan (Gebhard, 2006, p.81) states that in English as a foreign language classroom, teacher talk is an important input for the students. Furthermore, it has been proven that many English as a foreign language classrooms are dominated by teacher talk as it is found by Nugroho (2009), Nurmasithah (2010), and Ogunleye (2009). However, this domination does not reflect the quality of the teaching and learning process. Gharbavi and Iravani (2014) affirms that some teacher talks in EFL classroom does not give chances for students to participate more in the classroom and are not able to promote comfort in interacting with their teacher. Through teacher talk, characteristic of classroom interaction could also be defined.

There has been a growing number of attention in regards to classroom interaction which involve teacher and students. Brown (2006) notes that, "interaction is the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings, or ideas between two or more people, resulting in reciprocal effect on each other" (p.165). Rivers (Brown, 2000, p.65) previously states that through classroom interaction, students could enhance their language ability since they are exposed to teacher's explanation or authentic materials teacher provides, group discussion, etc and students also has chances to practice the language that they possess.

One of observation strategies to measure teacher talk and the characteristic of classroom interaction is Flanders' Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC). Malahmah-Thomas (1987, p.20) affirms that FIAC could provide information about classroom interaction including who, why, what, and how. In Flanders' Interaction Analysis Categories, teacher talk is categorized into seven types. The types are accepting feeling, praising or encouraging students, accepting or using students ideas, asking questions, lecturing, giving direction and criticizing and justifying authorities. FIAC also include students talk

categories, students' initiation or responses and silent moment. After obtaining the information of teacher talk type, classroom interaction characteristic could also be defined. This includes content cross, teacher control, teacher support, and students' participation.

Based on the elaboration above, this study attempted to answer the following three questions:

a. What are categories of teacher talk arisen in English language classroom?

b. What is the characteristic of classroom interaction that occurs in the classroom as the effect of teacher talk?

c. What are the students' opinion on their teacher talk?

Literature Review

- **Teacher Talk**

Talk is one of significant ways teacher uses to deliver information and control learning behavior of students (Allwright and Bailey, 1991, p.139). Gaies as cited in Allwright and Bailey (1991, p.139) supports through a research that teachers construct their talk cautiously so that their students could understand them. In addition, in the classroom, teacher talks

play essential role. Teacher talk highly has deep impact on the classroom interaction that occurs with students. Yanfen and Yuqin (2010, p.77) denotes that appropriate teacher talk could create positive atmosphere in the classroom and make friendly relationship between teacher and student. Teacher talk is also believed to be able to give more opportunity for the two to interact (Yanfen and Yuqin, 2010). Many interactive strategies also appear in teacher talk to make more interaction with the students according to Yanfen and Yuqin (2010). They include repetition, prompting, prodding, and expansions.

Flanders (1970) as cited in Nunan (1989, p.149) promote the interaction analysis strategies that include teacher and student talk. According to FIAC, teacher talk is categorized into two main type, indirect influence and direct influence. In indirect influence, teacher could accept students' feeling, praising or encouraging students, accepting or using students' ideas, and asking questions to the pupil. Teacher directly influences the students by lecturing the students, giving directions, and criticizing as well as justifying authorities.

- **Characteristic of Classroom Interaction**

The pattern of classroom interaction is correlated to teacher talk and the development process of thinking skills (Abkharon, 2013). Vu (2009, p.1) supports (2009, p.1) that the interaction pattern that covers the classroom may influence students academic achievement in the future so that it is important to notice the interaction pattern that has impact to students academic.

Flanders' Interaction Analysis Categories also provide researchers with the classroom interaction characteristic for those who want to find more and elaborate what kind of classroom interaction that emerge in the classroom as a result of teacher and students interaction. The characteristic of interaction includes content cross, teacher control, teacher support, and students' participation (Li, Shouhui, & Xinying, 2011, p.6). the characteristic of classroom interaction could be defined through interaction matrix that is built by firstly pairing the code in transcription of recorded classroom interaction and then putting it in the column and rows of matrix. Rows in the matrix refer to the first number of each pair

while the columns show the second number of pairing code.

Content cross is defined as teacher's dependent on asking questions and lecturing students. This characteristic can be seen from many appearances of tallies in rows 4-5 and columns 4-5 in which code 4 is used to refer the asking question behavior and 5 shows the lecturing behavior.

Teacher control pattern can be seen from the dominance of teacher's behavior of giving direction and instruction and criticizing as well as justifying authorities. In the interaction matrix, this characteristic can be seen from the tallies that mostly appear in column and row 6 and 7.

Another pattern of classroom interaction is teacher support that is characterized by the appearance of tallies in columns and rows 1-3. Code 1 shows students' feeling acceptance by the teacher while code 2 refers to teacher's praises or encouragement towards students. Code 3 represents the acceptance of students' ideas and teacher may even use the ideas of students.

Finally, students' participation pattern is defined by the domination of code 8 and 9 in the interaction matrix which represents students' initiation and response.

Methodology

The study was categorized as case study because it was specific to a classroom in which teacher talk and the interaction were studied. Zainal (2007, p.1) notes that case study helps researcher to describe data specifically from a small number of individuals as the subject of the study. This study was also categorized as case study because of its intention to capture the real phenomenon of classroom interaction without giving it any treatment or action as Gomm, Martin, & Foster (2000, p.4) and Zainal, (2000) denotes that case study is the attempt to observe real phenomenon in natural setting.

The research was conducted in an EFL classroom at one of vocational schools in Bandung which involved teacher and 34 students of the third grader.

The data in this research were collected by making use of observation sheet, video recording, and questionnaire. Observation sheet was used to collect the data of teacher talk type. The data of teacher talk was supported also by the questionnaire that included students' perception on their teacher talk. Video recording in the research was employed in order to obtain the real natural classroom interaction which then would lead to

identification of classroom interaction pattern.

There were several steps in analyzing the teacher talk and classroom interaction characteristic. Firstly the observation sheet was calculated. The tallies in the observation sheet were calculated then the teacher talk type could be defined. Secondly, the teacher talk type identification was also supported by students' perception on teacher talk that was obtained by giving questionnaire to students. The questionnaire included 14 statements that represented the teacher's talk categories in Flanders' Interaction Analysis Categories. The students were asked whether they strongly agreed, agreed, felt neutral, disagreed, or strongly disagreed. The result of the questionnaire was calculated by using *Likert* scale.

Finally, the video recording was transcribed, coded, paired, and put into interaction matrix. After interaction matrix had been filled, the calculation of each columns and rows could be started and the result would give researcher information about the characteristic of classroom interaction.

Data Presentation and Discussion

- **The Categories of Teacher talk**

Teacher talk is considered one of the essential features in classroom interaction. In this section, the result of observation is elaborated.

1. Indirect influence

In the type of indirect influence, there are four categories of teacher talk. They are accepting feeling, praising or encouraging students, accepting and using students ideas, and asking questions. From the observation for four meetings of teaching and learning process, it was found that teacher accepting students feeling once. This behavior was reflected from teacher's acceptance towards students' complaint of inability to see the power point presentation clearly. In that situation, teacher offered to read the presentation for the students.

Praises and encouragement appeared for about 18.54% from all of categories of teacher talk. Teacher praised or encouraged students often by repeating students' answers and giving words of praises, for example "Very good", "Good job", etc. Besides giving praises and encouragement, teacher sometimes accepted students' ideas or even used the ideas. In four meeting, it was found that teacher accepted or used

students' ideas for 7.54%. This kind of behavior was reflected by the teacher's elaboration, clarification, modification, and summary of students' responses (answers or ideas) to teacher's talk.

Finally, the category of teacher's talk which dominated the indirect influence type was asking questions. Teacher's behavior of asking question emerged for about 43,97% from all meetings. Teacher asked questions when she wanted to began the lesson, introduced new learning material, and stimulated students' knowledge about the lesson. Asking questions seemed to be the most important features in teaching and learning process for the teacher because by asking questions teacher was considered successful in getting students' attention, involving students in the interaction, conveying the learning material, and introducing new material without the need to directly lecture the students. This finding was apparently consistent with the findings of Yanfen and Yuqin (2010). Yanfen and Yuqin (2010) found that asking questions was the commonest way used by teacher to invite pupils to talk and was found effective invitation.

It could be seen also that teacher was in great success to make students understand and talk more in the classroom by asking questions to students. Thus, because of this great total of teacher's asking questions behavior, teacher talk type tends to be in indirect influence. This indirect influence's dominance was in accordance with the study conducted by Nugroho (2009) that found teacher talk was in indirect influence and in the total of 56.1% compared to direct influence. This study has also discovered that students were most involved because of the use of teacher's indirect influence.

1. Direct influence

Direct influence included the behavior of lecturing, giving direction, and criticizing and justifying authorities. Direct influence was merely found for about 29.80% from the total of teacher talk categories. Direct influence was dominated by lecture from teacher that was in total of 15.76%. Most of teacher's lectures were follow-ups to teacher's response to students' answers. In other words, when students give answers to the teacher when teacher asked questions,

teacher tended to give praises when the answer is right. After praising the students, teacher tended to reinforce the learning material by lecturing the students so students could obtain enlightenment from teacher's explanation.

Another teacher's talk category is giving direction or instruction. This category was found in the observation for 7.68% from all of teacher's talk categories. Direction was often given if teacher wanted students to work in group, come to the front of the class, exercise individually, etc. Teacher was also likely to criticize her students when students answered her question incorrectly. Teacher also criticized students' behavior that she considered unacceptable. Teacher would like to comment students' behavior and then acknowledge them what was right to be done so that students did not make any more mistakes. This teacher talk category was identified for 6.36%.

Inamullah (2008, p.34) stated that when teacher influence students more directly in his or her teaching, the atmosphere in the classroom was subject to become more autocratic.

- **Students' Opinion on Teacher Talk**

To support the result of observation related to teacher talk type, this researcher also seek for students' opinion on their teacher talk. To fulfill the research, questionnaires were given to students in the class. 14 statements were included in the questionnaire. Each two statements were devoted to a category of teacher talk in Flanders' Interaction Analysis Categories. The first to eighth statement was devoted to categories in indirect influence. For the first and the second statement, most of the students agreed and strongly agreed that their teacher accepted and responded to their feeling when they had any complaint delivered to teacher. These two statements obtained value of 84.71% and 88.82% which were considered as very strong based on the *Likert* scale criterion suggested by Akdon (2008) in Nitiswari (2012, pp. 39-40). The second two statements were reflection to the second categories of teacher talk, praising and encouraging students. Most of the students strongly agreed that their teacher would like to praise them when they had answered questions correctly or eagerly delivered their ideas. They also highly agreed that their teacher always encouraged them to talk in class. They felt that their teacher would encourage them to

deliver the ideas they had to the entire class. The statements gained 94.71% and 84.2% value and were classified as very strong.

Almost all students also noted that their teacher accepted their ideas and even used their ideas by clarifying or improved their ideas. The next two statements had the value of 97.65% and 95.29% and were defined as very strong. These two statements related to asking questions category. Nearly all students strongly agreed that their teacher always asked questions to them either to introduce new learning material or deliver the lesson.

The rest of the statements were related to the direct influence type which included three categories of teacher talk. More than half of the students strongly disagreed that their teacher spent most of the time to lecture or explain the learning material directly that they did not have chances to talk in the class. This result was in line with students' disagreement toward the statement "teacher explains the new learning material without asking questions to students first". Previously, students agreed that their teacher asked question to introduce new learning material. Then it was concluded that teacher did not spend much time on lecturing. Later, students

were faced with the statements to confirm the teacher's giving direction or instruction behavior. Firstly, more than half of the students did not agree that their teacher instructed them to listen to her explanation. This result was in line with the previous statement that teacher did not lecture very much in teaching and learning process. Nevertheless, most students strongly agreed that their teacher gave them direction when they are intended to work in group, come to the front to the class, or answer questions. It shows that their teacher gives direction to organize the students.

The last statements were related to the last category of teacher talk, criticizing and justifying authorities. The statements gained the value of 84.12% and 88.82%. Most students agreed that they were criticized or commented when they answered questions incorrectly or did something that their teacher considered unacceptable. After getting commented, students viewed that their teacher would like to correct their answers and improve their unacceptable behavior.

Thus, based on the questionnaire, most students perceived that their teacher would like to influence them indirectly by accepting their feeling, praising and

encouraging them, accepting and even using their ideas, and also asking questions to them. They also strongly agreed that they were involved in the teaching and learning process because their teacher often asked questions that they felt they have a lot of opportunities to talk more in the class.

- **Characteristic of Classroom Interaction**

Classroom interaction characteristic was defined by making use of video recording. The video that had been transcribed was then coded based on the coding procedure of FIAC. The coding procedure was followed by pairing the code and then put into interaction matrix. From the interaction matrix, author was able to define the characteristic of interaction in the classroom. From all four meeting, it was discovered that the interaction pattern was content cross according to Flanders' Interaction Analysis Categories. Content cross pattern was marked by many appearances in the columns 4-5 and rows 4-5. Code four represents asking questions categories while code 5 shows the lecturing behavior of teacher. In the first meeting, the percentage of content cross reached the total number of 68.21% while it turned to

be 48.85% in the second meeting. Then, the content cross reached the peak from all of the meetings which was in total of 75.24%. In the last meeting the content cross would decrease to the percentage of 70.18%. This characteristic of interaction was affected by the context of language teacher use in the teaching and learning process. Teacher asked much questions in the first and third meeting since teacher tried to introduce new learning material to students. The second pattern that dominated the classroom interaction was students' participation which was in the number of 43.06%. In the second meeting, the students' participation in the classroom was 41.73%. 36.33% of students' participation was found in the third meeting. Then it rose to the total percentage of 51.46%. Students' participation characteristic were identified since students were encouraged by teacher to participate in the classroom by answering teacher's questions, presenting material they have learned, and giving their ideas to the class.

The finding of classroom interaction pattern was consistent with the previous studies conducted by Nugroho (2009) and Nurmasithah (2010). However, Nugroho (2009) and Nurmasithah (2010) uncovered

that the content cross pattern in their research tended to be more on lecturing rather than asking questions. In this research, author found that the discovered content cross pattern fell more on asking questions rather than lecturing. It showed that teacher relied hard on asking questions to students in teaching and learning process either to introduce new learning material or help convey information to students. Yanfen and Yuqin (2010) supports that most teachers make more use of asking questions to student in order to attract students' attention and make students talk.

Conclusions

To conclude, the result of the research denotes that teacher talk type in the classroom interaction is indirect influence based on Flanders' Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC). Data from observation and questionnaire highly shows that teacher indirectly influences the students in teaching and learning process by relying hard on asking questions. Besides asking questions to students, teacher also made use of accepting students' feeling, praising or encouraging students, and accepting or even using students' ideas. Most of the students' perception also reflect the

indirect influence that teacher uses in classroom interaction.

The type of teacher talk also leads to classroom interaction pattern. By using interaction matrix, writer is able to identify the interaction pattern in the classroom that may have been the result of teacher talk category that mostly appears in the classroom. It was found that the interaction pattern that occurred in the classroom was content cross which was marked by the emergence of code 4 (asking question) and code 5 (lecturing). However, the content cross characteristic could be more on to one of the categories. In this research, it was discovered that the pattern of content cross tended to be more on asking questions than lecturing behavior. It indicates that teacher exceptionally depends on asking questions. This result is consistent with the perception of the students that mostly agreed that ther teacher asking questions very much in the classroom either to familiarize the students with new chapter of the lesson, hand information related to lesson to students, attract students' attention, and make students participate more in the classroom.

Based on the findings author also recommends further research on classroom interaction which is not limited to one

classroom and teacher so that there will be more comparison and information.

Furthermore, this research focuses on teacher talk type, so that it is hoped that future research might intend to seek the correlation of teacher talk type with the students' achievement in the classroom.

Finally, it is also suggested that teacher pay more attention to the type of questions asked to the students in order to attract more students' attention.

Despite of limitations and weaknesses, it is expected that this study can contribute to the enhancement of research related to teacher talk and classroom interaction type. The author also hopes that this study could evaluate teacher's teaching in the classroom and even become a provision for teacher to-be.

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