

## A STUDY OF TEACHER TALK IN INTERACTIONS INEFL CLASSES

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### ABSTRACT

Teacher talk plays an important role in provoking interactions between teachers and students. Therefore, lecturers should try to understand what languages would be more efficient in creating an environment in which students feel more comfortable and more confident and become more involved in interactive activities in the language classroom. This study investigated kinds of teacher talk by lecturers and the most employed of kinds of teacher talk by the lecturers in teaching English. It was found that: the kinds of teacher talk by lecturers are: Initiation such as: *questioning, invitation, and direction*, follow up in term of to no and incorrect answer such as: *inform, prompt, encouragement, criticizing, and ignoring*, follow up in term of to correct answer such as: *acknowledgement, and comment*. In ways of initiation, *questioning* (65%) as the most employed by the lecturers. In term of follow up in purpose to no and incorrect answer, *inform* (30%) as the most employed, and in purpose to correct answer, *acknowledgement* (60%) as the most employed by the lecturers.

**Keywords:** *Teacher talk, Interactions, EFL Classes*

## A. INTRODUCTION

For foreign language learners, classroom is the main place where they are frequently exposed to the target language. The kind of language used by the teacher for instruction in the classroom is known as teacher talk (TT). For this term, *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* defines it as “that variety of language sometimes used by teachers when they are in the process of teaching. In trying to communicate with learners, teachers often simplify their speech, giving it many of the characteristics of foreigner talk and other simplified styles of speech addressed to language learners” (Richards, 1992: 471).

Teacher talk is a special communicative activity. Its goal is to communicate with students and develops students’ foreign language proficiency. Teacher talk is used in class when teachers are conducting instructions, cultivating their intellectual ability and managing classroom activities (Feng Qican, 1999: 23). Teachers adopt the target language to promote their communication with learners. In this way, learners practice the language by responding to what their teacher says. Besides, teachers use the language to encourage the communication between learners and themselves. Therefore we can say teacher talk is a kind of communication-based or interaction-based talk.

Based on pre-observation, lecturers of English Education Department used several kinds of Teacher talk in teaching English. For instance; “*Let’s welcome the first speaker to present his or her speech.*” “*Now it is Martina’s turn to make her presentation.*” “*I’d like you to work in groups now!*” “*Would you please talk to each other about the results that you could imagine?*”. It is kind of teacher talk namely invitation. Invitation means that the teacher either uses the presiding languages, act as chairperson or a host, or uses imperative and interrogative sentences to ask students to do some activities. Another one is direction, it can be identify when lecturer showed an authoritative direction to be obeyed, an order of the teacher in this paper. In the language of the classroom, the lecturer is

absolutely the authority of class, there is little need for the teacher to be indirect for social reasons. Here are examples: *“Everyone, go through the whole article quickly, I will let someone read the passage, hope you can read it fluently.”* *“Discuss this problem with your partner if you like and you can choose one to be a representative to make the speech.”* *“Now work in groups and talk to each other about the results, number of the group will take down notes!”* *“Anton, come to the front and give your daily report!”*

Teacher talk in English classrooms is regarded as one special variety of the English language, so it has its own specific features which other varieties do not share. Because of the restriction of the physical setting, special participants as well as the goal of teaching, teacher talk has its own special style.

Based on the background above, therefore, the aim of this research are to investigate kinds of teacher talk and the preferred choice of teacher talk by both lecturers and students.

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Teacher Talk or Teacher Instructional Language**

Teacher’s instructional language is commonly known as teacher talk. A common language/model of instruction provides a framework for a way to talk about instruction that is shared by everyone in a district or school level, that are to converse about effective teaching, give and receive feedback, collect and act upon data to monitor growth regarding the reasoned use of the strategies identified in the framework. Similarly said that language used by the teacher in the classroom different with the use of language in natural setting (Marzono, 2010:1).

Ellis (1994:726) defines teacher talk as the process through which teachers address classroom language learners differently from the way they address other kinds of classroom learners. They make adjustment of language form and function in order to facilitate communication. Such adjustments are referred to teacher talk itself.

Foreign language teacher in the process of teaching typically use teacher talk. Allwright and Bailey (1991:139) state that “talk is one of the major ways that teachers convey information to learners, and it is also one of the primary means of controlling learners’ behavior”.

Based on the discussion of structure of classroom discourse (Mehan, 1979; Sinclair & Brazil, 1982), the following framework of teacher talk was drawn as guidance for observation design for the present study.

Table 1: Framework of teacher talk

Interaction	Initiation		Questioning
			Invitation
			Direction
	Follow-up	to no and incorrect answer	Inform
			Prompt
			Encouragement
			Criticizing
			Ignoring
		to correct answer	Acknowledgement
			Comment

### C. METHOD

The researcher in this study employed the qualitative research design. As Mason in Mackey and Gass (2005:162) pointed out that qualitative research is whatever it might be certainly does not represent a unified set of techniques or philosophies,

and indeed has grown out of a wide range of intellectual and disciplinary traditions. Then, Mackey and Gass (2005:162) briefly defined, the term qualitative research is can be taken to refer to research that is based on descriptive data that does not make (regular) use of statistical procedures. The researcher employed some instruments to facilitate this research, namely: Observation and recording. Observations and audio-recordings were conducted to build up a data base for describing the teacher talks. There are 10 English lecturers who were all the teachers teaching year one students of English study program of FKIP UKI Toraja were chosen as the subjects for observation.

## D. DISCUSSION

### Results from class observations

Table 2 summarized the results of class observation that tells what each of the 10 lecturers did in their observed classes. The percentages were worked out based on the class notes and records of what they did and the frequencies of each act, then average numbers of each teacher and all the teachers were calculated.

Table 2: Class observation record

			Percentage	
Interaction	Initiation		Questioning	65 %
			Invitation	10 %
			Direction	25 %
	Follow-up	to no and incorrect answer	Inform	30 %
			Prompt	20 %
			Encouragement	25%
			Criticizing	15 %

			Ignoring	10%
		to correct answer	Acknowledgement	60 %
			Comment	40 %

## 1. The Percentage of Teacher Talk by the Lecturers in Teaching English

### Initiation

The initiative move is the most important part in teacher-student interaction. From the class observation record results, it is seen that *questioning* is the most employed by the lecturers (65 %). And, direction (25%) followed by Invitation (10%) as less employed by the lecturers. Although in the language of classrooms, there is little need for the teacher to be indirect for social reasons, the teacher is in a position of authority and can exercise it overtly (Sinclair & Brazil, 1982), it is suggested that teachers use more languages of invitation in interaction. It is believed that invitation language is more humanistic, inspiring, gentle, and respecting than others, since it makes students be more focused, feel more respected, thus become more confident and active to participate in interactions.

### Follow-up

Teacher talk in the follow-up move is relatively important, since it is not only a summary about the interaction, but also affects students' interest to interact in the next interaction. In term of follow up deals with six parts, they are: inform, prompt, encouragement, criticizing, ignoring which are described as follows:

From the observation showed that the most employed of followed up is "inform" (30%). The classroom is seen as the place to fulfill this 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. As Chen (cited in Scollon, 1999) argued that the teacher is to serve as a role model, to perfect virtue and assist in the development of talent, to answer questions and to cultivate his own virtue and learning while encouraging students to do the same. Thus, whatever teachers provide would be

the models of what is grammatical and acceptable in the target language (Long, 1996).

The second order percentage of followed up is “encouragement” (25%). Sometimes the students would not like to speak even they do know the answers, just out of the fear of making errors, the fear of losing face and losing self-esteem, etc. Students’ silence in an EFL class is a common phenomenon, which often breaks down the interaction in classroom. A humanistic approach suggested to handle this problem is to give encouragement. Nunan (1989) argued that encouragement of some kind can be helpful particularly to those lower self-esteem students in reducing the anxiety and developing the confidence of those students who are more likely to open their mouths with the more humanistic encouragement or positive comments.

When students produce no answer or an incorrect answer, teachers usually prefer not to tell the students directly, but use ways of prompting (20%). Forms of promoting, such as repetition of the error, requesting students to clarify what he had said or giving some clues to the answers can provide students with an opportunity to reformulate and improve their utterances and thus, serve as a means of promoting ‘push out’, which is believed to facilitate acquisition (Swain, 1995).

In terms of criticizing, from the observation results, it is seen that the percentage of it is (15%). And, the least employed of followed up is ignoring (10%).

In term of “to correct answer”, it is classified into two parts. They are acknowledgement and comment. When students have provided the expected answer, the lecturers gave acknowledgement (60%), rather than being just simply comment (40%). With a very brief feedback of acknowledgement and comment, which can save more of the class time, the teacher could proceed to next student or other activities.

## **2. The Kinds of teacher talk by lecturers in Teaching English**

### **a) Initiation**

Initiation is the move in a teaching exchange which initiates an interaction; teachers will usually adopt the way of asking questions, invitation, and giving directions.

1) **Question:** It is a request for information and it is the commonest and most straightforward way to make students to talk in the class according to

classroom observation. By asking students some questions, the interaction will be motivated quickly and heatedly. Questions can be subdivided into referential questions and display questions. Referential questions are questions with no fixed answer, and display questions are the ones with a fixed answer. The following ones are examples of referential questions from the observation data: *“What is the title of yours?”*, *“What kind of the instrument?”*, *“What can you do for the type of question there?”*, *“what should the teacher do in teaching English?”*, *“what kinds of material that you want to ask by using question number one?”*, *“How many items do you have?”*, *“What is shock?”*.

- 2) **Invitation:** Invitation means that the teacher either uses the presiding languages, act as chairperson or a host, or uses imperative and interrogative sentences to ask students to do some activities. For examples: *“ok well students, for today you will work and display your work for today, so please sit with your group”, “would you please to speak freely with your group?”*, *“please, group one come here to display your discussion result”*.
  
- 3) **Direction:** Direction means an authoritative direction to be obeyed, an order of the teacher in this paper. In the language of the classroom, the teacher is absolutely the authority of class, there is little need for the teacher to be indirect for social reasons. Here are examples: *“Ok number one, you just show the phonetic symbols to the students, and after that you give the option here: a, b, c, d yes, without the written symbol. But you have to read the option and the students will identify the correct answer, so that appears in question are the instructions later phonetic symbol, but you have to be careful Because I am worry that your pronunciation is not good”, “ So you have to repeat and practice, you have to find out the correct pronunciation about this one. Well this is a great idea, so again this symbol is given to the students and then you read it? How many items do you have? ”*

## **b) Responses**

Responding moves are what is performed by students following the initiations produced by teachers. This study excluded this part, since the focus of the study is on the teacher talk.

### **Follow-up**

Follow-up is the last move of an interactive exchange which aims to give feedback to students' responses. Following different responses from students, teacher would choose to different ways to respond.

#### **a) *Follow ups to no and incorrect responses***

When students provide no response, that is, they may not know the expected answer or they are reluctant to give any answers, or when they provide incorrect responses, either linguistically and discursively incorrect, the teacher would choose to give a follow up in one of the following ways: inform, prompt, encouragement, criticizing, ignoring.

- 1) ***Inform:*** Informing is a direct way to help students realize their mistakes. It involves the provision of explicit information about the linguistic form that is perceived as the problem. It can be realized by means of giving definition, an example, an explanation or by signaling the problem. Besides negotiation of forms, inform here also includes negotiation of meaning. Examples are: *"I think those descriptions are the key, but you have to provide several options, expected and alternative answer", " ok, this is the answer for g, you have to provide the alternative answer for g. When he spoke this idea, then you give five score, then another Just talking for instance blond hair we give 4, 3,2,1, for example", "eh, not the extent of it, but want to know the difficulty. It should be to find the Difficulties faced by the students and what are the Difficulties" , "*
- 2) ***Prompt:*** It is an attempt to get the participant produce the correct answer by the use of a clue to indicate the location and/or nature of the error, or requesting the student to make a clarification of what he has just said, or by

the teacher's repetition of what the student has said with an emphasis on the incorrect part, so as to arouse the attention of the student to the error, such as: *"I want it is how it works, the way in collecting the data, whether this speaking that would be measured?"*, *"Means told to read, the first one you ask them to match the pictures with the Several sentences, where is the speaking here? So the flight to reading, it's not a cognate right? How do we create instruments that they talk, is there speaking here by using pictures with the sentences?"*, *"Means told to read, the first one you ask them to match the pictures with the Several sentences, where is speaking? So, the flight to reading, it's not a cognate right? How do we create instruments that they talk, is there speaking here by using pictures with the sentences?"*

- 3) **Encouragement:** Encouragement is an act of inspiring with hope, courage, or confidence; the behavior of heartening. Here are samples: *"yes, good"*, *"Well this is good, the next group to please display your result"*, *"It's OK"*, *"OK, try your best!"*, *"I am sure you know something about it, just say it"*.
  
- 4) **Criticizing:** Criticizing is to comment on students' incorrect response severely.  
 Examples are: *"Too high over your head thinking, it must be bad value, I did not precede the results"*, *"Bored, why there is a word of according, again, According sign, According anymore, no pages, year only, huh?"*, *"wrong, severe harm, everything you write is everything is all theory"*.
  
- 5) **Ignoring:** Ignoring refers to the situation where he/she pays no attention to students' mistake or turns to another student when the first one cannot give an answer, such as: *"Yes already, Desta you sit"*, *"Not so Novita, ok stop, please ..."*, *"Nothing at all of theoretical framework on top of this, none at all. Ok enough, thank you"*, *"Anyone knows the answer?"*, *"OK, sit down, next one!"*.

**b) *Follow ups to correct responses***

When students have provided the correct or expected response, teachers usually give some kinds of comment, or just a brief acknowledgement.

- 1) **Comment:** Comments of some kinds are given by the teacher sometimes to encourage the student providing the answer, and sometimes to let others notice what is give by the students, and sometimes to encourage others as well. Examples of comments are: “*I appreciate you giving us a good presentation.*” “*Very good, everyone, have you noticed that she has told us a very moving story?*” “*Good, thank you for such a wonderful talk?*”
- 2) **Acknowledgement:** It refers to the very brief feedback from the teacher in response to correct answers, such as: “*OK, good!*” “*That’s right!*” “*Alright! Sit down, please.*”

**E. CONCLUSION**

To sum up the results, the kinds of teacher talk by lecturers are: Initiation such as: *questioning, invitation, and direction*, follow up in term of to no and incorrect answer such as: *inform, prompt, encouragement, criticizing, and ignoring*, follow up in term of to correct answer such as: *acknowledgement, and comment*.

In ways of initiation, *questioning* (65%) as the most employed by the lecturers. In term of follow up in purpose to no and incorrect answer, *inform* (30%) as the most employed, and in purpose to correct answer, *acknowledgement* (60%) as the most employed by the lecturers.

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