Teacher talks: an analysis of direct and indirect influences for young learners in EFL class

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the types of teacher talks in classroom interactions; those are direct and indirect influences as proposed by Flanders (1970). Besides, the analysis of the teachers' difficulties during their talks was found out since the subjects in this study were teacher candidates. They had been taught about teacher talk during their micro teaching and teaching practicum classes. Therefore, the proposed research questions were: 1) What are the direct and indirect influences of teacher talks for young learners that appeared in EFL class? 2) What are teacher's difficulties during teacher talks? To answer the research questions, qualitative research was employed in this study by using observation sheet and questionnaire. The participants were five pre-service teachers from English Education Department of a private university in Jakarta. The teachers had joined teaching practicum in school so that they had had experiences in teaching primary school students. Based on the result, indirect influence of teacher talk were more frequently used (59%). Teachers indirectly influences the students by asking questions. Meanwhile, the direct influence gained 41% of the whole teacher talks with giving direction as the highest frequency (30%). Furthermore, vocabulary and grammar became the main factors of difficulty in teacher talk. Teachers sometimes got confused on how to deliver the certain expressions or give instructions, which made them less confident, especially when they felt nervous. This study was hopefully beneficial for the English department and universities to provide better learning process, other teachers' candidates that still improve their speaking skills to be more aware of their talks during teaching, and future researchers to broaden the field of study.

1. Introduction

Classroom interaction directly and indirectly forms students' communication ability since it provides a lot of input and output through listening and speaking, promotes exposure in using the language, and provides students' acquisition and acquaintance with the language (Noni, 1994). Teachers definitely plays important roles because they become the source of input that is imitated by the students. Moreover, teachers use the language during the learning process with some different speech acts, such as explaining, giving question, giving instructions, encouraging, and so on. Therefore, teachers talk should be clear and intelligible, which should contain no errors (Nurpahmi, 2017). Ellis (1985) proposed that teacher talk is the special language that teachers use when addressing second language learners in the classroom or treated as register with its own linguistics

properties. In young learners' classroom interation, the quality and quantity of teacher talk have many values, particularly in providing input as language model for children (Pinter, 2006) and supporting the students to practice the target language.

There are many studies regarding classroom interaction or teacher talk had been conducted and spread among the grades. For example, Mujahidah (2012) conducted research on the classroom interaction during the English teaching – learning Process at the eight grade of SMPN 1 Banjarmasin. She found that the teacher was more dominant during the classroom interaction with "asking question" as the most frequently talk appeared. Another study of teacher talk conducted by Pujiastuti (2013). Her study focused on analysis of teacher talk and student talk in English for young learners. She employed Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC) model to specify the types of teacher talks. The results were all categories of FIAC revealed in the classroom interaction and giving direction was found as the most frequently used. Most of the studies of classroom interaction were conducted in class with one teacher as the role model and the teachers had experienced teaching for more than five years. Thus, in this study the researchers tried to find out the classroom interaction with pre-service teachers as the role model. Pre-service teachers had been equiped with classroom language during their study so that they were expected to apply the theories into practical things. Pertaining the explanation above, this research would still utilize FIAC to analyze the direct and indirect influences of teacher talks. If two previous studies and the current study shared similarity in teacher talk type analysis, this current study would bring further investigation that was the teacher's difficulty during their talks in EFL class. Therefore, the research questions of this study were: 1) What are the types of direct and indirect influences of teacher talks that revealed during the classroom interaction in EFL class? 2) What are the teacher's difficulties during their teacher talks?

This study particularly aims to analyze the types of teacher talks and the difficulties of the pre-service teachers in their talks during teaching primary school students in the internship program. The direct and indirect influences of teacher talks would be investigated to know the verbal language used by the teachers in the class. As Tsui (1995) stated that "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," this study helped the teachers to know how effective they use the classroom language and whether they are more dominant in the learning process. Another aim of this study was seen from the practical view. Furthermore, this study was expected to give contributions to the pre-service English teachers in case of analyzing their teaching performances, to observe their classroom behavior and then to plan as well as to conduct interactive and child-friendly verbal classroom interactions (Pujiastuti, 2013). Classroom interaction should involve teacher and students talks so that communicative learning is adopted as the approach of the language learning process. However, this study would not observe both teacher and student talks because the focus was on teacher point of view. Teacher talk was pondered important aspect for pre-service teachers since they needed to practice conveying message to the students and adjusting their language with the grade. This aspect then became the limitation of this study.

Regarding the analysis of teacher talk, FIAC model (Flanders, 1970 as cited in Nunan, 1989) had been chosen because its category system contains direct and indirect influences of teacher talk. There are two teacher roles, those are indirect and direct influences. Indirect influence includes accept feeling, praise or encourage, accept or use idea, and ask questions. Meanwhile, direct influence includes lecture, give direction, and criticize or justify authority. The detailed categories are presented in the table below.

Table 1.　　　　　　Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories Model (Flanders, 1970)

Teacher Talk	Category	Feature
Indirect influence	Accepts feeling	accepts and clarifies the tone of the students in an unthreatening manner. Feelings may be positive or negative. Predicting or recalling feelings are included.
	2. Praises or encourages	praises or encourage student action or behavior. Jokes that release tension, but not at the expense of another individual, nodding head or saying „"um hm?"" or „"go on"" are included.
	3. Accepts or uses ideas of student	clarifying, building, or developing ideas suggested by a student. As teacher brings more of his own idea into play, shift to category five
	4. Asks questions	asking a question about content or procedure with the intent that a student answer.
Direct Influence	5. Lecturing	giving facts or opinion about content or procedure; expressing his own idea asking rhetorical questions.
	6. Giving directions	directions, command, or orders which student are expected to comply with.
	7. Criticizing or justifying authority	statements intended to change student behavior from unacceptable to acceptable pattern; bawling someone out ; stating why the teacher is doing what he is doing; extreme self-reference.

Discussing what types of teacher talks frequently appears in EFL classroom might relate to the teacher's knowledge of talk. Speaking in front of the class is not like daily conversation in which people are able to use any expressions, but more about how to produce utterances with meaningful input for the students. Hence, this condition likely makes teachers get difficulties in the teacher talks. Two studies about difficulties in teacher talks conducted by Horst (2010) and Tang (2011) as cited in Coxhead (2017) had concluded that the teacher talks of were lexically poor. It means the words or vocabulary that the teacher used in the class were limited or likely repeated several times so that it did not give any significant impact to students' language acquisition. Due to that problem, Elliot (1994), as cited in Coultas (2015), suggested that "teachers need to become more aware of what they are doing rather than telling them what they should be doing is a particularly useful way of carrying out research on teacher knowledge of talk, a complex area of pedagogy that has proved very resistant to change." Through this study, it is expected that pre-service teachers become more aware of their teacher talk as well as promote talk more effectively in the classroom.

2. Method

In order to answer the research questions and achieve the research objective, this research employed quantitative and qualitative research that included video observation administered in the end of the semester and questionnaire distribution. The observation was utilized to gain detailed information of teacher talk as pre-service teachers when they taught English for primary school learners during the internship program. In order to help the researchers collect the data, observation sheet (check box) was used. The teaching video transcription was also used to help figure out the purpose of each teacher talk. This way also eased the process of categorizing the teacher talk. Then, in order to answer the second research question, open-ended questionnaire was employed to gain the data. The data constituted the teacher's reflections on their own teacher talks, such as the type of teacher talk they considered as the most frequent used in the class, the difficulties that teachers had in their teacher talks, the factors that influenced their talks, and how to overcome teacher's difficulties. The questionnaire was distributed and after being filled out, the researcher did confirmation for less clear statements. Then, all data were analyzed and interpreted.

The participants of this study were the seventh semester students of English Education study program of a private university in Jakarta. The students were taking teaching practicum class.

During that semester, they were conducting internship program, that was teaching English in primary school. There were eighteen students and they belonged to pre-service teachers. For this study, there were only five pre-service teachers as participants. Those pre-service teachers were chosen because they taught older young learners (fourth and fifth grade students) and they achieved an A in teaching practicum, which meant their ability in speaking English was considered good. In this study, the last teaching video was used since the pre-service teachers had experienced teaching in early-seven meetings so that they were expected to perform better. The video was then analyzed using Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC) model.

The procedure in conducting this study consisted of eight steps. First, the researchers prepared the observation sheet in form of check box and the questionnaire. Second, the researchers picked up the data source in form of video and teachers' transcription from students who got A in teaching practicum. Then the data were classified based on FIAC model, particularly indirect and direct influences. Fourth, initial code was determined for each category of teacher talk. Every interaction was recorded one code. For example, accepting feeling was coded into AF, asking question was coded into AQ, and giving direction was coded into GD. The next step was pairing the data. In this step, the researchers paired the number of categories of interaction. Sixth, plotting the initial code to the table and count the data; which meant entering the data to a table and counting the frequency and percentage of the teacher talk. Next, the questionnaires were distributed via email. The last step was drawing conclusion from the response. The researcher described the teacher talk categories using FIAC model based on the available data and found out the teachers' difficulties.

3. Findings and discussion

In response to the research question, the result of the teaching video analysis revealed that indirect and direct influences appeared during the teaching performance. All categories of indirect and direct influences could be found in every teacher and performed in various frequencies. Based on the table 3 below, it could be seen that in T1 AQ (asking question) and GD (giving direction) gained 29% which meant it was highly frequently used. The lowest category was CO (criticizing and justifying authorithy) which gained only 1% because CO revealed only twice during the lesson. For T2, AQ gained 33% which meant it was high frequently used during the lesson, whereas AF gained 4% as the lowest category used during the lesson. The next teacher showed that GD gained 33% which was the high frequently used by T3 and the lowest category used by T3 was CO 1%. In T4, the highest percentage of the teacher talk category was AQ. It reached 41% or 51 times during the lesson. Besides the lowest category was AF which gained 1%. Similar with T3, T5 also produced GD as the high frequently used teacher talk, which scored 29%. For the lowest category of T5 was CO with 1% or twice during the lesson. In conclusion, asking question was the high frequently used by T1 (29%), T2 (33%), T4 (41%). Meanwhile, giving direction was dominantly used by T3 (33%) and T5 (29%).

The dominance of teacher talk happened when it came into presentation and practice parts. In the presentation, teachers explained the grammar implicitly by asking questions. Supported with the reading text, the teacher could make comprehension questions based on the content of the text and use wh-questions to connect it with the grammar. This process could also be found in other teachers. Most of them provided questions to explain the grammar instead of lecturing. Then, during the practice, the teachers gave direction to make the instruction clearer and they also confirmed it using questions. Actually, the finding of this study was consistent with other related studies like Mujahidah's (2012) and Pujiastuti's (2013) in which the highest percentage was on asking question and giving direction. By doing so, the teacher gave chances for the students to respond and get involved in the learning process. In addition, it helped the interaction between teacher and student become more communicative. This idea is also in accordance with quantity of opportunities for students to interact in classroom is crucial in learning language (Pinter, 2006).

Table 2.   Teacher Talk Frequency

		AF	PR	AO	AQ	LE	GD	CO	N
T1	Frequency	4	37	26	52	5	51	2	177
	Percentage	2%	21%	15%	29%	3%	29%	1%	
T2	Frequency	5	12	11	43	16	36	7	130
	Percentage	4%	9%	8%	33%	12%	28%	5%	
T3	Frequency	13	101	52	135	34	166	3	504
	Percentage	3%	20%	10%	27%	7%	33%	1%	
T4	Frequency	1	19	9	51	11	28	4	123
	Percentage	1%	15%	7%	41%	9%	23%	3%	
T5	Frequency	3	15	25	43	34	51	2	173
	Percentage	2%	9%	14%	25%	20%	29%	1%	

If the previous discussion was about direct and indirect influence analysis of each teacher, the following table presents the analysis of each teacher talk category of all teachers. Based on the result in table 4, we can see that the most dominant category in teacher talk was Giving Direction (30%). While the lowest category in teacher talk used in the classroom was Accepting Feeling (2%) and Criticizing or Justifying Authority (2%). It showed that the teacher might apply teacher-oriented in the class. The teachers focused on giving direction to the student which aimed to make students understand the lesson well. In fact, Accepting Feeling and Criticizing still became the lowest as a proof that the students' accept more direction than the accepting feeling from the teacher.

Regarding direct and indirect categories of teacher talk, it was clear that indirect teaching was more dominant than direct teaching. In total of the percentage, indirect teaching occurred 59% of the whole teacher talks, whereas direct teaching occurred 41% of the teacher talk. Brown (2000) mentioned that "interactive teaching is closely concerned on indirect teaching." Furthermore, the teachers' questions and meaningful contexts had implication to students' motivation which was high in classroom interaction. It was in line with an argument stating that children are keen on talking, telling stories, sharing ideas and many things they enjoy (Brumfit, 1991; Cameron, 2001; Halliwel, 1992; Harmer, 2001; Moon, 2000). This proved that the language learning process concerned on interactive teaching. Therefore, the pre-service teachers had likely successfully brought good atmosphere during the lesson.

Table 3.   Percentage of Teacher Talk Category

	T1		T2		T3		T4		T5		N	Percentage
	Freq	Perc	Freq	Perc	Freq	Perc	Freq	Perc	Freq	Perc		
AF	4	15%	5	19,2%	13	50,0%	1	3,8%	3	11,5%	26	2%
PR	37	20%	12	6,5%	101	54,9%	19	10,3%	15	8,2%	184	17%
OA	26	21%	11	8,9%	52	42,3%	9	7,3%	25	20,3%	123	11%
AQ	52	16%	43	13,3%	135	41,7%	51	15,7%	43	13,3%	324	29%
LE	5	5%	16	16,0%	34	34,0%	11	11,0%	34	34,0%	100	9%
GD	51	15%	36	10,8%	166	50,0%	28	8,4%	51	15,4%	332	30%
CO	2	11%	7	38,9%	3	16,7%	4	22,2%	2	11,1%	18	2%
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If the previous discussion turned out that indirect influence of teacher talk revealed more frequently, now the teacher's difficulties in producing talks would be figured out. The results of the questionnaire were the pre-service teachers had lexical problem, such as vocabulary and grammar. Most of them felt confused on choosing proper and simple words for primary school students. If there was new or difficult term, the teacher tried to explain the meaning simply, but still using the target language. Anxiety also happened when the pre-service teachers thought that they made grammatical errors. They thought that the grammar was incorrect although it was actually correct. To support the explanation above, the responses are presented below.

> *"Vocabulary choice sometimes becomes obstacle in my teacher talk. Since I teach*
> *primary school students, I have to make sure that I use simple language. I don't*

avoid new or specific term, but I need to consider whether students can understand it or not. I also give them explanation of new vocabulary." (A1)

"Sometimes I am not confident in using English in front of the class because I am afraid that there are grammatical errors." (C1)

"Moreover, it is sometimes difficult to explain the grammar focus. It's sometimes difficult to find the appropriate words or I forget the vocabulary." (D1)

"The difficulties that I had when I spoke in front of the class are the grammar and vocabulary. Sometimes I forget the vocabulary I want to say." (E1)

Besides lexical problem, other problems were identified based on the data of the questionnaire. Interactive communication and confirmation were considered difficult to be built and identified because the teachers needed to attract students' attention. One teacher said that creating interactive communication when answering students question or delivering instructions is apparently not easy. Teachers must be creative to trigger or encourage the students to speak and to respond their talks. The efforts increased since teachers also need to handle the class as well as become a good role model for the students. The supporting statements can be seen as follows.

"Sometimes, I still confused about how to deliver clear instructions to the students. I realized that sometimes I did not answer students answer clearly. I also have difficulties in creating more interactive communication." (A2)

One of the most difficulties that I face during my teaching in the classroom is I never know whether they understand my explanation or not. I can't read it from only their face. Sometimes, there are some students who are really focus on me while I'm explaining but actually their minds are not on me. They are thinking about something else while listening to me. (B3)

Apparently, the results were in accordance with the Horst's and Tang's studies (Coxhead, 2017) which found the teacher talks were lexically poor. Nevertheless, what evoked the difficulties had not been investigated due to the time constraints. The major hypothesis was related to the teacher's readiness. Although it had not been able to be proved, the expectation was teachers need to become more aware of what they are doing and become more aware of their teacher talk so that good atmosphere could be promoted in the class.

4. Conclusion

According to the finding and discussion, the direct and indirect influences of teacher talk revealed in the language teaching for young learners. The indirect influence more frequently occurred in asking questions. Most of the teachers relied on asking questions to influence the students in language learning process. Using questions were likely effective to encourage students' participation and respond so that they got chance to use the target language. The second influence was praising or encouraging. The teachers tried to ecouraged student actions and gave appreciation to what they had answered. The indirect influence brought positive implication towards classroom atmosphere and enhanced interractive learning. On the other hand, the direct influence was reached through giving direction and lecturing. Teachers gave instructions and commanded the students how they needed to accomplish the tasks, which were low frequently used. Therefore, the indirect influence of teacher talk was better used by pre-service teachers in teaching English as a foreign language for young learners. Nevertheless, the pre-service teachers realized that indirect influence, such as asking question and praising, was difficult to be produced because of lack of vocabulary or expressions, anxiety in making grammatical error, and even maintaining interaction with the students. It helped them reflect what they were doing. Therefore, this study was hopefully beneficial for other teachers' candidates that still learn classroom interaction to be more aware of their talks during teaching, the English department and universities to provide better learning process, and future researchers to broaden the field of study.

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