

An analysis on teacher talk in multiethnic and multisite classes

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Abstract: Teachers in multiethnic and multisite classes consider the aspects of both English and learners' culture as well as learning contexts for their talk to achieve meaningfulness. This research focuses on teacher talk, specifically linguistic variations containing code-switching, code-mixing, construction, and obstruction. The research subjects are two lecturers from the departments of education and communication. Data is collected through observations, interviews, and questionnaires. Then, it is analyzed using percentages and discourse analysis. This research finds that the teacher talk contains a minimum number of utterances describing ethnic messages. It is approximately 1% of the teacher talk containing code-switching, code-mixing, construction, and obstruction.

Keywords: teacher talk, multiethnics, multisite

Introduction

Teachers convey meaningful to talk to learners. In trying to do so, comprehensible input plays its role. To this point, teacher talk should consider learners ethnic backgrounds and places of interaction. In line with this, this research aims at studying teacher talk in multiethnic and multisite classrooms. Specifically, this research seeks to answer questions on linguistic variations in teacher talk whether they lead to code-switching and code-mixing, construction and obstruction.

This study on teacher talk is significant because it motivates teachers to be systematic and meaningful as well as paying attention to cultural and contextual aspects of a language class in their talk. It is essential to do so because language, culture, and contexts are interrelated. Building a bridge between the three can promote meaningful communication among multiethnic students in multi-classes.

Previous research

A study by Basra and Thoyyibah (2017) in *A Speech Act Analysis on Teacher Talk in an EFL Classroom* concerned on grouping teacher talk based on Searle taxonomy. The study found five classifications of teacher talk such as 'assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, declarative.'

Next, a study on teacher talk by Gharvani and Irvani (2014) in *Is Teacher Talk Pernicious to Students? A Discourse Analysis of Teacher Talk* applied conversational analysis as a research method. The study collected and analyzed a type-written script of an audio-taped lesson in trying to look for evidence of communicative teacher talk. The analysis found that teacher talk was uncommunicative. They found that the uncommunicative talk was characterized by 'repetitive, monotonous, followed IRF, controlled, and not consonant with second language theories.'

Then, Incecay (2010) studied *The Role of Teacher Talk in Young Learners' Language Process*. Observation collected the data and analyzed by conversational analysis. The study found two categories of teacher talk: 'construction and obstruction.' The former included 'direct error correction, content feedback, prompting, extended wait time, and repairing.' The later consisted of 'turn completion, teacher echo, extended use of initiation-response- feedback turn taking.'

Lei (2009) studied *Communicative Teacher Talk in the English Classroom* in which she found two problems and five criteria of communicative teacher talk. The former was to create a natural setting for English learning and to use referential questions. The latter was indicated by referential

questions, content feedback, avoidance of IRF, learner talk domination, and significant-free of teaching.

These researches inspire in a way that they discuss factors contributing to teacher talks such as construction and obstruction, code switching and code mixing. However, none of these researches studies teacher talk from the perspective of cultures such as English and learners' culture and formal instructional places such as department English classes. Therefore, this research focuses its study on teacher talk in multiethnic and multisite classes.

Teacher talk

A classroom is a place where a teacher and learners interact with one another to reach a condition what is so-called successful learning. The interaction is assumed to flow smoothly because the teacher can communicatively exchange ideas to learners. By communicative, he/ she qualitatively and quantitatively manages his/her talk to the point of the maximum amount of learners' understanding. Qualitative teacher talk refers to meaningful utterances that meet learners understanding. Quantitative one refers to some utterances produced by a teacher. In line with the quality and quantity of teacher talk, Ellis (1994, 580) classifies teacher talk based on the *amount of talk, functional distribution, rate of speech, pauses, phonology/ intonation/articulation/stress, modification in vocabulary, modification in syntax, and modification in discourse.*

Teacher talk takes forms of code-switching, code-mixing, construction, and obstruction. First, code-switching is a decision to change the use of one language to another language (Jendra: 2010, 73, Hudson: 1996, 51, McKay & Hornberger: 1996, 56). Jendra explains further that code-switching is divided into *grammatical and contextual classification*. The following is a summary of Jendra's classification.

1. Grammatical code-switching: Tag code-switching, inter- and intra-sentential
2. Contextual code-switching: Situational code-switching and metaphorical code switching

Second, code-mixing is a combination of two or more languages to form a sentence. The

combination is accurately accepted (Jentra, 2010, 78, Hudson, 1996, 53 McKay & Hornberger: 1996, 57). Jentra (2010, 81) provides an example of code-mixing, *Japanese bilingual mixes Japanese with English 'Watashi was Waseda graduate shimasita'*. Third, Incecay (2010) states that construction is *increasing learning potential* while the obstruction is *reducing the learning potential*. Construction promotes positive learning conditions while the obstruction is the other way around.

Code-switching, code mixing, construction, and obstruction occur in three components of classroom discourse: an opening phase, an instructional phase, and a closing phase (Mehan in Ellis, 1994, p. 574). Their occurrences are in a sentential level such as a statement, negation, interrogation, and command. Their occurrences take the form of simple, compound, and complex sentences.

Contextual teaching in multiethnic classes

Diversity becomes a significant character in a rapidly changing global society. It is also reflected in a classroom as a community. Within a classroom, students from various ethnic groups get together and interact with one another. Teachers in this class need to concern on the following factors. First, teachers should remain themselves as an agent of intercultural communication in which it is necessary for them to promote tolerance and respect. To this point, Brown (2007, p. 515) states that *teachers are responsible for creating an atmosphere of respect for each other's opinions, beliefs, and ethnic/cultural diversity*. Brown further explains that teacher talk should impose *discourse structures such as 'I see your point but....'*

Second, teachers should consider learners' ethnic identity that can be defined as to which one ethnic group identifies themselves. In line with this situation, they need to build communicative strategies based on *trust and respect* (Brown, 2007, p. 253). There are seven guidelines for these strategies: *showing interest in each student as a person, giving feedback on each person's progress, openly soliciting student's ideas and feelings, valuing and respecting what students think and say, laughing with them and not at them, working with them as a team, not against them, and developing a*

genuine sense of vicarious joy when they learn something or otherwise succeed. (Brown, 2007, p. 253)

Method

This research was quantitative and qualitative. It applied a discourse analysis on talk of two research subjects or lecturers whose learners studied in the departments of communication and education and came from ethnic backgrounds such as Maduranese, Malay, and bug sense. This research collected data through questionnaires to know individual learner's ethnic background.

The subjects were asked to self-record their utterances during the classes in sessions. Later on, they were also interviewed for confirmation and clarification of their talk that had been transcribed. The teacher talk was analyzed using four categories such as code mixing, code switching, construction, and obstruction. Furthermore, the data was also analyzed into three teaching stages: pre-, whilst-, and post-teaching.

Findings

1. There are 347 utterances produced by two lectures during classes in sessions. 95 out of 345 utterances were produced by N, a lecturer at Faculty Islamic Communication. 242 utterances were by W, a lecturer at the Faculty of Islamic Education.
2. 4 out of 347 utterances contain cultural messages. Three utterances came from N, and one was by W. The four utterances are as follows.
 - You are very **GPU**, confused.84
 - Perhaps Nila deliver from **Jembatan Tayan**.42
 - Moreover, then Rolin deliver from **Madura**.43
 - Boleh tentang bercerita tentang Cerita Daerah, dongeng, **scribble**.237
3. 3 out of 4 utterances were produced at Whilst-teaching stage, and one utterance was at the post- teaching stage.
 - Three utterances at the Whilst-teaching stage: 84, 42, 43

- One utterance at the post-teaching stage: 237

4. The four utterances are classified based on teaching stages by Mehan in Ellis (1994) and linguistic variations: code-switching and mixing (Jentra, 2010, 78, Hudson, 1996, 53 McKay & Hornberger: 1996, 57), construction and obstruction (Incecey, 2010).

- Code-switching: 42,43
- Code mixing: 84, 237
- Construction: 42,43,237
- Obstruction: 84

Discussions

1. This research found 1% of teacher talk containing linguistic variations that indicate ethnic messages. It is considered minimum in number which is assumed to indicate that a learner's culture has not yet represented in teaching activities. Bringing up the learner's culture can assist intercultural understanding in their attempt to understand the culture of English, the target language being learned.
2. For one reason, *You are very GPU, confused* contains an abbreviation GPU "Gak Pakai Urat" (no heart feelings). This utterance leads to an assumption that no compatible English words can be used to represent the teacher's way of thinking so that the teacher code mixes Malay to English. For the other reason, it indicates an obstruction that is assumed to contain a negative message because it brings learners to a situation of discouragement.
3. For one reason, *Boleh tentang Cerita tentang Cerita Daerah, dongeng, scribble* contains codemixing which is assumed resulted from a lack of Indonesian to represent *scribble*. For the other reason, this utterance leads to construction because it positively motivates and opens for cultural understanding to learners to do right.
4. *Perhaps Nila delivers from Jembatan Tayan, and Rolin delivers from Madura* are contextual codeswitching. The reason is that they contain two expressions to represent ethnic messages. *Jembatan Tayan* is a bridge in West Kalimantan, and *Madura* is an island in

- Indonesia. An interview on May 27th, 2018 with a teacher revealed evidence that it is her concern to integrate her learners' knowledge on their local wisdom so that she came to suggestions for Nila and Rolin to bring topics about *Jembatan Tayan* and *Madura*.
5. *Perhaps Nila delivers from Jembatan Tayan and Rolin deliver from Madura* also contain messages to make learners openminded. Therefore, it indicates construction.
 6. These four utterances are classified into the contextual code-switching.
- Conclusions**
- It is concluded that teacher talk in multiethnic and multisite classes contains minimum intercultural understanding. The finding that teacher talk indicates a minimum number of cultural messages proves as evidence.
- However, teacher talk indicates initialism and local wisdom. An initialism is discovered by the talk of *GPU* for the teacher to say "no heart feeling." The integration of local wisdom is discovered by a teacher talk to let learners integrate local stories in their attempt to accomplish a speaking assignment through storytelling. The use of geographical names in teacher talk is to develop learner's critical thinking to integrate local wisdom.
- All in all, teacher talk positively influences learning atmosphere through intercultural communication to learners.
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