

# Teacher Talk in EFL Online Classes at Indonesian Tertiary Level

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the nature and types of teacher talk in an Indonesian EFL tertiary setting. The research design of this study is descriptive qualitative along with naturalistic study for analysing the data. The methods of data collection of this study were observation and documentation. In this regard, the teaching and learning process by one English lecturer at one of the universities in Indonesia was observed, and there were three classes observed in this study. The data analyses involved three techniques consisting re-reading, counting, and building conclusion. There were 533 number of data as analyzed by Foreign Language Interaction (FLINT) system adapted from Moskowitz (1971). This study revealed that teacher applied bilingual approach in English teaching and learning process involving English and Indonesian. This study also demonstrated that nine (9) out of eleven (11) types of teacher talk were observed as a way to interact with students particularly when dealing with feelings, praises or encouragement, jokes, giving feedback to ideas of students, asking questions, giving information, correcting without rejection, giving direction, and criticizing student response. The most dominant type of teacher talk delivered by the teacher is giving information. The pedagogical implications of this study are discussed.

**Keywords:** *Classroom interaction, multilingual use, teacher talk*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

English is one of the foreign languages (EFL) in an Indonesian setting. The status of English as a foreign language has driven the condition where students are exposed to the target language in formal setting, particularly classroom only. In this regard, classroom should be convenient and facilitative to the development of English learning. One of the key factors in building such classroom is a teacher. Teacher's knowledge and pedagogy plays an essential role in providing maximum outcome for students' learning. Of some theoretical considerations that should be taken into account are language input, language processing and language output (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). In terms of language processing, it is classroom interaction that assist the development of language learning. Teacher plays an important role on the interaction in classroom (Putri, 2015). In this case, the way teacher interacts with students would determine how well the learning process and the students' understanding to the subject (Iswan, 2016). On the other side, students probably need teacher that could provide an interesting course and understand the students well (Khirahla & Tyas, 2020).

In other words, teacher's language is the medium in order to reach the learning objectives.

Some studies call the interaction or language produced by the teacher to get involved students in interaction in the classroom as teacher talk, and this term will be used in this study. The language used by the teacher in classroom interaction is defined as Teacher Talk (Xiao-yan, 2006). It can be in the form of initiating, asking questions, or giving feedbacks to the students (Iswan, 2016). There are a lot of categories for teacher talk developed by many experts. The teacher talk categorization depends on the theory chosen.

During COVID-19 pandemic situation, the learning process is implemented via online platform in Indonesia. This condition has shifted the way teachers build an interaction from face to face to full online learning system, a situation which is different from the model proposed by Sahiruddin (2019) regarding blended learning, a combination between face to face and online learning. Today's online learning process has brought about different interaction between teacher and students. Online learning basically perceives as less interactive rather than traditional class (Bali & Liu,

2018). Despite the interaction, online learning is an interesting education facility for EFL learning as it offers convenient and flexible learning for students (Rahmiati & Emaliana, 2019). It has been applied to enhance students' academic outcome to be better.

The objectives of this study are to describe the language use in an EFL classroom interaction and the types of teacher talk. The researcher is interested to look at the dominant language used in EFL classroom at tertiary level. The findings of this study were expected to encourage teacher in applying proper language use, particularly English as much as possible so the students' English proficiency level can be improved. In addition, by knowing the types of teacher talk used, it would encourage the teacher to pick the right interaction in order to give chances and promote students to actively participate in online classroom learning context.

Theoretically, the researcher used teacher talk categories proposed by Brown (2001) which were adapted from Moskowitz (1971). There are 11 categories of teacher talk established with Foreign Language Interaction (FLINT) system which are involved by both indirect and direct influence with certain categories with the intention to *deal with feelings; praise or encourage; joke; use ideas of students; repeat student response verbatim; ask questions; give information; correct without rejection; give direction; criticize student behavior; and criticize student response.*

The approaches of second language learning involve monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual. Monolingual approach usually deals with only the target language, in this context is English language. Bilingual approach manages the use of two languages all together by the learners (Küçükler & Tosuncuoglu, 2018). Meanwhile, multilingual approach inspects the language use in context which is usually done by practicing in classroom (Gorter & Cenoz, 2011).

## 2. METHODS

In this study, the researcher applied descriptive qualitative study as the research design. Qualitative research describes phenomenon, facts, and events of individual or groups in our surroundings (Creswell, 2014). The process of this research involves a detailed understanding of a phenomenon, stating the problems, collecting data from participants, analysing data for description, and interpreting the meaning of the data. The methods of data collection in this research were observation and documentation. One teacher was selected as Mrs. "I" having a five year minimum teaching experience in the program and she gave permission to allow the researcher to observe her classroom. The researcher was allowed to join the synchronous learning with Zoom meeting platform

without telling the students as to maintain the naturalistic environment during observation. The researcher observed classes from three different levels which are 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> semester students from English Language Education Study Program in one of the universities in Indonesia. Then, the data were analyzed by summative approach analysis as stated by Hsieh and Shannon (2005) consisting re-reading, counting, and building conclusion. It looked at the types and frequency of languages used in the classroom as well as the types of teacher talk used in the classroom interaction which were analyzed using teacher talk categories by Brown (2001) which were adapted from Moskowitz (1971).

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This current study scrutinizes the language use and types of teacher talk in an EFL classroom at an Indonesian tertiary education level. Three observation for classes across different semesters were analyzed.

### 3.1. The Language Use in Classroom Interaction

Based on the observation, this study found several languages used by the teacher in English learning process at English Language Education study program at one of Indonesian universities. Table 1 demonstrated number or frequency of languages used in classroom interaction. The Table 1 shows that there were three languages used by the teacher including Indonesian, English, and mixed language. English was the most frequent language used by the teacher in building up classroom interaction. It suggested that the teacher wanted to give more English exposure, so that the students would have a better outcome in using English. However, the teacher still sometimes used combined language in the learning process. The teacher applied multilingual approach in teaching English.

**Table 1.** Frequency of occurrence language use in classroom interaction

| Classes                           | Utterances          |                  |                |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|----------------|
|                                   | Indonesian language | English language | Mixed language |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> semester students | 15                  | 91               | 78             |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> semester students | 9                   | 95               | 71             |
| 5 <sup>th</sup> semester students | 7                   | 102              | 65             |
| <b>Total</b>                      | 31                  | 288              | 214            |

The first language was Indonesian language. It is the national and official language in Indonesia. It is mostly the mother tongue for Indonesian people. As it is used for daily life, Indonesian language also becomes the

essential part in the teaching and learning process. Although not many, this study found some utterances in Indonesian language spoken by teacher, for example: “*apa sih maksudnya?*”; “*keren kan ya*”; “*boleh saya mendengar suara Yola Octavianisa?*”

The second language used was English. This language is also known as the international language in the world. In Indonesia, English is taught at any level of education. It is usually utilized to trigger students to perform or react in English. This study found that English is the primary language in learning process even at tertiary level as seen in the following utterances: “*So, here, usually you will have a kind of a sequence of the story.*”; “*Okay, take a look at paragraph A and B.*”; “*So, what is the supporting ideas?*”

The last was mixed language, which is a language combining two or more languages in the grammatical or lexical aspects. Teacher often used mixed language because of real lexical need for particular topic. Here is the example: “*Kalau Anda pakai british, pakai ‘Axe’ ya. Tapi kalau Anda mazhab-nya American English, so you can have ‘Axe’, ya*”.

From the Table 1, it can also be seen that the teacher used English as the most frequent language at every class regardless the students’ level. It suggested that the higher the level of the students, the more is English used by the teacher. It is a normal situation that the teacher might expect the students with higher level are having more English competence so they can easily understand what the teacher says. On the other hand, the teacher knows that the students with lower level, especially for freshmen, would probably have less understanding of English.

### 3.2. The types of teacher talk

This study demonstrated nine types of teacher talk used during the learning process in the classroom, as displayed in the Table 2. The Table 2 revealed that the most frequent type of teacher talk used by the teacher was giving information. The Table 2 also showed the clearer description for each language in which the type of teacher talk presented. The type of ‘gives information’ was the most dominant type of teacher talk. More detail information was as follows.

Dealing with feelings means that the teachers are communicating well with the students during learning process. It can be about the situation at the time learning process is being done, the past event, or the future things that might affect students’ feelings.

**Table 2.** The type of teacher talk used by the teacher

| Types of Teacher Talk              | Number of Utterances |                  |                |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------|----------------|
|                                    | Indonesian Language  | English Language | Mixed Language |
| Deals with feelings                | 11                   | 41               | 27             |
| Praises or encourages              | 0                    | 26               | 19             |
| Jokes                              | 0                    | 3                | 2              |
| Uses ideas of students             | 0                    | 21               | 18             |
| Repeats student responses verbatim | 0                    | 0                | 0              |
| Asks question                      | 8                    | 52               | 47             |
| Gives information                  | 13                   | 107              | 81             |
| Corrects without rejection         | 0                    | 11               | 0              |
| Gives direction                    | 0                    | 19               | 14             |
| Criticizes student behavior        | 0                    | 0                | 0              |
| Criticizes student response        | 0                    | 8                | 6              |

It also must be done in inoffensive or safe way, and the teacher must be able to understand well about the condition of the students. In this study, it was found several examples of the use of dealing with feelings in three languages.

- Indonesian: “*jelas penting, kan untuk idenya*”.
- English: “ah you like it, I see”.
- Mixed: “updating status, *gitu ya, di WA*”.

Praises or encourages mean that the teacher would tell the students about what they have said or done. It is used to make the students feel comfortable and encourage them to continue trying. It can also be used to confirm that the students have done correctly. In this study, the researcher found some examples in English and mixed languages.

- English: “yes, yes, I can hear you. I mean I’m reacting on the event. Please, continue”.
- Mixed: “ok, so would you please help me, *gapapa ya, I’ll pick up another student*”.

Jokes are usually used to help break the ice a bit. It is usually an intentional word attempted to be humorous. This study found few examples on how teacher uses jokes in classroom although it is not necessarily intentional. It can be seen as follows.

- English: “Because I cannot control you (laugh) for using dictionary, please use the dictionary. If I were you, I would use dictionary than asking your friends’ answer”.

- Mixed: “Hahaha all right, *oke. Ya*, please kindly check your SIAM. Also to know whether you’re present or not. I mean, have I checked your attendance? So not, so you can access SIAM”.

Using ideas of students is usually used to clarify or summarize the students’ response. It must be paraphrased by the teacher and interpreted in the new way. This study revealed some uses of using ideas of students. The examples can be seen in the list below.

- English: “Okay good, so you’re remembering the past event. Flashback, memories, usually you have that”.
- Mixed: “*Iya*, because it is a story, you know. *Kalau* academic writing it’s supposed to be the very first *ya, memang*. Sometimes, we need to read it totally”.

Asking a question is a way for teacher to get information and answer by the students. It is basically done in which the answer has been expected by the teacher. It is also used to check the students’ understanding about a certain topic or material discussed when learning process is ongoing. This study found many questions asked by the teacher, and the examples are below.

- Indonesian: “*Apa sih maksudnya? Ada yang tahu?*”
- English: “Okay, next, let’s move to the paragraph. In which paragraph is the sequence of event important? What do you think?”
- Mixed: “*Tadi apa main ideas-nya?*”

Giving information is a kind of activity that teacher tells the students about information, facts, opinion, or ideas. It is usually the main session of lecturing. Rhetorical questions are also included as giving information. This study found that giving information was the most dominant type of teacher talk used by the teacher. Here are some examples of giving information.

- Indonesian: “*sepertinya ini salah ketik ya*”.
- English: “I think so. So, we should very detail in reading the passage like this”.
- Mixed: “All right. So, actually we’ve tried hard to work on this. *Yang lainnya itu masih sama seperti biasanya*”.

Correcting without rejection can be considered that the teacher is telling the correct response to students who made mistake. It must be used without using critics. This study found this type of teacher talk because the teacher wanted to give correct pronunciation to certain words. Therefore, correcting without rejection only happened in English. The example of utterance using correction without rejection are: “*Excuse me, STOMACHACHE. All right.*”; “*It’s pronounced ‘NOTICE.’ and ‘ADVERTISE’*”.

Giving direction refers to the teacher’s instruction that might be a direction, request, or commands towards the students. Giving direction is usually given by the teacher in order to encourage students to have active participation in the classroom. After that, it is expected that the students follow the instruction such as answering question, doing exercise, or presenting the result of discussion. This study found that this type of teacher talk was used in English and mixed languages. Some examples can be seen in the following extracts.

- English: “Now let’s have Febita for the next sentence”.
- Mixed: “Now we continue to ‘I then raised my head to see my condition’ *itu ya*. Starting from that sentence, *saya pilih Adristi Cantika*”.

Criticizing students’ behavior is basically refusing or rejecting the non-acceptable behavior done by students. It can be done by directly telling the students about their displeasure mistake that annoy the learning process. It is also concerned for the teacher dissatisfaction with what students are doing. Unfortunately, this study did not find the example of this type. It is probably because it happens in online learning environment in which the teacher cannot really see and control students’ activity.

Based on the FLINT system theory, there is also repeating student response verbatim. It has similar concept with using ideas of students. However, in this case, teacher uses or repeats the exact words done by students rather than paraphrasing it. Unfortunately, this study did not find the examples of repeating students’ response verbatim.

Lastly, it is about criticizing students’ response. It means that the teacher tells students about the incorrect or not-acceptable answer. The teacher then communicates it with such criticism or rejection words. This study found several examples of criticizing students’ response used in English and mixed languages as seen in the followings.

- English: “Oh we don’t have any picture here”.
- Mixed: “*Kalau yang itu kan masuk ke main idea, bukan supporting*”.

From the explanation above, it is clearly seen that the teacher talk varied based on the purposes needed by the teacher. The language uses also influence the use of teacher talk because some languages were needed to emphasize certain terms that the other language did not have, or it was merely because the teacher wanted to give the right intonation in such language. Additionally, the teacher also seemed to use English as much as possible to give more exposure to the students. The teacher talks in this study did not merely focus on asking question or giving directions but also paid attention more on giving information.

The findings of this study seem to be different from previous research on teacher talk done by Purwadi and Fauziati (2016) which discovered that there were five languages used by teacher in classroom instruction involving Arabic, English, Indonesian, Javanese, and mixed languages. It turned out that Indonesian was the dominant language in Purwadi and Fauziati's (2016) study, while in this present study, it was found that English was the most dominant language used by the teacher in the learning process. In addition, in Purwadi and Fauziati's (2016) study, nine (9) types out eleven (11) types of teacher talk were observed including: *attention getter; praises and encourages; repeat student response verbatim; ask questions; giving information; correct without rejection; give direction; criticize student behaviour; and criticize student response.* Moreover, the most dominant type of teacher talk presented by the teacher was asking question. This confirmed another study by Irmayani and Sofeny (2017) stating that "there were many teachers in EFL classroom who lacked attention to their talk during the classroom interaction. Many of them more often asked the question just to check the students' understanding regarding the lesson, but not to guide the students to have opportunities of using the target language practically" (p.225).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study revealed three languages used in the classroom interaction consisting of Indonesian, English, and mixed language. It was found that English was the most dominant language used by the teacher in the learning process. In addition, the types of teacher talk used by the teacher to interact with students found in this study involved nine (9) out of eleven (11) types of teacher talk delivered by the teacher including dealing with feelings, praises or encouragement, jokes, giving feedback to ideas of students, asking questions, giving information, correcting without rejection, giving direction, and criticizing student response. Moreover, the most dominantly used type by the teacher in the classroom was giving information. Unfortunately, this study did not figure out the use of repeating students' response verbatim and criticizing students' behavior. Future researcher may compare the teacher talk issue for face-to-face and online classroom. In addition, the pedagogical implication of multilingual use in teacher talk is still needed to be observed in the future and can be more beneficial for English teachers in the future. For beginner level, the use of bilingual or multilingual approach was preferable, and for more progression level or advanced learners, monolingual (English only) approach may suit the EFL classroom at tertiary level in an Indonesian or other EFL settings.

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