Do I talk right? Teacher Talk in Teaching English

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Abstract

This study investigated how the teachers used teacher talks in their classroom. This research was focused on analyzing how teachers in Pulo Aceh, Aceh Besar, used the features of teacher talk in improving students’ English speaking ability. SETT (Self Evaluation by Teacher Talk) designed by Walsh used to identify the features of teacher talk occurred in teaching and learning process. In addition, observation sheet was also used as the instrument of this study. From the findings, the writer found that there are eight of fourteen features used by the teachers in their classroom namely display question, extended teacher turn, teacher interruption, extended learner turn, extended wait-time, content feedback, form-focused feedback and direct repair. From these eight features, there were two of eight features used inappropriately by one of two teachers. Therefore, it can be concluded that the teachers has used teacher talk in their teaching and learning process, however the implementation of the features were not optimal. It is suggested the teacher should utilize more features of teacher talk in improving students’ ability in speaking so that the outcomes of the students in speaking is increased.

Keywords: Teacher talk, speaking, teacher talk’ features

1. INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the most important skills in language learning. It is supported by (Richards, 2008, p.16), mentioned that the ability of speaking skill is a priority in second language. In Indonesia, English plays a role as a foreign language (Crystal, 2003, p.60). Because it is a foreign language, people only speak English in schools or when they communicate with people who do not speak Indonesian. The effect of this condition is that they cannot develop their speaking ability in English.

There are four problems people face in speaking English. First, the environment of country that uses English as a foreign language does not support people to speak frequently (Paaki, 2013, p.96). Second, inadequate vocabulary that makes people difficult to express themselves or to communicate with other people (Alqahtani,
and then the problem in speaking is grammar (Paaki, 2013, p.30). Then, people who learn English are very easy to get confused with English grammar, which makes people who want to speak English are difficult and embarrassed to produce sentences orally. The last problem is pronunciation. According to Gan (2012, p.50) in his interview, in speaking people have to focus in the sound of their utterance particularly for word that is not used in daily life. It also happens to students who learn English. It is the reason why even students have learned English from elementary school to senior high school, they still cannot speak English.

To overcome the problems above, teachers can perform the appropriate teacher talk, or motivate students to be actively involved in the speaking classroom because teacher talk is important part that essentials for students’ learning activity (Rohmah, 2010, p.1). The features of teacher talk, such as scaffolding, may help teacher in teaching learning process. Teacher talk makes students involved actively in conversation and also develop their English proficiency (Xiao-Yan, 2006, p.5).

From the preliminary study in Pulo Aceh, the average score of speaking obtained by the students were lower than the minimum passing grade (70). The lesson students found the hardest was to produce a monologue about text genre. In order to find out more about the situation in the classroom, the writer also interviewed one of the students. In the student’s perspective, the teacher seldom encouraged her students to speak English, and usually spoke English too fast beyond the students’ competency. This is one of the ineffective uses of teacher talks in teaching speaking.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Teaching Speaking

Speaking is one of English language skills that is used as a communication tool to communicate with other people that has purpose to express their selves (Torky, 2006, p.13). According to Nunan (2003, p.54) as an English teacher, there are five principles that we have to know. First, as a teacher, we have to know whether the target language of English is as foreign or second language. Second, make students understand how to use appropriate English and get in touch in conversation with other people. Third, give students opportunities in speaking by asking them to make group or work in pairs. Fourth, plan speaking is a task that contains negotiation of meaning. The last, create classroom activities that include transactional and interactional speaking.

2.2 Teacher Talk

Teacher talk is the situation when a teacher uses the special way in teaching language learner so that the learner understands what the teacher means (Ellis, 1994, p.145). Then, teacher talk is a process when teacher negotiates meaning between first and target language in order to facilitate communication based on students’ level of proficiency (Fata, 2014).

There are fourteen features of teacher talk. First feature is scaffolding. Lee (2008, p.54) mentions that scaffolding is the situation where people with higher ability contribute themselves as a source to help other people understand something. The second is direct repair. (Asma, 2011, p.63), defines direct repair as a situation when teacher corrects students’ errors quickly and directly. (Walsh, 2006, p.141), also said direct repair is correcting students’ error quickly and directly. The third is content feedback. Content feedback is giving feedback on the meaning of the
sentence of the context rather than the form of the sentence (Asma, 2011, p.70). The fourth, extended wait time which means a situation where a teacher gives students opportunity to response to what the teacher asks. The fifth, referential question is a question that teacher really does not know the answer and the goal of this feature is to create a conversation (Lei, 2009, p.75). The sixth, seeking clarification is a situation where teacher does not satisfied with students answer and teacher rechecks her students understanding about the material (Walsh, 2012, p.8). The seventh feature is confirmation check. Rohmah (2010) explains that confirmation check is when teacher makes sure what she or he gives for a student has been appropriate with students’ response. The eight, extended learner- turn situation is a classroom interaction activity where teacher gives students opportunity to deliver information (Rohmah, 2010, p.5).

In addition, Walsh (2012) also states that extended learner-turn is situation when teacher gives a chance for students to explain their ideas completely. The ninth, teacher echo occurs when teacher repeats learner contribution in teaching and learning process to help all students understand the ideas given (Walsh, 2012, p. 9). The tenth, teacher interruption is designed to ensure interaction in class. It means that teacher gives attention in learning process that happens in class (Walsh, 2012). The eleventh, extended teacher turn process when a teacher gives material for students, and also the teacher needs to give right explanation about the material (Safrida&Kasim, 2016). The twelfth, display question is a situation when a teacher asks the question which the teacher has known the answer. It is carried out to get students’ response(Cullen, 1998, p.181) and (Rohmah, 2010). Next, form-focused feedback is when a teacher concentrates more on the correctness of structure that students use than the meaning of the messages(Walsh, 2012, p.11). The last is turn completion is a situation when teacher finishes all the content of material that students have worked (Asma, 2011).

3. METHODS

The participants were two English teachers from SMAN 1 Pulo Aceh and SMAN 2 Pulo Aceh. The teachers are male and female. There is only one instrument that the writer used in this study namely observation sheet. The purpose of using observation sheet was to provide a structured way to collect quality-related data as an input to data analysis. The research method used in this study was qualitative research. The recorded the teachers’ talk by those teachers then transcribed and analyzed them to get the data. The data was analysed by describing the teacher talk used by two English teachers. The transcribed data then analyzed to find what features of teachers talk that the teachers used in teaching English.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings of SMAN 1 Pulo Aceh

The first school observed was SMAN 1 Pulo Aceh. The teacher started the class by checking all of students’ attendance and saying hello. The teacher also greeted them by saying “How are you?What day is today?”and the students answered “Fine, today is Friday Miss”. What the teacher did was one of features in teacher talk that is display question.

The conversation below showed teacher talk used by the teacher:

T : General classification is a part that explains the subjects of reports or information. Then, the next part is description. What is the meaning of “description”?

LL : “deskripsi” (Indonesian)
“Description” provides subjects’ general characteristics. Then, what is the meaning of “general term”?

Common nouns

For example, wild animal. Verbs that described particular condition such as “an elephant is a big animal”.

By giving the explanation about the material for the students, the teacher did extended teacher turn. Then the writer also found that the teacher did extended wait-time in the teaching and learning process. It was proved in the conversation below:

What is the structure of simple past tense?

Then, one of the students answered:

The structure for simple past tense, irregular verbs

No

Then, the teacher asked each student to produce one sentence in past tense. However, all of students answered that they could not say it directly. Therefore the teacher gave them 1 minute to make a sentence. By giving the time for the students, the writer found that the teacher did extended learner turn. The conversation below showed it as evidence:

Please produce one sentence using verb in past form. Try to find a verb in past form, then make any sentence using the verb.

(they were not able to produce it in this time, then after about 1 minute)

“We made a cake last day ago”

Yes, it is right.

After all students finished producing one sentence in past tense respectively, they read the sentences one by one. Here the writer found that the teacher used content feedback. It was shown in the following conversation:

(Writing a sentence in white board) The sentences is “She woke up a half hour ago”. What is the meaning of the sentence?

The subject and it is verb in past (by showing them the sentence).

At this time, it was also found that the teacher used form-focused feedback. It was indicated because after asking the meaning of the sentence, the teacher also concerned about the structure of the sentence. The other features of teacher talk were also found in the interaction while the teacher explained recount text as shown in the following conversation:

What is the generic structure of recount?

Orientation
From the conversation above, it was found that the teacher used direct repair to correct the student’s mistake directly. In addition, the writer found that the teacher did interruption naturally. The interaction was shown in the conversation below:

T : What is orientation?
LL : Introduction the character, place and time Miss.
T : Then?
LL : “Event” Miss
T : Then, after “event”, what else?
L : “Event” Miss
T : No. After “event” is “RESOLUTION, PROBLEM SOLVING”.

After the writer conducted the observation, it can be concluded that the teacher used only 8 features of 14 features of teacher talk. The features were display question, extended teacher turn, teacher interruption, extended learner turn, extended wait-time, content feedback, form-focused feedback, and direct repair. The situation in the class was noisy and the students in class were active but they dominantly spoke in Acehnese or Indonesian.

4.2 Findings of SMAN 2 Pulo Aceh

The second school observed was SMAN 2 Pulo Aceh. The teacher used Indonesian and English in this class, but Indonesian was used dominantly in the teaching learning process. He used English only when he wanted to correct the students’ pronunciation or to translate the meaning of the word. The teacher started the class by checking all of students’ attendance then he shared hand out about the material learned on that day. Then, he explained about the past tense by using the text. He read and explained about the text as well as the meaning of the text. The writer found that the teacher did extended teacher turn as he tried to explain the material for the students when they started learning the topic.

After reading and translating the text, he asked the students about the text. The feature used by the teacher was called as extended wait-time. The conversation was as follows:

T : You know the story of the text, don’t you? I think you have watched the story, right?
LL : Yes.
T : So, what is the meaning of “once upon time a time”?  
L : ((   ))  
Pada suatu hari (Indonesian)”, Sir.
T : Yes, you are right.

After that, he asked one of students to read the text and translate it. When a student tried to translate it, the teacher did content feedback and direct repair. It was verified by the conversation below:

L : They were very boosy.
T : What is the meaning?
L : “Dia (Indonesian)” -
T : “They”, what is the meaning of “they”?
L : Mereka (Indonesian), is it right Sir?”
From the conversation above, it showed that the teacher focused on the meaning of the words and he also repaired the wrong meaning directly. The other features was found by the writer in the conversation below:

L : She had to do all of the homework.
T : What is the meaning of “she had to”?
L : (( )).
T : “She had to” has same meaning with “must”.
   So, she had to DO.
L : All the homework.
T : Yes.

Based on the conversation above, the teacher did display question where he asked the meaning of the word that he has known the answer. He asked the students to get their response about the text. Then, the writer also found that the teacher did teacher interruption that was one of the teacher talk features. The evidence was in the following conversation:

L : They lived happy ever after.
T : Yes, what is the meaning?
L : “Mereka hidup bahagia (Indonesian)”.
T : Then, continue to “the prince fell in love with her”, what is the meaning?
L : “Pangeran jatuh cinta kepadanya dan menikahinya (Indonesian)”.
T : Yes.

Then, the writer found that the teacher did form-focused feedback as shown in this conversation:

T : So we can conclude verb used in this story is a past verbs, for example “there was” in present form the verb is “there is”. Then, “there was a girl get called Cinderella, she lived”. “Live” is base verb, and “lived” is the past form of “live”. After that, “were” it has the same function with “was”. “Was” is used for subject I, she, and he, while “were” is used for subject they, you and we. “She had to do all home work”. “Have to” in present form becomes “had to” in past form.

LL : ( )

From the conversation, it was showed that the teacher focused on the form of the sentence structure in the text. He explained the word that was in past tense form as example from the text.

After the writer did observation, it can be concluded that the teacher at this school also used only 8 of 14 features of teacher talk. The features display question, extended teacher turn, teacher interruption, extended learner turn, extended wait-time, content feedback, form-focused feedback, and direct repair. However, the situation in the class was different from the class of SMAN 1 Pulo Aceh. In SMAN 2 Pulo Aceh, the students were not active and almost all of them only sat and kept silent.

4.2 Discussion

In this study, the writer found that the teacher of each school used only eight features of teacher talk in teaching English and the teacher did not use some of other important features. Whereas, the teachers must have used all features of teacher talk in order to improve the effectiveness of teaching English.

Based on the background of the students who have low proficiency in English, the teachers should use more features of teacher talk to increase the quality of students’ speaking. According to (Rohmah, 2010, p.10), she found that the teacher who used 12 features of teacher talk would gives great progress for students.
Furthermore, the teacher have to find a good way to teach the students as stated by (Karekatti & SHINde, 2010, p.63) that is teacher talk is very important for learners’ input, so the teacher must consider the use of teacher talk. The consideration includes how teacher use the appropriate features of teacher talk to teach complete beginners.

From eight features of teachers’ talk that the teachers used, only 6 of the features used by both of the teachers were appropriate with the theories, whereas 2 other features of teacher talk were not appropriate. The first feature found was display question. It is supported by (Notaz & Sanaz, 2014) pointed out that a teacher should use display question for low proficiency students in English in order that when students respond to the teacher they do not stress when they use their language. Then, using display question would improve their language proficiency.

The second feature found in observation was direct repair. Both of the teachers used direct repair, they used it when one of students made errors in structure or when the students had wrong pronunciation. As stated by (Race, 2009, p.8), direct repair give positive effect for students because they know how teacher correct them directly, and it motivates them to be better in learning process. The next feature found by the writer was content feedback. (Walsh, 2006, p.141) says that content feedback is feedback that focuses more to message rather than the structure of the sentences. It means that both of teachers corrected the wrong meaning produced by students. Furthermore, the writer found that the teachers also focused in the form of the construction of sentences, they showed the differences of verb in past and present form. By doing this, the teachers used form-focused feedback.

Another important feature found by the writer was extended teacher turn. The teacher used their turn to make their students understand about the topic by using the material that they had prepared. T1 started the class by asking them about recount text, and T2 started the class by giving them handout, then the students learnt about the material by finding out the example of the text.

Then, the writer found extended learner turn. (Rohmah, 2010, p.6) explains that extended learner turn is a proper chance for students because by implementing this feature, the teacher tries to make students understanding the material in their way and encourage them to be more active in class. In this context, T1 gave her students opportunities to make a simple past sentence by using subject and verb they want, while T2 gave his students opportunities to read and translate the text.

Then the writer would explain two features that were not used properly by one of the teachers. The feature was teacher interruption. (Mcchartry, 2003, p.5) states that teacher interruption is a feature indicating that there was a communication and interaction in classroom. As evidence, T1 did interruption by reminding her students about dictionary and T2 also did too much interruption.

The last feature found was extended wait-time. (Rohmah, 2010, p.6) says that by using extended wait-time, a teacher improves students’ ability. There is a difference between T1 and T2, T1 gave the sufficient time to wait the response from the students, while T2 only waited about 2 seconds and then he answered it by himself. Based on this situation, the writer figured out that the students taught by T1 were more active in class than students taught by T2.
5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the results of observation, it can be concluded that both of the teachers used only 8 features from 14 features of teacher talk namely display question, form-focused feedback, content feedback, extended wait time, extended learner turn, extended teacher turn, teacher interruption, and direct repair. Those eight features applied by T1 were appropriate with theories and the situation in the class. However, the writer found that from the eight features applied by T2, only six features were used properly and two other features were not appropriately used. It is suggested to English teacher to use the 14 features of teacher talk and know what feature they must use and how they should use it in order the features applied can be appropriate and improve students’ ability in English. Moreover, the writer suggests for further research to focus on the teacher talk and students talk in classroom.

REFERENCES
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