LANGUAGE MODIFICATION AND SUPPORTIVE ACTIONS BY AN ENGLISH TEACHER AT AN EYL CLASSROOM

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Abstract: The paper is concerned with the analysis of how a teacher modifies his or her language in the classroom. Moreover, this study investigates what the teacher does to support his or her language in the classroom. This study was conducted in one of international kindergartens in Bandung. The data were collected through video recording. Then, the data were analyzed according to Pinter's language modification framework (2006) and Harmer's paralinguistic features (2002). The result shows that the teacher tended to modify her language by repeating her utterances. The teacher also supported her talk by implementing paralinguistic features, especially gestures. This study recommended that teachers should consider their choice of language carefully and support her talk by implementing paralinguistic features.

Keywords: *Teacher talk, language modification, supportive actions, young learners*

Introduction

Since English is characterised as foreign language one, the type of English teacher talk is categorised as foreigner talk (Sambursky, 2009). As foreigner talk, teacher talk can be the main source of language input for the students especially in the young learners' classroom context (Pinter, 2006). Therefore, the teacher has to provide many language inputs by giving them many stimulus or responses verbally.

Acknowledging its importance, many studies have been conducted on teacher talk. Liruso and Debat (2002) highlight that there are several aspects of teacher talk that have been studied by many researchers, i.e. the amount of teacher talk, speech modification, code switching, types of questions, errors treatment, and the functional distribution of teacher talking relation to pedagogical and functional moves. Yet, as stated by Cullen (1998), the urgency of teacher talk is emphasized in the effectiveness of communicative teaching and learning process.

Nevertheless, creating effective and communicative atmosphere in foreign language classroom is not easy. Sometimes, communication breakdown between teachers and their students may appear. Therefore, the teachers need to modify their language use and they also need to support their verbal communication with nonverbal communication (Pinter, 2006) in order to make teaching and learning process more effective and interactive. Thus, the present study tries to answer the following research questions:

1.) How does the teacher modify his or her language?

2.) What does the teacher do to support his or her language in the classroom?

The result of this study is expected to give more information and descriptions about the importance of the use of supportive actions in the classroom to support verbal talk. Furthermore, the result of this study may attract other researchers to develop this area of study.

Theoretical Foundation

- Language Modification

Language modification refers to the teacher's technique in simplifying the language input in order to make it available and accessible to the students (Kumaravadipelu, 2008; Pinter, 2006; Cameron, 2001; Chaudron, 1988 cited in Moritoshi, 2006). In addition, the use of language modification in the classroom can avoid misunderstanding between the teacher and the students (Pinter, 2006). The language modification which is the focus of this study is based on Pinter's language modification (2006) which includes repetitions, comprehension checks, clarification requests, and confirmation checks.

1) Repetitions

In the perspective of foreign language classroom context, Duff (2000) defines repetition as the same utterances said by the teachers in order to help the learners develop their new language learning. In the young learners' classroom context, as it is suggested by Paul (2003), repetition is an essential part of language lesson because it will be more meaningful for children to listen to new

words over and over again. Harmer (2002) who also adds that repetition is very important because it can help the children remember and even use the new language that they see or hear.

2) Comprehension Checks

Comprehension checks are the speaker's query whether the interlocutors have understood the speaker's explanations (Allwright and Bailey, 1991, cited in Kumaravadipelu, 2008). In the classroom context, the speaker here refers to teacher and the interlocutors refer to the students. The teacher can check the students' comprehension by asking them "do you understand?" or "do you get what I am saying?" Checking the students' understanding is important for class management and for learning too (Cameron, 2001:211).

3) Confirmation Checks

Confirmation checks can be assumed as the speaker's question to the interlocutors in order to elicit the confirmation that the utterance has been correctly heard or understood (Sambursky, 2009). The teacher can express the confirmation checks by saying "are you saying you did live in London?" or "did you say you got five?" (Allwright and Bailey, 1991 cited in Kumaravadipelu, 2008: Pinter, 2006). Chaudron (1988, cited in Morithoshi, 2006) assumes confirmation checks as positive response of the teacher to the students' expressions.

4) Clarification Requests

As argued by Chaudron (1988, as cited in Moritoshi, 2006), clarification requests are similar to confirmation checks but with a more open answer. In addition, Allwright and Bailey (1991, as cited in Kumaravadipelu, 2008) define clarification requests as requests for further information toward what the students have previously said and can be expressed by saying "what do you mean?" or "what did you say?"

- Supportive Actions

Teachers in foreign language classroom should support their verbal talk with nonverbal aspects. Those nonverbal aspects are generally seen as a kind of bridge to connect with the verbal communication and it is called as paralinguistic features (Crystal, 1995). The paralinguistic features which are the focus of this study are based on Harmer's (2002) paralinguistic features. Harmer's paralinguistic features are divided into two broad categories: the vocal paralinguistic features (i.e. shouting, whispering, breathiness, huskiness, nasality, and extra lip rounding) and physical paralinguistic features (i.e. facial expressions, gestures, proximity, posture).

1) Vocal Paralinguistic Features

There are many ways in how to say things. It really depends on the situations, intentions, and circumstances (Harmer, 2002). This term is often said as tones of voice (Crystal, 1995). Crystal (1995) also adds that tones of voice describes vocal apparatus in which loudness, pitch, speed of speaking and many other the vocal qualities.

The example is given by Harmer (2002) who explains that someone can decide how low, loud, or soft the volume of their voice, such as whispering suggests a desire of secrecy, whereas shouting suggests as anger or determination. He also adds someone can make breathiness characteristic of their speaking if they want to express deep emotion. Then, to indicate the anxiety, someone can make his or her voice nasal.

2) Physical Paralinguistic Features

Physical paralinguistic features involve some body movements and may deliver a powerful message to others (Harmer, 1998). The example of physical paralinguistic features are facial expression, gestures, and proximity and echoing.

Methodology

- Site and Participant

The present study largely adopts qualitative method. The study was conducted in an International kindergarten in Bandung. This kindergarten was purposively chosen since English was used as the main instruction in the classroom. In addition, the participant of the study was a teacher who was a female.

- Data Collection

The data of the study was collected through video recording. The video recording technique was applied in this study because this technique can capture both of the teacher's language and actions. The video recording process was conducted six times (30th November 2012, 03rd December 2012, 05th December 2012, 10th December 2012, 12th December 2012, and 14th December 2012). On 10th December 2012, the participant of the study did not come to the class. Therefore, there were five recording data as the sources of the study. After collecting the five sets of data gained from video recording, the teacher's language use were transcribed and the teacher's actions were described.

- Data Analysis

The transcripts data were analyzed by using qualitative data analysis as proposed by Creswell (2009). The steps that were used in analyzing the data were organizing and preparing the data, reading through all the data, coding and classifying the data, generating a description of findings and forming themes, presenting and reporting the findings, and making the interpretation of the data.

Data Presentation and Discussion

- Language Modification

The present study examines two research problems, i.e. the language modification and the supportive actions realized by the teacher in the young learners' classroom. For the first research problem, it is found that the teacher modified her language in conducting the lessons in the classroom. The modification of the language by the teacher includes repetitions, comprehension checks, confirmation checks, and clarification requests. This is in line with what has been suggested by Pinter (2006). In addition, it is found that the teacher tended to modify her language by repeating her utterances. This finding is in line with Paul (2003) who says that teachers in young learners' classroom should repeat her utterances over and over again since repetition is meaningful for children to get language exposure. Distinctively, Table 1 presents the summary results of the teacher's language modification in the classroom.

Table 1

Summary Results of Teacher's Language Modification in one

Kindergarten in Bandung

Meetings	Language Modification							
	Repetitions		Comprehension Checks		Confirmation Checks		Clarification Requests	
	Freq	(%)	Freq	(%)	Freq	(%)	Freq	(%)
1.	54	76.06	13	18.31	1	1.41	3	4.23
2.	65	62.50	30	28.85	6	5.77	3	2.88
3.	61	48.03	47	37.01	14	11.02	5	3.94
4.	145	71.43	44	21.67	11	5.42	3	1.48
5.	157	72.35	42	19.35	15	6.91	3	1.38
Average	96.40	66.07	35.20	25.04	9.40	6.11	3.40	2.78

Based on Table 1 above, there are three points to be highlighted. Firstly, it can generally be observed that the teacher tends to repeat her utterances in the classroom (66.07%). The highest percentage of repetitions appears in the first meeting. Secondly, the percentage of comprehension checks takes the second place (25.05%) then followed by confirmation checks (6.11%). Finally, it can be generally observed that the lowest percentage of language modification used by the teacher is clarification requests (2.78%).

- Supportive Actions

The second research problem focuses on the supportive actions that were used by the teacher in the young learners' classroom. The teacher supported her verbal communication in the classroom by implementing nonverbal communication which is known as paralinguistic features. Based on the result of analysis, the teacher tended to support her verbal communication by using more physical than vocal paralinguistic features. The physical features include facial expressions, gestures, proximity, and posture. Among four physical paralinguistic features that were implemented by the teacher in the classroom, gestures were mostly implemented. Distinctively, **Table 2** presents the summary results of the teacher's supportive actions in the classroom.

Table 2

Summary Results of Teacher's Supportive Actions (Paralinguistic

Features)

In one Kindergarten in Bandung

Meetings	Paralinguistic Features									
	Vocal Paralinguistic Features				Physical Paralinguistic Features					
	Shouting		Whispering		Facial Expressions		Gestures		Proximity, Postures, Echoing	
	Freq	(%)	Freq	(%)	Freq	(%)	Freq	(%)	Freq	(%)
1.	1	1.11	2	2.22	5	5.56	70	77.78	12	13.33
2.	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	56	94.92	3	5.08
3.	4	5.88	3	4.41	3	4.41	55	80.88	3	4.41
4.	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	69	83.13	14	16.87
5.	11	6.83	0	0.00	0	0.00	140	86.96	10	6.21
Average	3.20	2.77	1.00	1.33	1.60	1.99	78.00	84.73	8.40	9.18
Total Average (%)	4.09				95.91					

Based on Table 2, there are three points to be highlighted. Firstly, it can be generally be interpreted that the teacher tended to use physical paralinguistic features (95.91%) than vocal paralinguistic features (4.91). The teacher mostly used gestures to support her verbal communication since it gains the biggest percentage (84.71%). This finding is in line with Roth's (2001) and Darn's (2005) observation toward the use of nonverbal communication in the language classroom that gestures is very essential and useful in foreign language. Secondly, those physical paralinguistic features appeared in every meeting, except the facial expressions. It happens because there is a difficulty in capturing teacher's facial expressions due to the position of the cameras. On the other hand, it can be obviously seen in Table 2, the vocal paralinguistic features did not appear in every meeting. They only appeared in the 1st, 3rd and 5th meeting and facial expressions only appeared in the 1st and 3rd meeting. Finally, it can be observed that in every meeting, the percentage of each type of vocal and physical paralinguistic features are various.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion above, it can be concluded that the teacher modified her language by repeating her utterances and supported her verbal talk by using gestures. The teacher repeated her utterances in order to make the students understand her instructions easily. When the students could not understand what the teacher had explained, she supported her verbal talk by using gestures.

For the improvement of further studies on the area of classroom discourse analysis, the present study offers suggestions. Firstly, this study focuses on teacher talk and supportive actions. Further study can analyze the influence of teacher talk and supportive actions to the students' comprehension in learning a new language.

Secondly, in terms of site and participant of the study, the present study only involves a teacher in one international kindergarten in Bandung. If time, finance

and energy allow, further researchers may involve a large number of participants and sites to have a better data representation.

The last one, it is suggested English teachers generally that they should use more target language in foreign language classroom in order to provide the main language input for the students who may have limited language exposure outside the classroom. Moreover, the teachers should strengthen their verbal talk by using nonverbal talk in order to make the teaching and learning process successfully.

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