EFL STUDENTS' DILEMMA: FACTORS DETERMINING THEIR TALK IN THE LANGUAGE LEARNING PROCESS

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ABSTRACT

Student talk is a critical component for students learning success in the classroom. It is also seen as one major factor determining students classroom interaction. The purpose of the present study is to explore the students talk and their dilemma in doing classroom interaction. This study also points out factors affecting students talk during language learning process. A case study was employed in this study. It was conducted in three English literature classes, consisting of ninety-seven undergraduate students. The data were obtained from non-participation observation, interview, and document. Through the synthesis of interaction analysis systems, these data were analyzed. The categories used were student talk-response (specific), student talk-response in choral, student-initiated/student's volunteering, use L1/native language, silence and confusion, and laughter. The findings of this study reveal that the students produced almost all categories of student talk when they participated in language learning process. Student talk-response (specific), student talk-response in choral, student-initiated/student's volunteering, and use L1/native language were mostly employed by them. The most encouraging findings from the students' dilemma was that many students felt restricted to participate in the class activity so they sometimes were unwilling to participate or interact in the classroom. Further, it was found several factors which affected and restricted their talk, they were, lecturing style, lecturer trait and classmate trait, unfavorable feedback from lecturer, lack of confidence, lack of motivation, lack of vocabulary mastery, lesson material, and classroom environment. Considering the findings of this research, it is important for lecturers to provide interactive and communicative teaching-learning activities to involve more interaction and participation from the students. It is also advisable for English teachers/lecturers to consider the factors that might affect the teaching-learning interaction in the classroom. Moreover, this study points to the critical role of students talk in shaping their classroom participation patterns. Thus, there needs to be more in-depth research in different contexts focusing on the kinds of pedagogical techniques that can facilitate active student interaction to avoid restriction of student talk.

Keywords: *student talk, language learning process, interaction.*

INTRODUCTION

Interaction is an important pattern where both teachers and students come into contact to share information and knowledge (Brown, 2000; Tsui, 2001; Hall & Walsh, 2002; Dagarin, 2004; Richards & Schmidt, 2010). Language learning is seen to result from active verbal interaction between the teacher and the students. It raises the effectiveness of language teaching-learning process as there is the involvement of two-way interaction and an active participation between teachers and students in the classroom activities.

In educational institution, there are teachers with different levels of experience, knowledge, skill, and expertise. Mutual sharing of knowledge and experience is a valuable source of professional growth (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Besides that, teachers roles affect the presence of student talk and determine students classroom participation. The teachers not only become a guide, facilitator, and counsellors (Brown, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Dagarin, 2004), but also make suggestions, control turn-taking in the class, and ask questions as they do the activities. The teachers model the target language, control the direction and pace of learning, and monitor and correct the learners' performance. The students need the suitable treatment from teachers to emerge their active interaction.

Studies into students dillemma in the second language classroom have been pervasive in various contexts. The college students of today faces many dilemmas, especially in language learning process. Since language learning itself has shifted from teacher-centered to more of student-centered, the biggest students' problem is on their active talk and participation. In this phases, letting them to take risks and learn from error are beneficial strategies for improving language skills. There are several students admitting that they has low self-esteem and motivation due to their difficulties in learning a foreign language, English. Even, they realize that for language learners to be successful they need to be able to speak and communicate in the class. On the other side, Swain (1985) argued that passive learners make slower progress to practice the target language since they are lack of awareness of the gap between what they want to say and what they are able to say in the target language, therefore, they are probable lack of

challenging themselves to enrich their language learning. Further, student silence reflects that there is no indication on how the lesson is accepted and processed by the students.

The relevant studies have shown that there are various factors determining the student's talk and student's participation in the learning process. The study from Abdullah, Bakar, & Mahbob (2012) found out that the factors influencing the students to speak up in the class were the size of a classroom, personalities of the instructur and students, and the perception of peers. Another result from Mustapha, Rahman, & Yunus (2010) strongly argue that lecturer traits and classmate traits play significant roles in enhancing student participation in Malaysian undergraduate students.

The concern on the success of english language learning leads a study to explore and identify the categories of student talk used by the students in English Literature classes and find out the factors determining their talk during language learning process. The discussion is based on the information gauged from classroom observation.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted at one of Universities in Bandar Lampung. The participants were three English literature classes, consisting of ninety-seven undergraduate students. These classes are drama class, prose class, and literary criticism class. The data for this study was collected in the early 2017 through interview, observation, and video-recording. The semi-structured interview with open-ended questions was conducted to three English lecturers to find out the possible answers from their point of view. Twenty-five students were also interviewed for about 25 minutes to express their experiences in participating and interacting during language learning process.

The observation was carried out by idenfying all potentially relevant occurances of interactions' categories of the student talk. The categories used were the synthesis of interaction analysis system (Flanders, 1970; Moskowitz, 1971; Brown, 1975). They were student talk-response (specific), student talk-response in choral, student-initiated/student's volunteering, use L1/native language, silence and confusion, and laughter. The non-participant observation was suitable since the observer remained inconspicuous so that the categories of student talk were not affected. Video-recordings were also allowed during the observations in the three classes. Video-recordings are a relatively straightfoward means of recording interaction in the classroom and have the added advantage of providing a visual representation of what happened (Walsh, 2011). 100 minutes from each session was recorded on video. The data from observation were coded. Recurring categories of student talk exhibited by the students in the classroom activities were identified and categorized through reading and coding the data.

ANALYSIS

After analyzing the data, the results show the multitude of views. Some categories of student talk used by the EFL students were identified and categorized based on the synthesis of interaction analysis system. From the findings, it is found that most of student talk categories were employed by the students. Those categories were student talk-response (specific), student talk-response in choral, student-initiated/student's volunteering, and use L1/native language.

In the drama class, the students showed their activeness by participating in the active activity such as role play. The student talk-response (specific) and students-initiated/student's volunteering were upmost categories posed by them. In role play activity, the students were pushed to show off their talent in acting. They talked actively and gave valuable response when the lecturer instructed them to do those activity. They liked volunteering when the lecturer asked them to act in front of the class or just read the dialogue in the part of story script. It is different with the second class's condition – literary criticism class. They performed all categories, i.e., student talk-response (specific), student talk-response in choral, student-initiated/student's volunteering, use L1/native language, silence and confusion, and laughter in the same portion. Meanwhile, the categories of student talk applied by the students in the prose class were student talk-response (specific), student talk-response in choral, student-initiated/student's volunteering, use L1/native language. Thus, these categories reflect that the students were not passive at all during learning process. Intentionally, the students use the student talk's categories to cover their response (Senowarsito, 2013) and initiation as learning strategies. The lecturers posed the direction/intruction, lecture, and questions to motivate the students to give their response and initiation. In delivering their responses, the students are not only individually but also chorally (Setiawati, 2012). It is believed that student's active talk is as a golden way through which the lecturers might be able to evaluate their language and cognitive development.

Related to the data, the students from three different classes show proactive to seek knowledge and acquire information. How they seek and acquire information reflect their behaviour as active participation. In the classroom, most activities done by the students of English literature classes were presentation, discussion, debate, and role play. These active activities foster the students' responsibility and independency by forcing them to talk spontaneously and actively, share their ideas, ask and answer the question posed, and respond in a natural way. By applying these activities, the students might generate variety of language functions such as argueing, hypothesizing, requesting, and clarifying. In certain time, the students faced several dilemmas in doing their language learning.

Based on the observation and interview, their learning dilemmas were caused by various factors. These factors can come from the lecturer, students, and their environment. Eventhough they are categorized as active students, they were somewhat reluctant to take part in the active activities given by the lecturers depanding on the situation and condition. They also can become passive student in joining classroom active activities due to the self-limitations. They stated that they are sometimes less serious in participating in these activities because they thought that sometimes the activities and the standard of activities given were difficut to be followed.

In the literary critisicm class, most students stated that students' confidence become the biggest dilemma they face during learning process as they were hesitant to share their own opinion, not be brave to talk, and shy to deliver their opinion. They did not want to take any risk to respond the question and initiate to discuss something. They were reluctant to share their ideas due to fear of lecturer criticism, fear of offense, and fear of failing to share their knowledge and intelligence, especially in discussion session. So, they preferred to give the response together with their friends, especially in question-answer session. Their argument is in line with Brock-Utne (2006) who argues that chorus answer/giving response together is safe talk for students. But, it has negative effect since the lecturer only accepts the students' answer without reassuring whether they understand the lesson or not. It is different with the students from drama class and prose class. They were pushed and encouraged to engage actively in the class activities such as role play. Most of them were somewhat passive when the lecturer explained the theory/lesson material. They were difficult to focus in the class and no interest in learning the topic being discussed. They preffered to perform something such as mini drama and musical poetry which show their talent and intelligent.

Classmate traits also affect them to contribute in the class. These point is one of the factors from the students in processing and producing language. They are afraid if their classmates judge them as inferior students when they are asking question about unclear explanation from the lecturers and giving incorrect answer or response. They found that their other friends laugh when they make mistakes. That situation surely make them unwilling to participate in the classroom activity. Brown (2000) asserts that the courageous of the students is influenced by classroom climate where the students accept each other. It is in line with Fassinger (1995) who classified classmate traits into interaction norms and emotional climate. Interaction norms include pressure from peers not to speak, the pressure to keep comments brief, peer discouragement of controversial opinions, peers' attention, and peers' lack of respect. In another side, emotional climate covers friendship, students' supports of each other, and students' cooperation. Most students from three different classes said that classmate trait gave them influences to be active in the class. For active students, they would be competing to search knowledge and information through discussion and participation in classroom. But, for passive students, classmate traits were assumed as negative thing since they thought that active students only wanted to show off rather than inspire them to learn. Some passive students considered the domination of active student talkaffecting them to feel inferior, thus, they choose to stay inactive in the language learning process.

Furthermore, motivation becomes a crucial factor affecting students' performance in English learning (Zhao, 2012; Dai & Sternberg, 2004). The students should encourage themselves to talk more since it can boost their performance in the class. Another point is vocabulary mastery. It also affects the interaction of the students. The students revealed that lack of vocabulary mastery could hamper their talk and impact students' reticence to participate in the language learning. As stated by Thornbury (2002), the lack of vocabulary makes the students difficult in receiving and producing the language.

The study revealed that teaching style and teaching method are very influential motivating factors to raise verbal participation amongst students during teaching-learning process. These factors mediated student silent behavior. The students stated that the lecturer's teaching style influenced their personal feeling. When the lecturer taught dominantly without providing an interactive way, they were restricted to take part actively. It is clear that these students were aware of the limiting learning opportunities provided by excessive teacher talk time (Walsh, 2002). If lecturer understands how the dynamics of classroom

communication influence the students' participation in the classroom activities, they might be better to monitor and adjuct the patterns of classroom communication in order to create an environment that is condusive to classroom learning and students' acquisition (Johnson, 1995).

Furthermore, the students stated that classroom environment also influenced their active talk and partisipation. The elements that associated with this factor were the size of a classroom, seating position in the class, noise, condition of the classroom, lecture time, and the use of technology (Abdullah et al., 2012). They believed that these elements determined language learning process less effective because learning environment supports or deters the students' quest for participating in the classroom activities (Tomlinson, 2003, in Maurine et al., 2012). Most of active students see different view on the effect of classroom size on their participation. They assumed small size classroom as a condusive and comfortable environment for learning. When they engaged in that class, they did not felt shy to contribute in the class activity and able to focus more on the topic being discussed. The finding also indicates that seating position gave impact to them. The portion of their participation was affected due to unconvenience seating position. Overall, the classroom size and seating positions in the classroom are essential aspects to persuade passive students to be active students in the class.

Overall, both active students and passive students acknowledge the importance of students to interact and participate actively in the class. Identifying the dilemmas covering factors for purpose of listing the reasons which encourage them to speak up in language learning process is important to the lecturers in managing their classroom. With this understanding, the lecturers can plan teaching strategies and employ suitable techniques to transform the classroom into a full integration of interaction categories whereby majority of the students get engaged actively in the classroom activities.

CONCLUSION

From the discussion and analysis, the students face dilemma when they could not get engaged actively and learn a language productively in the class. The domination of teacher talk deprives them to participate actively in the class. Their interaction could not run smoothly as they reach the limits due to the influencing factors. They found several internal and external factors that affected and restricted their talk. These factors are lecturing style, lecturer trait and classmate trait, unfavorable feedback from lecturer, lack of confidence, lack of motivation, lack of vocabulary mastery, lesson material, and classroom environment. They use various categories of student talk continuously with different proportion since the lecturer provides them the active and interactive learning activities such as discussion, presentation, debate, and role play. The more interactive learning activities they get, the more talk they produce.

In order to achieve a good interaction patterns, emphasizing on student talk, the interactive and communicative activities must be employed in language learning process. Both lecturer and students need to be aware of anticipating the internal and external factors determining their talk. In the light of the findings, it is obvious that good proportion of student talk is beneficial in language learning process so that they become the center and the learning process is not dominated by the lecturers. Thus, the lecturers also should be more creative in designing the teaching style, interactive and active learning activities, interesting teaching materials, and communicative tasks in order to attract the students to get involved actively and productively in language learning process.

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