Teacher and Child Talk in 'Paud' English Class

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Abstract

With globalization, the importance of English for young learners has been widely acknowledged in Indonesia in recent years and this is further enhanced by people's belief in early English education - the sooner their young children learnEnglish the better. Therefore, many people send their young children to PAUDpre-schools which provide English from the first year of schooling. Today, a lot of PAUDpre-schools are running English programs which have attracted many parents to send their young children to the schools.

This paper describes features of teacher and child talk in teaching English at one PAUD pre-school. The study was conducted in SatyaParahitaPAUD, in Salatiga. The participant of the study was the English teacher at the school. The data for the study were collected from several classroom observations which were audio-recorded and then transcribed. The analysis of the data shows that the teacher used a variety of interactional moves in teaching young learners and that the teacher's feedback shows different functions which support learning in different ways. The paper concludes with implications for early English instruction for young learners.

Introduction

With globalization and the role of English as an international language, the need for English competence has been widely acknowledged. Enthusiasm for English learning has intensified. With the implementation of the government's policy of teaching English early, participation in English learning has been rising in many PAUD pre-schools. For example, in PAUDYarsi, 'English Time', 'Family Day', 'Market Day' are activities in its curriculum designed as extracurricular activities (http://paud.yarsi.ac.id), and in some PAUD pre-schools English has been used as a medium of instruction (Susilawati, 2008). In Indonesia, PAUD has accommodated 15.000.000 learners (Mardiani, 2012) and it can be assumed that with the acknowledged importance of English more and more PAUD pre-schools, especially those in the cities, will be offering English to young learners.

The teaching of early-childhood English in PAUD has impacted the field of English teaching in English Education Departments. The curriculum has been adjusted to meet the needs for English teachers for young learners. More and more research is now directed to investigating how English is taught in PAUD. Many students have been assigned to have their teaching practicum in PAUD and then many of these pre-service teachers work as English teachers inPAUD.

The interest for introducing early English to pre-schoolers has been based on the assumption that young learners can acquire a new language easily. This statement is often heard from people or scholars who have pursued further study in English speaking countries where they had the opportunity to send their children to school. Many of them testified that their young children could communicate in English quickly. Research along this line has been published and the results indicate positive development of young children second language acquisition. While this finding may be generalizable across first and second language contexts, it needs to be questioned whether English for young children in Indonesia, especially that taught inPAUD would be acquired similarly well by pre-schoolers inPAUD considering that the learning contexts are variably different. This is a challenge to the teaching of English as a foreign language inPAUD.

In teaching English inPAUD, the role of the English teacher is very dominant. The question whether the English teacher should use Indonesian as the medium of instruction in teaching English has been a source of some debate. Arguments cantered on the context of English as a first or second language tend to be ideological and research-based and opt for exclusive use of the target language in the classroom. Much exposure to the target language is believed to speed up acquisition. On the other hand, EFL-based arguments tend to be linguistically oriented which is more instrumentally motivated, utilizing much Indonesian especially when complex explanation is needed or when classroom management issues arise during learning. In our school context, the English teacher is the only source of English input which should be made comprehensible to the learners. Therefore, as the argument goes, the teacher should as much as possible minimize code-switching practice since it deprives learners of the opportunity to get exposed to English and its real, authentic use. Much code-switching would result in lost opportunity to obtain useful intake and authentic communication. Research conducted in primary and secondary schools investigating the role of Indonesian in teaching English have revealed important findings about teacher talk and its pedagogical purposes and motivations of L1 use. The current study has a similar orientation with a focus on the teacher's interactional moves and feedback types in teaching Englishin one PAUD in Salatiga.

Teacher-Learner Interaction in English Classes

Learner language performance, to a large extent, is determined by the type of interaction that occurs between the teacher and the learner. Studies on child first language development in L1 contexts abound and child language performance can develop if the child and adult are engaged in elaborative conversations. Collaborative talks usually require higher cognitive and linguistic demands and these demands are believed to be able to push children's language acquisition forward. However, in the case of foreign (English) language acquisition, such as that in PAUD contexts, elaborative talks between the English teacher and the learners rarely happen, if not non-existent, because it is difficult for young learners due to their limited English skills.

It is common practice that talks in English classes in PAUD are teacher-controlled and learners tend to respond in single-word utterances or short phrases, or formulaic chunks. According to Yeh& Chang (2009), the research conducted by Tsai (1996) in Taiwan, reveals that student-teacher talks in English classes produce some interactional types when they have more open discussions on some topics familiar to the learners. They can produce more talk,

provide answers to the teacher's questions, and they talk with peers. However, in another study by Wu (2004), also cited in Yeh and Chang (2009), where English is used all the time as a medium of instruction, elaborated talks between the teachers and the learners, or talks between learners, seldom occur. One reason for this is because the teacher's instruction requires the learners to display their linguistic skills. In other words, the learners are not encouraged to express their opinions. These two studies show that interactions in English classes depend on the teacher's instructional demands which may be constrained by the learners' limited linguistic knowledge and the status of English as a foreign language with a very limited exposure in the classroom.

The literature on first language acquisition such as that discussed in Hughes and Westgate (1998) shows that the type of interaction that is made between adults and children determines how quickly children can acquire English. This, I would argue, is also true to Indonesian children learning Indonesian as first or second language. In our school or family contexts, young children are always surrounded by adults - teachers or parents, or other family members. These adults create opportunities to talk to children collaboratively in which the topics in their talks are jointly negotiated and this joint negotiation plays an important role in developing children's acquisition of Indonesian. A negotiated conversation is important because it encourages language use that is collaborative. Such talk provides children to build their language skills, share meanings and produce more quantity of talk. Besides talk between adults and children, opportunities for children's talk also has a significant role on children language learning. This is a crucial factor that seems to be lacking in most English classes in our educational system including those in PAUD language learning environments.

Studies investigating teacher's strategies in teaching English to young learners have been conducted at some schools in Salatiga (Noviana, 2010; and Purba, 2011). These studies reveal that the English teachers used a variety of strategies such as questioning, praising, instructing and so forth with a dominant use of Indonesian throughout the lessons and the classes were very teacher-centered. One interesting difference between these two studies is the use of collaborative technique in Purba's research. She observed English classes in first year of elementary school where the teacher, among other strategies she used, asked the learners to work in groups to solve a learning problem. This technique did not occur in Noviana's research since the learners werePAUD pre-schoolers. It appears that, based on these two studies, the choice of a particular technique is affected by the age of the learners. More mature learners can be assigned more complex tasks which demand higher cognitive and linguistic ability. It should be noted that in both studies the use of Indonesian was dominant and English was used less than optimal in quantity and quality.

It is interesting to know from other research in English speaking countries that the use of learner's language (English) in teaching a foreign language such as French also reveals relatively similar pattern; that is the use of target language (L2) was very low (Duff & Polio, 1990). In another study by Mitchell (1988) as quoted in Kim & Elder (2005), one reason for the low use of L2 was the presence of English (L1) as a means of communication for both the teacher and the students. In other words, because everyone speaks English (L1) it is very convenient if it is used for immediate classroom interactions. Similarly, the low use of English in English classes in Indonesian schools may be due to the same reason – since Indonesian is spoken by everyone in the class, it is pragmatically appropriate if immediate interactional needs use Indonesian. Other factors that may contribute to the minimal use of

English in our schools may derive from teacher's limited fluency in English which, then, makes it difficult to repair communication breakdowns in classes. As a result, the teacher may resort too much code-switching that results in learner's relying on Indonesian.

The view that emerges from the discussion above is that teachers need to be made aware of their language use. The main concern, in my view, is that the classroom environment should provide sufficiently rich English input to enable learners to acquire English being taught at one particular time. It is within this interest that this paper presents a study of teacher's interactional patterns of English classes in one PAUD pre-school.

The context of learning

This study was conducted in SatyaParahitaPAUD, in Salatiga.It is a non-formal education system and it does not have formalities such as those implemented in most pre-schools. This PAUDpre-school does not have fixed schedule and the lesson starts when the children have arrived. If many children come late, then the lesson will start a bit later. Attendance is not very regular. There are often new students coming to class, therefore, class size changes every day. The students' ages range from toddlers to six or eight years old. The English lesson does not have a syllabus; instead, the teacher picks up topics familiar to children such as parts of the body, occupations, or means of transport. The teaching techniques are carefully adjusted to simulate children games and everyday activities in order to avoid boredom. The teaching atmosphere is made very relaxing and flexible to accommodate children's interests. In this PAUD, there is no formal assessment; therefore, there is no record of students' progress in English. Learning progress is usually discussed together by the teacher and parents who are allowed to sit in the class. Very often the parents take the role as the teacher's 'assistant' in dealing with classroom management and discipline. The educational objective of PAUD is to prepare the children for the next level of education; that is to prepare them for primary school education. Therefore, learning experience in PAUD, including English learning experience, has a significant role in children education at the primary level in which English is often offered as a local content curriculum. With this learning context in mind, this study aimed to figure out the interactional patterns or teaching moves and feedback types provided by the teacher during English classes.

Method

This study used a descriptive method (Wiersma, 1969) to identify the patterns of talk by the teacher in teaching English to young learners at the school. The data were collected from six classroom observations and an interview with the teacher which were audio-recorded. The recordings were, then, transcribed and coded for the types of interaction patterns identified in the transcripts. The coding of the data was based on the framework proposed by Kim & Elder (2005), with some modification, in which they describe teacher's moves into the following categories:

1. Extend; the teacher builds upon previous student's language.
2. Check; the teacher asks closed questions such as OK? Finished? Ready? Etc.
3. Display; the teacher requires students to display their linguistic knowledge.
4. Elicit; the teacher gives commands, questions, or phrases functioning as a call for students' answers or responses.
5. Nominate; the teacher names students in the class and requires answers or responses.

6. Evaluate; the teacher repeats student's answers and provides feedback indicating that it is appropriate
7. Model; the teacher helps the student with either grammatical structure or pronunciation, and provides the correct model.
8. Discipline; the teacher's call to students functioning to change non-acceptable behavior in order to maintain attention.

Findings and Discussion

This section addresses the question how the teacher interacts with the learners in terms of teaching moves. Therefore, the analysis is presented in terms of teacher's interactional patterns and the types of feedback in their talk. Firgure 1 below presents the teacher's moves in teaching.

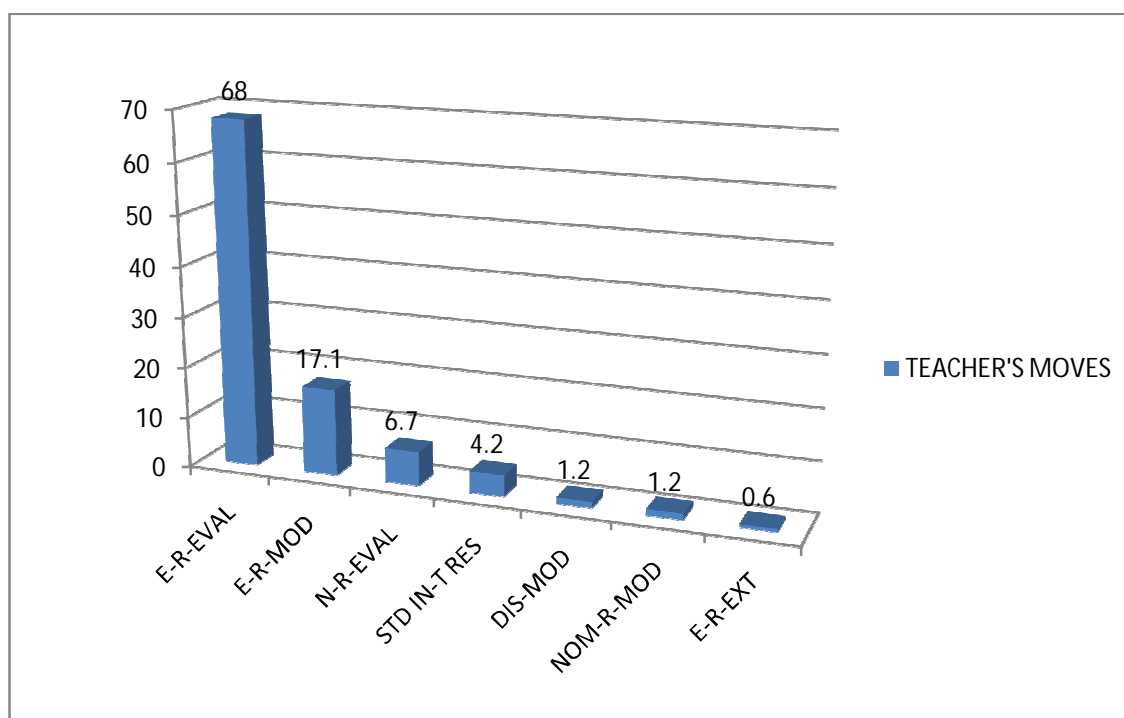**Figure 1. Teacher's interactional patterns**

Figure 1 shows that there are seven patterns of teacher's interactional moves which have been put in order of frequency from high to low. Table 1 below shows examples of interactional exchanges between the teacher and the learners.

Table 1. Types of Interactional Exchange

Interactional exchange	Teacher's move
1. Elicit-Response-Evaluation (E-R-EVAL)	
T: BahasaInggrisnyakepala, siapa yang ingat?	E

L: Head T: Head. Hebat	R Eval
2. Elicit-Response-Modeling (E-R-MOD)	
T: ApatadibahasaInggrisnyakuping? L: …ar T: Ear. Ya. Yang banter yuk. Lihatsini….	E R Mod
3. Nominate-Response-Evaluation (N-R-EVAL)	
T: Ernest, Ernest…ini…bahasaInggrisnyatangan? L: Hand T: Pinter	N R Eval
4. Student initiate-Teacher response (STD IN-T RES)	
S: Good morning (coming late) T: Good morning. Ayo lingkarankecil…lingkaranbesar….Wa…besar….(T and stds sing in circles)	Std initiate Teacher response
5. Discipline-Modeling (DIS-MOD)	
T: Yuk sekarangsemuaberdiri. Ayo Daniel berdiri (tangannyaditarikmendekati guru) T: (guru bernyanyidengangerakan). Today I go to school. Good morning, good morning…..	Dis Mod
6. Nominate-Response-Modeling (NOM-R-MOD)	
T: Nini….ingatndakbahasaInggrisnyatangan? L: hand (tidakjelas) T: Hand	N R Mod
7. Elicit-Response-Extend (E-R-EXT)	
T: BahasaInggrisnyaterimakasih? L: Thank you T: You're welcome. Siniambilsendirikertasnya.	E R Ext

As can be seen in Figure 1, the highest frequency of teacher's move was Elicit-Response-Evaluation; as much as 68% of the total teaching moves, indicating that in teaching English to the learners the teacher provided a lot of evaluation or praises to the learners elicited responses. Then, Elicit-Response-Modelling was second (17,1%) in which the teacher provided the correct model or correction to the learners' wrong response of English vocabulary or pronunciation. The third and fourth moves were teacher's evaluation to the

learners' nominated responses in which the teacher provided evaluation or praises or responses to individual students.

Further analysis of teacher's Elicit-Respons-Evaluation moves indicated that the teacher used different techniques of evaluating the learners' language as presented in the following table.

Table 1. Evaluation techniques used in teaching

Elicit-Respons-Evaluation move	Technique/means used
1 T: Ini lihat, ini gambar apa ini? L: Hidung T: Hidung. Hidung bahasa Inggrisnya apa? L: Nose T: Nose. Hebat. Kalo yang ini.....?	 Repeat L's response Verbal expression: hebat
2 T: Bahasa Inggrisnya kepala, siapa ingat bahasa Inggrisnya kepala? L: Head T: Head. (Guru mengacungkan jempol ke anak itu, sambil mangatakan 'hebat').	 Repeat L's response Gesture with verbal expression: hebat.
3 T: Bahasa Inggrisnya tangan apa tadi? L: Hand T: Iya pinter.....	 No repeat of L's response Verbal expression: Iya pinter
4 T: Apa tadi bahasa Inggrisnya kepala? L: Head T: Head. Yang banter!	 Repeat L's respons Instruction
5 T: Apa bahasa Inggrisnya hidung? L: Nose T: Nose. Pinter. Ni hidung... (guru menggambar hidung). Hmm....	 Repeat L's response Expression of evaluation: Pinter Drawing the object
6 T: Bibir apa bahasa Inggrisnya? Apa tadi? L: Lips	 Repeat L's response

T: Lip, ya... Kalo bibir atas, bibir bawah berarti dua... lips.	A bit of grammar; plural
7 T: Apa bahasa Inggrisnya mata? L: Eye T: Eh...kok cuma satu?	No repeat of L's response Grammar question

As Table 1 shows, the teacher's techniques to evaluate learner's language varied from repeating the learner's response to praising in Indonesian (hebat, pinter), giving further instruction, or use of gesture (thumb up) showing acceptance.

The second highest interactional moves was Elicit-Response-Modelling. It was made when the learners made mistakes either in vocabulary or pronunciation. Analysis of this move showed that the teacher used three different ways of modelling the correct language to the learners; providing the correct response with or without instruction or checking learner's understanding.

Table 2. Modelling techniques used in teaching

Elicit-Respons-Modelling move	Technique/means used
1 T: Apa tadi bahasa Inggrisnya kuping? L: ar... T: Ear. Ya, yang banter yuk, yang banter sebut sama sama. Ear...satu, dua, tiga Ls: Ear T: Ear. Yang banter, satu, dua, tiga T&S: Ear.	Provide correct response Give instruction
2 T: Ini gambar apa tadi? L: Telinga T: Telinga. Bahasa Inggrisnya telinga? Ear. Telinga bahasa Inggrisnya, ear.	Provide correct response
3 T: Gambar apa sayang? L: Tangan T: Tangan. Bahasa Inggrisnya tangan apa tadi? Hand... Apa bahasa Inggrisnya tangan?	Provide correct response Checking

Teacher Feedback

The teacher's feedback is presented in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Teacher's feedback in teaching
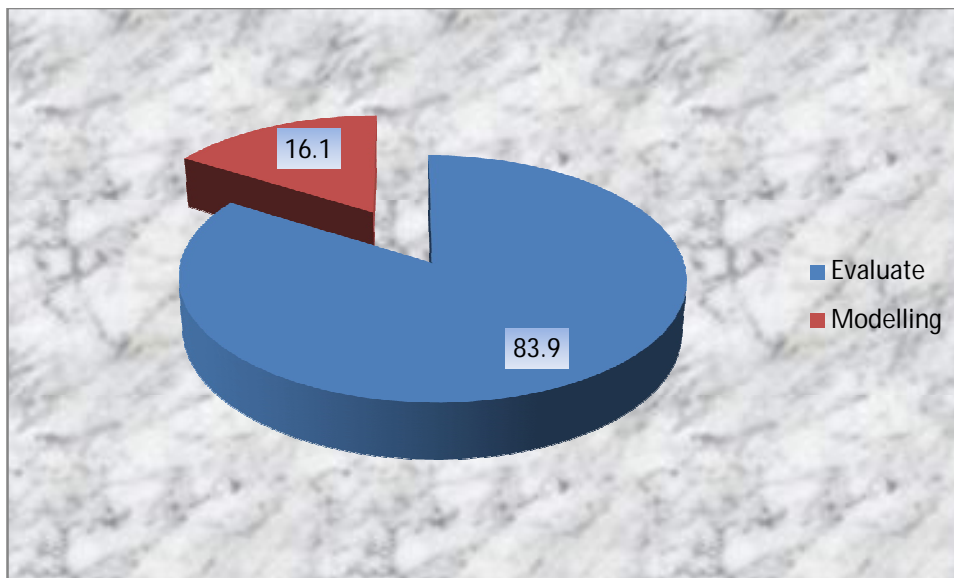
The analysis of classroom transcript shows that there were two pedagogical roles of teacher's follow-up move (Cullen, 2002); evaluative and modeling roles. The evaluative role was identifiable in the third move of the teacher's interactional pattern and its function was to provide feedback to the learner's response elicited by the teacher in her first move. This evaluative move functioned to confirm that the response was acceptable. Most teacher feedback was in Indonesian such as 'pinter' or 'hebat' accompanied with or without a hand gesture (thumb up).

The frequency of occurance of evaluative feedback was 83.9%, much higher than the other feedback type; modeling, which was 16,1% as indicated in Figure 2. The high proportion of evaluative feedback may indicate that praising is an essential pedagogical tool in Paud education. In the interview with the teacher, she explained that,

> ...setiap anak punya ciri sendiri...ada anak yang pendiam, ada yang suka ngomong. ...memang itu salah satu tantangan juga dalam mengenalkan bahasa Inggris karena tidak semua anak bisa langsung mengingat kosakata dalam bahasa Inggris. Memang berusaha untuk memahami temperamen anak.

It appears that praising learner's performance as a teaching technique is used to accommodate the different characteristics of the learners to encourage participation and enhance learning. On the other hand, the low occurance of modeling as feedback to the learner's mistakes may indicate that its role in teaching English to Paud learners is not that significant. The learners may not be able to notice the purpose of teacher's modeling the correct features of English since most teacher-learner English interaction takes place during play activities when the learners' attention is usually on the games or other fun physical activities. In the interview, the teacher said,

....kita tidak hanya menggunakan satu metode saja, tapi ada beberapa metode yang dalam penerapannya berganti-ganti...dalam bentuk perlombaan...misalnya menunjukkan kata yang guru sebutkan dalam bahasa Inggris , mereka menunjukkan nama bendanya. Atau guru menyebutkan bendanya, anak menyebutkan katanya dalam bahasa Inggris. Kemudian praktek langsung, misalnya *jump*, lalu anak-anak melompat. Jadi mereka memperagakan kata itu.

The types of activities planned for English classes seem to be determined by the learners' characteristics; being active, social, and unique with their individuality.

Based on the types of interactional patterns and the types of feedback moves discussed above, it can be concluded that the teaching of English in Paud is aimed to introduce lexical items which are characterized by the here-and-now condition; those vocabulary items which are observable in the learner's immediate environment. Further examination of the interactional patterns above reveals thatthe teacher-learner talk and English learning activities are delimited to developing the learner's recognition and recall of vocabulary through E-R-Eval or E-R-Mod moves. Such interactions can not be expected to help learners develop their English language capacity to appropriately express themselves since the teaching is largely teacher-centered. The classroom observations in this study show that the teacher provides all of the initiation moves as traditionally practised in many of our schools. This elicitation-response-follow up exchange has been criticised in the Communicative language teaching methodology since it fails to provide learners with the opportunity to develop their language capacity.

Given the present context of Paud education, the teaching of English could be pushed one step ahead, that is to help learners to develop their language acquisition capacity through teacher's discoursal role of the follow-up move (Cullen, 2002). Discoursal role of the F-move is qualitatively different from the the evaluative role of the F-move in that it aims to pick up learner's response (language) and incorporate it to create a (short) dialogue of two or three exchanges as simplified below.

T: (shows a picture of an ear and asks) What is it?

L: Ear

T: Good. How many ears do you have?

L: Two.

Such a simple teacher-child exchange would not be cognitively demanding and the activity can be designed to match the characteristics of young learners. Thus, the emphasis of such an exchange is not only the form (plural) but also the content (message). A discoursal follow-up move could also occur with questions which have a referential function commonly used in children real-world communication.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have attempted to identify the patterns of teacher-learner interactions in Paud English classes by examining the recordings of English classes. The interactional exchanges clearly show that the teaching is very traditional and teacher-centered without any attempt to

elaborate on the learner's responses. This shortcoming may be due to the learning context of Paud where the purpose of teaching English has not been well established as revealed in the interview with the teacher. It may beimportant to suggest that, in spite of the present condition of teahing English in Paud, the interaction between the teacher and the learners need to make use of the significant role of discoursal feedback move in order to develop learners' language capacity in English appropriate at this level. The findings of this study may have important implications for teacher training and development especially to teaching English to young learners in our schools.

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