

TEACHER'S DISCOURSE MARKERS IN ENGLISH CLASSROOM INTERACTION

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ABSTRACT

This study deals with discourse markers used by teacher in English classroom interaction. The objectives of this study were to find out the types of discourse markers which were dominantly used by teacher and the reasons for the existences of that dominant one. The subject of this research was an English teacher of SMP Swasta Pahlawan Nasional Medan. A descriptive qualitative design was used in this study. The data were collected by observing, recording the utterances of teacher and by interviewing the subject. The data were analyzed based on Fung and Carter's theory (2007). The result of the data showed that there were four types of teacher's discourse markers in English classroom interaction i.e. interpersonal, referential, structural and cognitive. Interpersonal were the most dominantly used by the English teacher with 38,94%, referential 25,26%, structural 30,52% and cognitive 5,26%. The reasons why the teacher used interpersonal markers as the dominant one were affected by the presage category (teacher's belief) and context category (the class in which the teaching process took place). Related suggestions were given to the English teacher to use the appropriate discourse markers in English classroom interaction. This study was beneficial for both teacher and students in English classroom interaction.

Keywords: *Discourse Markers, Teacher's Talk, Classroom Interaction*

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Human is the social creature, They need to interact with other people. In this case language has a big role in human life. Language is essentially a means of communication among the members of a society. Freeman (2003: 2) states that language is a means of interaction between and among people. Then, the function of language here is as a tool which connects one to others. People realize that language becomes a bridge that can connect people in different places and cultures. People can get information, knowledge, and experience by using language. They also can show and express what they think and feel.

In classroom interaction, language is the basic means of communication in the classroom. The language used in a classroom is transactional and interactional use of language. Transactional language is mostly used by teachers in delivering information knowledge for students. In other hand, interactional language is used by teacher to interact with students. The main case faced by teachers in the teaching and learning process of English in a classroom is how to give a clear understanding easily to students. In English classroom, teacher's language is not only the object of the course, but also the medium to achieve the objective of teaching. Nunan (1991) states that teacher's language is important, not only for the organization of the classroom but also for the process of acquisition of knowledge.

Teacher is considered as a main factor in education successfulness. The language used by the teacher should have good linguistics features. Their words are choosen and constructed carefully with good linguistic devices that make their talk have big attentions and easier to understand by the students. Teacher talk

needs to be organized accordingly so that the coherence and cohesion of the talk can be maintained. When texts are not coherent, they do not make sense or they make it difficult for the reader/listener to understand (Halliday and Hassan, 1976:324.). In order to make the speech coherent, consistent, easy to follow and understandable, a speaker can use cohesive signposts in discourse, that is Discourse Markers (DMs) (Granger,1996: 80 in Muller, 2005:19).

In teaching English as Foreign Language classroom, the words *oh, well, but, you know, and, okay, Listen, right etc* were important in teacher talk. Those words are typically discourse markers and perform a very important function in signalling changes in the interaction or organisation of learning (Walsh,2011:12). Discourse markers in teacher talk play an important role for students to understand teacher language better, which hence helps them to improve learning efficiency (Othman,2010).

Teachers in teaching English as Foreign language classroom used different discourse markers in their talk to make the teaching effective and enhance learner's participation in classroom. Othman (2010) stated that the appropriate used of discourse markers by the teacher in teaching and learning process not only can improve the participation of the students but also contribute to the effectiveness of learning.

Based on the researcher's observation in SMP Swasta Pahlawan Nasional Medan it was found that there was a lack of interaction between teacher and students. The students were bored to learn,lack of attention and lack of participation and there was not found the students responded or listened to the

teacher's explanation because the teacher are too dominant in classroom activities. The teacher just explained the material discussion and give the questions without paying attention to the used of discourse markers in the language used. So, the teacher's explanation difficult to follow by the students and the class will not stay together and will not work in harmony.

Below is teacher and students interaction :

T : What is present tense and past tense?

S : (silent)

T : What is present tense? Who knows? Who can answer it?

S : Present tense is action that occur in the past.

T : **Ok, Now.** Everyone **Listen!** What is past tense? Who knows?

Yang tahu saya kasih nilai tambah. raise your hand!

S : (almost all the students raising hand)

T : **Ok.** You shanti. What is present tense?

S : Present tense is tell about daily activities that happens right now.

T : **Yes, Right. So,** Present tense is not simple past. Simple past is action that occured in the past.

From the preliminary data above, the teacher asks the students a question without guided the students attention. Then, the students were silent, but it was not because the students did not know the answer, but the teacher did not guide them. When the teacher asked the question for the second time, the students give the respond and answer the question because the teacher guide the students by using discourse markers (*ok, now, listen, so, right, etc*) before asking the question. Therefore, discourse markers in teacher talk play an important role for students to understand teacher language better, which hence helps them to improve learning efficiency and make the students more active in classroom.

Based on explanation above, the researcher conducts this research to find out the types and the reason why the teacher used the dominant type of discourse

markers in English classroom interaction based on Fung & Carter's and Gages' theory.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Classroom Interaction

Dagarin (2004:128) argued that classroom interaction is two way process between the participant in the language process, the teacher influences the learners and vice versa. It means that, classroom interaction deals with interpersonal relationship between teacher and the students. If the interpersonal relationship is good, it is assumed that teaching and learning process will run well. On the other hand, if it is bad, the process of teaching and learning will not run well. Furthermore, interaction in the classroom is categorized as the pedagogic interaction. The classroom or pedagogic interaction is a continuous and ever changing process and the factors of context shift from minute to minute. The teacher acts upon the students to cause and reaction. The reaction includes a response to a questions, and item in a drill, a word pronounced and a sentence written (Sarosdy et.al, 2006:35).

Sudjana (1995) states there were three communication patterns in classroom interaction interaction process, namely communication as action, interaction and transaction.

- 1) Communication as action or one-way communication

The teacher as the giver of the action and the student as the recipient of the action. Active teachers, passive students, teaching is seen as an activity to convey learning material.

2) Communication as interaction or two-way communication

The teacher can act as an action giver or receiver of the action. Conversely students, can the recipient of the action can also give the action. Dialogue will occur between teachers and students.

3) Communication as a transaction or communication in many directions

Communication does not only occur between teachers and students, but also between students and students. Students are required to be active rather than teachers. Students, like teachers, can function as learning resources for other students

Dagarin (2004:129) has categorizes some interaction conducts by the participants in the classroom. These are the most frequent ways of organizing classroom interaction, depending on who communicates with whom:

1) Teacher-Learners

The first form classroom interaction is (teacher-learners) interaction. This interaction established when a teacher talks to the whole class at the same time. Teacher takes the role of leader or controller and decides about the type and process of the activity. The primary function of such interaction is controlled practicing of certain language structures or vocabulary. Mostly, they are in the form of repeating structures after the teacher (the model). This type of practice is also referred to as a drill.

2) Teacher-Learner

The second arrangement is conducted when the teacher refers to the class, but expects only one student or a group of students to answer. It is often used for evaluation of student individually. This arrangement can also be used for an informal conversation at the beginning of the lesson or for leading students into a less guided activity.

3) Learner-Learners

The third type of interaction is called "pair work". Students get an assignment, which they have to finish in pairs. The teacher holds the role of a consultant or adviser, helping when it is necessary. After the activity, teacher puts the pairs into a whole group and each pair reports on their work.

4) Learners-Learners

The last type of classroom interaction is called "group work". As with pair work, the teachers' function here is that of a consultant and individual groups report on their work as a follow-up activity. The last two ways of organization are particularly useful for encouraging interaction among students.

2. Teacher Talk

Teacher talk is the utterances that a teacher does in the teaching and learning process. Lei (2009) stated that good communication in the teaching and learning process depends on a good and effective teacher talk. Teacher talk is very important in order to create good interactions during the teaching and

learning process. Teacher talk needs to be organised accordingly so that the coherence and cohesion of the talk can be maintained. As confirmed by Harmer (2007) that students learn from the teacher talk. That is the reason why the teachers are expected to know how to talk to students and adjust the language that they use because teacher talk gives a chance for students to hear the language which they more or less understand.

Lei (2009) state that “communicative teacher talk has some features. Some of them are referential questions and content feedback. Referential questions are questions in which the teacher genuinely does not know the answer of. By posing such questions, the teacher engages students to answer the question and talk. Content feedback means the teacher comments on what students are saying”.

Harmer (2007) pointed out that too much teacher talk can make students lose their chance to talk, and he actually stated that a good teacher maximizes time for students to talk and minimize time for him/her to talk. Both of them must be in balance. Too much teacher talk will make the students passive and static. They cannot improve their English acquisition from the teacher. But it will be also bad if the teacher has too little talk, the students will not get enough knowledge from the teacher.

3. Teaching English as Foreign Language

Teaching English as foreign language , particularly in public schools, implies different issues and challenges for many teacher. In teaching process the teacher may set a topic and material, give directions, give and take responds, determine who contributes in teaching and learning activities,

provide feedback to the students get the output effectively. The teacher may share his/her own experiences with the students and encourage them to talk about their own ones.

Teaching English as foreign language was a problem in certain class group discussions which could hamper learning of the target language. This was a sign of low proficiency in the target language. Her, Gage (2004) states there are variables which might affect to each other on the teacher's and student's performance. They are : (a) presage category: teacher's years of experience, characteristics, age, and the teacher's belief of the subject knowledge she is teaching; (b) context category: the characteristics of the nation, region, community, school, and class in which teaching takes place; (c) process category: which can also be broken down into three categories, namely, teacher thought process in planning, and deciding; teacher thought process and the content of teaching; and teacher thought process and students' thought process; and (d) product: represents the goal of all the foregoing categories. It includes achievement of cognitive objectives and can also refer to achievement of social emotional objectives.

These will increase motivation for learners, there are several causes that make students to have low Proficiency in English language for instance teacher's language awarness thus learners lack model to emulate learners are passive teacher centered methodology, lack of motivation by learners and students think in mother tongue and then translate to English Language (Alharbi:2015).

4. Classroom Discourse Analysis

Yule (2006:142) states that “the term ‘discourse’ is usually defined as ‘language beyond the sentence’”. The analysis of discourse entails social perspective on language use and communication exchanges which included spoken and written discourse. In other words, discourse analysis views that discourse cannot be separated from everyday life and what we do with language when we use it. As stated from Brenes (2005:3), discourse analysis give emphasis on how language is used by speakers and understood by listeners in verbal communication . In a discourse, there should be a particular unit of language that is used socially (Schiffrin, 2001:726). From that statement, it can be known that discourse analysis is related to linguistic elements to increase social awareness in understanding written and oral texts. One of the discussions of discourse analysis is discourse markers.

Discourse that happened in the classroom is classroom discourse. Classroom discourse analysis is an aspect of classroom process research, which is one way for teachers to monitor both the quantity and quality of students’ output. Classroom discourse analysis that can be simply defined as investigating at language in used in the classroom to understand how each pattern influence each other.

5. Discourse Markers

In Linguistics, a discourse marker is a word or phrase that is relatively syntax-independent and does not change the truth-conditional meaning of the sentence, and has a somewhat empty meaning (Charter, Ronald:2011). It means that discourse markers are words or a group of words which are used in expressions without changing the real meaning and these markers for some uses do not have any meaning. Discourse markers are defined as sentence connectives from a systematic functional grammar perspective (Halliday and Hassan, 1976; Cohen, 2007). Another definition given by Fraser (1999) that discourse markers are practical markers which provide remark on the following utterance; that is they show the way of an utterance and indicate how the speaker intends basic message to relate to the previous discourse. Therefore, discourse markers are used as pointer of chronological discourse in social interaction.

In short, discourse markers are words, phrases or expression that can be used as a partner for speaker or writer to connect and organize what to say and to write. These markers are used in order to express an attitude in a discourse.

Fung and Carter (2007) suggest that discourse markers are socially sensitive and pragmatically significant. On the basis of a corpus-driven approach, they categorized English Discourse markers into four categories, They are: interpersonal, referential, structural and cognitive. Interpersonal discourse markers are useful to serve as solidarity building devices to enforce and mark shared knowledge, attitudes, and responses. Discourse markers main function on the referential level is to relate discourse units based on various meanings including cause and sequence, contrast, comparison and so on. Structural markers

are used to orientate and organize the discourse in progress and signal links and transitions between topics. Here was the table for the types of discourse Markers.

Types of Discourse Markers	Markers
Interpersonal	<i>yeah, yes/no, great, right, oh, sure, well, go on, frankly, actually, to be honest, of course, oh, wow, gosh, indeed, true, sort of, just, kind of, please, here, see, listen, look, wait, what else?, you know, you see, you understand?, okay?.</i>
Referential	<i>because, since, and, then, so, hence, therefore, as a result, similarly, in the same way, however, but, even so, still, on the other hand, while, yet, though, although, even if, even though, if, unless, whenever, as long as, so long as, provided that, and, or, for example, in particular, such as, what's more, also, in addition, furthermore.</i>
Structural	<i>to begin with, let's start, now, okay, right, all right, as to, so, now, what about, how about, but, okay, well, right, by the way, talking of, anyway, back to my point, and, so, after all, as I was saying, so, in general, to sum up, generally speaking, first of all, firstly, secondly, lastly, finally, for another thing.</i>
Cognitive	<i>that's to say, I mean, if you like, well, to put it in another way, in other words, in my opinion, I mean, like, well, I think, I suppose, well, sort of.</i>

5. Discourse Markers in Classroom Context.

In classroom, the use and functions of discourse markers is the essential interactional factor in classroom teacher-student conversation. Discourse markers perform a very important functions in signalling changes in the interaction or organisation of learning.

In teaching English as Foreign Language classroom, the words *oh, well, but, you know, and, okay, Listen, right etc* were often found in teacher talk. Those words are typically discourse markers and perform a very important function in signalling changes in the interaction or organisation of learning (Walsh,2011:12). Discourse markers in teacher talk play an important role for students to understand teacher language better, which hence helps them to improve learning efficiency (Othman,2010).

Teachers in teaching English as Foreign language classroom used different discourse markers in their talk to make the teaching effective and enhance learner's participation in classroom. Othman (2010) stated that the appropriate used of discourse markers by the teacher in teaching and learning process not only can improve the participation of the students but also contribute to the effectiveness of learning. Discourse markers have an especially important role in enabling teacher to structure their discourse, in that way making it possible for learners to interpret the communicative demands of the context and participate in activities more successfully (De Fina, 1997).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was used descriptive qualitative design. The researcher choosed this design because the fact that the study deals with language phenomenon as a social element. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) state “ qualitative design is a reseach which has a natural setting as the direct source of the data and the reseacher is the key of instrument.

The source of data in this study was an English teacher who teached at grade VIII of SMP Swasta Pahlawan Nasional Medan in one meeting in the

academic year 2019/2020. The data were collected by observing, recording the utterances of the teacher and by interviewing the teacher. After collecting the data through observation, recording and interviewing, the researcher analyzed the data by using the data analysis from (Saragih, 2014), these are steps:

1. The audio recording of the class was transcribed down in form of written transcript in order to get what was spoken by the teacher .
2. Segmenting the transcript which had several sentences into clause.
3. Analyzing the clauses by grouping them based on the types of discourse markers.
4. Determining the dominant types of discourse markers that mostly used in the teacher talked in English as foreign language classroom.

$$X = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

Where:

X = percentage of discourse markers

F = the frequency of discourse markers occurrences

N = the total number of all discourse markers occurrences

5. Conducting the interview section with the English teacher based on Saidman's theory (1998)
6. Discovering the reasons for the existences of the dominant type of discourse markers realized in the way she/he was by categorizing the result of teachers' interview based on the conception of teaching (Gage, 2004).
7. Drawing the conclusion.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Research findings

In the classroom interaction, the four types of discourse markers; interpersonal, referential, structural and cognitive were counted from greeting until the end of English class that day. The total number of teacher's discourse markers was 95 that used by the teacher in 90 minutes teaching and learning process in English classroom interaction of SMP Swasta Pahlawan Nasional Medan. Interpersonal markers was the dominant types of discourse markers used by the teacher in the teaching and learning process with 38,94%, referential 25,26%, structural 30,52% and cognitive 5,26%. The underlying reasons of teacher's performance related to the existence of Interpersonal markers as the dominant type of discourse markers produced were due to several reasons; Those were (a) Interpersonal markers was expected can improve and create the knowledge of the students (b) by using Interpersonal markers, the teacher can measure the students' understanding about the topic discussion in the teaching and learning process and (c) Interpersonal markers was expected encourage the students' activation and the students confidence to share their opinion and their ideas in English classroom interaction. So, based on the reasons, it can be concluded that teacher's performance during the teaching and learning process was affected by the teacher's belief which belongs to the presage category and was affected by the context category which refers to the class in which process take place (Gage, 2009:47).

Discussion

Discourse markers are words, phrases or expressions like *Uhm, Alright, Okay, So, Now etc* that can be used as a partner for speaker or writer to connect and organize what to say or to write. In the classroom interaction, discourse markers can be found operating in four realms of functional categories, namely; *interpersonal, referential, structural and cognitive* (Fung and Carter, 2007).

In this research, the objectives of the study were to find out the types of discourse markers which were dominantly used by the teacher in English classroom interaction and the reason for the existences of that dominant one. After analyzing the data, it can be stated that the research problems have been answered.

In regards to the first problem, the finding confirmed that the teacher used all the types of discourse markers in English classroom interaction were interpersonal with markers; *okay, you understand?, please, yes, look, right, listen, What else?, You see, here and well*, Referential markers with markers; *if, although, but, also, or, for example and then*, Structural markers with markers; *but, by the way, now, Let's start, okay, so, firstly, secondly, Alright, and well*, and the last was cognitive markers with markers; *I think. I mean, and like*. The dominant type of this study was Interpersonal markers. This result also found by Karlina (2015) which investigated teacher's discourse markers in Indonesia, Javanese and English. It was found that the English discourse markers used by the teachers in the classrooms were *okay, so, filler er and em, well, now, and, but, because, and then, next, if, by the way, and I mean*. Discourse marker '*okay*' was the most frequent discourse markers used by the teacher in English classroom.

Furthermore, regarding of teacher's discourse markers in English classroom interaction can be seen from previous research by Khurtina (2015) which investigated English discourse markers in teacher's initiation. It was found that discourse markers *now, well, okay, do you think, great, right, and, I mean, do you know, in other words, and anyway* were used in teacher's initiation.

In addition, Gloria and Eva (2017) investigated the use of discourse markers in nonnative (Croatian) EFL teacher's talk with primary and secondary school students. It was found that the most frequently discourse markers used by the teacher were *ok, so, and and*. The findings contribute to raising awareness of the diversified functions of discourse markers in organization and structuring particular teaching segments.

In regards with the second problem of the study, it could be seen from research findings based on the interview with the teacher. The existence of interpersonal markers in the teacher's utterances were due to several reasons; Those were (a) Interpersonal markers was expected can improve and create the knowledge of the students (b) by using Interpersonal markers, the teacher can measure the students' understanding about the topic discussion in the teaching and learning process and (c) Interpersonal markers was expected encourage the students' activation and the students confidence to share their opinion and their ideas in English classroom interaction. Those reasons was affected by the teacher's belief and the class was the process take place.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

The overall teaching and learning process found there were four types of teacher's discourse markers were used in English classroom interaction at the eighth grade of SMP Swasta Pahlawan Nasional Medan. They were; interpersonal, referential, structural and cognitive. The total number of teacher's discourse markers was 95 that used by the teacher in 90 minutes teaching and learning process. The most dominant type of discourse markers used by the teacher among all the markers was Interpersonal markers in the classroom interaction. The underlying reason of teacher's performance related to the existence of Interpersonal markers as the dominant type of discourse markers produced were due to several reasons; Those were (a) Interpersonal markers was expected can improve and create the knowledge of the students (b) by using Interpersonal markers, the teacher can measure the students' understanding about the topic discussion in the teaching and learning process and (c) Interpersonal markers was expected encourage the students' activation and the students confidence to share their opinion and their ideas in English classroom interaction. So, based on the reasons, it can be concluded that teacher's performance during the teaching and learning process was affected by the teacher's belief which belongs to the presage category and was affected by the context category which refers to the class in which process take place (Gage, 2009:47).

Suggestion

To the English teacher should be realized that using discourse markers is very important in their talk. The use and functions of discourse markers as one essential interactional factor in teacher talk. So, if the teacher used the appropriate discourse markers in classroom not only can improve the participation of the students but also contribute to the effectiveness of teaching and learning process and for other researcher who will conduct similar research, this research is expected to help and to give more information about the teacher's discourse markers in English classroom interaction.

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