

AN ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE VARIETIES USED BY ENGLISH TEACHERS IN YOUNG LEARNERS CLASSES

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ABSTRACT

Strategic competence is one of the competences in teaching skills. Every language teacher must have the ability to communicate with their students either verbally or non verbally, so they can learn English effectively. The aim of this paper is to investigate language varieties used by English teachers in English to Young Learners (EYL) classes. The language variation investigated is specified into the way how teachers give instructions. Holmes (1993) groups types of instructions into three categories: descriptive sentences, imperative sentences and interrogative sentences. Two EYL teachers (one native speaker and one non-native speaker) were involved in this study. Since this research employs qualitative research design, the data for this study were gained through direct observation. The study revealed that imperative sentences dominate the expressions used by teachers in EYL classes followed by questions and declarative sentences. Imperatives were used more since the teachers often used Total Physical Response (TPR) technique in teaching young learners.

Keywords: *Language Varieties, English for Young Learners, English Language Teaching*

INTRODUCTION

As one of international languages, English becomes one of compulsory subjects in universities, high schools, elementary schools, and even pre-schools in Indonesia. In the context of formal education, especially public schools, young learners in Indonesia have been introduced to English since they are in the first grade of elementary school, though English is still considered as local content (*muatan lokal*) subject.

Young learners have totally different characteristics from teenagers and adult learners. The characteristics are very

unique. Harmer (2007) elaborates eleven characteristics of young learners, which make them unique, namely: 1) They respond although they do not understand, 2) They learn from everything around them: they learn indirectly rather than directly, 3) They understand mostly when they see, hear, touch and interact rather than from explanations. Abstract concepts are difficult to deal with, 4) They generally display a curiosity about the world and an enthusiasm for learning a language, 5) They like talking about themselves and respond to learning that uses their lives as

the main topic, 6) They love discovering things, making or drawing things, using their imagination, moving from one place to another, solving puzzles, 7) They have a short attention span; they can easily get bored after 5-10 minutes, 8) Teachers should have a rich repertoire of activities to help young children receive information from a variety of sources and plan a range of activities for a given time period, 9) Teachers should work with students individually or in groups, 10) Teachers need to be aware of the students' interests to motivate them and 11) The classroom should be colorful and bright with enough room for different activities.

Regarding the unique characteristics of young learners, the demand for competent English language teachers to teach young language learners is crucial. A competent English teacher must possess several teacher competences, especially strategic competence. Teacher with strategic competence will stimulate their students to learn English effectively.

Based on the issues mentioned above, the study is aimed at investigating the language varieties found in EFL young learner classes. Specifically, it is aimed at describing the variety of instructions given by teachers. The research question is: "*How do English teachers of young learner classes give instructions?*". Theoretically,

the result of this study is expected to give a real descriptions and basis for future research related to the practice of classroom interaction in young learner classes. And practically, the result of this research hopefully can give contribution to EFL teachers in young learner classes about their teaching performances.

A. Teacher Competences and Comprehensible Input

Competent teachers are one of the key factors in the success of education. Characteristics of competent teachers have been elaborated in Indonesian laws no. 14/2005. There are four competences which should be possessed by teachers and lecturers, namely: pedagogical competence, personality competence, social competence and professional competence. Pedagogical competence is defined as ability to understand students, to plan and implement teaching and learning process, to evaluate learning outcomes and develop students with their potentials. Personality competence is the ability to reflect stable and wise individual and to become good model for his or her students. Professional competence can be seen as the ability to master learning materials, including the curriculum and the methodology. Finally, social competence is the ability to communicate and interact effectively with

students, fellow teachers, students' parents and nearby society.

Several studies about teacher and students interactions have been conducted by scholars. For example is Coulthard (1977) who found that pedagogical discourse is different from natural discourse. Coulthard claims that teachers usually modify their speech during instruction in a way that resembles caregiver talk but with some peculiar and distinct features at the level of syntax, discourse, phonology, and lexis. In other words, teacher speech is usually modified variously based on the task and the students' level of proficiency. Scarcella and Oxford (1992) and Chaudron (1988) cited in Debat (2002) add that the characteristics of teachers' modified speech are higher pitch, exaggerated intonation, short sentences, recurrent use of intonation, lower rate of speech, more frequent pauses, exaggerated pronunciation, basic vocabulary, low degree of subordination, use of declaratives and statements, and repetition. Osborne (1999) summarizes that teacher speech with young learners is usually made simple, shorter and more careful pronounced to make it clearer and more comprehensible.

Previous studies have also been conducted to investigate the importance of comprehensible input. Krashen (1985)

claims that students should get large amount of comprehensible input for acquisition. The optimal comprehensible input for learner is a little below students' level of proficiency (i+1). Moreover, input for students can be made comprehensible using verbal and non-verbal clues. Other studies also done by Hatch (1983) and Enright (1991) which revealed some characteristics of comprehensible input at the different linguistic level, for example: pronunciation (fewer reduced vowels and contractions, slow rate and longer pauses), vocabulary (less slang and fewer idioms, fewer pronoun forms, use of gestures and pictures), grammar (shorter utterances, repetitions and restatements, more collaborative completion), discourse (requests for clarification, more frames, such as ok, salient conversation components), non-verbal adaptation (gestures, mimes, etc), contextual (visual and auditory aids), para-verbal (speaking clearly, slowing pace, using pauses) and discourse (rephrasing, repetition).

B. Types of Teacher Instruction

There are many ways to give instructions. Holmes (1983) as cited in Debat (2002) elaborates three different ways of giving instructions (directives):

Teachers' Directives		
Types	Form	Example
Imperatives	Verb 1 You + imperatives Present Participle Verb Ellipsis Imperatives + modifier Let's Verb 1	Speak louder You go on with the work Looking at me Hands up Turn around, please Joe Let's try
Declaratives	Modals Non-modals	Will you read this page for me? People at the back are you listening?
Interrogatives (Questions)	Embedded agent Hints	I want you to draw a picture Sally, you are not saying much

Table 1: Holmes' Syntactic Forms of Directives (Cited in Debat, 2002)

From the literature review and previous studies above, it can be concluded that teachers of English to young learners need to develop an awareness of the importance of effective communication with them, especially in giving instruction. Teachers should also be aware of young learners' characteristics so successful teaching and learning process can be achieved.

METHODOLOGY

In line with the purpose mentioned above, this study employed a qualitative study. Qualitative research is conducted to examine questions that can best be answered by verbally describing how participants in a study perceive and

interpret various aspect of their environment (Crowl: 1996). Miles and Huberman (1992) also state that qualitative research uses naturalistic enquiry which places the researcher as the instrument. The researcher serves as the main instrument of the research.

This research was conducted in The British Institute (TBI). It one of English courses in Bandung which serves different kinds of EFL classes, starting from English for preschoolers, English for young learners, English for teenagers, English for adults and exam preparation classes. It is located on Jalan Riau (Martadinata) Bandung. The reason for choosing this site is due to purposive sampling strategy,

which this institution provides young learners EFL classes and teachers are native teacher and also non-native teachers. The availability of the participants to be observed during the teaching and learning process also become the consideration.

To answer the research question, the data were collected Two English teachers were participated in this research. The first participant is a local English teacher with 10 year-experiences in teaching English. The teacher has not taken CELTA training

yet. And the second participant is a native teacher (Australian) with 8 year-experiences in teaching English. The teacher has taken CELTA training. The selection of the participants was based on convenient sampling. It is a non-probability sampling technique where subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher (Crowl, 1996). The table below displays the qualification of the participants in this study:

Participant	Nationality	Sex	Age	Teaching Experience	Certification	Teaching Hour/Week
Teacher 1	Indonesian	F	35	10 years	Non-CELTA	14 hours
Teacher 2	Australian	M	43	8 years	CELTA	30 hours

Table 2: Profiles of Participant

To answer the research question, the data were collected through classroom observation. The observation was used to see the teaching and learning processes, specifically to investigate the types of instructions used by the two participant teachers. The observation was done twice, once in EYL class with native teacher, and once in EYL class with non-native teacher. The duration of each class in 60 minutes and the class observation was audio-taped.

The next process after collecting the data is data analysis. Burns (2000) says that the purpose of analyzing the data is to find meaning in the data and this is done by systematically arranging and

presenting the information. It has to be organized so that comparisons, contrasts, and insights can be made and demonstrated. Specifically, thematic analysis was used in analyzing the data. Boyatzis (1998) elaborates thematic analysis as a strategy in qualitative research to analyze information in a systematic way in order to make the data understandable. It organizes and describes the data in detail according to emergent themes. In doing thematic analysis, the researcher used the phases by Braun and Clarke (2006) as the guidance. Table below displays the phases of thematic analysis process:

NO	PHASES	DESCRIPTION
1	Familiarizing with the data	Transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas
2	Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code
3	Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme
4	Reviewing themes	Checking the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (level 1) and the entire data set (level 2), generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis
5	Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme
6	Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research questions and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Table 3: Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clark)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

From the two observed young learner English classes, it was found imperative sentences dominate the expressions used by teachers in EYL classes followed by

questions and declarative sentences. In giving instructions, the two teachers use direct imperative sentences. The calculation of teacher speech can be seen from the table below:

Teacher 1					
I	%	D	%	Q	%
23	67%	7	21%	4	14%
TOTAL: 34					

Table 4: Percentage of Directives (Teacher 1)

Teacher 2					
I	%	D	%	Q	%
29	73%	5	12%	6	15%
TOTAL: 40					

Table 2: Percentage of Directives (Teacher 2)

For more clear illustration of each teacher, see the figure below:

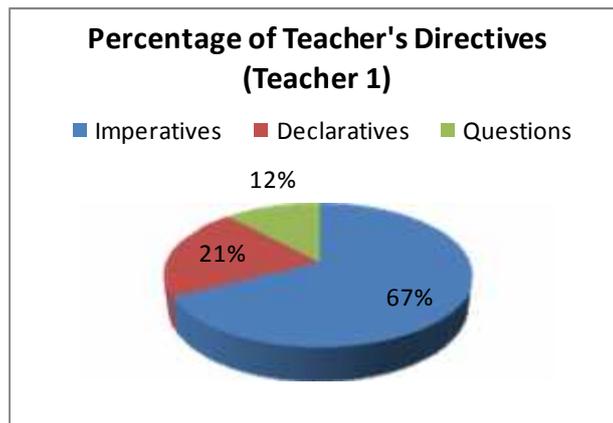


Figure 1: Types of Directives (Teacher 1)

Figure 1 above shows that teacher 1 gives instruction in various ways: direct instruction (23 utterances), declarative (7 sentences) and questions (4 utterances). From the total of 34 utterances, imperative sentences dominate the whole utterances of instruction, for about 67%. The result

implies that the teacher is aware of the characteristic of young learners that they will find it difficult to understand abstract concept that is why the teacher used imperative sentences in giving instruction to make it clear and understandable.

Percentage of Teacher's Directive (Teacher 2)



Figure 2: Types of Directives (Teacher 2)

Figure 2 above shows that teacher 2 also gives instruction in various ways: direct instruction (29 utterances), declarative (5 sentences) and questions (6 utterances). From the total of 40 utterances, imperative sentences also dominate the whole utterances of instruction, which is for about 73 %. The result also implies that the teacher is trying to make the instruction

clear and understandable by imperative sentences.

CONCLUSION

From the finding of this study, it can be concluded that teachers of English in young learner classes had shown language varieties, especially in giving instruction. From the two participants of this research,

in giving instruction, teachers used more imperatives rather than declaratives and questions. This study in line with what Ur (1991) and Wright (2003) who elaborates the effective characteristics of effective

teacher commands. The instruction must be brief, referring to one task at a time, and aided with gestures and aids to demonstrate meanings.

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