



Male and Female Instructors' Instructional Talks in Indonesian College EFL Classrooms: Case Study of Vocational Higher Education in South Sulawesi

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Abstract

It is believed that men are different from women in communicating their ideas and feelings through the communication system called language. This article divulges how gender factor influences EFL instructors' instructional talks in Indonesian context. It goes over findings of a case study undertaken at two colleges in Makassar, South Sulawesi. In the study, four EFL instructors (two male and two female) of the colleges were purposively chosen as the subjects, and the data leading to the findings were obtained through classroom observation. The findings reveal that the male instructors' instructional talks are quite stiff and typically stimulate instructor-centered atmosphere, while the female instructors' are more genial and naturally stimulate instructor-students harmonious interactive communications. Thus, it can be inferred that while the male instructors tend to be 'commanders' in front of the class, the female set themselves as amicable "mothers" to the students.

Introduction

When some teachers have the same level of competence, will gender factor make a difference to their teaching performances in the class? This question seems to have been in scholars' minds for ages. In fact, despite its long age, the issue still looks charming on the scientific stage.

Men and women have their own ways of communication Wahyuningsih (2018) signifying that the way teachers use language in leading the classroom interaction with students can be affected by gender factor. The big possibility is due to the fact that teacher-students interaction in the teaching and learning process is essentially a social interaction, a social event through language in which ideas are exchanged, feelings are expressed and questions are answered, and in holding the social event, both sides (teacher and students) can never release themselves from their innate tendencies as human beings. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, (Sundari, 2017) found that teacher-student interactions are gender-related, and discovered that female teachers have better self-efficacy than do male. Definitely, those claims are nothing but a bunch of hypotheses to be confirmed; they still need to be verified in more contexts of EFL classroom.

In Indonesia, English is taught and learnt as a foreign language. In the world's largest archipelago country are hundreds of indigenous languages, and many Indonesians speak an indigenous language as their mother tongue (Rijal et al., 2019), use Bahasa Indonesia, the national language, as their second language, and learn English as a third language. Although the world's number one international language has been a compulsory subject at secondary schools and universities for about 70 years, it remains a foreign language in the Southeast Asia's largest country. Even for many Indonesians, English is still a "language from Mars". This seems to reflect complexity of EFL learning here. Undoubtedly, it takes high sensitivity towards all phenomena occurring in the EFL teaching and learning processes, including those related to teacher gender, to change the condition.

Instructional Talk

A classroom interaction is essentially a social interaction through language with teacher and students as its participants. Such an interaction is built by two components; teacher talk and student talk (Mahmud, 2015). Being the one in charge, teacher controls the teaching and learning process in the classroom, therefore, whatever he or she says determines how the process goes and students' involvements in the classroom activities. This obviously signals that teacher talk plays such a vital role in the teaching and learning process.

Literally, teacher talk refers to any utterance coming out from teacher's mouth in the classroom. Specifically defined as the language used by teacher in the classroom, it has three major aspects; psychological, interpersonal and pedagogical aspect (Parsonson, 2012). While the psychological aspect deals with how teacher uses talk to create conducive atmosphere in the class, and the interpersonal is about how teacher establishes and maintains classroom interaction with the students through talk, the pedagogical covers how teacher organizes the lesson through talk. Simply, teacher talk essentially deals with the language used by teacher in managing the class and providing the students with instructions, and here come management and instructional talk.

Language functions in terms of management and instructional talk relate to teachers' role in classroom as a teacher and a manager (Sukarni & Ulfah, 2015). This means that it takes both instructional and management skills to be a good teacher. Instructional skill relates to teacher's explanation about subject matter to students, questions, and responses to students' questions and answers; while management skill relates to giving effective direction and controlling students' discipline and behavior such as presence, reprimand, reward, encouraging, and facilitating interaction (Vighnarajah et al., 2008)

As the language that teacher uses in transferring the teaching material, instructional talk is provided in five different contexts; giving explanation, giving direction, giving correction, asking question and answering question (Sukarni & Ulfah, 2015). Giving explanation means giving detail information about teaching material; giving direction is providing instructional direction; giving correction involves giving clarification whether students' work is correct or wrong and providing explanation about the mistakes and how to correct it; giving question deals with giving either instructional and management questions; and answering questions is about providing responses to students' questions.

Gender Differences in Communication

Gender differences, which are socially and culturally constructed, are one of the interesting phenomena in contemporary society. Their impacts can not only be seen in political life, where women fight for their political rights, or in households, in which women fight to reduce household harassment. Discourse on gender differences, in fact, also exists in the use of

language for communication, highlighting that men and women are different in their ways of communication, and therefore they should be treated differently (Pratama et al., 2012).

Badollahi & Almy (2019) has noted that when talking with the same sex peers, women will use many positive politeness strategies. On the other hand, men in similar circumstances do not show this tendency. This seems in line with (Mahmud, 2015) notion that women tend to speak with reference to the rules of politeness, conversational implicates and interpersonal exploration, while men tend to speak with reference to the rules of conversation and straight factual communication.

Methods

Employing a single-case study design, the study was undertaken at two colleges in Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Four EFL teachers (two male and two female) of the two schools were purposively chosen as the subjects. The data leading to the findings were gained through classroom observation involving audio recording.

Results and Discussion

Predictably, the teachers lead the EFL teaching and learning process with their use of instructional talk in five different contexts; giving explanation, giving direction, giving correction, asking question and answering question. It is amazing that either the male or female teachers provide their instructional talks on their own ways. This implies that there are some significant differences between the male and female teachers in using instructional talk in the EFL classroom.

Table 1. Features of the Male and Female Instructors' Instructional Talks

	Male	Female
Giving Explanation	<i>Long and Detailed</i>	<i>Efficient and Interactive</i>
Giving Direction	<i>Simple and to the Point</i>	<i>Long and Detailed</i>
Giving Correction	<i>Direct</i>	<i>Direct</i>
Asking Question	<i>Comprehension Check</i>	<i>Comprehension Check</i>
Answering Question	<i>Direct</i>	<i>Indirect (Involving Students)</i>

As we have seen, the significant differences lie in three of the five contexts of instructional talk; giving explanation, giving direction and answering question. In giving explanation, the male teachers speak longer and in detail, while the female tend to explain the material efficiently and interactively; in giving direction, the male just speak to the point, while the female typically speak in detail; and in answering question, the male tend to give their answers directly, while the female typically encourage the whole class to get involved in the answering. Meanwhile, in the context of giving correction and asking question, both sides seem to have the same manners; they tend to provide direct corrections for the students' mistakes and use questions to check the students' comprehension. From here, we can see that gender factor to some extant influences the teachers' instructional talks.

Giving explanation simply means giving detail information about the teaching material. That the male teachers' instructional talks in this context tend to be long and in detail seems to imply their conviction that the students can fully understand the material if it is described as detailed as possible. On the contrary, that the female teachers have the tendency to explain the material in efficient and interactive way seem to represent their idea that a long monologue risks confusing and boring the students. Conclusively, in giving explanation about the material, the male teachers are more teacher-centred than are the female, and the female are more collaborative than are the male.

Giving direction is about providing both instructional and management direction. As elucidated in Table 1, in giving direction in the EFL classroom, the male teachers tend to go straight to the point, while the female prefer to speak in detail. This signals that in directing the class, the male teachers simply say what they want the students to do, while the female seem to consider that the students can fully understand the direction when it is described in detail. This signals that in the context giving direction, the female teachers' instructional talks are typically longer and more detailed than are the male teachers'.

Giving correction deals with giving clarification whether student's work is correct or incorrect and providing explanation about the mistake and how to correct it. Table 4.1 elucidates that in the EFL teaching and learning processes, either the male or female teachers prefer to correct the students' mistakes directly, implying that both sides believe that direct corrections would be effective in the EFL classroom. Thus, it can simply be claimed that gender factor does not significantly influence the teachers' instructional talk in the context of giving correction.

Asking question is giving either instructional or management question. In the EFL teaching and learning processes, both the male and female teachers mostly question the students just to check their comprehension. In the opening session of the class, for instance, either the male and female teachers ask the students about what they got from the previous lesson. Accordingly, it can be proposed that gender factor does not significantly influence the teachers' instructional talks in the context of asking question.

Answering question involves providing response to student's question, and in the EFL teaching and learning processes, the male teachers tend to just answer the students' questions directly, while the female typically invite the whole class to respond to the questions before providing the answers. This does mean that in answering questions, the female teachers are so much more interactive than are the male.

Finally, it can be deduced that the research findings have confirmed (Tran, 2010). notion of differences between male and female in using language in communication. Indeed, in building communication through language, female typically consider their relations with others and therefore prioritize social harmony. In fact, the research findings elucidate that in the context of EFL classroom, female teachers typically use language to stimulate classroom interactions with the students, signaling their intention to set themselves as an amicable "mother" to the students instead of "talking down" to them as a "commander".

Conclusion

The findings lead us to understand that overall, in the EFL teaching and learning processes, the female teachers' instructional talks tend to trigger teacher-students interactions, while the male teachers' are just to stimulate teacher-centered atmosphere. This does imply that the female teachers are typically more interactive, supportive and patient in classroom interaction. In fact, the female teachers' classes seem more "alive" than do the male teachers', or the male teachers' classes look stiffer than do the female teachers'. Simply, the female teachers seem more successful than the male in creating and maintaining exciting classroom interactions through instructional talks. More specifically, the female teachers' instructional talks seem more

efficient than do the male teachers' in the EFL teaching and learning processes. Gender is a gift; there is no way for a male teacher to turn into a female just to have instructional talks which students prefer in the EFL teaching and learning process. That the research findings seem to expose the female teachers' win signposts that male should acquire good qualities of female in using instructional talk. In using instructional talk in the EFL teaching and learning process, male teachers need to be "more female", which means that they have to have sufficient sensitivity to students' condition.

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