PROBLEMS WITH CLASSROOM LANGUAGE ENCOUNTERED BY STUDENTS OF THE ENGLISH EDUCATION PROGRAM

by Ignatius Harjanto

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ABSTRACT

Classroom language or 'teacher talk' can have a tremendous impact on the success of learning-teaching interactions in the classroom. In line with this, teachers need to use language that is understandable and appropriate for their students' level and age. The importance of using English as the medium of instruction in class is clearly seen in the teaching and learning activities conducted. Classroom activities need to be verbalized for the students to participate in, and teacher candidates need to be able to verbally interact with the students during the teaching and learning process. Nevertheless, observing the teacher candidates conducting micro teaching practice, the researchers found out that many teacher candidates who had passed Speaking course about classrom language still faced difficulties in using English as the medium of instruction when delivering their English lessons during their teaching practice. Such a condition encouraged the researchers to uncover the teacher candidates' difficulties in using English as the medium of instruction in the classroom.

This research was conducted to find out answers to this question: What common problems with classroom language do the EESP (English Education Study Program) students have during their teaching and learning process? Eight students taking the teaching practice program in the odd semester of 2010/2011 were taken as the research subjects. The verbal English expressions uttered by these subjects during the teaching and learning process in the classroom were recorded. These classroom English expressions were then transcribed for the research data. The transcribed verbal English expressions were coded and classified into types of errors. To achieve trustworthiness, triangulation was conducted. Two raters analyzed the same data with the developed evaluation form. The raters met regularly to discusss the results of analysis.

The findings indicated that the common problems with classroom language these subjects had were those related to English grammar, pronunciation, intonation and diction. Of all these problems, the biggest number of mistakes made was related to English grammar (58.02%); the second biggest was related to English pronunciation (23.41%); the third biggest was related to the English diction (17.06%); and the smallest number was related to the English intonation (1.51%).

Since the research findings indicated that the biggest problem encountered by the subjects was related to the English grammar, one of the suggestions offered to the EESP is that EESP students should be given more practice of using English grammar in more meaningful contexts (written as well as oral). In addition to that, the students of the EESP should be given a lot of practice in using proper classroom language, for example in Speaking classes and Micro Teaching class, to prepare them to be better teachers of English.

Keywords: classroom English expressions, teacher candidate, English grammar, pronunciation, intonation, diction

INTRODUCTION

Although English is a foreign language in Indonesia, its role is becoming more and more important. English is used in the daily life stuffs, educational field, science and technology, commerce, and communication. To meet this demand, schools in Indonesia, from kindergartens to universities, are giving English subject as one of the compulsory subjects. The purpose of English teaching at schools is to provide relevant English proficiency for the students. To reach this purpose, schools need qualified English teachers to teach the subject, and this demand of qualified English teachers has pushed English Education Study Programs of the Teacher Training Faculties to prepare their graduates well so that they can be qualified English teachers, who can teach English well.

One of the missions of the English Education Study Program of the Faculty Teacher Training and Education, Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University is to produce professional

English teachers, who are competent to teach English in schools at the primary level and secondary level. To realize this mission, theEnglish Education Study Program of this Faculty offers several required courses related to pedagogy and teaching, both for the theories and practice. The peak of the courses offered is the Teaching Practice Program (usually called PPL or Program Pengenalan Lapangan), which is conducted in the real schools of primary level (sometimes kindergarten) or secondary level (junior or senior high schools). This course is given 4 credits and is offered in the seventh semester. In this program, the students of the EESP are given a lot of opportunities to conduct teaching and learning activities in the real classroom, where they are expected to implement all the knowledge, skills and proficiency they have obtained.

The standard of competence that has to be achieved in this course (Teaching Practice Program) is EESP students poossess the ability to carry out real classroom teaching to develop their students' English communicative competence and carry out teacher's administrative responsibilities (Pedoman Akademik 2008/2009). The basic competences include the following abilities:

- develop a lesson plan (for different levels of learners)
- open and close a class
- explain teaching materials clearly
- ask questions of various kinds
- respond students' questions appropriately
- assess students learning achievement appropriately
- apply appropriate teaching techniques, media, and other learning resources in conducting the class activities.
- give appropriate feedback to the students
- manage English language classrooms
- manage teaching-learning time
- develop and administer English test items to their students
- assess their students' English competence
- conduct academic school administration
- guide their students' academic activities
- establish rapport

A closer look at the basic competences that have to be achieved shows that the EESP graduates-to-be have to possess good English for classroom instruction to perform their duties as English teachers, or they should be fluent in classroom English. With the series of speaking courses given (from Speaking I: Daily conversation, Speaking II: Group Discussion, Speaking III: Presentation and Debate, to Speaking IV: Classroom English) and Micro Teaching course, the EESP students are highly expected to possess the ability to speak English fluently and use good classroom English in interacting with their students or pupils in the teaching practice schools. The fact in the field, however, sometimes shows that the EESP students do not fully comply to the objectives stated in these syllabi. The classroom English uttered by some students is sometimes inappropriate.

This study is, therefore, conducted to find out common problems with classroom language the EESP (English Education Study Program) students have during their teaching and learning process. This will, hopefully, give a feedback to the EESP related to their graduates' teaching performance and English proficiency, which in turn can be used to revise or modify the syllabi of the Speaking courses and Micro Teaching.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

What common problems with classroom language did the EESP (English Education Study Program) students have during their teaching and learning process?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The importance of using English as the medium of instruction in class is clearly seen in the teaching and learning activities conducted. Classroom activities need to be verbalized for the students to participate in, and teacher candidates need to be able to verbally interact with the students during the teaching and learning process. To this point, Hughes (1990) argues that though the role of this linguistic interaction is perhaps one of the least understood aspects of teaching, it is clearly crucial to the success of the teaching/learning event.

Barnes (2006) argues that everything teachers say and do sets patterns which can become ingrained; therefore, developing good teacher-talk is important for the instructional success. In the

language classes, a teacher is usually the best and sometimes the only person who can provide comprehensible input for his/her learners (O'Neill, 1994). Students, especially young learners, usually pick up as much as what they perceive from their teachers: their attitude, enthusiam, and language. They often imitate what their teacher says, behaves, or acts. Referring to English language teaching, students will usually regard their teachers as the model of the language they are learning. They imitate the language their teacher uses in the classroom. It is very important, therefore, for a teacher, to be a good model of the language they are learning. Once the students get the exposure of incorrect usage of the language, it will stick in their memory and it can take a long time for them to correct it.

Parrish (2004) states that the language that teachers use in class, or 'teacher talk', can have a tremendous impact on the success of interactions they have with students. Therefore, teachers need to use language that is understood by learners and that is appropriate for their students' level and age.

It is a fact, however, that teacher candidates, despite their long preparation that they have undergone in their study at the EESP, still face difficulties in using English as the medium of instruction. To this point, Willis (1981) states that a major problem for non-native speaker teachers of English, especially those with no direct experience of English-medium teaching, can be the language itself: the difficulty of actually speaking it well in the classroom, getting students to use the English they have learnt productively and to accept the use of English as the medium of instruction in class. He further indicates that there are two reasons why this problem exists. First, classroom language is more complex and specialized than is generally recognized, and according to Willis, a greater problem is caused by the complexities of classroom discourse. Second, a lack of explicit justification for the adoption of English as the medium of instruction has caused many problems, for examples the use of English as the medium of instruction even obstructs the teaching and learning process, students feel insecure and defensive because of the teacher's demand of using only English in the classroom, and some teachers, afraid of making mistakes, will keep to a bare minimum of the English they use in class, which bears little or no relationship to everyday English in the outside world. In short, the problem facing the non-native speaker in English-medium is not only what classroom language to use, and how, but also why.

In relation to comprehensible input for the target language learned, the classroom interaction between teacher and learners, which is conducted using English as the medium of instruction, will give the learners a lot of comprehensible input in English. It is widely accepted that a vital ingredient in the learning of any language is exposure to it. The more comprehensible input the students get, the better the result will be (Harmer, 4th edition). This also implies that it is a must for language teachers, in this case English language teachers, to provide good and correct comprehesible input for their learners.

In another role as encourager, teachers have to communicate with the students to establish good rapport between teacher and students. In this role, teachers have to use language in such a way so that their students can be motivated and encouraged in the classroom. The persuasive language uttered by teachers should be appropriate so that the purpose of the lesson can be achieved.

Finally, with regard to the English language instruction, in addition to its role as comprehensible input, classroom language uttered by teachers is very influential to their students so that the class activities can go on smoothly and the objectives of the lesson can be achieved.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research was descriptive by its nature. It observed the actual classroom language of the teacher candidates (in this case eight EESP students taking their teaching practice program in the real schools in the odd semester of the academic year 2010/2011), analyzed it, described the results (in the form of data display), and drew the conclusion based on it. The research subjects were chosen using the purposive random sampling method to represent the EESP teacher candidates taking their teaching practice program (PPL) in the odd semester of the academic year of 2010/2011. The following table indicates the subjects and the level of the schools where they had their teaching practice program.

Table 1
The Subjects and the Level of the Teaching Practice Schools

No	Teacher Candidates	School levels
1	Teacher Candidate 1	Senior High School
2	Teacher Candidate 2	Vocational School
3	Teacher Candidate 3	Vocational School
4	Teacher Candidate 4	Junior High School
5	Teacher Candidate 5	Primary School
6	Teacher Candidate 6	Junior High School
7	Teacher Candidate 7	Senior High School
8	Teacher Candidate 8	Primary School

The research data were collected using the following instruments:
- The researchers (equipped with knowledge of classroom English and experiences in teaching English)
- Voice recorder (used to record the research subjects' classroom language uttered during the teaching process in the classroom)

The transcribed data of all the eight subjects were then analyzed and all the mistakes made by the subjects are collected, classified, and analyzed further using the following form:

Table 2
Mistakes Encountered in the Subjects' Classroom Language

No	Teacher Candidate's Faulty Utterance	Classroom Situation	Corrected Version	Types of Mistakes				CS
				Pro	Into	Gr	Dict	

RESULTS

The results of the data analysis indicate the common mistakes made by the subjects of this research, which actually reveal the problems encountered by the subjects.

The collected mistakes made by the research subjects were classified based on their types, and basically there are four major types of problems made: pronunciation (Pro), intonation (Into), grammar (Gram), and diction (Dict). Although almost all subjects (7 out of 8) did code switching (from English to Indonesian) during the teaching and learning process, this practice is considered acceptable and the products of code switching are not considered to be mistakes or errors. The results of code switching are classified under code switch (CS) in the analysis. The following table summarizes the analyses of the types of mistakes/errors made by the subjects of the study, which in turn indicates the problems experienced by these eight subjects.

Table 3
Types of Mistakes Made by the Subjects

Teacher Candidate	No of Mistakes	Types of Mistakes				CS
		Pro	Into	Gram	Dict	
TC 1	37 (out of 150)	8	-	18	11	4
TC 2	68 (out of 390)	4	2	53	9	32
TC 3	147 (out of 373)	37	1	82	27	8
TC 4	25 (out of 164)	1	-	21	3	-
TC 5	114 (out of 335)	31	1	74	8	103
TC 6	48 (out of 156)	11	1	25	11	18
TC 7	85 (out of 181)	20	3	43	19	15
TC 8	74 (out of 343)	28	1	31	14	81
Total	**598 (out of 2092)**	**140**	**9**	**347**	**102**	**261**

The foregoing table shows that the subjects had problems with English pronunciation, intonation, grammar and diction. The biggest number of mistakes made (347 out of 598 or 58.02%) was related to the problem with English grammar; the second biggest number (140 out of 598 or 23.41%) is related to the problem with English pronunciation; the third biggest number (102 out of 598 or 17.06%) was related to the problem with diction or choice of word; the smallest number (9 out of 598 or 0.51%) was related to the problem with English intonation.

➢ In terms of pronunciation, the subjects of the research made only a few mistakes such as follows:
  • Mispronouncing some English words (such as *health, healthy, succeed, question, year, birthday, twentieth, example, zero, caffeine, obesity, position, signal, the before a vowel sound, correct, drank, attendance, April, relationship, lesson, heard, formula, sick, sentence, terrible, come on,* and *genius*)
  • Mispronouncing the English diphthong [ei] in *name, date, late, complains, predicate, make, paper, and made,* which is always mispronounced as [e].
  • Not pronouncing the final consonant [k], in *think.*
  • Not pronouncing the plural ending {s}, in *managers.*
  • Not pronouncing the past ending {ed} in verbs *altered,* and *changed.*

➢ In terms of intonation, two out of the eight research subjects made no mistakes at all. The other six made only a few mistakes in the English intonation as follows:
  • Using the falling intonation instead of rising intonation for unfinished sentences.
  • Using the rising intonation instead of falling intonation for Wh questions.
  • Using the rising intonation instead of falling intonation for commands.
  • Using the falling intonation instead of rising intonation for Yes/No questions.
  • Using the rising intonation instead of falling intonation for statements.

➢ In terms of English grammar, the research subjects made quite a number of mistakes. The mistakes are listed as follows:
  • Sentence Fragment
  • Misuse of Determiners/articles
  • Misuse of Plural Ending
  • Agreement between noun and personal pronoun
  • Agreement between Subject and Verb
  • Missing Connector (relative pronoun, conjunction)
  • Missing Subject
  • Missing Object
  • Missing Verb/Be
  • Missing Plural Ending
  • Missing Article
  • Verb Pattern for Active and Passive Voice
  • Verb Pattern for Direct Question and Indirect Questions
  • Double Predicates
  • Double objects
  • Mistakes in Gerund and Infinitive
  • Verb Tenses
  • Misuse of Verb Forms
  • Missing 's for possession

➢ In terms of diction, the research subjects made quite a number of mistakes. The mistakes are listed as follows:
  1) Redundancy (adding unnecessary words such as prepositions to the expressions used).
     For examples: *discuss about* *) instead of *discuss.*
                   review about *) *instead of review.*
  2) Omission (omitting the necessary words for the clarity of the intended meanings).
     For examples: *Is there any opinions*? instead of *Are there any **different** opinions?*
                   Could you sit? instead of *Could you sit **down**?*
                   Now come to your seat instead of *Now come **back** to your seat.*

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3) Using a wrong word for the complete expression/phrase/collocation used.
For examples: *the same with* *) instead of *the same as*.
The same ... like instead of *the same ... as*
... both ...or ... *) instead of *... both ... and ...*
pay attention at ... *) instead of *pay attention to ...*
pay attention with this one *) instead of *pay attention to this one*
look on the whiteboard *) instead of *look at the whiteboard*.
Make it by your own *) instead of *make it on your own*
Submit ...for me *) instead of *submit ... to me*
... the baby to care or take care instead of *... the baby to care for or take care of.*

4) Using wrong words to express the intended meanings.
For examples: *see* instead of *look at*
Original instead of *ordinal*
Pieces instead of *copies*
An honour instead of *a privilege*
Every problem instead of *each item*
Do the complaint instead of *make the complaint*
Conclude instead of *include*
Plus instead of *add*
Works instead of *exercises*
It instead of *one*
Softly instead of *slowly*
With instead of *by*
Of instead of *in*
On instead of *in*
Slow instead of *soft*
Again instead of *more*
Again instead of *else*
Mix instead of *mingle*
Other instead of *another*
Maam Indah instead of *Ms. Indah*
from instead of *of*
for instead of *to*
did mistakes instead of *made mistakes*
present instead of *teach*
no instead of *not*
whether instead of *if*
nutritional instead of *nutritious*
person instead of *representative*
Indonesia instead of *Indonesian*

5) Using totally wrong expressions/sentences to express the intended meanings.
For examples:
Who has not come? instead of *Who is absent today?*
Do you mean how? instead of *What do you mean?*
Give to the others instead of *let the others try*
You can submit it later, on free time, ok? instead of *You can submit it later during the break.*
Let's discuss the story together instead of *Let's discuss the answers together.*
Now, we are going to learn about months instead of *Now, we are going to use the melody for months.*
... but sometimes there are some months with thirty one day, ok? instead of *... but some months have thirty one days, ok?*
All of you say yes .... no, so why? instead of *Some of you say yes, and some say no, so why?*

Let's come to the second instead of *Let's move on to the second.*
...so let's make it as your homework instead of *...so do it for your homework.*

DISCUSSION

In general, the classroom language spoken by the research subjects was comprehensible enough; it means that during the teaching and learning processes, the use of English as the medium of instruction was effective enough although the subjects made several mistakes or errors in pronunciation, intonation, grammar and diction.

From the aspects of accuracy and appropriateness in pronunciation, it has been proved that the research subjects have a number of shortcomings such as follows:
(1) Mispronouncing some English words
(2) Mispronouncing the English diphthong [ei]
(3) Not pronouncing the final consonant [k]
(4) Not pronouncing the plural ending {s}
(5) Not pronouncing the past ending {ed}

From the aspects of accuracy and appropriateness in intonation, the research subjects had a number of shortcomings such as follows:
(1) Using the falling intonation instead of rising intonation for unfinished sentences.
(2) Using the rising intonation instead of falling intonation for Wh questions.
(3) Using the rising intonation instead of falling intonation for commands.
(4) Using the falling intonation instead of rising intonation for Yes/No questions.
(5) Using the rising intonation instead of falling intonation for statements.

From the aspects of accuracy and appropriateness in grammar, the research subjects had a number of shortcomings such as follows:
(1) Sentence Fragment
(2) Misuse of Determiners/articles
(3) Misuse of Plural Ending
(4) Agreement between noun and personal pronoun
(5) Agreement between Subject and Verb
(6) Missing Connector (relative pronoun, conjunction)
(7) Missing Subject
(8) Missing Object
(9) Missing Verb/Be
(10) Missing Plural Ending
(11) Missing Article
(12) Verb Pattern for Active and Passive Voice
(13) Verb Pattern for Direct Question and Indirect Questions
(14) Double Predicates
(15) Double objects
(16) Mistakes in Gerund and Infinitive
(17) Verb Tenses
(18) Misuse of Verb Forms
(19) Missing 's for possession

From the aspects of accuracy and appropriateness in diction (choice of word), the research subjects had a number of shortcomings such as follows:
(1) Redundancy (adding unnecessary words such as prepositions to the expressions used).
(2) Omission (omitting the necessary words for the clarity of the intended meanings).
(3) Using a wrong word for the complete expression/phrase/collocation used.
(4) Using wrong words to express the intended meanings.
(5) Using totally wrong expressions/sentences to express the intended meanings.

The deep explanations why the research subjects made these mistakes need further research; however, at a glance, especially in relation to pronunciation, intonation and grammar, it can be

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concluded that certain subjects are a bit careless, or sometimes a mistake happens because of slip of the tongue or mind. This can be traced from the fact that actually they are able to self correct their own mistakes when these mistakes are pointed to them. Despite this fact, this, however, also proves that these teacher candidates need to make extra efforts to review their grammar and practice their pronunciation. In terms of diction, they need to be more careful and to widen their vocabulary repertoire.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Related to the classroom language uttered, the research subjects made several mistakes or errors in pronunciation, intonation, grammar and diction. The biggest number of mistakes made (58.02%) is related to the English grammar, the second biggest number of mistakes made (23.41%) is related to the English pronunciation, the third biggest number of mistakes made (17.06%) is related to the diction or choice of word, and the smallest number of mistakes made (1.51%) is related to the English intonation. In general, despite these mistakes made, the classroom language spoken by the research subjects was comprehensible enough; it means that during the teaching and learning processes, the use of English as the medium of instruction by these eight subjects was effective enough.

Since the research findings indicate that the biggest problem that the teacher candidates had with classroom language was related to English grammar, the EESP Structure lecturers should give more opportunities to the EESP students to have more practice of using the English grammar in more meaningful communication in addition to the existing written exercises that they have got. This practice will enable the EESP students to remember the grammatical rules and apply them properly in their communication.

In relation to the materials of Speaking IV (English for Classroom Instruction), more exercises involving classroom scenarios should be added so that the teacher candidates will be more accustomed and spontaneous in using classroom language appropriately. Thus problems with pronunciation and diction will be reduced too.

The EESP students should also be given a lot of practice of doing teaching simulation or peer teaching in the Micro teaching course. With this, they will get a lot of practice in using the classroom language, and will therefore be able to use the classroom language appropriately during the teaching and learning process in the classroom.

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