

Exploring Teachers' Use of First Language (L1) in EFL Classroom

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Abstract

Teachers are always seen as the role model of the classroom. Students tend to imitate what the teachers speak and do, including in English classroom. It has been popular that in English classroom teachers impose the students to use English (L2) only. However, the practice showed that teachers still use L1 in their teaching. Regarding that fact, this study aims to investigate how teachers use first language (L1) in English classroom. The study involves experienced teachers from two private schools in Bekasi, a junior high school and a senior high school. Observations, video and audio recording, and interview were conducted to collect the data. From the data, it is obtained the teacher talk (TT) where the teachers mostly used English. Although the teachers used English and encouraged students to use English, it turned out that in some situation L1 is unavoidable. The teachers used L1 during the class learning. This teachers' L1 was then analyzed from the perspective of initiation, response, feedback (IRF) exchange. The result shows that teachers performed typical acts and functions in the class interaction. Moreover, teachers' L1 was not necessarily showing incompetence or reluctance to use L2. Rather, L1 use performed functions in the classroom that it helped teachers build students' knowledge and manage the class more efficiently.

Keywords: First language (L1), IRF exchange, teacher talk

Introduction

Teacher talk has always been successful to attract the attention of scholars. This is due to the fact that, teachers are the ones who are responsible for the success of the learning in the classroom. TT is important because teachers are the role model especially for the young learners. TT is used as the role model on how to speak respectfully (Diffily & Sassman, 2006). The young learners will imitate how the teachers talk. With that role, the consequence is teacher talk dominates the classroom talk. Studies done by Macaro (2006) and Chaudron (as cited in Creese, 2005) show that 60% of classroom talk consists of teacher talk that contains mostly teachers' questions. Besides that, teacher talk, as summarized by Kiasi and Hemmati (2014), functions to construct learners' knowledge, class control and management, and language input.

In English as Foreign Language (EFL) context, the teacher talk becomes more complex. The complexity in EFL classroom includes the use of first language (L1) that has been an endless argument since a long time ago. Some scholars (e.g. Ellis, 1984; Wong-Fillmore, 1985; Chaudron, 1988; & Lightbown, 2001), believe that foreign language is the only language used in EFL classroom because the use of L1 can deprive the exposure of the foreign language which later can result negative transfer to the students (Jingxia, 2010). On the contrary, researchers (e.g. Tikunof & Vazques-Faria, 1982; Levine, 2003; Widdowson, 2003; Butzkamm, 2003; Liping, 2004; Lee & Macaro, 2013) supporting the use of L1 in EFL classroom argue that L1 can be used to learn the target language that it serves a good strategy for efficient learning (Chavez, 2016; Jingxia, 2010). The use of L1 should be seen as a normal way of communication in multilingual situation (Gardner-Chloros, 2009). This

situation promotes the social condition in the classroom. However, the class participants should maximize the use of TL so the learners do not lose the TL exposure to improve their language.

From the perspective of the students, they respond positively on the use of L1 in EFL classroom (Borlongan, Lim, & Roxas, 2012; Jingxia, 2010; Macaro & Lee, 2013; Manara, 2007). They believe that L1 support their EFL learning that they do not misunderstand instruction. Unlike the students who clearly support the use of L1, the teachers' perception on this issue is divided. In a way, they believe that L1 can create a non-threatening learning situation. On the other way, it might deprive the exposure of TL (Cook, 2001).

Although teachers do not meet to one agreement on the use of L1, in practice L1 always occur in the classroom, whether it is produced by the teachers or students. With the limited time for the classroom meeting, L1 seems to be a good strategy to make an efficient learning, especially for controlling and managing the classroom. Not only to manage the classroom, L1 is also used as means to access the curriculum, and build interpersonal relations among the class participants (Cahyani, de Courcy, & Barnett, 2016). In other words, L1 simplifies the knowledge building, class management and socialization between the teachers and students, or among the students.

Studies concerning the perception of teachers and students on the use of L1 have been done intensively but few discusses the teacher talk L1 in the framework of Sinclair and Coulthards's IRF exchange. To see further how teacher talk L1 functions in the classroom interaction, this study attempts to find out (1) what acts the teachers perform when using L1 in the classroom and (2) in what ways L1 TT is used in the classroom.

Literature Review

Teacher Talk and IRF Exchange

Teacher talk plays an essential role in learning process that it is the central of how the class is running. Teacher talk is often used as strategy for developing technical language, constructing ideas, encouraging students to develop their ideas and reasoning (Sharpe, 2008). Consequently, teachers often dominate the classroom, approximately two third of the lesson (Macaro, 2006).

Teacher talk is composed of three-part exchange called IRF patterns. Sinclair and Coulthard, who coined the term in 1976, explains that classroom interaction usually starts with initiation (I) from the teacher, then students reply with a response (R), and a feedback (F) to evaluate the students' responses (Sharpe, 2008; Viiri & Saari, 2006). Regarding the pattern, teachers' role mostly occurs in the initiation and feedback part. The initiation determines the effectiveness of the learning (Lynch, 1991) and the feedback part is to evaluate students comprehension, to repair problems and direct learning and explore different kinds of trajectories (Lee, 2007).

The aforementioned functions is clearly shown in the IRF pattern. Sinclair and Coulthard (2002) categorizes the exchange to be free exchange and bound exchange. Free exchange does not always follow the IRF pattern. In some occasion, feedback or response do not occur. For example, I(R). IR(F), IR, IF, etc. Meanwhile, the pattern of bound exchange consists of the three-part exchange with some re-initiations, such as, IR^bRF, IRF(I^b)RF, IRF(I^b)RF(I^b)RF, etc.

Furthermore, the IRF moves represent different acts. The acts are elicitation, directive, informative, marker, loop, prompt, comment, accept, evaluate, and check (Sinclair & Coulthard, 2002). In Table 1 it is shown the description of the acts:

Table 1. Sinclair & Coulthard's Acts

Acts	Function
Elicitation (el)	to request a linguistic response.
Directive (d)	To request a non-linguistic response.
Informative (i)	To provide information. The only response is acknowledgement of attention and understanding.
Marker (m)	To mark boundaries in the discourse
Loop (l)	To return the discourse to the stage it was at before the pupil spoke, from where it can proceed normally.
Prompt (p)	To reinforce directive or elicitation. This act is not only requesting response but expecting or demanding a response.
Comment (com)	To exemplify, expand, provide additional information.
Accept (acc)	To indicate that the teacher has heard or seen and that the informative, reply, or react is appropriate
Evaluate (e)	To evaluate a pupil's response.
Check (ch)	To enable the teacher to assess the progress of the lesson and to check if there are any problems hindering progress.

Conversation Analysis

Conversation Analysis (CA) defines as a way of analysing language and social interaction (Wong & Waring, 2010). Social interaction is associated to 'talk-in-interaction' that represents the naturally-occurred conversation (Have, 2007). This implies that CA analyses the natural conversation as two people or more talk in daily conversation. However, it is difficult collect data from natural conversation because the researcher's presence might make them uncomfortable. One possible condition of natural conversation is classroom interaction. There the data can be obtained by recording the conversation.

Using the transcription, the conversation analysis is able to conceal the meaning underlying the utterance although the utterance is incomplete or not in good forms (Koshik, 2002, 2005; Seedhouse, 2004). In second language acquisition, what is seen from the utterances is not only the form but also the intended meaning that the speaker wants to convey.

Method

This study adopts qualitative approach by using video recording, observation and interview (Nunan & Bailey, 2009). Although this approach is not identical with numeric data, qualitative study still uses quantifying findings such as number of display questions versus the number of referential questions, the number of times errors are corrected, the amount of time the target language is used during the lesson, and others. It is also possible that one type of data is used to answer a certain part of the research, and the other type for the other questions (Greene & Caraceilli, 1997).

The participants of this study are two English teachers from two private schools in Bekasi. One is a junior high school English teacher (Teacher A) and the other is a senior high school English teacher (Teacher B). Both teachers hold bachelor degree from English Education programs and both are experienced teachers. Teacher A has been teaching for fifteen years, while Teacher B has been teaching for two years in that school.

The observation starts with a preliminary observation in Teacher B's classes. This preliminary study was conducted two times to see the interaction in the classroom. Besides that, the preliminary observation aimed to make the class participants get used to the observer's presence. Class participants sometimes feel uncomfortable when being observed,

so they do not interact as usual. Therefore, preliminary observation was done to get the normal situation of the classroom. Regarding that situation, the data of the preliminary study were not used in this study.

After the preliminary study, the data was obtained from the next meetings of the class. Both teachers were observed four times. During the observation, the classes were video and audio recorded. A recorder was placed near the teachers' table to record the teachers speaking more clearly, while the video was taken from the back corner to get the full coverage of the class. Then, the recording was transcribed which later was to analysed.

Before the observation, a list of L1 functions was prepared to see how teachers used L1 in the classroom. The writer also made some notes about class situation and L1 functions not included in the list. The observation and the list then are used to analyse how the teachers used L1 in English classroom.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to get teachers' perception on the use of L1 in English class. The interviews took about 20-35 minutes. The interviews were audio recorded then transcribed to see the L1 occurrences in the class interaction.

Findings and Discussion

The result of the study shows that teachers used L1 during the learning process despite their belief that they should only used TL in the classroom. From Table 2, it can be seen that in both schools L1 mostly occurred in the re-initiation, feedback, initiation, and response. The response has the least number because as aforementioned the classroom talk and the initiation are dominated by the teacher. Consequently, it is the students that give more responses in classroom interaction.

Table 2. L1 Occurrences

Acts	Teachers								Total			
	School A				School B							
	I	I(b)	R	F	I	I(b)	R	F	I	I(b)	R	F
Accept				44				62	0	0	0	106
Check	6	3		1	8	23	1		14	26	1	1
Comment	1	5	1	2			6	3	1	5	7	5
Directive	22	28	2	1	32	36	4	2	54	64	6	3
Elicitation	51	160	7		27	51	7		78	211	14	0
Evaluate			1	32				37	0	0	1	69
Informative	3	7	2		24	37	6	4	27	44	8	4
Loop		17				39	12		0	56	12	0
Marker	2				7	1	2		9	1	2	0
Prompt		22				3			0	25	0	0
Total									183	432	51	188

Table 2 shows that teachers' L1 dominated the re-initiation. This can be seen as the teachers' attempt to optimize the use of TL. They used TL, then used L1 when they felt that the students did not give the correct answer. Extract 1 exemplifies the situation where teachers try to use TL rather than L1. The context of the learning is discussing the structure of sentences. In the beginning, the teacher asked whether the sentence written by a student was correct or not. Then, in Turn 175 she checked the student's comprehension by asking some questions and L1 occurred to make sure that students understand the structure and the grammar of the sentence. When she was correcting the student's ungrammatical sentence,

she switched to use L1 in Turn 181. By doing this, the students were aware that there is a grammatical point that they need to pay attention.

Extract 1 – School A

173.	Teacher	The question, is it correct or not?
174.	Student	Correct
175.	Teacher	Correct. <i>Pertanyaan tentang? Data, identitas.</i> [What is the question about? Data, identity] Okay? Does Guy live with her parents? <i>Jawabnya apa?</i> [What's the answer?] No?
176.	Student	She doesn't
177.	Teacher	She doesn't (<i>writing on the board</i>) She live, she lives with?
178.	Student	(x)
179.	Teacher	Her?
180.	Student	(x)
181.	Teacher	<i>Pertanyaannya pakai does, jawabannya tambah?</i> [When the question uses does, the verb is attached with?]
182.	Student	S
183.	Teacher	Remember. Okay, next number five. H! ...

From Table 2, the acts where L1 usually occurred are elicitation, directives and loops. Elicitation occurs when the speakers request linguistic respond, while directives occurs when the speaker request non-linguistic response such as doing an instruction (Sinclair & Coulthard, 2002). The elicitation can be seen from Extract 1 Turn 175 and 181. As aforementioned, that the teachers attempted to lead the students to produce grammatical questions.

Extract 2. School B

260	Teacher	So, later when you write your opinion or reasoning about your project, try to write like we did today. I'll check your writing. Please study hard. Now, we continue our study. We go back to page eighty-two
261	Student	Eighty-two
262	Teacher	Come on, <i>Dame</i> (Students opening the book)
263	Teacher	Okay, about Got Talent. Page eighty-two. Please read the Got Talent show::: <i>Dion! tolong dibaca, Nak.</i> [Dion, can you read the text!]
264	Student	(Reading) The Got Talent show is now produced in over thirty countries. In the show, singers, dancers, and other performers compete for audience support. If they are really good, they get a chance to record a CD or travel with their act.

Furthermore, directives occurred when the teachers gave instruction to the students as seen in Extract 2 turn 263. The teacher used L1 because she did not get the non-linguistic response which is reading the text. After giving instruction in English without getting the expected response, the teacher switched to L1. The extract shows that the giving instruction in L1 is effective as the student read the text right away.

The other act occurring in re-initiation is loop, an act to return to the discourse (Sinclair & Coulthard, 2002). From Table 2 it can be seen that act loop occurred quite frequently. The cause was that the class was too noisy. Because the teacher could not hear the students' answer, she asked the students to repeat their answer. In this situation, the teacher used L1 so she could get the immediate response in the middle of the noise. Once again, using L1 is considered to be a logical option done by the teacher to get the effective response.

After the re-initiation, teachers' L1 frequently occurred in the initiation move. This happens because teacher's role is very important in the learning process in the classroom. They are responsible to build knowledge and control the class. The consequence of the role

is dominating the classroom talk and L1 occurred during the process. From the studies, 60% of the classroom talk is the teacher talk (Macaro, 2006).

The acts that the teachers served mostly are elicitation and directives. This aligns with Sinclair and Coulhard's study saying that teachers talk mostly contains with elicitation, directives, and informatives (2002). Elicitation is closely related to teachers' role to construct the learners' knowledge. Elicitation or questions are used because teachers do not spoon-feed the students, meaning the answer of a certain question is given directly. Rather, the teachers attempt to build the logical thinking of the students by giving questions. When this happens, the use of L1 by the teachers are sometimes unavoidable. Extract 3 turn 20 shows how L1 elicitation occurred in the classroom. The teacher asked whether or not there was a full stop in the sentence. She was correcting the student's way of reading the sentence when the intonation was not appropriate. Then, she continued correcting the grammar of the sentence. Some L1 elicitation occurred in the preceding re-initiation moves.

Extract 3 School A

20.	Teacher	Stop. <i>Ada titik nggak?</i> [Is there a fullstop there?]
21.	Student1	<i>O iya</i> [yes]
22.	Teacher	There is fullstop. Okay, what is the answer?
23.	Students	Wears
24.	Teacher	<i>He?</i> [Sorry?]
25.	Student1	Wear
26.	Teacher	Wear. Look:: <i>ada 'look' gitu kan? Berarti, kejadiannya?</i> [Look:: There is 'look'. So, when does it happen?]
27.	Student	<i>Sekarang</i> [now]
28.	Teacher	<i>Sekarang</i> [now]. Right now. So?
29.	Student	(x)
30.	Teacher	Look! <i>ya</i> . There's a fancy dress party. And all the people?
31.	Student	(x)
32.	Teacher	Are wearing?
33.	Student1	Animal costume

Meanwhile, the directives act occurred in the initiation move when the teachers giving instruction related to the classroom facilities and managing the classroom. Extract 4 and 5 show how directives occurred in the initiation move.

Extract 4 School B

...		
164	Teacher	<i>Pakai panah nak</i> (giving instruction to scroll the picture) [click the arrow]
	Student	(Click the arrow)
...		
253	Teacher	<i>Tolong dimatikan.</i> [Please, turn off the projector] (pointing to the projector)
254	Student	(Turning off the projector)

In Extract 4 the teacher was asking the student to scroll the picture and to turn on the projector. The picture was partly displayed in the screen and the teacher was explaining the material to the students sitting in the corner. When other students want to see the picture completely, she asked the student to scroll the picture. The similar situation also happens for the projector. The teacher asked the student to turn off the projector. Furthermore, the class management can also be seen in Extract 5. The class was discussing exercise and the teacher was choosing the students who should answer the questions. Here, the teacher used L1 to

save the time. Teacher B said that it was a conscious decision to use L1 because she wanted the problem get solved quickly.

Extract 5 School B

342.	Teacher	<i>Sebentar, satu, ee:: coba dilihat yang bagian enam puluh di Language Choice. Tolong nomor dua Adit, nomor tiga Aura. Nomor empat Valen.</i> [Jordan hasn't performed. One more. Oik, perform today. The other three, perform next meeting. Get ready. Wait, one, ee:: please check part sixty on <i>Language Choice</i> . Please number two Adit, number three Aura. Number four, Valen]
343.	Student	<i>Yang mana, Miss?</i> [Which one, Miss]
344.	Teacher	<i>Enam puluh, language choice. Halaman dua puluh.</i> [sixty, <i>Languange Choice</i> . Page twenty]
345.	Student	<i>Enam puluh, enam puluh</i> [sixty, sixty]
346.	Student	Ma'am?
347.	Teacher	Yes
348.	Student	<i>Bagian lima enam?</i> [Part fifty-six?]
349.	Teacher	<i>Bagian enam puluh</i> [Part sixty]
350.	Student	<i>Ooh, enam puluh</i> [oh, sixty]

The third move where L1 usually occurred is feedback. Table 2 shows that the most frequent acts occurring in feedback are accept and evaluate acts. The act of accept means the teacher has heard or seen that the acts of informative, reply or react is appropriate (Sinclair & Coulthard, 2002). Extract 6 shows that the teacher used L1 to accept students reply. Interestingly, in turn 275, 277, and 279, the teacher accepted students' L1 answer. When the students answered in L1, the teacher repeated the L1. However, in turn 280 the student gave TL answer and the teacher accepted the answer in TL too. This indicates that the teacher got dragged to the students' preference of language. Even more, when the students answered in TL, the teacher translated the answer into L1.

Extract 6 School B

273.	Teacher	<i>Yang diomongkan adalah tentang apa?</i> [If. Yes. What is 'if' about?]
274.	Student	<i>Jika</i> [if]
275.	Teacher	<i>Jika. Kalau jika itu berarti apa? He?</i> [if. What does it mean?]
276.	Student	<i>Tidak pasti</i> [uncertain]
277.	Teacher	<i>Tidak pasti</i> [uncertain]
278.	Student	<i>Tergantung</i> [it depends]
279.	Teacher	<i>Belum pasti, syarat, prediksi. Kenapa?</i> [uncertainty, condition, prediction. Pardon me?]
280.	Student	Unreal
281.	Teacher	Unreal. <i>Tidak nyata</i> [unreal]. Okay <i>Coba</i> , let's see part four. 'If they are really good, they get a chance to record a CD'. There is in bracket, in bracket 'present', and we have match it with the blue box, that is a rule, something that is always true. A rule. If bla bla bla, they get a chance to report a CD. The sentence is in present

The other act occurring in feedback move is evaluate act, that occurs when the teacher evaluate, correct, or repair students' reply (Sinclair & Coulthard, 2002). Extract 7 shows how L1 evaluate act occurred in the classroom talk. In turn 435 the teacher evaluated the student's singing performance in L1. The student accepted the evaluation that she kept her hand off the chair and continued singing.

Extract 7 School B

431.	Teacher	<i>Ayo Oik, ayo Oik.</i> [Come on Oik, Oik]
432.	Student1	<i>Nyanyi atau doa?</i> [Singing or praying?]
433.	Teacher	<i>Satu, dikit aja.</i> Come on [Sing a little. Come on]
434.	Student1	(singing) <i>Ayo mama, jangan mama marah beta</i> [song lyrics]
435.	Teacher	<i>Ya gak pake pegang kursi juga kali</i> [Don't hold the chair like that!]

436. Student1 (keep her hand off from the chair – continue singing) *Dia cuma, dia cuma pegang beta. Ayo Mama, jangan mama marah beta, ma orang muda sudah biasa.* [song lyrics]

Teacher A and B actually believe that students should use TL only in the classroom. They believe that TL only in the class can improve the students' performance significantly. This idea comes from their education background and their own opinion. When they were learning in Education program, they were exposed with English all the time. As the result, they acquired English much better than before. Besides that, their teachers in the university told them that they must use TL only to teach EFL classroom. So, they bear the same idealism when they teach their own classes now.

However, the teachers' idealism seems to be hard to bear. They could not avoid the use of L1. Teacher A said that she used L1 when she saw confusion in the students' facial expression. She knew that some students did not understand the subject. So, when she asked the students one by one, she used L1 in the initiation move to make sure that the students understand the concept. Later, to keep the TL exposure to the students, the teacher switched back to TL. Meanwhile, Teacher B said that she used L1 to save the time regarding the material that they needed to cover. To keep up the material, she used L1 for explaining complicated material.

From the observation, the use of L1 also shows some functions. There are four functions of L1 such as for knowledge building, class management, interpersonal relationship, and affective meaning (Cahyani et al., 2016; Ferguson, 2009). For the knowledge building, L1 mostly occurred when the teachers check students' comprehension and explain grammar. Besides that, L1 also functions to give feedback to the students, explain new vocabulary, and explain concept. For the class management, L1 occurred when the teachers gave instructions, asked the students to repeat what they said and warned the students. Furthermore, in building interpersonal relation the teachers also used L1. This happened when the teacher replied students L1 questions or when they wanted to lessen the pressure to slow learners. The last function, to share personal and affective experience, did not occur frequently in School A. This function can be seen more clearly in School B which class situation is more crowded than the other school.

Conclusion

Applying the use of full TL, in this case is English-only rule is the idealism of many teachers. In fact, L1 is still used by teachers in practice. This study shows that L1 frequently occurred respectively in re-initiation, initiation, feedback, and response. The acts occurring in the re-initiation and initiation are elicitation and directives. These two acts are the most frequent acts used by teachers in classroom interaction (Sinclair & Coulthard, 2002). For the feedback move, the acts occurring most frequently are accept and evaluate. The act of accept happens when the teachers confirm the students' reply. Interestingly, teachers tend to repeat what the students says. The teachers accepted in L1 when the students use L1 and in TL when the students use TL. For the feedback is not discussed further because this is the part where teachers contribute the least.

Besides saving the time, L1 shows some functions in the classroom talk. The most visible reason is that L1 help students build their knowledge of the subject. For instance, the teachers check the comprehension and explain grammar in L1. The first language is considered to be more effective and efficient. The second function is to manage the classroom. L1 is considered to be more efficient to give instruction, including administrative instruction, to ask students speak clearly, and to warn the students. The third function is to

build interpersonal relation. The students feel more comfortable to talk to the teacher when there is no English-only rule.

This study reminds teachers how to maximize the use of TL. Allowing the use of L1 should not be used as excuse to discourage the use of TL. Rather, teachers should encourage the students to practice the target language. The use of L1 should still be limited to maintain the TL exposure. The limitation of this study is that the interaction transcribed is only the classroom talk, when the teachers talks to the class. The direct interaction between teacher-student and interaction among the students in group discussion is not transcribed due to the lack of media. For the future, the study can investigate how L1 and TL are used in direct interaction and group discussion.

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