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QUESTIONING MODIFICATIONS IN CLASSROOM INTERACTION

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Abstract

This study investigates the use of four questioning modifications in EFL classroom as proposed by Chaudron (1988); these are repetition, narrowing by means of clues, rephrasing with alternative or "or-choice" questions and wait-time. The investigation was carried out in a private senior high school in Banda Aceh by conducting six sessions (480 minutes) of direct observations. The classroom interaction between an English teacher and fourteen female students in each session was video recorded. The result of analysis on teacher's questioning modifications showed that narrowing by means of clues was dominantly used by the teacher to modify questions in the classroom. The use of narrowing by means of clues was intended to describe the question clearly in order to make the students more understand.

Keywords: Question, questioning modifications, classroom interaction.

INTRODUCTION

Employing strategies to encourage students to talk during teaching-learning processes is important. Some scholars (e.g. Brown, 2001; Richards & Lockhart, 1996; Nunan, 1991) conclude that asking question is one of teacher's strategies to get students talked and participated in the classroom lesson. However, using different types of questions does not guarantee for improving classroom interaction. The most important is the questioning modifications employed by the teacher to provoke oral student's response and to improve students' grammatical competence (Wu, 1993). The main problem found in most EFL classroom settings including Indonesia is that the teacher tends to ask more knowledge or comprehension questions which require recall information or recognition without considering students' critical thinking. Lack of questioning modifications or strategies used by the teacher in the classroom is another obstacle to develop interactive environment and to reach learning language goals as stated in curriculum. It is important that teachers are able to ask any types of questions appropriately for any levels of students. Hence, teachers also have to be able to master questioning modifications as one of strategies to follow up students' response or absence of responses (Moore, 2007). Questioning modifications are essential aspect of classroom interaction to improve the quality and quantity of students' responses and attention in learning process. Every question is expected to be answered by students. Unfortunately, not all questions are responded by students due to some reasons such as unclear questions, long and complex questions asked and some questions are not understood. These circumstances remain the interaction is not interactive. Thus, it is important not only investigating types of questions but questioning modifications used by the teacher to encourage students' responses and participation.

A number of researchers have conducted some studies related to questioning modifications. One of them was studied by Yu (2010) in Qingdao University of Science and Technology. Her study focused on teacher's used of types of questions and modifications (e.g. repetition and wait-time (pauses). A parallel study of questioning modifications in different EFL context was conducted by Moritoshi (2002). He looked at modifications used by the teacher in terms of self-repetition, pauses, rephrasing, translation into Japanese and code-switching. Another study on questioning modifications was conducted by Farooq (1998) in Japan. His study focused on two types of modifications (teacher's wait-time and rate of speech). However, this study focused on four questioning modifications proposed by Chaudron (1988). To the purpose of this study, the following research question was raised "What is the frequency of each type of questioning modifications (e.g. repetition, narrowing by means of clues, rephrasing with alternative or "or-choice" question and wait-time) used by the teacher?"

LITERATURE REVIEW

Questioning Modifications

A number of modification classifications seem overlap at times. Therefore an explanation of each classification is important to take into account to decide the one used for this study. Reviewing and comparing research on modifications in teacher talk has been pioneered by Chaudron (1988). He has studied teacher talk for a long time, and he concluded four types of modifications in the classroom teacher talk: repetition, narrowing by means of clues, rephrasing with alternative, and wait-time. Further, other researchers (e.g. Nunan, 1991; Richards & Lokchart, 1996) have discussed modifications based on Chaudron's extensive analysis.

Another classification of questioning modification is proposed by Moore (2007), he concluded five modifications; these are redirecting, wait-time, halting time, listening, and reinforcement. The above classifications of questioning modifications have been developed based on different contexts of studies and frameworks. Chaudron (1988) identifies four types of questioning modifications derived from his taxonomy of speech modifications in teacher talk in ESL contexts. Meanwhile, Moore (2007) develops his taxonomy of questioning modifications for general instructional processes in the classroom. It is either used for language teachers or other subject matter teachers. However, his suggestion on the wait-time technique in asking questions was one supported by Rowe (1974). Even though various types of modifications are classified from different perspectives, the one proposed by Chaudron (1988) is employed to the present study considering that Chaudron (1988) is the leading of reviewing and collating research on speech modifications (Moritoshi, 2002; Yu, 2010).

METHOD

This study employed one case study of one EFL classroom to investigate four questioning modifications proposed by Chaudron (1988): repetition, narrowing by means of clues, rephrasing with alternative or "or-choice" question and wait-time. This study was conducted at one private senior high school in Banda Aceh. The participant was a female English teacher teaching fourteen second grade female students. In teaching, the teacher used Student's Book and Work Book 3. This study analysed teacher's questioning modifications used by the teacher during 840 minutes sessions of the teaching-learning processes. The teaching-learning process was videotaped and then transcribed for the purpose of data analysis. During the classroom observation, observation sheets and field notes were utilized as well.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study found that the teacher used the four questioning modifications proposed by Chaudron (1988). From those modifications found from the observations, they were calculated afterwards and displayed in Table 1. The table confirms the most dominant type of modifications occurred in the classroom to the least one. Hence, the modification frequency can be made in percentages as shown in the following table.

Table 1. The frequency of questioning modifications.

| No. | Types of questions | Code | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|--|------|-----------|------------|
| 1. | Repetition | M1 | 31 | 14.6 % |
| 2. | Narrowing by means of clues | M2 | 64 | 30.1 % |
| 3. | Rephrasing with alternative or "or-choice" questions | M3 | 62 | 29.2% |
| 4. | Wait-time | M4 | 55 | 25.9 % |
| Total | | | 212 | 100 % |

From the above table, the findings are different from the research's finding conducted by Yu (2010). She discovered three questioning modifications namely; repetition, wait-time, and code switching. The most common questioning modification found in her study was repetition, which reached 88.6%. Meanwhile, Moritoshi (2002) found several modifications of questions employed in his study. They were repetition, wait-time, rephrasing, translating, and code switching. His finding was similar to Yu's (2010) finding that repetition was the most common modifications used. Moritoshi (2002) found that up to 82 % of questions were repeated by the teacher. Similarly, Farooq (1998) revealed numerous modified questions in his study, and the teacher's longer wait-time and self - repetition became the dominant modifications applied.

Relating to those studies, this study listed narrowing-modified question by giving clues (30.1%) as the leading type of modifications used during all observations. Additionally, rephrasing with alternative was the second dominant modifications used in the classroom (29.2%). Obviously, rephrasing has provided more input for the students, also the silence of the class was being eluded. This finding was really different from Moritoshi's (2002) study that only 15% questions were rephrased. The other modifications such as wait-time and repetition took the second and third position in this study that respectively occurred only 55 (25.9 %) and 31 (14.6 %) modifications from the overall modifications analyzed. The longest wait-time occurred in this study spent 1 minute and 20 seconds. The longest wait-time was employed when asking vocabulary meaning, so the response given was taken from the dictionary. It means the students did not produce their own sentence. It can be concluded that the teacher really wanted her students to know the meaning of words. Moreover, the three other longest wait-time modifications occurred in asking students' preference and wish about something, and another one in asking grammatical pattern questions which certainly encouraged students to produce a longer response. Albeit, the repetition turned out to be the least modification of question used by the teacher during the study. Repetition was used by the teacher for many times before the expected response, the teacher also repeated her question when she wanted other students to respond.

CONCLUSIONS

Narrowing by means of clues was the leading modification employed by the teacher in this study or equally reached 30.1%, followed by rephrasing with alternative (29.2%). The wait-time modification used by the teacher equally reached 25.9%, which the longest wait-time was around 80 seconds. Meanwhile, repetition was at the least occurrence from the entire modifications observed by the writer or equally occurred 14.6%.

Overall, the dominant uses of clues (30.1%), followed by rephrasing (29.2%), demonstrate the teacher's effort to make students produce the target language and avoid the silence of the class. In addition, these two modifications were intended by the teacher to make the students more comprehend and understand the question. The teacher promoted the learners' productions in the target language as it is supported by the teacher use of longer wait-time to the response.

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