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Student-Teachers' Strategies in Giving Feedback in Teaching Speaking

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Abstract

Teaching language productive skills is one of the most of the challenging processes for English teachers. Some novice teachers fail to give feedback in teaching the skills. This study focuses on identifying student-teachers' ways of giving feedback to their pupils, especially related to teaching speaking. It, therefore, is to explore how student-teachers give feedback to the pupils' speaking skills and of the student-teachers' difficulties in giving feedback for the pupils' speaking skills. This study was conducted in Micro Teaching classes in the English Study Program of Sanata Dharma University in 2014. A survey research was conducted by triangulating the data gathered from document analysis, questionnaire, field notes, and focus group discussion. The study reveals that most students produced appreciative feedback. Some other feedbacks are feedback on language competence whose focus is in accuracy of the language used. The difficulties of giving feedback commonly occur due to student teachers' unconfident feeling about their own language ability and also due to time management problems. The findings suggest that when giving feedback to students, teachers should not only appreciate the efforts but also comment on the language used.

Keywords: feedback, teaching speaking skills, student teachers

Introduction

Teaching and learning productive skills, namely speaking and writing skills, is very difficult (Alwasilah, 2001: 15). Teachers need more efforts to teach them. The former productive skill requires the teacher to give more focus since he/she cannot retrieve what the students said. There are some important questions related to teaching speaking (Bilgih, 2009). They are as follows.

1. Is it necessary to review the language to be used in a task?
2. Will the learners work in pairs or small groups?
3. How will learners be monitored as they complete task?
4. How will teachers provide feedback to students?

The latter productive skill is also challenging to teach. Besides those similar four important questions, there are also additional challenges in teaching writing. Time constraint will be one of them. It is because "A process approach to writing emphasizes generating ideas, organising and presenting them in an acceptable way and re-writing first/second drafts in the light of feedback from readers" (<http://www.uefap.com/articles/fumeaux.pdf>, 1995: 8). Feedback for writing should not only come at the end of the process. It is good to give them feedback during the drafting process. It means the writing process needs much longer time.

From the researchers observations when accompanying student-teachers during their micro teaching and internship program, the focuses of those student-teachers in planning were more on activities to conduct during the process. Only little attention was given to what they needed to do while or after the pupils did the speaking or writing activities. In fact, what they did most was recognizing that their pupils already finished

their activities by saying, for instance “Okay class, let’s give the group applause.” This statement is meant only to appreciate their pupils performance, whereas in fact the pupils need comments or correction to the language they use. In other words, they need feedback. An example of teachers’ little attention given to writing class is that the pupils are only given task to write and leave them without any comments given. Even, in some cases in the process of accompanying the student-teachers in their internship program the researchers encountered that they only asked the pupils to write certain topics at home.

Feedback is crucial in the teaching process since it “provides students with advice about learning and with language input” (Lewis, 2002: 4). It is one of the teachers’ most important responsibilities. Its aim is to bring about self-awareness and improvement (Gower et al, 2005: 163). Feedback can give the pupils meaningful information on their performance; for example they can find out whether the language they use is correct or not in terms of grammar, diction, or style. When the pupils recognize that there are some incorrect uses of language, they are expected to learn from their mistakes. On the other hand, when they know that they already use the language correctly, they will usually be confident in the next oral or written performance. Therefore, for the sake of successful learning, feedback should not only be given to comment on the pupils’ errors, but also more important to be given to comment on what the pupils are doing well (Lewis, 2002).

Therefore, this research is meant to focus on identifying student-teachers’ ways of giving feedback to their pupils, especially related to teaching speaking. It was conducted in Micro Teaching classes in the English Education Study Program of Sanata Dharma University. This research focuses on the two following research questions. They are (1) how do student-teachers give feedback to the pupils’ speaking skills? and (2) what are the student-teachers’ difficulties in giving feedback for the pupils’ speaking skills?

In doing the research, there are some limitations set to give clear guidelines in conducting the research as well as reporting the results. The focus of the research is on diagnosing student-teachers’ strategies in giving feedback. Therefore, the research will only deal with performance of student-teachers in Micro Teaching classes. Based on the primary data that are going to be gathered from the documents from the previous semester, the research is going to be done in the academic year of 2013/2014. To avoid the confusion, it is necessary to define some essential terms. The following section elaborates the definition of important terms in this study.

1. Student Teachers

Based on Johnson (2012), “by definition, student teaching is a period of guided teaching when the teacher candidate takes increasing responsibility for leading the school experiences of a group of learners over a period of consecutive weeks. Similarly, from a definition in a dictionary, it is found out that” a student who is studying to be a teacher and who, as part of the training, observes classroom instruction or does closely supervised teaching in an elementary or secondary school” (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/student+teacher>). In this study, student teachers are students of micro teaching class of the English Language Education Study Program who have to do teaching practice in front of their peers.

2. Feedback

Feedback is “information a teacher or another speaker, including another learner, gives to learners on how well they are doing, either to help the learner improve specific points, or to help plan their learning” (BBC, <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/knowledge-database/feedback>). In this study, feedback refers to any actions the STs took as to respond to students’ speaking performance or students’ writing result produced in class.

Teaching Speaking

22 Speaking is a complex skill which, according to 24 Hinkel (http://wha.arizona.edu/classes/ariew/slat596/Hinkel_4skills.pdf, accessed), is reflected in the range and type 614 of subskills. Those subskills consist of conveying/comprehending messages/information, morphosyntax and lexis, discourse and information structuring, and the sound system and prosody, as well as appropriate register and pragmalinguistic features (Tarone, 2005 as cited by Hinkel, p. 115). For those speaking in a second/foreign language, the speakers need to be aware of their oral production. Therefore, they can identify and correct their own 19 problems in a real conversation.

Speaking in a second/foreign language requires fluency, accuracy, and a sufficient lexicogrammatical repertoire for meaningful communication to take place (Hinkel, pp. 115-116). This implies that a second/foreign language learner needs to be exposed to various experiences in communicating in the target language.

Knowledge about the complexity of speaking skills is really essential for second/foreign language teachers to learn. As language teachers, they 1 should be able to select the suitable and effective teaching method. For instance, according to Ellis (2003), the task-based teaching of L2 speaking skills has built-in opportunities for online planning that result in more accurate and complex uses of language. Ellis explains that carefully designed tasks can foster the development of various aspects of L2 oral production: Narratives and descriptions can be effective in fluency-focused teaching, and, for example, debates and problem-solving tasks can promote increased grammatical and lexical complexity in learner language use. Another advantage of using tasks in L2 oral instruction is that rehearsal (or task repetition) affords learners an opportunity to accommodate the complex 5 cognitive demands of fluency, accuracy, and linguistic complexity. For example, advance planning and rehearsals of content and formulation, that is, what to say and how to say it, lead to substantial improvements in the amount of spoken discourse and in grammatical, lexical, and articulatory accuracy. In content-based and task-based instruction, contextualized uses of specific grammar structures and vocabulary can be emphasized to connect the subject matter and language learning activities (for a thorough overview, see Snow, 2005).

The following guidelines for a creative speaking activity are taken from (Gower, 2005: 102-103). Before the lesson, the teacher 2 needs to:

- decide on the aims: what s/he wants to do and why,
- try to predict 2 what students will bring to the activity and any problems they might have. Will they have something to speak about? Are they capable of doing the activity successfully? Do they have the necessary language? Will the students find the activity interesting, useful, fun?
- work out how long the activity will take and tailor it to the time available.
- prepare the materials.
- work out his/her instructions.

During the activity, the teacher should:

- arouse the students' interest through media,
- remind students of any structure or vocabulary,
- give clear instruction,
- give students time to work on the group and finish the activities,
- focus on activities which are more to give students opportunities to show their ability in the process,
- monitor the activities,
- evaluate the activities to give feedback.

After the activity, the teacher has to provide feedback in order to:

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- indicate how each person communicated, comment on how fluent each was, how well they argued as a group, and so on,

Sometimes the teacher might record the activity on audio or video cassette and play it back for discussion. It is better to focus on possible improvements rather than mistakes – in fact it is taped, sometimes they can be asked to do a rough version first, then discuss improvements, then re-record. S/he should note down glaring and recurrent errors in grammar, pronunciation, use of vocabulary. Individual mistakes might be discussed (in private) with the students concerned and the teacher might recommend suitable remedial work to do at home. Mistakes which are common to the class can be mentioned and then practiced another day when the teacher had a chance to prepare a suitable remedial lesson.

Teacher Evaluation

The teacher is often seen as the judge in testing but in teaching you need to play several more important roles (Al-Jawi, 2011: p.16). Firstly, s/he can be a reader of the students' work. This is important, as one of the most serious problems in class writing, is the lack of a real reader. To be a reader rather than a judge, s/he needs to act like a reader, telling the student what s/he likes, what s/he disagrees with, what s/he cannot understand and so on.

Another role is as adviser, making suggestions for improvement. The teacher could say, e.g. 'Maybe if you add a little more detail about how Arun feels here, that may make the story more interesting' or 'Why not leave this bit out. You have said the same thing in paragraph 1. The reader may get bored.' In this role, one thing the teacher has to remember is not to ask for improvements that the student is not capable of making.

Another role the teacher can play is as a resource person. S/he can tell students words they don't know, show them where they can get the information they need (e.g. dictionaries, encyclopaedias, thesauruses, etc.) and generally be there for them to consult on what- ever they need help with.

Feedback on Successful Language Use

Lewis (2002: 12) mentions that feedback can be in forms of positive or negative comments, and done either individually or as a class. The example of positive feedback done individually is "You linked your ideas to what other people had said" and as a class is "Most of you knew how to take turns. You introduced your ideas with phrases like "That reminds me ..." (Lewis, p.12). Positive comments can cover feedback on strategies the learners use, how they surmount such as not knowing the exact word or not comprehending what someone else has said. In addition, it may also include comment on students' ability to express meaning. Negative comments focus on students' errors.

Lewis and Hill (1999) describe some techniques that can be used by teachers to make students' correction:

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- 1) Teachers need to help students aware that mistakes are a natural part of the learning process. Students need to know that there are many factors contributing towards the success or failure of the individual language learner. One of the most important factor can be the confidence the learner has in his ability to succeed in the task.
- 2) Teachers need to give students the chance to correct their own mistakes that they know, such as slips of the tongue
- 3) If the student is unable to provide self-correction, the teacher should involve other students in the class to comment before providing the correct language.

- 4) If it becomes necessary for the teacher to provide a correction, it is essential to isolate the problem. Isolating the mistake both helps to correct, and avoids the demotivating effect of suggesting that all of what the student said was satisfactory.
- 5) The student must use the correct language. If the student corrects himself, he inevitably does repeat the correct form. If some other member of the class provides the correct answer, the teacher must invite the student who made the mistake to say the complete correct form.
- 6) Teachers need the ability to recognize different kinds of mistakes, so they know what to correct. Some of common mistakes: stress, intonation, register and even appropriacy, omissions.
- 7) Correcting register and appropriacy needs tact. Few students will be upset if the teacher corrects their use of vocabulary or structure. A smile and pleasant manner help.
- 8) Teachers should correct promptly for accuracy, afterwards for fluency. In practices which concentrate on accuracy, it is usually best for the teacher to indicate a mistake immediately – usually by facial expression or gesture.
- 9) Don't over-correct. Over-emphasis on correction by the teacher can have a demotivating effect.
- 10) Reformulation is often better than correction. The teacher responds naturally to what is said, and in passing provides the correct language.
- 11) Use a code to correct written work. Correction is more likely to be effective, and less intimidating if the teacher devises a simple code which he/she can write in the margin for drawing the student's attention to surface errors.
- 12) Teachers can use class discussion as a method of correcting written work.

Methodology

This research was aimed to investigate how the student-teachers gave feedback to English speaking skills, and to identify the difficulties that were met by the student-teachers in giving feedback. To answer the research problems formulated previously, a qualitative approach was employed. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2009), qualitative research refers to research studies that investigate the quality of relationships, activities, situations, or materials.

This research aims to study about the professional development of the students taking Micro Teaching course, 2013/2014 academic year, in the English Language Education Study Program (PBI) of Sanata Dharma University. Micro Teaching is an obligatory course offered by PBI every even semester for the sixth semester students. This research was intended for the students of batch 2011.

In accordance with the aims of this research, the respondents were students who were taking Micro Teaching course and who were assigned to teach English speaking skills in the even semester of 2013/2014 academic year. Two classes consisting of 19 and 16 students were selected purposively.

In order to obtain answers for the research problems, this research employed three instruments as tools to gain the data:

1. Documents

As a preliminary study, the researchers analyzed the videos of the prior Micro Teaching students teaching speaking skills. This procedure was taken as a way to validate the research instrument (observation field notes). It is going to be conducted in the odd semester of 2013/2014 academic year. The documents related to student teachers'

reflection done weekly and at the end of the semester were used to enrich the data. In addition, STs' lesson plan were also taken to support the findings.

2. Observation field notes

The field notes were to portrait the student-teachers' actions while they were teaching in front of their peer students. All activities were written down related to giving feedback in the field notes.

3. Focus-Group Discussion (FGD)

In order to check the reliability of the obtained data from the observation and questionnaire, the researchers made a focus-group discussion by involving 6 student-teachers teaching speaking to gain further clarification of their teaching experiences.

Research Findings

The following are the results of this research.

1. Types of feedback in the speaking classes

There are three types of feedbacks occurring in the micro teaching process, the most of which is **appreciative comments**. Most student teachers assigned the class to practice having dialogue in pairs or in a group. With their partner or groups students were expected practice certain learned expressions based on the situation given by student teachers. The following situation is an example where a ST gave only appreciative comments to the students speaking performance.

After 22 minute teaching, she asked the students to practice conversation in pairs and then asked some groups to come in front. She said, "Okay guys, give applause. Without any comments, the ST asked the first group to assign the next group. The ST did not give any comments on the components of the performance. She only asked the students to give applause. In fact in the first group' conversation, one student said "He is player football (sic) now". The other one whispered "football player" to the previous student. Then, the previous student revised the sentence. After the second group, she said "Give applause. For the rest group, *yang belum tampil*, please prepare again and I will give score next week." Then, she summed up the lesson.



Picture 1: Group 1 and group 2 performed conversations

(Source: Observation on 3 April 2014, Std. #: 11-002, Topic: Describing others)

The second type of feedback given is related to the **language competence** shown by the students in the speaking performance. Most comments were related to the accuracy of diction and pronunciation. There were no comments related to whether the students had good fluency when they were speaking. This is in line with techniques for correcting from Lewis and Hill mentioning that we need to "correct promptly for accuracy, afterwards for fluency" (1999: 94).

Some student teacher gave comments on whether the students used the right choice of words or not. The following is an example of how the student teacher gave feedback for the students' speaking performance. There were two students who were asked to perform in front of the class, a girl and a boy, focusing on invitation.

A: I don't have any activity at Saturday night. So, I can join with you...

Students: Ohhh... my God...join with you..

One of the students: *Memangnya kenapa to Miss?*

ST: Stay cool okayYou can't use join with (language ...),maksudnya yoyo, join you
(YWP)

Some feedback was also given in relation to wrong pronunciation. One of the student teachers corrected the students' pronunciation: architecture, chemist when reading a dialogue. (JA)

The next finding related to feedback in speaking class was feedback related to **contents of the speaking performance**. What included as contents were (a) correct use of particular learned expressions, and (b) appropriateness of the topic. There are a few feedbacks related to the correct use of particular learned expressions.

A: What expressions did they use?

What time *untuk menanyakan?*

The expressions that is used by ginong and bijakwhat time is it? Dan tadi bijak njawabnya pakai? (YWP)

The following excerpt is another example of how a ST deals with giving feedback related to the correct use of particular expressions.



Picture 2: ACK teaching asking and giving direction (observation)

The ST asked the students to come in front to give direction and the partner should draw the direction. When the students were doing the instruction, the ST took notes. After they finished doing the conversation, the ST asked the following questions:

Who's the winner?

What will you say if you are here and you want to go home (review)

While you are practicing here, I heard...did you say go around?

Is there any body know what is the meaning of go around?

It is clear that this ST was commenting on the appropriateness of the language used in the conversation. She corrected the use of the phrase “go around”

There was also a feedback given on the appropriateness of the topic which was found in the feedback given by the student teachers to the students’ speaking performance whereas in fact by commenting to the appropriateness of the topic ST could trigger the students’ critical thinking.

Materinya terlalu susah. Terlalu fokus dalam pronunciation, grammar. Tdk memberikan feedback pada konten (pacaran), manajemen waktu (terburu-buru), manajemen kelas (ribut). Sebaiknya juga perlu memberikan nasihat/pengarahan pada sikap. Ok nice, tapi kalau di sekolah jangan ngomong tentang pacaran ya, diberikan batasan-batasan. (FGD)

(since the materials are too difficult, I focused on pronunciation and grammar. I did not give the feedback on the content/topic (having a boyfriend or a girlfriend). ... I should have given them advice on attitude, for example it is okay but don't talk about having a boyfriend or a girlfriend at school, ...)

Actually, the ST can facilitate the critical thinking by discussing the topic chosen by the students, i.e. about love and having a boyfriend or a girlfriend at their age. The ST

Difficulties in giving feedback for speaking performance

The difficulties in giving feedback are related to the following aspects. The first is related to professional competence. The STs were reluctant to give feedback on speaking in details because they were not really confident with their own mastery of English. They tended to hesitate whether what they explained was on the right track. Most of them chose not to give comments, and others postponed the comments by saying “I will discuss it next week, you can talk to me personally” (observation, April 2014). Some other evidence are that the ST did not pronounce the words loudly (FGD,) and that the ST always avoided the word “cockroaches” because the ST did not know the word.

The second aspect is pedagogic competence. Most STs had the wrong choice of focus. The ST thought that it was more important to pay attention to the rest of the class who were listening to the speaking performance than to pay attention to the performance. He wanted to make sure that the rest of the class gave attention to the performance. A ST said: “Tidak memberi feedback karena terlalu fokus dengan keadaan kelas.” (FGD result, ST 5). In addition to the wrong choice of focuses, the difficulty was caused by time management in teaching. Some student teachers failed to give comments to the students’ writing work because they thought they would not have enough time. After hearing the first beep, a signal showing that they only had 5 minutes left, the student teachers directly ended the class by summing up the lesson. A ST also reflected on her reflection as follows:

“From all of them, the most regretful thing was the time management. It was because I ended up my class early than the set time. I was afraid of my teaching. I was worried if I did not end in the appropriate time. As the result, my worry happened, I still had four minutes left. Besides, sometimes I said in wrong grammatical sentence but, fortunately, I realized and corrected my sentence directly. Another thing which I should improve was giving feedback. While teaching, I was confused what next step I should do.” (Ref, 111214012).

Conclusions

The feedbacks for speaking activity given are mostly in a form of appreciative comments, language competence, and content of the language used by the students. In terms of the language competence, the focus was on language accuracy than language fluency. However, there are some cases where the STs failed to give feedback as they predicted in their lesson plan. Most students did not give focus on the content of the topic chosen in the conversations or in writing.

Most difficulties are because the ST felt that they did not master the materials themselves and therefore they were not confident in giving comments to the students. The other difficulty is due to time management problem. Therefore, the action they performed as a response was giving appreciative feedback or was mentioning that the feedback would be given on the following meeting.

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