TEACHER DISCOURSE IN EFL CLASSROOM: 
A GENDER AND DISCOURSE STUDY

Wacana Guru di Kelas EFL: Studi Gender dan Wacana

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Diajukan: 27 April 2017, direvisi: 25 Juli 2017

Abstract

The relationship between language and gender has long been interest within sociolinguistic and related disciplines. In particular, it looks at the ways in which male and female use language differently. Thus, the objective of the present study is to find out and describe how male and female teachers in EFL classroom use language differently in the classroom interaction, particularly in English Speaking class. This exploratory case study was carried out with 2 male and 2 female English Speaking 1 teachers of English Literature Study Program Universitas Teknokrat Indonesia. The data collected included direct observation of classroom interaction, audio and video recording of the teacher and students’ interactions. The analysis of the data revealed that in fact both male and female teachers used language to advice the students. It was all because the aim of teaching is to improve students’ ability, so the teachers frequently used language to give advices and suggestions for the students’ improvement. In the other hand, male teachers more focus on the goal of teaching to maintain their status meanwhile female teachers more concern on the process of teaching to build relationship with the students.

Keywords: Gender, Discourse, Teacher, Classroom.

Abstrak

Hubungan antara bahasa dan gender telah lama diminati dalam sosiolinguistik dan disiplin terkait. Secara khusus, hal ini dapat melihat cara penggunaan bahasa oleh pria dan wanita secara berbeda. Oleh sebab itu, tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui dan menggambarkan bagaimana guru pria dan wanita di kelas EFL menggunakan bahasa secara berbeda dalam interaksi kelas, khususnya dalam kelas Berbahasa Inggris. Studi kasus eksplorasi ini dilakukan pada 2 orang guru pria dan 2 orang guru wanita kelas bahasa Inggris 1 Program Studi Sastra Inggris Universitas Teknokrat Indonesia. Data yang dikumpulkan meliputi pengamatan langsung terhadap interaksi kelas, rekaman audio dan video interaksi guru dan siswa. Analisis data menunjukkan bahwa guru laki-laki dan perempuan menggunakan bahasa untuk memberi nasehat kepada siswa. Itu semua karena tujuan pengajarannya adalah untuk meningkatkan kemampuan siswa, sehingga para guru sering menggunakan bahasa untuk memberi nasehat dan saran untuk peningkatan siswa. Di sisi lain, guru laki-laki lebih fokus pada tujuan mengajar untuk mempertahankan statusnya sementara guru perempuan lebih memperhatikan proses pengajaran untuk membangun hubungan dengan siswa.

Kata kunci: Gender, Wacana, Guru, Kelas.
1. Introduction

Teachers play an important role in the classroom, particularly in the language learning such as the Indonesian EFL classroom. As Liando (2010) confirmed that the situation in Indonesia’s teaching and learning process is less student-centered but more teacher-centered. It shows that teaching and learning activities are still relying heavily on the teachers. The situation urges the teachers of foreign language to be a good example for students to improve their speaking ability in the target language. The teacher language skill must be used as an instrument in creating the atmosphere of English language speaking and learning of the students. The reason is that the teacher may be the only English speaker in the class. The regular interaction with the students using English can help the latter becomes used to English speaking because they are given opportunities to use the language in real communicative situation. So, by looking the importance of the teachers in EFL classroom, the writer intends to know the influence of teachers’ gender on the language use.

In recent decades, the research in the area of language and gender studies moves significantly from recognition and acceptance of female’s comparatively disempowered position in society manifested in their language to a more nuanced situation. Nowadays, female has gotten a better place not only prepared to raise children at home but also female can have professional job as male does. This situation influences the way the experts on language and gender research in seeing the differences between male and female in communication. The previous research believed that the differences that female made were considered as deficient of the female itself. Further, it also was considered as a result from male supremacy and also possibly an effect of patriarchy. Currently, when the differences between male and female appear, these are because male and female belong to different subcultures as they have been socialized to do so since childhood. This, then results in the varying communicative styles and language use of male and female (Tannen, 1990).

In order to have better understanding and clarify the discourse choice of male and female, it is important for gender research to situate male and female discourse within specific context as different demands of different situation dictates the choice of particular discourse features. Gaies (1983) defined classroom as the crucible where teachers and learners come together and where learning happens. The main players are teachers and learners or students, who each of them bring into the classroom their individual expectations, needs, experiences and resources. However, the most important thing is the interaction pattern, which ultimately determines if learning is taking place. According to Tsui (2001), classroom interaction refers to the interaction between the teacher and the students, as well as interactions between the students. So there are two kinds of interactions happen in the classroom. The interaction does play important role in classroom. Further Tsui believed that successful learning depends more on the type of class interaction than the method used. But this research is only focusing on how the teacher interacts to students.

Based on that, this research is answering the question on how does gender affect the language use of
teachers in the classroom and what is the different language use between male and female teachers in teaching and learning process. As the aim of this research is to clarify and understand the different language use of male and female teachers, it is decided to situate the study in the classroom context.

1.1 Literature Review

There are some researchers has been discussing the issues of gender discourse in educational context. Doray (2005) found that there were more similarities than differences exist in the teachers’ discourse within Adult ESL Classroom of the English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students (ELICOS) academic. Durán (2006) described a case study which explores teacher and students’ conceptions about gender in an EFL setting and the way they are manifested in their discourse patterns. The analysis of the data revealed that in fact there are imbalances in relation to boys’ and girls’ participation during interaction, made manifest by verbal and nonverbal attitudes. Then Rashidi and Naderi (2012) explored the effect of gender on the patterns of classroom interactions between teachers and students in Iranian EFL classrooms. According to the results of the study, although males and females shared some features, the patterns of teacher-student interactions were gender related. While Monsefi and Hadidi (2015) showed the effect of gender and use of politeness strategies by teachers on the patterns of classroom interaction between teachers and students and learning process in Iranian EFL classrooms. There were clear implications for EFL contexts, like teachers’ knowledge of pragmatic and whole-person goings-on in the classroom and the huge otherwise unknown effects that teachers’ personal styles of behavior and socio-psychologically varied treatment of the students could have on the learning outcomes.

1.1.1 Teaching Exchange

The systematic analysis of the entire range of classroom interaction was developed by Sinclair and Coulthard. They defined exchange as two or more utterances, particularly in teaching process (Sinclair and Coulthard in Coulthard, 1992: 2-3). They further stated that “a typical exchange in the classroom consists of an initiation by the teacher, followed by response from the student, followed by feedback to student's response from the teacher.” The model provides a way for the description of teacher-student interaction, where the teacher initiates, the student responds and the teacher gives feedback. This structure of exchange is expressed in terms of Initiation (I), Response (R) and Feedback (F), so the complete structure will be IRF. The structure is drawn in a form of table. A single line across the page signifies an exchange boundary, so one reads down the first column until the boundary line (Sinclair and Coulthard in Coulthard, 1992).

The exchange used in this research is teaching exchange. Teaching exchange shows the way any particular lesson is progressing. Teaching exchange is identified into eleven subcategories, six are free exchanges and five are bound exchanges. Free exchange is the exchange which has an initiation whether from the teacher or the student. There are six types of teaching exchange, the four are initiated by the teacher and the rest are initiated by the student (Coulthard, 1992).
1.1.2 Difference Theory

Difference theory is a theory in the area of language and gender which examines the effect that gender has on language use. The key features of difference theory relates to biological/psychological differences, socialization and differences in social power. This theory is developed by Deborah Tannen as the reaction of Lakoff’s dominance of man theory.

Tannen in Jule (2008) stated that men and women speak in particular ways because they have been formed by the gender cultures into specific conversational roles and are thus most comfortable in them. So, the differences that may appear are caused by the culture which both men and women experienced according to their gender. Generally, Difference theory as postulated by Tannen is summarized into six categories, each of which pairs a contrasting use of language by males and females, (i) Status v Support, (ii) Independence v. Intimacy, (iii) Advice v. understanding, (iv) Orders v. proposals, (v) Conflict v. compromise, and (vi) Information v. feelings.

2. Methodology

In selecting the teachers, the writer uses purposive sampling method. The selected participants of this research were 2 male and 2 female English Speaking 1 teachers of English Literature Study Program Universitas Teknokrat Indonesia. The subject of Speaking 1 is chosen because the topic discussed is daily activity which mostly creates the interaction between teacher and students. The participants were selected based on 2 criteria, which are teachers who have the same level of education, which is master degree, and also have the experience of teaching more than 2 years. The writer chooses those characteristics since it can also influence the language use in class setting. Since the data in this research are words, phrase, sentences and clauses, so this research uses the descriptive qualitative method. The data collected included direct observation of classroom interaction, audio and video recording of the teacher and students’ interactions.

3. Findings

In this section the main aspects revealed through the data analysis are described and supported. It presents the research findings about the differences on language use among male and female teachers of the Higher School of Foreign Teknokrat, specifically the teachers of English Speaking 1 class. The data are analyzed based on Teaching Exchange theory by Sinclair and Coulthard and Difference theory by Deborah Tannen.

3.1 Status v. Support

Men see the world as a competitive place, so they like to gain and maintain their status. The way of gaining status is by telling the jokes or stories and by sidetracking the jokes or the stories. Meanwhile women see the world as the network of connection, so they use language to gain and give confirmation or agreement and offer support or encouragement or compliment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Sample 1</th>
<th>Initiating</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Eliciting</td>
<td>Have you taken medicine?</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Yes. What? Combantrine?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The exchange above is classified as teacher eliciting since the exchange is initiated by the teacher and the intention of this exchange is to obtain verbal responses from the student. This exchange has complete structure, which is IRF. The initiation (I) is the question from the teacher, which is “Have you taken medicine?”, the response (R) from the student is “Yes.” And the feedback (F) is the further question from the teacher to direct to the conclusion. The context of this exchange is that the male teacher asks the health of the students. One of them answers if she is getting flu. At that time the class puts the attention to the student who is sick and listens to her explanation. Then by telling a joke with the utterance “What? Combantrine?”, the male teacher is successful taking the attention of the class. The class puts back the attention to the male teacher and laughs at him. It shows that the male teacher tries to maintain his status as the center stage or attention.

The exchange above is classified as teacher informing because the teacher provides the student with new information through personal opinion, which is telling about the improvement of one student. The structure of this exchange is only initiation (I) with no response (R), since in this exchange response (R) is not necessary and no feedback (F) from the student. This utterance shows the student just finished presenting the presentation about house. After that the female teacher gives compliment to the student's improvement by telling that she is better now after some meetings. By doing this, it shows that the female teacher keeps the connection with the student, because it is categorized as a support for her. Since the female teacher acknowledges the effort of the student.

### 3.2 Independence v. Intimacy

The way of men to be independence is by taking decision by himself with no negotiation. Meanwhile for women the decision is taken by negotiating with others.

**Data Sample 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Eliciting</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any question before we start?</td>
<td>How about the punishment if just singing, sir?</td>
<td>You wish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singing, sir.</td>
<td>No bargaining, just asking. Remember, now I rule the class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The exchange above is categorized as teacher eliciting, because the exchange is initiated by the teacher and the intention of the exchange is to obtain verbal responses from the student. This exchange has complete structure, which is IRF. The initiation (I) from the teacher is “Any question before we start?”, then there are some responses (R) from the student shown on the table and the feedback (F) from the teacher is “No.
No bargaining, just asking. Remember, now I rule the class.” The context of the utterance is the male teacher explains about the rule of the game before they start playing a game, including the consequences if they fail in playing the game. One student bargains the punishment providing by the male teacher. Then the male teacher directly refuses it by saying “No, bargaining, just asking. Remember, now I rule the class”, which means the male teacher rejects to have negotiation of the punishment. The situation shows that the male teacher prefers to take decision by himself instead of negotiating.

Data Sample 4
Female

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiation</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Eliciting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many minutes you like?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The exchange above is categorized as teacher eliciting. It is because the exchange is initiated by the teacher and the intention is to obtain verbal response from the students. The structure of this exchange should be IR (F), which means feedback is not necessary. Since there is no response (R) from the students yet, so the structure of this exchange is only the initiation (I) from the teacher, which is “How many minutes you like?”. The situation of the utterance is the teacher and the students discuss about the mid test which will be conducted in the next meeting. In making the decision about the time of presentation, the female teacher offers a negotiation with the students. So, they can give their preference about the time. It means that the female teacher tries to keep her connection and relationship with the students by conducting negotiation to achieve consensus.

3.3 Advice v. Understanding

At this category, the men use the language to find a solution of a problem, or complain or certain situation. So, they prefer to give advice to solve the problem. While women prefer to seek and give understanding to a problem, complain or certain situation. But in this category, the writer found that both male and female teachers prefer to use language as a medium to give advice. It is because the context of the research is in education system, so that the teachers have responsibility to ensure the improvement of the students. So that the teachers will always focus to give advice to the students.

Data Sample 5
Male

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiation</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Re-initiation (i)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do you think Structure is difficult?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do you think Structure is difficult?</td>
<td>Rempong, sir.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you mean rempong? Well, structure is train you to be a good analyst. So, it is dealing with the, the analysis anyway. So, I think if you are good when you were in senior high school, when you were</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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good in chemistry, mathematic, it is like structure anyway. Because it is doing analysis. It is about structure, it is about structure anyway, so how you try to make the sentence into a good pattern and you do not have to memorize all the formulas of the structure, all the tenses, but the thing that you have to be is, is to make it familiar with you.

The exchange above is categorized as re-initiation (i). It is because the exchange is initiated by the teacher and then because there is no response yet from the student, the teacher re-initiates the question through repetition. This exchange has complete structure, which is IRF. The initiation (I) is from the teacher which is "Why do you think Structure is difficult?" then the teacher re-initiates the question. After that the response (R) from the student is "Rempong, sir." And the last is the feedback (F) from the teacher shown on the table. The situation of the utterance is the student shares about her difficulties in getting a good score in Structure subject. Then the male teacher advises her to be familiar with the pattern of Structure subject instead of memorize it. Seeing from the situation, it can be inferred that the male teacher uses language as a medium to give suggestion or advice instead of to show understanding or sympathy to the student's problem.

**Data Sample 6**

**Female**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiation</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Directing</td>
<td>Okay, now. Let me see. This your friend, this is not the jury, this is your friend. Come on. So, we will see then. Come on. Confident. Practice. Come on.</td>
<td>Speech you don’t read, in speech you don’t read. Speech you can’t read. You make outline, submit and speech you don’t bring this. Ya, maybe you can bring note, but not this.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The exchange above is categorized as teacher directing because the exchange is initiated by the teacher and the intention of this exchange is to direct the student to do something but not necessarily to say something. The structure of this exchange is IRF. The initiation (I) from the teacher is "Okay, now. Let me see. This your friend, this is not the jury, this is your friend. Come on. So, we will see then. Come on. Confident. Practice. Come on." the response (R) is the activity of the student which is
practicing speech, and the feedback (F) is from the teacher which is shown on the table. The situation of the utterance is that the female teacher asks the student to practice his speech to face competition. Since the student is still new and does not memorize the speech yet, so she practices by reading the text of the speech in front of the class. Then the female teacher asks her to not read, but she can bring note instead of the whole text. From the utterance, it means that the female teacher uses her language to give advice to solve the student’s problem in practicing speech instead of understanding the situation of the student.

3.4 Order v. Proposal

Men and women are different in giving command. Men like to use direct imperative, while women like to use proposal form.

**Data Sample 7**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male Initiation</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Directing</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who haven’t, who haven’t got the turn yet? Siapa yang belum dapet giliran? Raise your hand.</td>
<td>[Raising hand].</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The exchange above is categorized as teacher directing because the exchange is initiated by the teacher and the intention of this exchange is to direct the student to do something but not necessarily to say something. The structure of this exchange is IR with no feedback. The initiation (I) from the teacher is “Who haven’t, who haven’t got the turn yet? Siapa yang belum dapet giliran? Raise your hand.” the response (R) is the activity of the student which is raising hand, and there is no feedback (F) from the teacher. The male teacher wants to continue the students’ presentation from previous meeting. The utterance of “Raise your hand” is used by the male teacher to give the command to the students, in order to know the number of the students who have not got the chance to present their presentation yet. From above utterance, it shows that the male teacher prefers to use direct imperative instead of to use proposal form in giving the command.

**Data Sample 8**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female Initiation</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Directing</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let’s see Jo’s house. I think will be very minimal, because he doesn’t have money.</td>
<td>[The student presents the presentation].</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The exchange above is categorized as teacher directing because the exchange is initiated by the teacher and the intention of this exchange is to direct the student to do something but not necessarily to say something. The structure of this exchange is IR with no feedback. The initiation (I) from the teacher is “Let’s see Jo’s house. I think will be very minimal, because he doesn’t have money.” the response (R) is the activity of the student which is doing the presentation, and there is no feedback (F) from the teacher. The situation of the utterance is all of the students present the presentation about House. When asking one of the students to do the presentation, the female teacher prefers to ask him by using proposal
form, which is “Let’s see Jo’s house” instead of direct imperative. It shows that the female teacher considers her command as suggestion to the student to do presentation and to the other student to pay attention to Jo’s presentation about house.

3.5 Information v. Feeling

In this category, men like to share knowledge, fact or factual information, while women like to stem on emotional viewpoint, for example by sharing personal experience.

### Data Sample 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initiation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Eliciting Sir, which, eee, important among IQ, SQ and EQ?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The exchange above is classified as student eliciting. It is because the exchange is initiated by the student and the intention of the exchange is to get verbal responses from the teacher. This exchange has structure of IR with no feedback from the student. The initiation from the student is “Sir, which, eee, important among IQ, SQ and EQ?” and the response (R) from the teacher is the answer and explanation for the question shown on the table. The situation of the utterance is the male teacher encourages the student to share or ask or say something to the class. Then one student gives a question to the teacher about the importance of IQ, SQ and EQ. Before giving further explanation, the male teacher adds the fact and knowledge that there is Social Quotient. So, from the utterance, it can be inferred that the male teacher likes to use language as medium to share fact or knowledge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiation</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Informing Because I study computer, only by computer, nobody teach me how to operate. Operate by yourself.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The exchange above is classified as teacher informing because the teacher provides the student with new information through personal experience, which is about the experience of the teacher in learning to operate the computer. The structure of this exchange is I or initiation from the teacher only. The initiation (I) from the teacher is “Because I study computer, only by computer, nobody teach me how to operate. Operate by yourself.” and there is no response (R) in this exchange, since it is not necessary. The context of the utterance is the female teacher still feels disappointed with the students that are afraid to operate the computer. After giving advice to study independently, the female teacher shares her experience if she learns computer by herself with no one helps her. From the utterance, it can be said that the female teacher prefers to
use language to deal with emotional viewpoint instead of sharing fact.

4. Conclusion

After analyzing the data by using Teaching Exchange and Difference theories it can be summed up that generally the gender affects some aspects of teachers' language use. The gender affects the purpose of using language of the teachers. Male teachers use the language to maintain and keep status, to show independence, to give order and to provide information. Female teachers use language to gain and offer support, to show intimacy, to give proposal and to show the feelings.

Furthermore, the differences that male and female teachers made are described in the following points:

1. The male teachers often use language to gain and maintain status instead of to offer support. The data shows that there are 35 utterances which are used to maintain and gain status and only 14 utterances which are used to offer support. While the female teachers often use language to offer support and give confirmation. The data shows that there are 27 utterances which are used to offer support and give confirmation and only 12 utterances which are used to gain and maintain status.

2. The male teachers use language to show the independence. There are 8 utterances which are categorized as showing independence and only 4 utterances which are categorized as showing intimacy. While the female teachers use language to show intimacy. There are 7 utterances which are categorized as showing intimacy and no utterance categorized as showing independence.

3. In giving command, the male teachers prefer to use order form such as direct imperative. The data shows that there are 111 utterances which are observed as orders and only 18 utterances which are observed as proposals. While the female teachers prefer to use proposal form which is more polite. The data shows that there are 93 utterances which are indicated as proposals and only 57 utterances which are indicated as orders.

4. The male teachers use language to provide information. The data shows that there are 6 utterances which are categorized as information. While female teachers use language to show feeling. The data shows that there are 5 utterances which are categorized as showing feeling.

In the other hand, the analysis shows that the gender does not affect in the aspect of Advice v. Understanding. It is all because the context of the research is in education system, where the teachers have responsibility to help improving students' ability, so they are required to give advice or suggestion for students' improvement. Beside that, the aspect of Conflict v. Compromise is not exist. It is all because conflict does not commonly happen in teaching and learning process, especially is higher education. So, based on the analysis, it can be concluded that gender is an inherent factor in society's life that generally affects the daily life of an individual how to act in society. As how it is found in this analysis, the gender affects how male and female use their language.
References


