

# PHONOLOGICAL MODIFICATION OF TEACHER TALK IN INDONESIAN EFL CLASSROOM

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## Abstract

Phonological modification of teacher talk is a major concern in English language teaching. It is considered to provide comprehensible input and language model in creating effective and meaningful teaching and learning activities for students. Therefore, this study aims to explore (1) the ways phonological modification employed by teachers and (2) the reasons why phonological modification employed by teachers at Senior High Schools context. The researcher applied a qualitative research method to explore the phonological modification phenomenon in EFL classroom interaction involving three English teachers teaching at two different schools, SMA Negeri 1 Parepare and SMA Negeri 2 Parepare. The data were collected through direct classroom observation entailing audio recording and interview, then it analyzed based on the framework of conversational analysis. The data analysis reveals that EFL teachers regularly modify their talk through the use of phonological modifications involving (1) more extended pauses, (2) slow rate of speech, (3) exaggerate articulation and (4) clear articulation and in teaching and learning process. Moreover, these modifications occurred in three numbers of reasons, namely (1) emphasizing to the presented material, (2) providing understandable input, (3) modeling the students to the target language. Therefore, it takes into account phonological modification accelerated students' comprehension their classroom interaction.

**Keywords:** Phonological modification, teacher talk, EFL classroom Interaction, second language learning

## A. INTRODUCTION

English as foreign language classroom has the core of communication between teacher and students who interacts one another. They involve in process of classroom interaction where teaching and learning process takes place. In the sense of students learning English as foreign language (EFL), classroom interaction may result a good comprehensible input which benefit to the students both practicing and using the language. Furthermore, EFL students get a good language model in teacher verbal

communication. Therefore, effective teacher language can help and engage students' interest to actively execute classroom activities.

In the line with the previous idea, Krashen (1985) highlights teacher talk as an important source of comprehensible input for the language acquisition of the students. It is supported by Nunan (1991:189), he stated that teacher talk is crucial of importance, not only for the organization of the classroom but also for the processes of acquisition. From this starting point, the students

effectively develop their English through the teaching and learning process. Nevertheless, creating effective and communicative atmosphere in foreign language classroom is not easy. Communication sometimes breakdowns between teacher and their student as the teacher may not communicate effectively and comprehensibly. The teacher, in this case, is as provider of accessible information to students requiring an important competency. Using the language that they understand are essential to the effectiveness of teacher talk with a good classroom management. Therefore, teacher talk modification or adjustment plays essential role in communication to help the students grasp a good understanding of the material.

There had been many perspectives of teacher talk modification. The first perspective is by Pinter (2006), he stated that language modification refers to the teacher's technique in simplifying the language input in order to make it available and accessible to the students which include repetitions, comprehension checks, clarification requests, and confirmation checks to avoid misunderstanding between the teacher and the students.

The second is Long & Larsen-Freeman (1991:217) pointed out teachers modify their talks in three different areas, namely phonological, syntactical, and semantic aspects. Phonological modification deals with intonation, speech rate, pitch, articulation and pause between utterances. When teacher are dealing with EFL students, intonation is more exaggerated, and the pitch range used is

wide and high with clear articulation, speech rate is slower and there are more pauses between the utterances. Moreover, syntactical modification deals with the length of utterance and grammatical aspects. When dealing with EFL students, teacher utterance should be shorter and simplify her/his sentences' structure. At last, semantics modification, teacher uses the restricted and basic vocabulary, the words used match with the level and proficiency of the students, difficult and new words are avoided when dealing with the EFL students.

The most popular theory about teacher talk is by Chaudron (1988). He pointed out four aspects of teacher talk modification such as phonology, syntax, lexis and discourse. Phonological aspect is characterized by exaggerated articulation, extended pauses and slower rate of speech. Syntactical aspect is characterized by the use of fewer subordinate or embedded clauses and short utterances. Moreover, lexical aspect is characterized by the diversity of vocabulary by avoiding colloquial expressions and slang words. Furthermore, discourse aspect is characterized by the repetition of the teacher's utterances to make teacher explanation clearly.

In Indonesia context, there are several researchers who conducted the research related to teacher talk modification. Rahayu (2013) in her research entitled "*Language Modification and Supportive Actions by an English Teacher at an ELY Classroom*". She investigated how a teacher modifies his or her language and what the teacher does to support his or

her language in classroom. She applied Pinter's language modification framework (2006) and Harmer's paralinguistic (2002). This study found that the teacher tended to modify her language by repeating her utterances. Moreover, the teacher also supported her talk by implementing paralinguistic features, especially gesture. The relationship between the present researches with the previous one is both explore about language modification. However, the current study has different focus concerning with the object being observed. The previous research discussed the language modification and teacher supportive action. The current research focuses on modification of teacher talk articulated by the teachers particularly in phonology aspect

Muhayyang (2017) in her research entitled "*Phonological Modification on Teacher's Instructional Talk for Secondary School Students*". She investigated the phonological modification of teachers' instructional talk in teaching English to secondary school students in South Sulawesi. The study found that the teachers modified their instructional talk into some *Bahasa Indonesia* sounds on both English vowels and consonants in the beginning, during, and closing phases of teaching. The relationship between the previous and this current study is both researches exploring phonological modification of teacher talk.

Acknowledging its importance, the researcher is interested to explore how teachers modify their talk in phonology area. By applying descriptive qualitative in analyzing phonological modification, the researcher concerns

particularly in delivering material of teaching and learning phase. The main focus of this research is to explore teacher talk modification on phonology aspect. Therefore, the researcher interested to conduct the research entitles "Phonological Modification of Teacher Talk in Indonesian EFL Classroom".

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

This paper is a qualitative study, which was intended to collect, analyze, and interpret several data which were related to one particular phenomenon, that is the phonological modification of teacher talk in EFL classroom interaction. It analyzed based on the framework of discourse analysis approach which concerned with the description and analysis of spoken interaction.

The data resources were taken from three English teachers were chosen as subjects of this research teaching at two different Senior High Schools in Parepare, South Sulawesi, they are SMA Negeri 1 Parepare and SMA Negeri 2 Parepare. The subjects were chosen by determining three criteria. Teachers chosen are awarded certificate competency level in teaching, completed their master degree and they are senior teachers who have already taught for 10 years and more as an English teacher.

To collect the data, the researcher conducted classroom observation entailing audio recording to explore the ways teachers modify their talk in phonology area. Then, interview was designed to collect the data about EFL teachers' opinioin deals with the

assistance of phonological modification in the learning process.

### C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This part displays the results from classroom observation and interview which was employed to explore the ways teachers modify their talk in phonology area and the reason why the teachers' modify their talk at Senior High Schools of Parepare.

Phonological modification of teacher found in teachers' utterance characterized by more extended pauses, slower rate of speech, more extended pauses and clear articulation. Here some extracts shows teachers modify their talk in phonology aspect:

- 1) More extended pause

#### **Extract 1**

**Teacher :** *No, I mean.. Before UNBK... Sebelum UNBK.. saya masuk yang sepekan itu? No?*

*Students: No ma'am*

#### **Classroom Observation**

##### **Teacher 1- HR**

In extract 1, the teacher 1 asked the students about her presence before national examination. She employed more pauses in her utterance. The first, she extended her pause of the utterance less than five second. The second, "**Before UNBK...**" she extended her pause in five second. The researcher believe that, it was not accidentally happen, however, by employing more pauses, it will help the teacher to have extra time spent planning how to phrase their speech to adapt to the students (Chaudron, 1988).

#### **Extract 2**

**Teacher :** Yang tadi, maybe... you can find in youtube, *the title.. poetry invoice 2016, You can see the... expression. She is the winner..* Jadi kamu bisa contoh dari situ yah.. Liat disitu... *Ok.. yang the last saya ambil dari.. film.. film shakespear in love.. the.. title is who is Silvia*

#### **Classroom Observation**

##### **Teacher 3 – MD**

In extract 2 above indicated that teacher explanation about poetry. She explained how to read poetry properly. She employed more extended pauses in her utterance by separating word and phrase articulation. Chaudron (1988) argued pauses may be either intentionally made for comprehension, or they may simply be a natural concomitant of slower. In this case, teacher intended to employ extended pauses to emphasize the point of presentation are heard clearly by the students.

In the same case can also be seen in the following extract:

#### **Extract 3**

**Teacher:** Because it is narrative, jadi ada peran atau tokoh naratif yang kalian sampaikan. *Jadi, when you start, when you... are going to start, your dialogue.. Please for the first, introduce yourself. What's the name of your.. of your.. what's the name of your, what's the name of you in the story..* misalnya yah, I am as

Cinderella, say your name. I am Diana as Cinderella. Dan mungkin ada dua participant...

*Classroom Observation  
Teacher 2 - RS*

In extract 3 above depicts teacher explanation before assigned the students to present their dialogue in front of the class. Teacher 2 explained much and employed more and extended pauses. She modified her talk by employing more extended pause in her utterance. It indicates that the teacher independently modified her talk to aid students' comprehension and processing of specific words.

Moreover, the other way to modify teacher talk can be seen in the following extracts:

(2) Slower rate of speech

**Extract 4**

Teacher: *I give you example..* Saya kasih contoh, sebelum UNBK, sebelum UNBK yah.. they make an effects itu, dia buat efeknya itu saling menyambung.. *The first reason, yes.. we nervous ma'am..* you are the one that will face the UNBK, nervous. *The second one, they said, study hard..* But the fun thing.. is the third one.. The third one, she said that suddenly the computer.. in Senior High School 1 Parepare is.. stolen, hilang.

*Classroom Observation  
Teacher 1- HR*

In extract 4 depicts teacher 1 gave an example about cause and effect. She explained much about the effect that could happen from the cause "*next week is national examination*". From the teacher's utterance, she modified her talk by employing slow rate of speech when she mentioned the effect one by one. Studies show speech rate alters depending on with who the speakers are speaking to. Chaudron (1988:64) confirmed that most of researcher found teachers' speech to second language learners to be slower in comparison with other context and condition. The researcher believed that teachers need to speak slower in order to it can be heard clearly by the students.

In the same case, different teacher employed slower rate of speech in the following extract:

**Extract 5**

Teacher 3: *Nah today.. I will show you some.. poetry.. the famous poetry... So, I hope.. kalian bisa meniru nya.. dan..* menampilkan yang terbaik, untuk minggu depan

*Classroom Observation  
Teacher 3 - MD*

In extract 5 depicts the explanation of teacher 3 in classroom when teaching about poetry. She spoke slowly and employed more pauses in her utterance in order to have extra time spent to think what she is going to say. Long & Larsen-Freeman (1991) pointed out teacher talk should be clear, the speech rate is slower and there are more pauses between the utterances.

### Extract 6

Teacher: *And then, after introducing your dialogue.. at the end of your dialogue then you say the moral message.*

Remember for writing the moral message in your book, and then say it in the end, in the end of your performance. Don't say, you don't find.

#### *Classroom Observation*

##### *Teacher 2 – RS*

In extract 6 above show teacher 2 instructed the students the proper way in performing students' dialogue. She explained what the students should do at the beginning and ending of the performance. She modified her talk to be slower so it may independently aid students' comprehension.

The other phonological modification can be seen in the following extract:

(3) Exaggerate articulation

### Extract 7

Teacher: *When I invite the first group,* means that the other groups do not have time to memorize that dialogue **because your time is over.** Please.. your book, no other activity, just pay attention on the performance... **Just take note..** if you want to comment. There is one group that should give comment after the performance.

#### *Classroom Observation*

##### *Teacher 2 – RS*

Extract 7 above depict the teacher told the students about what they should do during the performance. She

modified their talk by employing exaggerate articulation in order to emphasize her utterance. In the same case, the following extracts also employed exaggerate articulation:

### Extract 8

Teacher: 20? *Look at activity 1!* Warming up, over there. *Read the example!* "Ben threw banana peel on the floor", that's the cause, right? Ben ini buang sampah sembarangan, buang kulit pisang. The first effect is Diana stepped on it and slipped, Diana injak dan...

#### *Classroom Observation*

##### *Teacher 1 – HR*

In extract 8 above, teacher instructed the students to look at the task about cause and effect. She spoke louder to emphasize their utterance, so the students heard the teacher's instruction. Chaudron (1988) stated that a rising final intonation and marked stress in several teachers' speech that had the effect of emphasizing and focusing on the teachers' speech in a way resembling a comprehension check

### Extract 9

Teacher: *Suaramu tolong lantangkan,* intonasinya, ekspresinya dan tadi intonasi dan tekanan suaranya yang the winner itu.. *Ketika dia marah, ketika dia sedih,* dia kecilkan suaranya sampai sampai hampir kita tidak dengar.. Tapi ketika dia bilang, *"I'm not slave, I'm the people"*, tekanan suaranya naik lagi

#### *Classroom Observation*

##### *Teacher 3 – MD*

In extract 9 depicts teacher 3 explained the ways to read poetry appropriately. In several part of her utterance, she spoke louder to emphasize her utterance were heard clearly and expressly, so students have no difficulty in understanding what the teacher said.

Data analysis gained the way teachers modify their talk particularly in phonological modification during three phases of teaching, the researcher found out three EFL teachers employed more and pauses when presenting the subject of the lesson. They also modified their talk by slowing down the rate of speech to produce clear articulation. Moreover, exaggerate articulation were also employed by the three observed teachers in instructing the students and giving example how to speak well. As a result, their utterance will be heard clearly. Thus, the students will easily understand the speech.

Teacher talk plays important role in the process of teaching and learning process. Phonological modification bridges the teachers to talk in English as to make students readily perceive the points of their presentation. Ellis (1980) added teacher talk facilitate communication both language form and language function.

- a. The reasons of phonological modification

**Extract 10**

Teacher 2:*To make students understand well and to emphasize the material spoken in English...*

*Interview*  
**Teacher 2 - RS**

Observed teachers confirmed the reason why they modified their talk particularly in phonology area is to make students understand well and emphasize the material spoken in English. Typically, a teacher's speech is slower, louder, more deliberate, and makes greater use of pausing and emphasis. In order to students understand what the teachers are saying, they need to modify their talk to help convey meaning.

**Extract 11**

Teacher 1: *To make sure my student with low English skill understand*

*Interview*  
**Teacher 1 - HR**

**Extract 12**

Teacher 3: *Cause students have limited vocabulary.. and also pauses give me time to think also@ about what should I say. If I speak slower, students are easily to catch the information. Or maybe, they find new vocabulary when I talk, maybe*

*Interview*  
**Teacher 3 - MD**

Extract 11 and 12 depicts the teachers' reason why they modified their talk in phonology area. Teachers' believe that students' English skill differ one another. Students might have difficulty in catching the meaning because of limited vocabulary. Moreover, it is not accidentally happen, pauses give teacher time to think what they should say next. Therefore, EFL teachers modified their talk in order to be understood by the students. As

Breines (2002:472) said teacher talk characteristics is as a language input for the development of students' foreign language. Lynch (1996) added that there is a link between comprehension and second language progress.

Based on the findings above, the researcher concludes, the reason why teachers modified their talk into four aspects based on Walsh (2012) perspective.

1. Emphasizing to the presented material

The interview data show about why the teachers modified their talk particularly in the use repetition in their utterance. Both teacher 1 and 2 explained that repetition is the way to emphasize to the point of the material. As a result, students understand easily to the presented material.

2. Providing understandable input

Teachers modify their talk in order to emphasize the material spoken in English. As students have limited vocabulary, teachers have to make sure students' understanding. It is highly unlikely that students will progress if they do not understand their teacher. The teachers believe that the main point of teaching and learning is make sure students' understanding related to the presented material.

3. Fostering language model

**Extract 13**

The Reseracher:

Do you think ungrammatical sentence and mispronunciation on teacher talk can affect students' language acquisition? Why?

Teacher 3: *Off course, student is imitators.*

Teacher 2: *Yeah,.. that's why teacher need much learn before teaching as teacher is the language model in class.*

**Interview**

**Teacher 3-MD and 2-RS**

In the extract 13 above shows teachers' statement related to the teachers' perception about teacher talk modification affect the students' language acquisition Teacher 3 believed that, students are imitators; of course, they imitate their teacher because they are a language model for the students. Therefore, teacher 2 asserted that that is why teacher need much learn before teaching as teacher is the language model in class.

However teacher 1 argued the statement that teacher is not the only one language model in students' acquisition.

**Extract 53**

Teacher 1: *Not really, because some students get their English skill trough communicative learning (song, movie etc)*

**Interview**

**Teacher 1**

The second reason, teachers are language model for their students. Teachers believed that students are imitator; they learn new words from their teacher. However, a teacher's articulation of a second language may not be the only exposure to the language that learners actually received because some students get their English skill



through communicative learning, such as song or movie.

## CONCLUSION

Data analysis reveals that EFL teachers regularly modify their talk through the use of phonological modification feature including the use of more extended pauses, slow rate of speech, exaggerate articulation and clear articulation and in teaching and learning process. Moreover, Teachers modified their talk in three numbers of reasons namely emphasizing to the presented material, providing comprehensible input, accessing to the language model. Therefore, it concludes that teacher talk modification accelerated students' comprehension and developed their classroom interaction. Teacher talk modification, in short, bridged the teachers to talk in English as to make students readily perceive the points of the presentation.

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