INTERPERSONAL MEANING NEGOTIATION

IN THE TEACHER-STUDENT VERBAL INTERACTION

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ABSTRACT

Interpersonal meaning describes the social relationship among language users, expresses a speaker’s attitudes and judgments. It also deals with acting upon and with others and is realized in wordings through MOOD and modality. Not to mention that it is most centrally influenced by tenor of discourse. These show that the teacher ability in negotiating the Interpersonal meaning is so significant in building talk or dialogue with the students in academic setting.

This study aims to reveal the role relationship among the teacher and the students of Senior High School 4 Semarang Year XII and the way the teacher negotiate her interpersonal meaning to the students. The design of the research was a discourse analysis concerning on the analysis of mood suggested by Susan Eggins. A transcript of the teacher and students interaction was taken as the main source of data. I analyzed the data by using Mood Analysis suggested by Eggins.

The results showed that most of the utterances produced by the teacher were in the form of command which means that the authority of the teacher was dominant. Besides, the teacher also tried to be equal with the students by using some declarative and interrogative types of Mood. These made the students respond well but not really elaborated her/his responses.

Familiarity in implementing Subject, Finite, and Modality was the main reason due to the problem of Interpersonal Meaning Negotiation. This leads me to suggest that in the foreign language (FL) context lexico-grammar cannot be taken for granted. FL learners need to notice the grammar and eventually acquire it. This can happen if the learning process encourages focus on form. This point should be the focus of teaching English as a Foreign Language.

Key Words: Interpersonal Meaning Negotiation, Verbal Interaction.
UNINTRODUCTION

English Language Teaching (ELT) classes are frequently criticized for too much teacher talking time and insufficient student talking time. Recent research shows that in ELT classroom teachers spend 70 percent to 80 percent class time talking. Unfortunately, most English teachers in Indonesia have not realized the importance of Teacher Talk (TT). Moreover, there are few such studies of TT, most of which deal with the introduction and general representation of western theories regarding Foreign Language (FL) classroom and FL teachers (Achugar et al. 2007: 12).

Published articles relevant to TT in the main domestic foreign language periodicals or issues are rather limited. ZHENG Li-sheng (2002) explores the relationship between Teacher Talk and learner output in the classroom. YAN Wen-jun (2002) conducted a research about the differences in questioning strategies between foreign and Chinese teachers. All these researches are far from perfect, the interrelationship between TT and the English learner remains to be further explored. Therefore, this study endeavors to make a systematic analysis of how teachers talk to students in ELT classroom.

Many studies have been conducted to find the way people negotiate and build conversations as well as acquisition and learning language. A research by Bitchener (1999) examined the effect of three individual learner variables (ethnicity, gender, and pairing) and certain communication tasks (free conversation and decision making) on the way in which advanced ESL learners (Japanese and Korean males and females in monoethnic and interethic dyads) repair communication problems and use the process of negotiation in their language learning. It revealed that task was the only variable to affect the amount of negotiated repair and conversations produced more negotiation than the decision making task. The negotiation examined in this research was a general negotiation. In this research, the intent of the interlocutor in responding to utterances, whether s/he wanted to respond the speaker’s feeling (interpersonal negotiation) or the message conveyed by the speaker (logico-semantic negotiation), was simply neglected.

From pedagogical perspective, numerous studies have shown the effect that individual learner, task, and context variables can have on promoting opportunities for negotiation. While some attention has been given to the effects of the individual learner variables like ethnicity, gender and pairing, and to task and contextual variables on L2 negotiation, their meaning has been little researched, as far as I know. Meanwhile meaning was becoming the core of negotiation because it becomes the main reason or intention for the speaker to negotiate.

This study focuses on whether the teacher engaged interpersonally in language analysis based on functional linguistics perspective (for example, Halliday & Hasan, 1989) that has given them new insights into the learning processes. Interpersonal Meaning describes the social relationship among language users, expresses a speaker’s attitudes and judgments. These show that the teacher ability in negotiating the interpersonal meaning is so significant in building talk or dialogue with the students in academic setting. The functional linguistics metalanguage and analysis skills the teacher developed gave new ways of approaching the texts read and written in the classrooms and enabled the teacher to recognize how language constructs the content s/he is teaching, to critically assess how the content is presented in her/his teaching materials, and to engage students in richer conversation (Achugar et al, 2007: 1).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions formulated in this study are the following:

1). How is the role relationship among the teacher and the students realized interpersonally?

3). What does this study provide for language learning?
FRAMEWORK OF THOUGHT

Functional Linguistic Approaches to Language Education

Learning a language is a means to learn about the world, about the social relations we participate in, and about the patterns in which this information is routinely organized. According to Halliday (1999), language appears in three forms in schooling: in learning language (first language or second language development), in learning through language (content matter), and in learning about language (metalanguage). While the first two of these may proceed to some degree without conscious attention to language itself, learning about language, and becoming conscious of the power of different ways of using language, requires conscious attention by teachers, and requires that teachers develop their own knowledge about language. For teachers, a metalanguage for talking about how knowledge is constructed in language in their subject is a prerequisite for making the link between the “content” and the language through which it is construed (Achugar et al, 2007).

The metalanguage of systemic functional linguistics offers tools for talking about the role of language in the educational process as an integral aspect of a pedagogy that makes the valued ways of making meaning in a discipline explicit to students (Schleppegrell, 2004). The incorporation of a functional metalanguage into the professional development experience enables teachers to develop the means to reflect on language and subsequently to reflect on the meanings and values constructed with that language.

Metafunctions in Functional Grammar

Halliday developed four metafunctions, three of them show up in the clause column but the last metafunction does not show up in the clause column because it is not embodied in the clause but in the clause complex-clauses linked together by logicosemantic relations to form sequences (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 61). Those four metafunctions are as follow:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metafunction (technical name)</th>
<th>Definition (Kind of Meaning)</th>
<th>Corresponding status in clause</th>
<th>Favored type of structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiential</td>
<td>Construing a model of experience</td>
<td>Clause as representation</td>
<td>Segmental (based on constituency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>Enacting social relationships</td>
<td>Clause as exchange</td>
<td>Prosodic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textual</td>
<td>Creating relevance to context</td>
<td>Clause as message</td>
<td>Culminative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logical</td>
<td>Construing logical relations</td>
<td>__</td>
<td>Iterative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The summary of those kinds of metafunctions are as follow (Thompson, 1996):

1). We use language to talk about our experience of the world, including the worlds in our own minds, to describe events and states and the entities involved in them.
2). We also use language to interact with other people, to establish and maintain
relations with them, to influence their behaviour, to express our own viewpoint on things in the world, and to elicit or change theirs.

3). In using languages, we organize our messages in ways which indicate how they fit in with the other messages around them and with the wider context in which we are talking or writing.

4). In using languages, the clause complexes—clauses linked together by logicosemantic relations to form sequences (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004).

**Strands of Meanings: ideational, textual, interpersonal**

On of the most powerful aspects of the systemic approach is that language is viewed as a source for making not only one meaning at a time, but several strands of meaning simultaneously. These simultaneous layers of meaning can be identified in linguistic units of all size: in the word, phrase, clause, sentence, and text (Eggins & Slade, 1997: 48). As we know that teacher and students talk is also text which is modeled as the simultaneous exchange of these three types of meaning. These three types of meaning or metafunctions can be glossed as follows (Eggins & Slade, 1997: 49):

(i) **Ideational meaning**: meanings about the world, this involves looking at what topics get talked about, when, by whom, and how topic transition and closure is achieved, etc.

(ii) **Interpersonal meaning**: meaning about roles and relationship, this involves looking at what kinds of role relations are established through talk, what attitudes interactants express to and about each other, what kinds of things they find funny, and how they negotiate to take turns, etc.

(iii) **Textual meaning**: meanings about the messages, this involves looking at different types of cohesion used to tie chunks of the talk together, different patterns of salience and foregrounding, etc.

The three strands of meaning are summarized and exemplified as follow:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of meaning</th>
<th>Gloss/definition</th>
<th>Example:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideational</td>
<td>Meaning about the world, representation of reality (e.g. topics, subject matter)</td>
<td>Conversation, expressions; the French language: cigarettes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>Meanings about roles and relationships (e.g. status, intimacy, contact, sharedness between interactants)</td>
<td>Conflictual relationship, Supportive relationship, Provoking talk, assertive, less assertive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textual</td>
<td>Meanings about the message (e.g. foregrounding/ salience; types of cohesion)</td>
<td>Rapid turn-taking: cohesion through ellipsis and reference; foregrounding of expression/ idioms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Focus on Interpersonal Meaning**: In *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, Halliday defines interpersonal meaning as a strand of meaning running throughout the text that expresses the writer’s role relationship with the readers or the relationship between speakers, and
the writer’s attitude towards the subject matters (Halliday, 2000). The interpersonal metafunction is concerned with social relationships as they are realized in text, that is the interaction between the speaker and the interlocutor.

When people are speaking, they do more than talk; they interact with language and use it to express interpersonal meanings. In fact, interpersonal meaning covers two areas. The first concerns the type of interaction which is taking place or the commodity being exchanged. The second concerns the way speakers take a position in their messages.

In interacting with language, one of basic interactive distinctions is between using language to exchange information and using it to exchange goods and services. A second distinction is between demanding and giving. People can therefore demand information or give information and demand or give goods and services. These are interpersonal meaning at the semantic level of language which will be realized at the lexicogrammatical level.

Meanwhile, sometimes speakers take a definite position or stand in what they say. They take a position or assert a position and are prepared to defend it in arguments. When speakers are definite about their proposition, the finite always encodes the time of the action in relation to the speakers. This shows whether an event has occurred, is presently occurring, or is yet to take place and is obviously very important to argue if we are to argue about a clause. It is the subject-finite relationship which allows discussion of the proposition contained in a clause. In any discussion, argument or quarrel, it is the contents of the Mood which are at stake. In addition to that, if the speakers want to disagree with another speaker’s positive proposition, they simply need to add a negative such as not or n’t into the Mood after the finite.

In this study, I would like to see how the teacher negotiates the interpersonal meaning with the students. This is so important to know how the teacher negotiates with the students since this is the point of the communication among the teacher and the students. In addition to know how the teacher negotiates interpersonally with the students, this study will also find the quality of the teacher and students interaction during the teaching and learning process.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Role Relationship among the Teacher and the Students

The systemic concept of tenor shows interpersonal values of four main dimensions: the status relationship enacted by participants, the frequency with which they come into contact, the degree of affective involvement they feel toward each other, and their sense of affiliation with each other. At the clause level, the major patterns which enact roles and role relations are those of mood, with the associated subsystem of polarity and modality. Mood refers to patterns of clause type, such as interrogative, imperative, and declarative. Polarity is concerned with whether clause elements are asserted or negated, while modality covers the range of options open to interactants to temper or qualify their contribution (Eggins & Slade, 1997).

The analysis of Mood choices can reveal tension between equality and difference as interactants enact and construct relations of power through talk (Eggins & Slade, 1997). Thus, in order to describe the tenor among the teacher and students, I analyzed the grammatical patterns of the clauses or Mood Type analysis.

The type of relationship between the teacher and students in this study was like usual role relationship among them in academic setting. This means that authority of the teacher was still paramount and dominating issue. This was so common since this happened in academic setting. Yet, the study was not only focus on that point. It also revealed the type of Mood used by the teacher in interacting with the students.
Diagram 1. The Overall Clauses Produced by the Teacher and the Students

The diagram above shows that the teacher dominated the teaching and learning process. The total clauses produced were 300 clauses and around 79% of them were produced by the teacher. Meanwhile, the students only produced around 21%. I display this diagram in order to give a general description about the real situation of the teaching learning process under this study and as the evidence of my finding which says that, generally, the role relationship among the teacher and the students are exactly the relationship between teacher and students. More detailed information about the power relation among the teacher and the students are described in this chapter.

Diagram 2. Number and Type of Clauses Used by the Teacher
During the teaching and learning process, both parties, the teacher and the students produced clauses. I separated the clause produced by the teacher from those produced by the students in order to give more detailed information due to the type of clauses which then ended up with role relationship description among them.

The diagram 2 provides description of the number and type of clauses produced by the teacher. Overall, the teacher produced 90 declarative clauses, 80 interrogative clauses, and 67 imperative clauses. Mostly, the teacher used declarative clauses. In general, this showed that the power of the teacher here was very dominant since using declaratives show that the teacher was the one who gave the information and at the same time put the students as the one who received that information. Furthermore, from the diagram 3 below, we could see that the students also mostly used declarative to respond their teacher. This proved that both the teacher and the students preferred to use this type of clause or mood. Yet, the declaratives used by the students were mostly elliptical declarative such as:

2 S : Morning.
4 S : Parjo....
8 S : Five or six.
10 S : Telling story.
17 S : Legend, love story, fable, mystery.

Those elliptical declaratives function as form of their responding and supporting role to the teacher talk.

Diagram 3. Number and Type of Clauses Used by the Student

In order to provide deeper description and analysis due to the role relationship among the teacher and the students, here I show the analysis of Mood Types used by both the teacher and the students.

CONTRIBUTION OF THIS STUDY FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING: Throughout this classroom conversation, the students and the teacher tend to exchange ideational meanings (focused on lexis). Exchanges of interpersonal meanings made were limited to yes and no responses. The tenor established during the conversations was mainly demanding and giving information with the teacher taking the role as information provider. This is caused by the complexity of the lexico-grammatical system (Subject, Finite, Modality etc.) that realizes interpersonal meanings. Many students do not like interpersonal grammar; they
do not like learning tenses, aspects and so on, moreover to implement these parts in their speech. Unfortunately, this area of the clause is the one that expresses interpersonal meanings and, thus, the very means that establishes role relations or tenor.

The findings clearly demonstrate that in the foreign language context lexico-grammar cannot be taken for granted. Foreign Language learners need to notice the grammar and eventually acquire it. This can happen if the learning process encourages focus on form (Doughty and William 1998). Besides, the use of Subject, Finite, and Modality need to be implemented since the very beginning of the study. Many students understand the concept of these but fail to use it in their speaking since they are not well exercised.

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