

Repair Strategies of Teacher's Talk in EFL Classroom

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the curiosity of how an eminent senior high teacher handled the communication in EFL classroom when he has problems in expressing ideas during the learning process where English is unlikely to be spoken than Javanese. It examined two repair strategies; repetition and self-initiated repair since these two are prominent features of daily communication mostly in the setting of English as a foreign language. It was a classroom discourse analysis study which used a descriptive qualitative approach. Numbers used in the form of percentage to support the findings. The participant of this study was an eminent teacher of a private senior high in Semarang. The learning session was video recorded then was carefully transcribed. Then, the repair strategies of the teacher's talk were analyzed through the study. The findings revealed that self-initiated repair was used less frequently than repetition. There were 45 out of 210 utterances done for repetition (13.81%) and 16 out of 210 utterances done for self-initiated (7.61%). It was also found the combination of those two repair strategies in one utterance. The findings indicate that the effort of the teacher to build English speaking classroom atmosphere is very high even though the students were lack of motivation in speaking English. Yet, the teacher shows the repair strategy mostly in the beginning of the learning session, but he finally made it through the rest of the session. The findings may inspire those of many other English teachers, especially in Indonesia, in giving positive contribution in building EFL classroom.

Keywords: repair strategies, repetition, self-initiated repair

Introduction

Teaching English as a Foreign Language is not an easy job to do. Teacher should consider the students' proficiency in using English to participate English speaking classroom. It makes the aims of teaching English for non-native English learners

emphasize on communicative competence. Celce-Murcia et al. (2007:46) assert that the main competence in communicative competence is discourse competence. Discourse competence will be achieved not only by the fulfillment of socio-cultural competence, linguistic

competence, formulaic competence, and interactional competence, but also strategic competence.

Celce-Murcia, et. al., (2007:41-57) explained that strategic competence is the knowledge of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies which enhance the efficiency of communication and, where necessary, enable the learner to overcome difficulties when communication breakdowns occur. So, it refers to someone's ability to keep the communication going when the communication breakdown is occurred in order to enhance the effectiveness of the communication. Furthermore, Celce-Murcia, et. al. proposed a model of communicative competence as follows:



Figure 1. Communicative Competence Schematic Representation

It can be seen from figure 1 that the schematic is in the shape of pyramid

which is enclosing a circle and surrounded by another circle. The circle within the pyramid is discourse competence surrounded by three points that are sociocultural competence, linguistic competence, and actional competence. The strategic competence discussed in this study refers to a circle surrounding the pyramid; it is skills that allow a strategically competent speaker to negotiate messages and resolve problems or to compensate for deficiencies in any of the other underlying competencies. The competence requires a speaker to have a systemic technique when s/he faced some difficulties in doing communication. The systemic technique deals with one of the competencies that a teacher should have; one of them is by applying repair strategies.

Rabab'ah (2013) said that repair strategy is one way of modifying, organizing and maintaining conversation especially within non-native speakers. He suggested teachers to use this repair strategy in teaching students who are not English as their first language since it is a kind of challenging job. Research done by Rieger C.L, in her research paper

entitled “Repetition as self-repair strategies in English and German conversations”, revealed that the participants used repetition repair strategy mostly in English rather than German. The repeated more pronoun-verb combination, more personal pronouns, and more prepositions (2003:67). She also stated that “repetition as a self-repair strategy is an orderly phenomenon” (2003:47). Another research done by Fotovatnia and Dorri (2013) gave more evident that the usage of repair strategies is dominated by EFL learners.

Based on the explanation above, the present research aims to investigate how an eminent senior high teacher handles the communication in EFL classroom when he has problems in expressing ideas during the learning process where English is unlikely to be spoken than Javanese. It also examines which one is more frequently used between self-initiated strategy and repetition strategy. The findings will hopefully inspire those of many other English teachers, especially in Indonesia, in building EFL classroom since it is part of the teachers’ duty to encourage their

students to have some willingness in speaking English.

1. Repair Strategy

A successful conversation implies that the speaker has useful communicative competencies (spoken discourse). Rabab’ah (2013:124) stated that “one of the common features of spoken discourse is repair, which results from the speakers’ recognition of faulty plans”. Mostly for non-native speakers, repair is the way to help them achieving communicative goals. It is quite common to help the speaker that persist some obstacles during the conversation. Schegloff et.al. (1977:361) defined repair as dealing with “recurrent problems in speaking, hearing, and understanding.” They proposed research on repair strategy which has identified a variety of them, namely self-initiation self-repair, other-initiation self-repair, other initiation other repair, repetition, paraphrase, confirmation checks, clarification requests and comprehension checks (Schegloff et.al., 1977; Schegloff, 2000; Nagano, 1997; Drew, 1997). The present study will investigate two strategies; repetition and self-initiated repair since these two are the most prominent features of daily

communication mostly in the setting of English as a foreign language.

Furthermore, Schegloff et.al explained that it is a language phenomenon, it is necessary for keeping communication smooth and accurate, and it has been evident in the literature that language learners are able to employ many repair strategies in second language interaction (Schegloff et.al., 1977; Watterson, 2008; Eleftheriadou and Badger, 1999; Schegloff et.al., 2007).

2. Repetition

Repetition is the most effective strategy used by non-native speakers. Hoekje (1984:10) argued that repetition is a common strategy whose role in communication could be one of the “most effective strategies for promoting comprehension that a speaker can use”. This argument is in line with Rieger (2003:47), she stated that repetition, which is a type of self-repair is the most common type of repair consisting of a particular set of repair strategies where the repairable and repairing segments occur in the same turn and the repair is performed by the initiator of the repairable. The reason why the present study focuses on this kind of repair is

that repetition is familiar to Indonesian people in English speaking atmosphere.

The following is the example of repetition strategy based on Cho and Larke (2010):

T	:OK. Today I <i>sneeze wobbly</i> . Yesterday I, what verb form?
S1	:Uhm? One more time
T	:Today I <i>sneeze wobbly</i>
S2	: <i>Sneezed</i>
T	:Yeah, <i>sneezed</i>

Figure 2. The Example of Repetition Strategy

From the example above, it is seen that the speakers repeated the same lexical item that is “sneeze”. The speaker (T) seemed to not understand the use of past tense when he wanted to express the time marker “yesterday”. Since the speaker (S2) did not explicitly say “sneezed”, he would not realize it. It is one of the evident in doing repetition strategy.

3. Self-initiated repair

According to Schegloff et.al. (1977:376), self-initiated (self-repair) takes the form of initiation with a non-lexical initiator, followed by the repairing segment. The example of

Schegloff et.al. by self-initiated repair is as follows:

- (59) B: → n'Yeah, 'hh This feller I have- (m)
 → 'felluh'; this ma:n (0.2) !'hhh He ha:-(s)- uff- eh- who- who I
 have fer Linguistics // is really too much. (TG:8)
- Or the 'not X, Y' format may be used, in which the 'not X' component locates the repairable, and the 'Y' component supplies a candidate repair:
- (60) A: → That sto:re, has terra cotta floors. (pause)
 A: → Not terra cotta. Terrazzo. (AT:FN)
- (61) Louise: → Isn't it next week we're outta school?
 Roger: → Yeah next week. No // not next
 → week, // the week after. (GTS:1:28)

Figure 3. The Example of Self-Initiated Repair

These non-lexical initiators include cut-offs, lengthening of sounds, and quasi-lexical fillers such as "uh" and "um" (Schegloff et.al., 1977). This kind of repair can be confusing with repetition because when repairing the errors, the speakers often combine the non-lexical initiators with repeating words and using fillers to gain time and achieving their communicative goal.

The present study examines how an eminent senior communication in EFL high teacher handles the classroom when he has problems in expressing ideas during the learning process where English is unlikely to be spoken than Javanese. It also examines which one is more frequently used between self-initiated strategy and repetition strategy. Thus, the aim of the present research is to answer the following questions:

1. How does the teacher handle the communication problems occurred in EFL classroom?
2. Which strategy is the most frequently used by the teacher?

METHODOLOGY

This was a classroom discourse analysis study which used a descriptive qualitative approach since the author wants to describe the phenomenon of the study. Numbers used in the form of percentage to support the findings. The present study concerns with the repair strategies employed by a teacher.

The participant was an eminent teacher of a private senior high in Semarang. His name is familiar in

educational setting of senior high level. He is also active to be adjudicator of English competition of junior to senior high, such as debate, speech and storytelling competition. Within his big name, the author tried to investigate her curiosity without informing the teacher's name and the school's name. She wanted to know whether the teacher with those experiences is still doing repair strategies or not when he communicates in EFL classroom.

The data came from one classroom observation. The learning session was video recorded then was carefully transcribed. Every talk produced was transcribed including pause, laughter, phrases or utterances in Bahasa Indonesia. Then, the repair strategies of the teacher's talk were analyzed through the study. The unit of analysis was utterance that was well transcribed so the repair strategy used by the participant was easily recognized.

In order to make the research reliable, then the researcher discussed her initial interpretation with one of her colleagues in PGRI University of Semarang who is a Professor with the expertise in research. The discussion included

the data source and technique of the data. Then, the results of this study were based on his comment, revision and suggestion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study show that there are 210 utterances uttered by the teacher during learning session. 45 out of 210 utterances are classified into repair strategy done by the teacher. Those are displayed as follows:

Strategy Type	Frequen cy	Percenta ge
Repetition	29	13.81
Self-initiated	16	7.61
Total	45 out of 210	

Table 1. The Percentage of Repair Strategies in Teacher's Talk

As displayed in Table 1, the total number of utterances produced by the teacher is 210 utterances. It can be seen that the participant did the repetition repair strategy more frequently than self-initiated repair strategy with the percentage of 13.81% (29 utterances) and 7.61%

(16 utterances). The discussion is presented below.

1.1. Repetition

It is revealed that repetition is the most frequently employed by the participant rather than self-initiated repair strategy. As stated in Table 1, there are 29 utterances which are classified as repetition strategy. The repetition subcategories were repetitions of pronoun, be, determiner, article, adverb, modal, preposition, wh-question, noun, verb, until phrase and sentence.

Most of the repetition strategies used by the participant were done by him without any influence or even help from somebody else. Look at the utterances that are displayed below:

(R1) What's **your** ...**your** activity **before...** **before..** the class?

(R2) **Don't....Don't** think this very special now. Where I need you

...to...what is it?
to to learn together to get knowledge.

(R3) So you should **be.. be**what is it....active so to express your idea.

(R4) **You can....you can tell the...the...the...** social function or the purpose of the explanation text?

(R14) Just kidding. Okay.. so based on the title **that you ... that you...get** from your friend.. So You can conclude... you can conclude

(R16) **No no no Not I mean.. No..no..no Not I mean...**

(R17) **One more...one more...Explanati on text...is**

that...**a text ...a text**..that answers the question using ...["why and how"].

(R22) So...if you find aa.. the words ending in "-ance".....,it's not like -ANCE, tapi jangan dibaca INCE or ANCE..... So ATTENDANCE ...[ATTENDANCE].. So mostly..mostly this....aaa **suffix..is suffix** in English...in front of suffix is verb .. you get verb..and then...any suffix ...most of them become... ladies and gentlement... **like...like....-ion,** -tion, - ment... so most of them are noun... that is kata kerja

followed by those..ya..can be noun..

(R23) ...it become keying...bisa mengunci... that is English... (.....). Sometimes,aaa **we..we..we..** rarely get that word but in this case we find it. Jarang ta?.. Keying...I never heard keying... Keying your pin, you put your finger on the finger print scanner mounted

Repetition strategies were indicated that the participant used these subcategories of strategies to gain time in order to maintain the English speaking atmosphere in his classroom.

The participant also did repetition within phrase or

even sentence. See the utterances below.

(R6) Yak ... **Can you catch my question?**
[contohnya]
Can you catch my question?

(R26) **Don't...Don't copy from your friends? Ya Don't copy from your friends.**

It is noticed that the participant used repetition in phrases and sentences in order to make his ideas clear and well-received by his students. The researcher also found the use of another strategy that is fillers almost in all of his utterances. It was used by the participant in order to fill the time gap in finding out the proper vocabularies for his ideas. At the end of the learning session, he started to apply Bahasa Indonesia more often than the initial one.

1.2. Self-Initiated Repair

Self-initiated repair strategies were recorded then the analysis revealed that the most frequently employed self-initiated by the subject is to encounter some difficulties in connecting his speech during the lesson. Look at the utterances of self-initiated repair strategies below.

(S2) Don't....Don't think this very special now. Where I need you ...to...**what is it?** to to learn together to get knowledge.

(S3) So you should be.. be**what is it**....active so to express your idea.

(S4) So you are free to say in English because it is **English school...English group... English**

- area I think. So no one speaks Indonesian.
- (S5) So I said like this...today is English....eee..**English lesson....English study...** So I would like you to speak English all the time...
- (S6) Eeee
Sa!...[Sa!]....Would you please give me some...some ..**what is it...?** some phenomenon either natural and social phenomenon that shows ...based on the title... you can catchthat is the explanation text?
- (S7) Whenever you look at the title of **the sen....of the**

text, then you know.. this is explanation text.

From 16 utterances of self-initiated repair strategies, it can be seen that the use of expression “what is it?” mostly occurred rather than another subcategories of this kind of strategy. Furthermore, the use of synonym was occurred in order to maintain English speaking classroom atmosphere and the students were able to catch the teachers’ ideas. Thus, it indicated that English is uncommonly used by these students. It is also found that both repetition and self-initiated repair strategies are mostly combined at the same utterances.

However, the teacher handled the communication problems occurred in EFL classroom by applying repair strategies. It was revealed that repetition strategy is used more frequently than self-initiated repair strategy. This is in line with the result of Rabab’ah (2013), he said that repair strategy is one way of modifying, organizing and maintaining conversation especially within non-native speakers.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the present study show that the teacher used both repair strategies; repetition and self-initiated strategy in order to overcome the communication breakdowns with his students. Within 210 utterances uttered by the eminent senior high teacher during the learning session, there were 45 evidence of repair strategy. The teacher did the repetition repair strategy mostly in repeating the lexically matter and also lengthening the time in order to catch his ideas in learning process. Furthermore, the teacher did the self-initiated repair strategy to encounter some difficulties in connecting his speech during the lesson. The use of “what is it?” expression was commonly used by the teacher as his effort to find out the proper vocabularies.

By the evidence of 45 out of 210 utterances showing repair strategies, it can be concluded that the effort of the teacher to build English speaking classroom atmosphere is very high even though the students were lack of motivation in speaking English. Yet, the teacher shows the repair strategy mostly

in the beginning of the learning session, but he finally made it through the rest of the session. The findings lead the researcher to the suggestion that inspiration may come after reading the findings of the present study. The participant of this study can inspire those of many other English teachers, especially in Indonesia, in giving positive contribution in building EFL classroom.

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