

Teacher Talk and Student Learning

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Introduction

- Teacher talk has long been researched as the most common channel of teacher-to-student communication.
 - A large number of previous studies focus on the ratio of teacher talking time and student talking time (Musimeci, 1996; Walsh, 2002).
 - The impact of teacher talk on student learning has been overlooked.
 - ‘How can teachers enhance the quantity and quality of learner output by more careful language use?’ (Walsh, 2002, p.3)
- This study is to modestly fill that gap in the EFL context of Vietnam.

Literature Review

- Definition of student learning
- Prevailing approaches to teacher talk and student learning
- The relationship between teacher talk and student learning

Literature Review

- Student learning is defined as their involvement in the lesson as according to Walsh (2002), 'maximizing learner involvement is conducive to second language acquisition' (p.3).

Prevailing approaches to teacher talk and student learning

The length of teacher-talk time vs. student-talk time

- Pinpoint the excessive amount of teacher talk time (Musumeci ,1996; Walsh 2002)
- Suggest reducing it
- A 'simplistic' and 'unrealistic' approach (Walsh, 2002, p.3)

Features of teacher talk

- The IRF pattern (Initiation-Response- Feedback) (Brazil & Sinclair, 2006)
- The controlling role of the teacher 'who says what to whom and when' (Clifton, 2006, p.143)
- The leading roles of teacher questions (Walsh, 2002)

Only an adequate number of studies have discussed the relationship between teacher talk and language learning in EFL environment (Incecay, 2010)

Literature Review

The impact of teacher talk on student learning

- Both constructive and obstructive impacts (Walsh, 2002; Incecay, 2010)
- Obstructive techniques of teacher talk: turn-completion, teacher echo, extended use of the IRF pattern.
- Constructive techniques of teacher talk: direct error correction, content feedback, prompting, extended waiting time, repairing.

Teacher talk can have contrasting effects on student learning, which requires further examinations in more varied context.

Methodology

- Research questions
 1. How do teachers conceive the influence of teacher talk on students' learning?
 2. What is the influence of teacher talk on students' learning as perceived by students?
 3. What is the influence of teacher talk on student learning as observed in the research context?

Methodology

- Participants
 - 3 teachers Hoa, Mai, Thanh (all pseudonyms)
 - Working in a Hanoi-based university
 - 4, 6, 3 years of teaching, respectively
 - 13 first year students
 - All females, B1 level of English (CEFR)

Methodology

- Data collection instruments:
 - Classroom observations: two 50-minute classes/ each teacher to scrutinize what teacher talk strategies in use, their impacts or students' learning
 - Teacher interviews: teachers' perceptions
 - Student focus group interviews: students' perceptions and suggestions

Methodology

- Data analysis

Qualitative content analysis: 5 steps

Transcribing → coding for themes → looking for patterns
→ making interpretations → building theory (Dornyei,
2007, p.246)

Findings

- The influence of teacher talk on student learning as perceived by teachers
 - Providing input (depending on the teacher's proficiency and talk register)
 - Modeling the target language
 - Developing teacher-student rapport

Findings

- The influence of teacher talk on student learning as perceived by learners
 - An indispensable source of input
 - The demand for more complex vocabulary
 - Liven up the class atmosphere if teacher talk sounds energetic, loud, and fun

Findings

- The impacts of teacher talk on student learning as observed
 - Giving input
 - Prompting/ scaffolding

Discussion

- Findings of previous studies have been confirmed. Both constructive and obstructive impacts were witnessed. There are emerging impacts, namely, rapport establishment and class atmosphere via teacher talk.
- There seems to be a congruence between the stated impacts of teacher talk and students' responses.
- There exists a mismatch between teachers' perceptions and students' needs.

Implications

- More formal and complex teacher talk
- Some adjustments in the Vietnamese- English ratio and teacher talk pace (should be 70% for English and 30% for Vietnamese)
- Students' facial expressions as a clue for teacher to adjust their talk.

Conclusion

- Data from classroom observation and interviews have indicated that teacher talk does have influences on student learning in both ways, obstructively and constructively.
- By observing students' facial expression, teachers can make changes to their talk, including the pace, word choice and the language code for students' optimal learning.

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