

INDICATORS OF THE PRACTICE OF POWER IN LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS

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Abstract: This paper attempts to reveal some strategies performed by teacher which indicate that s/he is exercising power in managing and conducting language teaching and learning process. Such power may be manifested in terms of the frequency of directives or of the holding of control over the interaction Process. Despite the fact that exercising power seems to impair justice, democracy, and humanity because it implies inequality, in a pedagogical context, especially in a language teaching and learning process, such a practice may still be beneficial and justifiable. Among the benefits of the exercise of power are enumerated by the end of the paper.

Key words: power, indicators of exercising power, benefits of practicing power

Studies on natural language use may be conducted in institutional settings. Interaction between a judge, an attorney, and a defendant in a court room, a teacher and students in a classroom, a police officer interrogating a law breaker, a doctor diagnosing patients in a hospital, businessmen making business dealings, and company managers meeting are examples of discourse in institutional settings. The study of 'institutional dialogue' is, then, the study of how people use language to manage those practical tasks, and to perform the parti-

cular activities associated with their participation in institutional contexts” (Drew and Sorjonen, 1989: 92) .

Related to institutional settings, Wunderlich (1980: 296) asserts that there are two kinds of speech acts, namely primary/natural speech acts that are necessary for any kinds of human interaction, and secondary/institutional speech acts that are “specific for a certain institution (an organized system of social life which results from the social division of labor and which is determined to fulfill the specific needs of society)”, such as, school instruction, courtroom investigation, political debate, and commercial advertising.

Wunderlich (1980: 297) further claims that institutional contexts can also have various impacts on speech acts. First, an institution gives rise to the creation of new kinds of speech acts, mostly of a declaration type, such as baptizing, judging, appointing, and opening a session. Some of these are accomplished by means of using specific performative formulas. Second, an institution may modify primary/natural speech acts. For instance, there are a whole range of institutionally modified kinds of questions and requests, such as examination questions which are generally used in classrooms, interrogative questions in the police interrogation room, prescriptions in the doctor’s office, orders in military base, and summons in preaching. Third, an institution may also produce a new discourse type which reveals specific complex speech units and speech act patterns, such as standing orders in a courtroom or in a wedding ceremony.

Such a phenomenon also applies in a classroom, an institutional communication, where the relationship between teacher and learners is asymmetrical (Stubbs, 1983: 43). It is the teacher who has power, authority, and control over learners. Teacher plays significant roles as a planner and manager of activities, as a model to imitate (Brown, 1987; Ellis, 1986), and as a source of invaluable input (Krashen, 1985) which is required to promote language acquisition.

Studies have been conducted on classroom discourse. Using approaches to sociolinguistic analysis, Shuy focused on identifying dimensions of classroom language (1988), Ramirez on analyzing speech acts (1988), and Tenenberg on diagramming question cycle sequences (1988). In analyzing speech acts, however, Ramirez assisted by his team members, uncovers only the frequency of teachers’ performing acts based on predetermined categories using statistical quantification to compare six classrooms. Those three studies aim to uncover whether student perceptions of classroom language factors affect participation

and school success (Green & Harker, 1988: 1). Hanafi (2000) unfolded the characteristics of teachers' speech in the classroom interaction of the teaching of Bahasa Indonesia at elementary schools. Rahmah (2006) studied the verbal disagreeing strategies used by students of doctorate program at the State University of Malang. Hudiono (2007) described instructional conversations that took place at MTsN 1 Malang.

This paper presents the strategies of the practice of power as reflected in the classroom discourse. Following Halliday's (1985: 69) suggestion of the giving or demanding of goods-and-services or information, the writer analyses the practice of power in the classroom discourse. He asserts that in the process of interaction there are two types of commodities and two roles in the exchange. The commodities are goods or services and information, whereas the roles are giving and demanding. In regards to this point, namely the exercise of power, attention is paid to the roles in the exchange, especially the second role, i.e. demanding.

Power is inherent in demand. The more demand is performed indicates that the demander is more powerful. Demanding either goods and services or information is classified as directive. Therefore, the performer of the directives must practice greater power. In the context of classroom interaction, for example, the teacher imposes numerous demands by asking questions, ordering learners to do tasks, eliciting, and prompting. That implies that the teacher holds control over the class and exercises greater power.

Using that framework of thought, the writer tries to present some indicators of the practice of power. Then he discusses some benefits of the exercise of power for language pedagogical purposes.

METHOD

The data were obtained from an English language class of mixed-ability adult learners taught by a male teacher using audio-visual recording and observation. In order to preserve the validity of natural data, some measures were taken, such as considering the frequency of repetition and establishing rapport. The results of the recording were transcribed so that it was easier to prepare data fragments of teacher-learner interaction. Observation was done by the researcher's sitting at the back of the classroom taking field notes (Spradley,

1980: 59). This facilitated comprehensive understanding of the corpus and its context which was useful in the process of transcribing and analysing.

The data were then analysed using the techniques of qualitative data analysis proposed by Miles and Huberman (1992: 18), namely data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and interpretation. Parts of the transcript and the notes which were not directly related to the wielding of power were set aside; thus, the remaining data were organized and manageable. Power is defined as the control that the addressor imposes on the addressee. It can be manifested in terms of teachers' keeping hold of the conversation, dominating the classroom interaction, exhibiting undemocratic behaviour, and giving arbitrary commands without opening a chance for negotiations. The data relevant to this definition of power were then displayed in order that the researcher could enumerate points, draw conclusions, and make interpretations.

FINDINGS

Indicators of the Practice of Power

The indicators of teacher's wield of power over the learners during classroom interaction were the amount of speech, frequency of directive acts, initiative of interaction, control of topic, teacher being questioner, use of closed questions, teacher's use of modelled extraction, and teacher's answering own questions.

Amount of Speech

The data recorded by the research instrument showed that the total amount of speech produced during the lesson was 476 utterances. Among that number, 341 were produced by the teacher, 104 were by individual learner, and 31 by choral learners. This is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of Teacher-Learners' Utterances

Speech Producers	Number of Utterances	Percentages
Teacher	341	72%
Individual learner	104	22%
Choral learners	31	6%
Total	476	100%

Although that proportion indicates that teacher produced more speech than learners, i.e. teacher spoke as much as 72% of the interaction and learners only 28% individually and classically, this does not mean that, learners did not have time to practice using the target language. In fact, the teacher provided them with a lot of chances to practice the language, as indicated by the activities conducted during the lesson.

In the guessing game, for instance, it was revealed that there were 34 utterances produced by the learners. In the second stage, grouping competition, learners worked in groups classifying the phrases in accordance with the appropriate life stages. For example, wearing nappies belongs to babies, flirting at the opposite sex to teenagers, and stopping working and getting grey-haired to retired people. Unfortunately, this grouping activity could not be clearly recorded by the instrument. However, the writer assumes that in doing such an activity, learners produced utterances. In conducting the discussion, there must be utterances produced, but, unfortunately, they could not be recorded due to technical difficulties.

When learners were engaged in pair-work of telling each other about the most important event in their lives, learners also produced target language utterances. Unfortunately, the pair-work discussion could not be recorded. After the learners did the matching activity, they were instructed to discuss their answers together with their partners to check if their answers are correct. In carrying out this task, learners also produced speech.

Frequency of Directive Acts

Having scrutinized the data of classroom discourse, it is obvious that there were 198 directive acts performed during the teaching and learning process.

These were performed by both interlocutors—teacher and learners. However, among those acts, 188 were done by the teacher and only 10 were by the learners. This indicates that the teacher exercised power over the learners, which confirms Stubbs' (1983) claim that in the classroom interaction between learners and teacher, there is an imbalanced or asymmetrical relationship in the extent that teacher holds powerful control over the learners.

This is a superficial conclusion. In order to analyze the discourse deeply, it is important to identify what commodities are demanded by the speakers and how they do so. In relation to this, the commodities exchanged by the classroom interlocutors are services and information. The analyst does not find any data about the demand of goods. The communicative functions to demand services are instructing, nominating, commanding, ordering, requesting, stimulating, calling attention, asking for repetition, drilling, correcting pronunciation, and offering. The acts to demand information are eliciting, asking, prompting, checking comprehension, checking knowledge, and asking for confirmation. The examples of asking and nominating are:

- (1) Teacher (T): *What is one?* (Checking the answer made by group one)
OK, group two? What do teenagers do?

Almost all of the demands were performed by the teacher, and only two of them were done by learners, i.e. requesting to demand services and asking to demand information. For example:

- (2) T: OK, how about this one?
Learner (L): *Please, your finger.* (L asked T to remove his finger because it blocked some part of the picture)
T: All right.

When the teacher was showing a picture on OHP, he demanded information from the learners by eliciting their comments towards the picture in the form of verbal description. However, some of the teacher's fingers were blocking some part of the picture. Therefore, one of the learners requested him to give a service in the form of doing an action of removing the finger in order not to block the view. The teacher responded by doing what the learner requested.

Sometimes, learners also demanded information by asking a question. For example, when learners were working in groups to classify activities based on life stages, one of them demanded information from the teacher by asking him

about the meaning of the word “bald”. The teacher answered his question not verbally, but by using gestures, that is, touching his head, which is, fortunately, bald. His non-verbal response was intended to satisfy the learner’s demand of information about the meaning of the word. Therefore, the information demanded was provided not in the form of verbal information, but by using real objects.

Initiative of Interaction

Another indicator of the practice of power is the initiative of interaction. The communicant, who takes initiatives to open the interaction, as manifested in the forms of turn taking, is the person who holds power over the powerless. It can be seen during the lesson proceedings that it was the teacher who took the initiative to start the interaction. In other words it was the teacher who dominated the turn taking. Following Sinclair and Coulthard’s (1975) frame of exchanges, it is clear that the form is dominantly Teacher-Learner-Teacher. First, the teacher initiated the speech by presenting a question. Then a learner responded to the question. Finally, the teacher provided feedback. The following are some of the examples:

- (3) T : *What else? Did you remember?*
L1 : *Married couple.*
T : *Yes, married couple, and then?*
...
T : *So, in the center, if you make circle like this, what is it called?*
L1 : *Part of.*
T : *Yes, part of what?*

During the lesson on people’s life stages, after the teacher and learners talked about the stages of babies, children, and teenagers, the teacher initiated the conversation by asking “What else? Did you remember?” Then a learner responded to him “Married couple.” After that response, the teacher gave feedback of confirmation followed by further question “then?” Before learners give response to it, the teacher answered his own question.

Afterwards, the teacher shifted to eliciting the topic under discussion by asking another question followed by learner’s response, and teacher’s feedback. In short, the structure of turn taking was teacher-learners-teacher (T-L-

T), which is in line with Sinclair and Coulthard's statement (1975) and Aman and Hosniah's findings (2006).

Control of Topic

Asymmetry of power relations between teacher and learners was also indicated by the control of topic by the teacher. Teacher determined what to discuss at every point of the lesson and learners merely followed and responded. The example of topic control by the teacher can be seen in the following extract.

- (4) T : OK. Life stages.
This is the context of our discussion today. About "Life stages"
What do babies do usually?
L1 : Cry
....
T : *How about children?*
L2 : Play.
T : Play a lot.
Married couple?
L1 : Arguing a lot

The teacher stated the topic of discussion at a point, namely "life stages." Then, he shifted the topic to talking about the activities normally done by people in each life stage starting from the earliest phase, i.e. "What do babies usually do?" This is another topic for the following discussion. Then T presents another topic by asking, "*How about children?*", and shifted the topic by asking, "*Married couple?*" It is obvious that the controller of the topic was the teacher, while learners were merely following and responding to him. It indicates that the teacher held control over the learners, hence implying the domination of the powerful over the powerless.

Teacher Being Questioner

Having analyzed the data, it was found that the forms of the questions used were either complete interrogative sentences consisting of (wh-questions followed by) auxiliary verb, subject, and verb or complete affirmative sentences with rising intonation or merely fragments, namely just phrases or words

ended with rising question intonation; and that the teacher uses questions for several purposes as listed in Table 2.

Table 2. The Uses of Questions

Uses of questions	Linguistic realizations
to greet	<i>How are you today?</i>
to elicit words or phrases	<i>What is it?</i>
to check comprehension	<i>You know what I mean?</i>
to offer a chance	<i>Who else wants to sit here?</i>
to give an order	<i>OK, how about this one?</i>
to control topic	<i>How about its stages? Can be children,...</i>
to nominate	<i>How about group one?</i>
to give confirmation	<i>Spend much money ya?</i>
to stimulate speech	<i>What do you think about this picture?</i>
to give prompt	<i>The synonym of raise up is?</i>
to ask for repetition	<i>Sorry?</i>
to give guidance	<i>Where is he? Where is he?</i>
to give feedback	<i>Is it right?</i>
to check knowledge	<i>What is given up smoking?</i>
to ask for information	<i>Do you like Mr. Bean?</i>
to ask for confirmation	<i>Are you sure number six?</i>

Questions are used to convey various functions. In addition to greetings, the teacher also used a question form to elicit the type of dress he is wearing, i.e. *batik*. Actually he already knew the answer; in that context, however, he elicited that word to see if the learners knew the word and to focus their attention to it. It was also used to check if the learners understood the instructions given by the teacher. In this case, the teacher used an affirmative form ended with a rising question intonation. To start the guessing game, the teacher offered a chance to volunteers by addressing a question form.

Another purpose of the teacher's questions was to give an order. For example, a learner guessed a described picture correctly. After nominating another guesser, the teacher wanted the class to start describing another picture while showing it on OHP. He asked a question "OK, how about this one?" The question could be read, "OK, now describe this picture."

The teacher also used questions to control a topic. The context was that after the teacher gave an example of what people in a certain life stage usually

do, for example babies wear nappies, the teacher shifted the topic by asking about the life stages.

A question form was also used to nominate volunteers to do a task. After learners worked in groups to classify activities into appropriate life stages, the teacher nominated one of the groups to read aloud the results of their discussion by using a question. To confirm the previous learner's response, the teacher also used a tag question. In this case, he repeated the last part of learners' response and then ended it with a tag question. The teacher stimulated the learners to speak up using a question. By asking for their opinion about the picture, the teacher stimulated the learners to speak.

The teacher used a question to give prompts to learners. By raising the final intonation of the phrase, it was easier for the teacher to prompt learners to complete it. Sometimes, a question was used to ask for repetition. By saying the word "sorry" with rising intonation, it was clear that the teacher asked the learners to repeat what he just said. Question was used by the teacher to give clues to the learners. The teacher wanted to elicit the phrase "look forward to" by using the picture of someone in the jail. First he asked "Where is he?" When a learner answered incorrectly, he did not reject it but asked a confirmation question. When another learner gave the correct answer, he confirmed it. Again, he asked other leading questions. When learners were on the right track, he gave prompts. In short, question was also used to give clues.

When a learner made a mistake, the teacher did not immediately disconfirm it. Instead, he gave feedback by asking for others' responses to it. That was not only to engage learners in a thinking process, but also to encourage peer correction. A question was also used to check learners' knowledge. By asking that question, the teacher knows if learners have already got knowledge about the meaning of the phrase "given up." The normal use of a question is to ask for information. In that case, the teacher really did not know whether or not learners like Mr. Bean. He really needed that information because as the topic of discussion, the teacher expected that learners were interested in it. Finally, a question was used to ask for confirmation.

Considering all those uses, it is obvious that it was the teacher who dominantly used them. It indicates that the teacher held control over the flow of the lesson or the flow of the discourse. In other words, being the questioner, the teacher practiced greater power.

Closed-Question Usage

Many of the teacher's questions, as found in the data, are closed. For example:

- (5) T: What is it?
Who else wants to sit here?
OK. When you have babies, and then?

He did not seem to use many high level questions which required the learners to make inferential or interpretative explanations. This is, however, understandable because his main teaching aim was "to help the learners understand and use multi-word verbs to do with life stages". Focusing on vocabulary required memory more than explanatory inferences. Therefore, it is logical that teacher stimulated learners' participation using more closed questions rather than open questions. Closed question usage is an indicator of the practice of power because with that type of question learners become more controlled and their options are more limited. That is different from the "why" question which is more subjective and gives greater freedom.

Modeled Answer Extraction

The linguistic manifestation of modeled answer extraction is that the teacher said some part of a word or a phrase to be completed by learners. First, the teacher gave modeled answer extraction by saying some part of the phrase to answer his question, and then one of the learners completed it. This linguistic phenomenon could be found in the discourse data of this study, such as:

- (6) T: What do you think about this picture?
Mother taking care of ...
Mother taking care of ... her children

This becomes an indicator of the practice of power because in this linguistic behaviour the teacher to some extent dictated what learners should say. On the one hand, the teacher got the learners to do something, i.e. completing his/her unfinished utterance; on the other hand, what they should say was pre-determined by the teacher. It implies that the teacher did not provide free options to the learners; hence indicating his/her use of power.

Teacher Answering Own Questions

Teacher answering own question is also found in the classroom discourse data. The example of this is:

- (7) T: Married couple.
Yes, married couple, and then?
Middle-aged people, and the last is retired people.

It started with the teacher's asking questions. Before learners provided answers, the teacher answered his own questions. Talking about life stages, first a learner mentioned "married couple." Then the teacher confirmed and repeated it. After that, he stimulated learners to mention other stages by asking, "and then?" However, before the learners responded to that stimulus, the teacher already gave the answer.

DISCUSSION

Benefits of Exercising Power

Despite the fact that exercising power may seem to impair justice, democracy, and humanity as it implies inequality; in a pedagogical context, especially in a language teaching and learning process, the wielding of power is beneficial and justifiable. Teacher's abundant speech is beneficial in the sense that it has multiple functions: as input to perceive, a model to imitate, informative knowledge to transfer, stimuli to activate verbal responses, a means to regulate or manage the classroom, and to initiate active interaction. Therefore, the quantity of teacher's speech is beneficial not only to promote acquisition but also to establish and preserve the flow of language classroom activities fluent. This is in line with Krashen's (1985) claim of the importance of quantified comprehensible input to promote language acquisition.

By frequently giving orders, teacher is able to involve learners in activities. Learning takes place as a by-product of learners' active involvement of conducting language tasks. This is relevant with the principle of task-based learning (Prabhu, 1987), where learning may happen subconsciously through carrying out target-language-using tasks/activities. By taking initiative of interaction, moreover, teacher is capable of establishing and maintaining the flow of

interaction and providing sufficient assistance to the learners to get involved in authentic communication; hence, increasing the effectiveness of language learning. It is ideal that teacher encourages learners to take initiative as a mental training of character building; however, considering that learners do not yet have adequate language ability to do so, it will be more efficient if the teacher takes the initiative. In that way, s/he is able to hold control over the relevance of the topic, the flow of discussion, and the proceedings of the lesson as a whole.

Control of topic is useful to keep the lesson relevant with the pre-determined syllabi and to retain the class proceeding in track, thus increasing the efficiency of lesson objective achievement. By asking lots of questions, teacher can intensively involve learners in thinking process. When learners have cognitive engagement, learning becomes more effective. When the teacher sometimes uses closed questions, which require short, fixed, and usually easy answers, it not only facilitates learners to take a part in productive interaction but also stimulates active participation from more learners, further making the classroom process more alive and unthreatening. Krashen (1985) claims that learners' low affective filter is one of the requirements to promote the success of language acquisition.

When the teacher uses modeled extraction, such as saying a half part of words or phrases, s/he actually gives learners clues so that they are able to give proper responses. This is useful to promote learners' feeling of security and safety in taking part of the interaction; hence increasing their self-confidence. This is one of the affective factors contributing to effective language learning (Ellis, 1986). Even when the teacher sometimes answers his/her own questions, such a practice is beneficial to fill in interaction gap; thus, the lesson proceedings do not get stuck but flow smoothly.

In short, exercising power is beneficial to arouse learners' trust, to preserve discipline, to keep the class in control, and to maximize the effectiveness of learning.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The findings of the research signify an explanatory power towards a consistent idea that the variety of activities in the lesson, the diversity of communicative acts performed during the classroom interaction, and the balanced ex-

ercise of power, are all oriented towards the effective achievement of the pedagogical objectives, touching all aspects of human learning, namely psychomotor, cognitive, affective, and social factors.

Exercising power in a language instructional setting is beneficial to some extent. However, it should be done with great caution. It is true that teacher is inherently endowed with power over learners. He has the authority and right to plan, to manage, and to control activities. In practice, however, s/he should take into account learners' personal dignity and their needs of being cared, respected, and loved. Therefore, the way to exercise power must be mild and humanly, so that good and harmonious relationship is established.

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