

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Teacher talk was one type of classroom interaction that occurred in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Simply put, teacher talk related to how teachers communicated with their students in the classroom, so in this case, English teachers played an important role. For instance, teachers played a role in fostering creativity through creative writing and text analysis, and facilitated mastery of technology by integrating digital tools into the learning process. Teachers not only imparted information to students but also shaped their intellectual, social, and emotional foundations. Teachers were not just information providers; they were skilled communicators, and their role in classroom communication often served as the primary driver of students' success or failure in achieving profound understanding. Student behavior was primarily influenced by the type of behavior exhibited by the teacher (Amatari, 2015). Therefore, teachers had to be competent and audible in teaching students, so that students had an idea in their thinking about what was conveyed or taught by the teacher in the learning process. Classroom interaction in any form played a very vital role in the formation of the learning process. Dagarin (2004) suggested that “classroom interaction was a reciprocal process that involved participants in the learning process.”

Teachers did not only face one or two students in the class but many students were involved. Of course, the characteristics of students in the class were very different, starting from their personality and level of intelligence as well. Zulfikar, Dahliana, & Sari (2019) stated, "Students showed positive attitudes in cognitive (reasons, competence, thinking), emotional (interest, enjoyment), and behavioral (attention, participation) aspects of learning English." Therefore, teachers needed to apply appropriate communication techniques according to the characteristics or abilities of each student in the class. Teachers could know the characteristics of each student and could group them according to their abilities. This was obtained when the teacher taught in the classroom.

Mixed abilities related to students' cognitive development. The theory of cognitive development was popularized by Jean Piaget, a Swiss psychologist and genetic epistemologist. Piaget (as cited in Sinaga & Choiriyah, 2023) stated, "Students go through different stages of development." In classifying the stages of student development, the researcher used the terms low-level students, medium-level students, and high-level students to classify each stage of development of each student. Low-level students needed extra support and more detailed instruction. Medium-level students could usually master the material at a standard level but might have needed additional help. On the other hand, high-level students could handle material quickly and might have needed extra challenges to maintain their motivation. It was important to remember that these evaluations could vary depending on the context and specific subject, and providing support

according to individual needs was the key to supporting the development of all students.

The Flanders Theory (1970) was a valuable framework for understanding teacher-student interaction through the lens of Teacher Talk. Developed by Ned Flanders in the 1960s, this theory provided significant insights into how teachers communicated with their students. Within Flanders' theory, it was elucidated that there were seven types of teacher talk, namely, accepting feelings, praising or encouraging, accepting or utilizing students' ideas, asking questions, lecturing, giving directions, and criticizing and justifying authorities. It categorized teacher behavior into various classifications, including low-level and high-level questioning, praise, criticism, and more. Nunan (Gebhard, 2006, p.81) asserted that "in English as a foreign language classes, teacher talk served as a significant input for students." Additionally, it was proven that teacher talk dominated the classroom environment during the English teaching and learning process, as evidenced by Nugroho (2009). Analyzing Teacher Talk using Flanders' theory enabled researchers to delve deeper into how teacher communication influenced the learning process and its impact on student participation, conceptual understanding, and motivation.

Based on the Flanders theory, teachers were expected to apply several types of teacher talk in learning with various objectives, including interacting with students, conveying, discussing and negotiating, motivating students, checking student understanding, providing knowledge to students, and controlling student behavior. However, in reality, when implementing Introduction to the School

Field or Pengenalan Lapangan Persekolahan, in the teaching and learning process, teachers only relied on two types, namely praising and questioning. Of course, this made students not interested in learning, let alone communicating or participating actively. Consequently, various goals that had been explored previously were not achieved. Especially for students with mixed abilities, teachers could not use the same type of teacher talk, in this case, "utterances," for all students because of differences in abilities between students in the class.

There had been a lot of previous research regarding Teacher Talk in Classroom Interaction at both middle and high school levels. Most of the previous studies that raised this topic mostly used teachers who taught in first and second-year classes in middle or high schools as the research population (Charisma, 2019; Gultom & Naibaho, 2022; Siregar, 2020). Apart from that, several previous studies had the same research problem, and the aim of the research was only to find out what types of teacher talk were found in the teaching and learning process and what percentage, so the only difference was the location of the school or the research subject. This research involved a sample of a teacher who taught in a third-year class, namely a grade 9 teacher at SMP Gajah Mada Medan. Not only that, this research also attempted to look more deeply into how teachers differentiated their utterances regarding the phenomenon of mixed abilities of students in the teaching and learning process in the classroom.

This research presented an in-depth investigation into the analysis of Teacher Talk. Through a better understanding of the way teachers communicated, the researcher aimed to illustrate ways in which teaching practices could be

improved. Based on the explanation above, the researcher was encouraged to analyze the categories of teacher talk and the percentages at which teachers employed them during classroom interactions. This research also analyzed and classified teacher talk delivered by the teacher to low-level students, medium-level students, and high-level students. It was hoped that this research could contribute to readers, especially teachers, in choosing utterances and types of teacher talk that suited the characteristics or abilities of each student in learning English.

B. The Problems of the Study

Based on the background provided above, the research questions were formulated as follows:

1. What categories of Teacher Talk were identified in the learning process at grade IX SMP Gajah Mada Medan?
2. How did the teacher adapt teacher talk to mixed-ability students?

C. The Objectives of the Study

Based on the problems of the research, the objectives of the research were as follows:

1. To identify the various types of Teacher Talk employed in the learning process at class IX SMP Gajah Mada Medan.
2. To analyze the teacher talk adaptations used by English teachers to mixed-ability students.

D. The Scope of the Study

To avoid expanding the scope of the study too broadly, the researcher specifically concentrated on examining teacher talk within the classroom interactions involving ninth-grade students at SMP Gajah Mada Medan. Hopefully, the findings would be helpful for teachers and students.

E. The Significance of the Study

The findings of the research were expected to be beneficial and be able to give some contributions to the improvement of the effective English teaching and learning process.

1. Theoretically

This research contributed to educational theory by providing insight into the practical implementation of communication theory, particularly within the framework of a mixed-ability classroom. Understanding how different types of Teacher Talk impacted learning could contribute to the refinement of educational theory regarding classroom interactions.

2. Practically

This research has the potential to improve teacher professional development programs. By identifying effective communication strategies, this research could inform training programs that aimed to improve teachers' ability to adapt their communication to meet the needs of diverse students.