CONVERSATIONAL HAND GESTURES OF STUDENT TEACHERS TO GIVE INSTRUCTION IN MICROTEACHING CLASS OF ENGLISH TEACHER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AT SUNAN AMPEL STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY SURABAYA

Zubaydah1, Irma Soraya2, Rizka Safriyani3
Islamic State University of Sunan Ampel
Surabaya, Indonesia
zubaydah93@gmail.com

Abstract— It is very essential for student teachers to convey clear instructions during their microteaching class to prepare themselves better in the real teaching process at school. Student teachers need to have specific techniques to give instruction. The most advantageous technique is gesture because gesture can clarify unclear teacher talk and give visual aids in comprehending the instruction. Specifically, conversational hand gestures are associated to promote students’ better understanding that may lead to better involvement in the class activity. There are four types of conversational hand gestures to mediate instruction: iconic, metaphoric, deictic, and beat. This study is qualitative descriptive design with naturalistic approach. In particular, 4 student teachers in four different microteaching classes were analyzed by videotaping them during their teaching practice. The student teachers were interviewed to support the data. Based on the findings and the discussion, this research figured out that the conversational hand gestures are supportively enacted in five different organizational steps: (1) beat and iconic gestures as an attention getter, (2) deictic, iconic, and beat gestures in delivering the direction of the instruction, (3) iconic, deictic, and beat gestures in mediating to explain expectation, (4) deictic, iconic, and beat gestures in restating the instruction, and (5) deictic and beat gestures in following up the instruction. Furthermore, the findings showed that there were only three out of four gestures that commonly used by student teachers to give instruction: deictic, iconic and beat gestures. Therefore, it can be concluded that student teachers have enacted the conversational hand gestures to support the instruction and help students understand the instruction better.

Keywords— Conversational hand gestures, instructions, student teachers, microteaching class.

I. INTRODUCTION

Teacher is expected to establish effective teaching strategies to help students engage in learning, develop thinking skills, and keep students on task. Effective teaching is closely related with effective teacher and effective instruction.[1] This reflects the fact that the primary nature of a teacher’s work is teaching or instruction that generally carried out in the classroom. Instructional support obviously affects the classroom activities because it involves giving the students information, telling them how they are going to do the activities, putting them into pairs or groups, and finally closing things down when it is time to stop. If the students do not understand what they are supposed to do, they may not get full advantage from an activity. If teachers fail to give and explain the instructions to the students, chaos will ensue, and the activity may be wasted.

Teachers need to have specific techniques to give instruction. Scrivener argued that gestures and facial expressions are an important techniques to use in order to support instruction.[2] Harmer also added that it is especially useful to use gesture to provide comprehensible input.[3] Teacher requires themselves to perform the gesture as we may not deny that teacher is a kind of teaching aid. According to Scrivener, The most fundamental reason why teacher associates their instruction with gestures is because gestures can help reduce unclear teacher talk when giving instructions. This study focuses on conversational hand gestures. Krauss, Dushay, Chen and Rauscher defined conversational hand gestures as hand movement people often make that are synchronized with their speech, and to the listener some of these movements seem related to the meaning of the speech they accompany.[4] If teachers can associate their instructions with conversational hand gestures, it will promote students’ better understanding which may lead to better achievement. They also allow teacher to say less, which by itself may help to make the instructions clearer. For example, the gesture of hand holding imaginary pen midair and wiggling along with the word ‘write your answers’ may well be sufficient to get the class organized.
Although conversational hand gestures have been proven to mediate the instruction better, but teacher still pays little attention to it. Surkamp stated that English language classes have traditionally emphasized verbal instruction. A combination of instruction and gesture in English language classroom can make students easier to interpret the messages or meanings of the instruction. Furthermore, it is also important for language students to become aware of the gesture role in instructional conversation. Therefore, both teacher and students can actively and supportively engage in the classroom activities as they interchange the same desired meanings of the instruction.

The subjects for this research are the sixth semester students of microteaching class (PPL I) in English Teacher Education Department (ETED) at Sunan Ampel State Islamic University Surabaya (UINSA). Students have to pass this microteaching class in order to join the internship program at school (PPL II).[6] The students of microteaching class are called student teachers.[7] Microteaching class consists of 12 student teachers. Their peers will play role as students when one practices teaching. Student teachers will have their teaching performances for 20 minutes. Student teachers are required to deliver clear instructions during the practice teaching, so their students will understand what they want them to do. Thus, if student teachers can deliver instructions well during their practice teaching, they can have fundamental experience to help their professional development in real teaching.

Several researches regarding to this issue have been widely conducted. In Ukraine, Tetyana Smotrova and James P. Lantolf have conducted the research entitled The Function of Gesture in Lexically Focused L2 Instructional Conversations. The study investigated the mediational function of the gesture-speech interface in the form of catchments in the instructional conversation that emerged as teachers attempted to explain the meaning of English words to their students in two EFL classrooms in the Ukraine. Another similar research is done by Daniela Sime entitled What do learners make of teachers’ gestures in the language classroom? This study explored the gesture performance in EFL classroom, viewed mainly from the language learners’ perspective.[8] Learners interpreted teachers’ gestures in a functional manner and use these and other non-verbal messages and cues in their learning and social interaction with the teacher.

All of above-mentioned reasons of this study, the researcher is trying to examine gesture-speech interface enacted in instructional conversation of student teachers in microteaching class of English Teacher Education Department at Sunan Ampel State Islamic University Surabaya in academic year 2016/2017 in order to find out the specific gestures in giving instructions used by student teachers in their teaching practice. Therefore, the problem of the study can be formulated as this following question:

1. What type of conversational hand gestures are commonly enacted by student teachers to give instruction in microteaching class?

2. How is conversational hand gesture enacted by student teachers to give instruction in microteaching class?

II. Literature

Surkamp stated that the language classes have traditionally emphasized verbal communication, but communicative competence cannot consist solely of the verbal language. This means that we cannot leave out the non verbal dimension of the communication in foreign language teaching because students may not learn to coordinate language and gesture in the reception and the production of foreign language. Conversational hand gestures are hand movements that accompany speech and seem related to the speech they accompany.[9] Furthermore, conversational gesture can help students to understand the foreign language and to express themselves in it because conversational hand gesture can mediate the communicative intention that they cannot utter verbally. Thus, the combination of verbal language and conversational hand gesture in foreign language classroom can make students easier to understand and communicate with the foreign language. McNeill described four types of conversational gestures that co express meaning with speech that are relevant for this study[10]: (1) Iconics aims depict the content of speech, both objects and actions, in term of their physical characteristics. Teacher’s hands, for example, show a picking action when speaking about picking fruit from a tree. (2) Metaphorics presents images of abstract ideas or entities. Teacher’s hand, for example, looks like holding a container when referring to a theory or explaining difficult words and instructions. (3) Deictics are pointing movements that indicate physical, available objects, as well as physically unavailable ones at the time of gesturing. Teacher, for example, points to a painting when speaking about it. (4) Beats are vertical hand moves with a rhythmical pulse that lines up with the stress peaks of speech. A typical beat gesture is a simple flick of the hand or fingers up and down, or back and forth that can serve to highlight portions of an utterance.

In delivering the effective instructions, the teacher has to notice some ways. Ortlich, Harder, Callahan, Trevisan, and Brown indicate that the teacher can use some gestures to effective instructions for being applied to the classroom. Teachers need to give several steps when they give instruction to the students. It is very important that teachers follow the steps in order to make students understand their instructions better. Those steps are[11]:

1. Get the students’ attention

   Conversational hand gestures can act as an effective highlighter and attention-getter. Wang et al.’s looked at the specific types of gesture that appeared to be most effective in scaffolding.[12] The results showed that iconic and deictic were the most efficient types of hand movements that elicited more responses from the students, maintained their focus of attention on the task for a longer period of time, and resulted in a higher rate of success in accomplishing the task.
2. **Deliver the directions in brief steps**

   Students will be confused if the teacher delivers many directions of the instruction at the same time. Carol states that the directions of the instructions should be brief, use accessible vocabulary, proceed in a step-by-step manner, and not skip any steps.[13] In addition, the instruction should use appropriate language and vocabulary to the students to avoid missing information. The use of language also should be communicative way. In doing so, the teacher is perceived to use mostly standardized moves such as deictic to control speech turn or to divide group work.

3. **Explain expectation**

   Orlich also stated that explaining expectations is about what and when the students will produce from the activity. In order to facilitate the students’ understanding on the instruction, delivering the final aim of the activity can be very beneficial. Teacher’s gestures provide the cues to the students to involve in understanding what they will produce in the activity. Teacher, for example, uses the iconic gestures to mediate the meaning of the lexical items inside the expectation. Similarly, teacher construct the gesture space of the utterance by using deictic gestures. Teacher may also use metaphoric gesture to elaborate the meaning of abstract action of the expectation.

4. **Restate the instruction**

   In this step, teacher needs to check whether students have fully understood the instruction. Smith and Laslett explained that checking is needed by the teacher that instructions have been grasped by questioning one of the students to reiterate them.[14] Restating the instructions delivered by the teacher can help the students to understand the instructions, whether the instructions are clear or unclear. This step may result teacher and students mimic each other gestures. It indicates that students have internalized the meaning of the instruction along with the gestures when the teacher utters it verbally.

5. **Follow up the directions**

   After providing the students with the directions, teachers still need to closely monitor the students in order to know that the directions are being applied. Teacher places themselves in a position to observe and be observed. Orlich stated that if your students know you are watching how they behave and interact, you will prevent many problems. Walking around your classroom allows you to check on those students who may be having difficulty with the small group or individual seat-work and deter misbehaviour by proximity to students contemplating mischief. It is important to catch problems early on in the lesson and correct student misunderstanding.

### III. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

This research will use qualitative descriptive to find out the result of research question. Ahmadi stated that qualitative method is used when the research aims to describe phenomena; and the data used are opinion (interview), behavior, and document which are not analyzed using statistical pattern.[15] Additionally, the study will use naturalistic approach in determining the data. Newman and Benz defined naturalistic approach as approach to observe and interpret reality with the purpose of developing a theory that will explain what was experienced.[16] This approach will emphasize the phenomenological basis of conversational gestures, and elaborate description of the “meaning” of those conversational gesture phenomena for the subjects under examination.

In this study, observations, interviews, questionnaires, and audiovisual materials are used in collecting the data. The data will be collected from 4 student teachers’ recorded videos of their teaching performances in the microteaching class. As some possibilities might be occurred in the student teachers’ teaching practice process, the researcher will interview them. Some particular questions based on the gesture-speech interface that might arise in their instructional conversation in teaching practice will be asked. The recorded conversation between the interviewer and the interviewees will be utilized as the data. Furthermore, the researcher will copy questionnaire for the student teachers as to know their background in peer-teaching activities besides their microteaching class. The researcher can gain the information on how familiar they are with instructional gestures.

### IV. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

#### 1. The Frequency of Common Conversational Hand Gestures in ELT Classroom Instruction

The beat gestures facilitated to arouse students’ attention through the hand clapping gesture. In this case, it helped to emphasize the students’ involvement in the class activities. Student teachers used the gestures because it also created sound which indirectly initiated the students to turn their heads and face the teacher in order to know what the teacher would say. Rosenshine reviewed that there was a close relationship between students’ attention and learning.[17] Students can do better if they concentrate on the instruction to succeed in the following activity. He also added that one of the features to handle this issue is repetitive gestures. Therefore, beat gesture can be appropriately implemented to attract students’ attention.

Used repetitively, the deictic gestures in the form of delivering directions of the instructions are found to make students perceive the teacher’s intention to organize the class interaction. These pointing gestures help teacher control the speech turn, organize group work, and assign roles to particular students. Sime argued that deictic gestures are the standardized gestures mostly used by teachers to direct the class activity. She added that when the teachers’ gestures were directed at leading the class activity, students would react and follow the teacher’s instructions. Thus, deictic gesture can be associated by students to support the directions holistically.

The iconic dimension of gesture mediated understanding of the action-related aspects of meaning in the verbal expectation through portrayal of the action. The iconic
gestures not only provide gestural cues to what the expectation may seem but also initiate students’ understanding about the expectation. According to Lozano and Tversky, gesture is superior to the verbal modality in communicating action-related information since it is able to convey perceptible support and action-based knowledge directly.[18] Hence, the deictic gestures are able to visualize and portray the expectation in order to make the students fully understand it.

The student teachers employed the deictic gestures in restating the instruction. In this step, teacher and students often mimic each other gestures and end up gesturing synchronously. The deictic gestures aims to prevent misunderstand the instruction. The ability of the gesture to highlight the possible misunderstanding if any aligns with Goldin Meadow at.al that stated the students did not mimic the teacher’s gesture mindlessly, without understanding, but were able to convert into the instruction previously introduced by the teacher exclusively in gesture.[19]

The deictic gestures are used to check the students’ involvement and understanding of the class activity when teachers monitor the class. Teacher will walk around the class and move from group to group or student to student in order to know whether they apply the instruction correctly or have difficulty with the task. Sime stated that when students are being watched, they will concentrate more on the task. Orlich added that if your students know you are watching how they behave and interact, you will prevent many problems. Therefore, the gesture allows the class activities run smoothly as it is used to anticipate misunderstanding about the instruction.

Based on the findings, there is only one type of gestures that is not used by student teachers in any step of giving instruction, metaphoric. It could happen because most instructions used by student teachers only try to convey the meanings of concrete entities not the abstract one. They mostly use the standardized instructional language that most students have already been introduced to it. They know the meaning, but they just miss the context. So, the student teachers think that it does not need any metaphorical elaboration through the gestures. But, Sime explained that teacher may still use metaphoric gestures to represent only abstract objects or actions through concrete gestures. Teacher, for example, introduces the word ‘pick up’ in the instruction by producing action of catching an object in the air with her hand. It is like a physical movement, but it suggests a mental activity in the brain to catch an idea or concept. It makes the word less ambiguous. Therefore, it can be said that teacher can still use the metaphoric gestures to support their instruction with relevant function and situation.

2. Instruction Mediated by Conversational Hand Gestures in ELT Classroom

The second research question addressed the ways how conversational hand gestures are enacted to mediate instructions in English classroom interactions. The data suggested that the gestures were pervasively enacted by the participants in giving the instructions. McNeill argued that these recurrent gestures, synchronized with different verbal elements, served as a reference point to the given instructions.

a. Gestures as an attention getter

Being performed in a spatio-visual modality, conversational hand gestures can act as an effective highlighter and attention-getter. Student teacher C employed the iconic gesture to arouse the students’ attention in the beginning of the instruction by introducing the game to play. She formed an arc with her right hand like holding a ball and slightly moved it forward away from body while saying ‘we are going to play a game, snowball game’. The students start to smile brightly and enthusiastically when teacher mentions about game. Therefore, the finding showed that the gesture makes the students concentrate more on the following steps of the instruction as the gestures convey the meaning of the teacher’s intention to make the students’ actively involved in the activities.

However, the new facts are found in the findings. All the student teachers used the beat gestures such as hand clapping gesture or circular hand movement to attract the students’ attention. Firstly, student teacher A made a circular hand movement after greeting the students, but they answered it unenthusiastically. It indicated that they did not related with the classroom interaction yet. After seeing the teacher’s gesture, the students started to look at the teacher as they waited what would happen next. Moreover, that circumstance was supported with the second beat gesture used by the student teacher A. Her both hands clapped to excite the students as the teacher verbally instructed ‘you have to keep your spirit because you will be excited with today’s lesson’.

Next, student teacher B also clapped both of his hands to make students pay attention to the instruction again. This happened because he started the class with quite funny and refreshing ice breaker which showed that he forgot how to open the door. Most students think it was very ridiculous, and made them laugh so hard at it. It made the class very noisy and uncontrolled. But, students started to remain silence after hearing the teacher clapped. It indicates that the students are ready to follow the next activity. This circumstance also happened to student teacher C. The beat gesture she used aimed to make students’ enthusiastically follow the lesson. Before giving the gestural support to the instruction, the students’ attention was scattered because they still prepared the stuff they probably needed during the lesson or were busy talking to their classmate. The gesture signals the students that they have to pay attention to the teacher right after seeing it.

Lastly, student teacher D started the class by asking students to throw the rubbishes they found in the class to the garbage plastic. After doing this, students became very noisy. He then clapped his hands to give clues to the students that the following activity was about to begin. Therefore, previously mentioned findings indicate
that teachers’ gestures are not merely an attention getter but an important source of information often because it allows students to get the messages from the teachers that they should be enthusiastically involved the activities. This in line with Smortova that stated when there was a conflict between the information conveyed in gesture and speech, the students went with gesture.[20]

b. Gestures in delivering the direction of the instruction

Initially, teacher’s gestures in relation to the directions of instruction are to control speech turn. The students see the teacher’s gestures as the signals to anticipate the teacher’s intention of asking someone to speak or stopping them after along turn. Pointing someone after a question signals them that they are required to answer. Besides, teachers will deliberately stop student after a long run by using beat and deictic gestures to make the students give up the turn without resistance.

The data further described that student teacher B used deictic gesture to organize the speech turn. He elicited the lesson about procedure text by asking the students whether they ever watched any tutorial video on YouTube. He extended his right hand thumb to nominate the students to speak or stopping them after along turn. Pointing someone after a long run by using beat and deictic gestures to make the students give up the turn without resistance.

Iconic and beat gestures are also used in this step. Student teacher D used iconic gestures to mediate students’ understanding the meaning of the word ‘put’ in the given context. This gesture initiated students’ response about where to put the thing they have taken from their bag before describing it later on. Student teacher A, on the other hand, cupped both hands to describe the definition of the word, which is followed by students’ elaboration of teacher’s gesture as assign of improved understanding in order to succeed in the following activity.

This suggested that students are aware of the teacher’s leading role in the interaction through the gestures that help to emphasize and clarify the message of the instruction in the context of concrete action.

c. Gestures in mediating to explain the expectation of the instruction

Orlich stated that explaining expectations is about what and when the students will produce from the activity. The analysis of teachers’ gestures in the data suggests that teachers use iconic gestures to mediate the expectation. Firstly, the student responds to the teacher’s gestures in elicitation of the expectation by involving in the verbal elements of the instruction. Student teacher B moved his hands inward while saying ‘one person will...’ to provide the students with gestural cues about what they will produce from the activity. The iconic gesture makes the students understand the activity. It made students understand the activity.

The other organizational function of teacher’s gestures in delivering directions is to organize the grouping and particular role for students. Sime stated that teachers would often use deictic gesture to designate roles in interaction by selecting groups or pairs for the students or allocating various roles to different students. The first instance came from student teacher A. She said ‘I want you to make a memo in pairs’ and pointed with her right hand index finger to two students at a time to let them know whom they will be paired up. Then, student teacher B used both hand to form an arc in front of three students in order to signal them that they are in a group. This gesture used simultaneously with the verbal instruction of the teacher ‘I want to make you into three groups. Three persons will be in a group. So, you are group 1, 2, and 3’. Finally, student teacher D waved her right hand in front of students to pair them in creating the simple dialogue using the expressions of asking and giving opinion in the given context. Student teacher D, on the other hand, pointed a student to lead the activity of pronouncing the written vocabularies on the whiteboard. Teacher said ‘please lead your friend to read these vocabularies’ while pointing to the selected student.

The instances indicate that deictic gesture makes the grouping time and role assigning go faster because it gives visual cues to students about who they will work with.
with the given paper after saying ‘your job is to draw something on that paper’. He used his hand to mimic the drawing action. The presented instances initiate the students’ response to understand the meaning of the expectation.

Student teachers also used deictic and beat gestures in mediating the expectation. Student teacher A asked students to describe the picture that she showed them. It gives further elaboration to students that the teacher expects them to respond it based on what she has pointed. Furthermore, the next deictic gesture she used aimed to inform the students where they would present the memo they have made. The gesture synchronized with her verbal command ‘you have to present it in front of the class’. Student teacher B also employed the deictic gesture to serve the same function by telling the student that they need to demonstrate the given text in front of the class.

Besides, student teacher A used beat gesture to emphasize her instruction when they presented the given task in front of the class. She mediated to explain the appropriate volume of voice in a presentation after saying ‘can you speak louder?’ with beat gesture in this circumstance. She synchronized that verbal element of instruction by gesturing near her mouth repeatedly. While student teacher B clapped for several times to make the students aware that they had to read the paper thoroughly and understand the steps in order to do well in the next activity. The instances in this step initiate the students to understand the desired understanding about the instruction with gestural cues.

d. Gestures in restating the direction and expectation

The findings showed that student teacher A used the deictic gesture to ask clarification whether they still remembered which memo they would follow to write their own memos. She said ‘which memo are you going write students? This one or that one?’ and the students responded ‘we will write like the one on the right miss’. Both teacher and students pointed to the memo they talked about. The deictic gesture made the teacher aligned with the students by mimicking her gesture as she was speaking and the two ended up gesturing synchronously in their instructional interactions. Furthermore, student teacher D also used the deictic gesture to restate the instruction. He wants the students to describe something that he showed them. Describing in this context was closely related with the physical appearance of the things. Yet, the students’ response about this activity was not in line with the expectation the teacher expected. It made him restate the expectation in the middle of the activity. More importantly, it is essential to catch problems early on in the lesson and correct student misunderstanding.

Unlike the previous instances, student teacher D was the only one to use the beat gesture to follow up the instruction. While monitoring students to do the task of describing their friend drawing in three sentences, he clapped once after checking the students’ task one by one. This gesture indicated that teacher was pleased that the students applied the instruction correctly. Those findings suggest that teachers need to place themselves in a position to observe and be observed, accompanied with the synchronized gestures. Orlich also said that if the students want to signal the speech turn, they had to raise their hand. The teacher restated it by showing the raising hand gesture frequently while saying c ‘who wants to come forward first?’ and raised the right hand upward above head. It synchronized students with teacher’s gesture to tell her that they wanted to come forward and presented their dialogue. The two end up gesturing synchronously for signalling the turn request to the teacher by repeating the previously stated instruction. Moreover, Smortova stated that students did not mimic the teacher’s gesture mindlessly, without understanding, but were able to convert into speech the strategies previously introduced by the teacher exclusively in gesture.

e. Gestures in following up the instruction

Student teacher A walked around the class to check the pair work of making short dialogue about a memo. She said ‘good’ while extending her right hand index finger to point the students work. It showed that the students had concentrated on the task, and if they still needed a help about the task, teacher would be available to help them. While student teacher B constantly observed the activity of the students, the students made inappropriate catchment of the instruction. The deictic gesture was used by teacher to correct the students in order to achieve the correct involvement in the activity. That is the way from the teacher to keep students in control and concentrate on the instruction. The gesture signals the students to reapply the instruction given previously. Finally, student teacher C implemented the deictic gesture while moving from one student to another in doing the given task. She pointed to the student’s task when student gazed at the teacher to ask help about the task. The gesture allowed teacher to check on the student who might be having difficulty with the individual work in order to prevent problems and initiate the desired result of the activity. More importantly, it is essential to catch problems early on in the lesson and correct student misunderstanding.

Overall, the findings suggested that the teacher’s gesture is a fundamental aspect of teacher-student interaction because gestures provide comprehensible input to foreign language students. Taleghani-Nikazm suggested that the shape of a gesture can be “recipient designed”. In other words, speakers perform gestures in a manner to make them interpretable by their recipient.[21] In the above-discussed data excerpts, teachers perform gestures
elaborately to make them interpretable for their students. Although this data mentioned above cannot claim about the various aspects of teacher talk and gestures perceived by the students, it certainly provides relevant insights that we need to consider not only the verbal channel but also the visual channel to which they have access.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the data in research findings which were presented in the previous chapter, student teachers have enacted the conversational hand gestures to give instruction in microteaching class. There were only three out of four gestures that commonly used by student teachers to give instruction. The most chosen one was the deictic gestures. Student teachers used beat and iconic gestures to attract the students’ attention that resulted the increasing time of students’ focus on listening the teacher and task. In delivering the directions of the instruction, student teachers used deictic, iconic and beat gestures to manage the speech turn, organize group work, and assign various roles to students. Furthermore, student teachers mediated the expectation by gesturing to provide the meaning of particular lexical items of the instruction. They next implemented deictic, iconic and beat gestures to restate the instruction whether the students had fully understood the instruction well. Lastly, student teacher followed up the instruction by monitoring the class in order to check the students’ involvement in activities and to provide help for students who may be having difficult. The deictic and beat gestures were enacted to constantly observe the activities of the students. The finding showed that the gestures supported the verbal elements in every step of instructions in order to give clearer understanding and active involvement of the students in the process of language learning.

REFERENCES