Learning English through the Use of Classroom Language in Community Service

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Abstract—The study investigated how student tutors of Big Buddies Club, a community service tutoring English to elementary school students, learned and used classroom language in the prep training and tutoring program. The subjects of this qualitative study were four students tutoring a group of class 3 and 4 tutees. The data were collected through observation and documents. The results show that in prep training, student tutors learned classroom language through lecturing, saying classroom language and getting feedback when mispronunciations occurred, teaching practice, and sharing ideas with fellow tutors. In teaching practice, student tutors employed three out of eight types of classroom language. However, they lacked the opportunity to analyze their performance. In tutoring activities, student tutors used five types of classroom language. They employed some strategies to make the classroom language comprehensible for the tutees: repeating, translating into Indonesian, using ‘wait time’, providing modeling, gestures, and actions, and mixing the expressions and instructions in English and Indonesian. After eight meetings, they gained better fluency and pronunciation. As the community service has provided opportunities for students to learn and practice English, the program contributes a new insight of EFL pedagogy in Indonesia.

Keywords—student tutors; classroom language; prep training; BBC program

I. INTRODUCTION

English has been a challenging subject for most Indonesian students of all level of education due to the language complexity[1] and its position as a foreign language which is never spoken with its native speakers [2]. Helping students cope with their problems, the roles of English teachers become significant. Mukminatien [3] suggests that teachers should provide students with adequate input for acquisition in the classroom and encourage them to use the target language either in or outside the classroom. Another suggestion is that teachers provide opportunity for students to do presentation as it is helpful to encourage them to communicate their ideas in an organized way [4]. In addition, to enhance students learning by actively articulating their idea has also been proposed by Britz, et al. [5]’s "learning through teaching" and Gartner and Riessman [6]’s new model of learning, “learning by teaching”. Students, then, should produce the target language in the form of either spoken or written actively in or outside the classroom to strengthen their language learning.

Inspired by the idea of “learning by teaching”, a community service program called Big Buddies Club (henceforth BBC) was founded by a Peace Corps volunteer and an English teacher of an Islamic senior high school in October 2010 [7]. It is a volunteer club run by students organized to teach elementary school students that combines English and community service. The volunteer saw the opportunity when parents living in the neighborhood asked her to teach their children English. Considering that it would give the students new experiences, then she along with the English teacher and eleven students founded the club. BBC aims to facilitate students to develop their English competencies and skills as well as to apply them meaningfully in the real life by assisting elementary school students to learn English through interactive learning methods. To meet the requirement to be competent tutors, the volunteer and English teacher as supervisors provided them with some trainings on teaching English to young learners, classroom instructions, and lesson planning. In addition, reflection session became a routine when the student tutors completed that day’s activity.

What BBC has done is a sort of community engagement pedagogy or service-learning [8]. Although service-learning is not a part of high school curriculum, the community service done by BBC is included as a service-learning for the student tutors use their English knowledge to fulfill the real need of children in the community. Furthermore, the activity is also known as cross-age tutoring in which the tutor is several years older than the tutee [9]. Access Center [10] defines cross-age
tutoring as a peer tutoring approach joining students of different ages, with older students performing the role of tutor and younger students performing the role of tutee. Teaching English to the younger ones benefits student tutors in some ways, such as the improvement of their communication skill [11], the improvement in the language areas including speaking skills in terms of grammar, comprehension, vocabulary acquisition and fluency[12], the increase of their English speaking skill, their self-confidence to speak the language, and their motivation to improve their spoken English[13].

Yet, question about whether students with unprofessional English expertise deserve to be tutors for young learners might arise. Students can serve as tutors with the requirement that the student tutors get sufficient training to act as competent tutors prior to the tutoring program [14]. Moreover, Heath and Mangiola [15] state that students deserve to be tutors no matter what their level of competencies are, by learning through audio-visual materials, modeling, and discussion with teachers and other tutors. Furthermore, they emphasize that when students possess the responsibility to educate themselves to be competent models for the tutees, their efforts will be beneficial for the tutees.

As the student tutors work with young learners, knowing how the children learn and acquire the target language is a prime importance. According to Willis [16], listening to English is crucial for children learning language because they can only learn English when they have sufficient exposure to what they hear and attend to. The more input they receive; the faster their comprehension will develop. Consequently, teacher speaking English in class becomes vital to provide children with rich exposure to English by speaking it a lot, simplifying and elaborating through building on routines that children are familiar with and giving instructions in simple English[16]. The routine language used on the regular basis of classroom is called classroom language [17].

According to Salaberri [18], classroom language refers to English idiomatic expressions used for teaching English, especially to young learners. Cullen [19] states that these expressions are used by the teachers when “giving instructions, explaining, asking questions, …, responding to and evaluating students’ contributions, signaling the beginning and the end of activities and lesson stages and so on”. Classroom language also covers the teacher’s response to extend the students’ contributions [16], the teacher’s recasting students’ utterances in their mother tongue [20], and dealing with the students’ errors [18]. Johnson [21] expands the definition of classroom language that it refers to either target or first language used by the teacher and students in a second language classroom, which is completely different from everyday language.

Willis [16] states that elementary school English teachers should have sufficient competency in spoken English to make interaction in natural English with the children possible necessary to help children acquire the target language. Cullen [19] also emphasizes that teacher skills in using classroom language is significant because it is part of classroom management and communication. In addition, teachers have to feel confident and positive about speaking English. They need not to be competent in all areas of English but having competency in classroom language for classroom management and handling activities is fairly specific [16]. Therefore, providing training for student tutors who act as teachers is required [14, 22].

Furthermore, Slattery and Willis [20] offers a pattern for practicing classroom language in training sessions: assigning student tutors to play an extract of classroom activities with different roles, videotaping the performance and analyzing the classroom language use.

Myriad researches on teachers or teacher candidates using classroom language have been done. Munir [23] investigated how pre-service English teachers (PSETs) learned classroom language in Classroom Discourse Unit (CD Unit) and implemented it in several microteachings and practicum. He found that the microteachings on the use of CD Unit contributed significantly on the PSET’s use of lesson management skills, explaining the lesson and asking comprehension check questions, and attempted three kinds of scaffolding: prompting, extension and modeling.

Rabbidge and Chappell [24] investigating teachers of elementary schools in South Korea who were required to implement TETE (Teaching English through English) reported that the teachers established techniques that they used both English and Korean while maintaining the students’ motivation in learning English. The techniques were using Korean only, English then Korean, and Korean then English for classroom activities. The findings were in line with Kang [25] that Korean elementary school teachers utilized techniques, namely exclusive use of L1, exclusively use of TL, use of L1 or TL immediately followed by the equivalents in the other language,

Research on how students learn English through the use of classroom language has not been reported. This paper, therefore, attempts to explore 1) how student tutors learn classroom language in BBC prep training; and 2) how student tutors use the classroom language learned in BBC prep training in BBC program.

II. METHODS

The subjects were four students tutoring a group of elementary school students of class 3 and 4 at an Islamic Senior High School. One of them was an eleventh grader and being a tutor for two semesters, while the other three were tenth graders and new comers. The data were collected through observation and documents. The observation was conducted during the prep training on classroom instruction and eight meetings of tutoring program. However, only the data attained in the first meeting were analyzed for it would allow the student tutors to use the most out of eight types of classroom language. The data gained through the rest of the meetings were used to investigate how the students learn English. The data from observation were analyzed using a technique suggested by Miles, et al. [26]. The coding were: SI (simple instruction), SS (dealing with the language of spontaneous situation), SN (the language of social interaction), PG (pair- group work), QT (question types), AV (audio-visual aids), DE (dealing with errors), E (evaluation), ST1 (identified student tutor), STs (more than one student tutor produced utterances), T1 (identified tutees), and Ts (more than a tutee produced utterances). Coding for identifying student
tutor’s classroom language use was: ST1/SS (Student Tutor’s ID/Type of Classroom Language). The analysis was based on [18]’s “Classroom Language (Handbooks for the English Classroom)”. The data from documents were attained from the training material on classroom instruction and the lesson plans.

III. RESULTS

A. Student Tutors Learning Classroom Language in Prep Training

The prep training was held a week prior to the tutoring activities and coached by the supervisor. It lasted for one and a half hours covering two materials, namely Teaching English to Young Learners and Classroom Instructions.

In the training on the Classroom Instruction, the supervisor used lecturing method. The objectives of Classroom Instruction training were that tutors are able to say the English classroom instructions properly and to implement them in BBC activities.

Then, the students learned the procedure of the first meeting such as greeting, introducing oneself, revealing the objective(s), etc, accompanied with English expressions and instructions. After that, they learned the functions of classroom instructions, followed by some examples of expressions and instructions, and read them as a class. When mispronunciation occurred, the supervisor recast in the proper one.

After that, they were divided into four groups to practice on how to use the expressions and instructions in the first meeting of tutoring. Two tutors of each group were assigned to play the role of tutors while the rest as tutees. Their task was to introduce ‘Numbers’. Taking place in each corner of the training site, the students did the teaching practice without any preparation. Another student videotaped one of the groups’ activities.

At the beginning of the practice, the tutors performed the types of SIn (saying hello at the beginning of a session), SI (introduction at the beginning of the first meeting), and SS (checking the tutees’ condition), as follows:

Extract 1:
ST1: Assalamu’alaikum warrahmatullahi wabarakatuh
Ts: Waalai kum salam warrahmatullahi wabarakatuh
ST1: Now introduce myself. My name is Alfi and …
ST2: My name’s Salma
ST2: How are you today?
Ts: I’m fine. And you?

Finishing the introduction, the tutors proceeded to the next procedure by telling the objective of that day’s activity. The tutors used SI as instructions at the beginning of a session. It seemed that the tutors had no idea about what to say, a tutee showed them the instruction. The tutor accepted her idea. Moreover, the tutee also shared her idea about what song involving numbers was. Here was the interaction:

Extract 2:
ST1: Today we will study … about numbers. Terus?

ST2: Let’s sing together about number. Apa ada lagunya?
T: Let’s sing together about number.

After that, the tutor used hand gesture to clarify the meaning. The tutees repeated after her. As the tutees could perform the counting activity well, the tutors gave a positive reinforcement as SIn type.

Extract 3:
ST1: This is one. (showed her forefinger)
Ts: One.
STs & Ts: Very good! (clapped hands together)

They intended to move to another activity when the supervisor gave the signal to stop because the time was almost over. The students did not have opportunity to close the tutoring activity so that the instructions about closing the lesson did not appear. Then, the training ended.

In the teaching practice, the students had endeavored to implement the procedure and used the expressions and instructions they learned previously. Since they did not prepare, they often had no ideas about what activities to perform and what expressions and instruction to use. The tutees, then, shared the idea about the activities and the instruction.

B. Student Tutors Using Classroom Language in BBC Program

The program was divided into three sessions: pre-tutoring, tutoring, and reflection. When school was over at 11 AM on Friday, the student tutors gathered to prepare for the program. The supervisor checked their readiness for the tutoring activities, including the procedures stated in the lesson plans, pronunciation on vocabulary, expressions, and instructions, media, and songs. After reviewing all required for the program in general, the tutors gathered in their own groups and continued discussing the teaching and learning procedure.

The supervisor constructed the lesson plans for the first meeting as a model for the tutors to create lesson plans for the following meetings. To facilitate the tutors in administering the program, the supervisor also listed some useful expressions and instructions. Yet, they could use their own instructions suitable for their activities.

The tutoring program began at 12.30. A tutor asked other tutors and the tutees to stand up and form a big circle. They initiated the activity by using SIn (saying hello at the beginning of a session), SS (checking tutees’ conditions), and SI (introduction in the beginning of the first meeting).

Extract 4:
ST1: Good afternoon, everybody.
STs & Ts: Good afternoon.
ST1: How are you today?
STs & Ts: I’m fine. And you?
ST1: I’m fine, too. Nice to meet you. OK. Let me introduce myself. My name Afariyani. You can call me Mbak Afa.
The next was that the tutees’ turn to introduce themselves. Different from the tutors’ introduction that used English completely, ST1 helped the tutees to understand the instruction by translating into Indonesian language, as described in the following extract:

**Extract 5**

ST1: OK. It’s time to introduce yourself. *Silakan sekarang adik-adik yang memperkenalkandiri. Bisa?* 

When the introduction was over, ST1 signaled to move to the next activity. She varied the instructions. She used all instruction in English, but expressions in Indonesian. It seemed that the tutees understood all English instructions. It was proven in the following extract:

**Extract 6**

ST1: OK. That’s all. Thank you, adik-adik. You can sit down. *Ada yang sudah ikat BBC sebelumnya?* Hands up. 
(all tutees raised their hands). *Sudah pernah dengar lagu ‘Ten Little Fingers’?*

ST1: *Masih ingat?* 
Ts : *Pernah.*

ST1: *Masih. OK. Let’s sing it together. OK? Let’s sing together. Show me your hands. Show me your hands. Like this. OK? (gave example). Let’s start it. One, two, three…*

Moreover, the tutor employed SI functioning as common instruction and instruction when session develops. The tutor modeled the activity as well.

There were some reasons that strengthened the meanings so the tutees could understand and do the instructions. First, the tutees might have been familiar with the instructions. Second, the tutees saw the tutors modeling through action and gestures. E.g. when ST1 said “You can sit down”, all tutors sat down; when she instructed “Hands up”, she herself raised her hand; as ST1 told the tutees “Show me your hands”, she modeled by saying “Like this”. Moreover, she also repeated some instructions that made them much clearer.

The tutor tried to maintain to use the English instructions all the time. However, as the activity developed, the tutor needed more various instructions that she might have not learned yet. Consequently, she mixed the instruction in English and Indonesian in an utterance. It occurred when she intended to divide the tutors and tutees into three groups. The following extract showed the proof:

**Extract 7**

ST1: *Dik, sekarang we have to berhitung satu sampaitiga.* 
OK. Let’s start from here.

ST1: OK. For number one to Sania. To *Kak* Sania. Stand up, please, number one…

When the activity was close to an end, the tutor gave some evaluation. She used question type to check tutees’ understanding and SI for positive reinforcement, as shown in the following extract:

**Extract 8**

ST1: OK. I have one question. One plus one is? 
T9 : Two.

ST1: OK, great. Give applause.

Not only evaluating individually, the tutor also evaluated the tutees in groups. Even when the tutees answered the question incorrectly, the tutor helped her to get the correct answer and praised them afterwards. She also guided the tutee to speak English. In addition, in using longer instruction, ST1 repeated it once then followed by translation. Here is how the evaluation took place:

**Extract 9**

ST1: Please, hands up if you are finished. OK. Please hands up if you are finished. *Silakan angkat tangan yang selesai.*

One of the groups raised their hands, but it seemed that they put the cards incorrectly. Instead of 16-5=11, they put 16 – 5 = 21.

ST1: *Sixteen minus five …berapa? Enam belas dikurangi lima. Berapa?* 
T9 : *Sebelas.*

ST1: OK. Try again. *Dibacakan pakai bahasa Inggris.*

T9 : *Eleven.
ST1: OK. Nice.*

After going through some activities, finally the tutor closed the session. She used SI (instruction when drawing to a close) and SI (saying goodbye to close the session). The following extract shows how she ended the tutoring program.

**Extract 10**

ST1: OK, dik. That’s all for today. Thank you so much for… for join BBC. Nice to meet you, and see you. *Wassala- mualaikumwarahmatullahiwabarakaatuh.*

Ts : *Waalaikumsalamwaraahmatullahiwabarakaatuh.
ST1: See you next time. 
Ts : *See you.*

The tutor, ST1, employed some strategies while using the classroom instructions and other expressions. The strategies were repeating the instructions and expressions, translating the expressions into Indonesian language, using modeling, actions, and gestures, and mixing English and Indonesian in one utterance.

In the first tutoring program, ST1 took the most roles in delivering the activity. It was understandable that she had been joining BBC for two semesters, so she possessed sufficient experiences in using the English expressions and classroom
instructions. Besides, she became a model for new tutors on how to handle the tutoring program. To give the same opportunity for all tutors to practice the English instructions, they were assigned different roles: some tutors were responsible to deliver the warm-up, some handled the main activity, and some had the chance to wrap-up and close the program. In this way, they all could learn and put their learning into practice. These were how the student tutors used English through the use of classroom language. ST1 gained the most fluency and proper pronunciation, while the other three tutors increased their fluency and pronunciation as a series tutoring program was closer to an end.

IV. DISCUSSIONS

A. Learning Classroom Language in Prep Training

The tutors are still at the senior high school level but can serve as tutors for the program provides sufficient prep training to become competent tutors [14]. They learn through modeling and discussion with supervisor and other tutors as suggested by Heath and Mangiola [15]. Not only attending prep training, BBC is also supplemented by lesson guides and supervisor observing the tutoring session. Thus, this kind of program is characterized into “highly-structured” program [22].

The Classroom Instruction in the BBC prep training refers to what is generally called classroom language as described by Salaberri [18], Cullen [19], Slattery and Willis [20]. In prep training, the student tutors are equipped with the classroom language necessary to handle, interact, and provide the tutees with sufficient exposure to the target language [19]. The student tutors recognize some functions of classroom language as explicated by Salaberri [18] as they can implement three types of classroom language.

However, the allotted time is too brief that they neither have time to perform the closing activity nor analyze their performance, although another student tutor has already videotaped the practice. The teaching practice, then, is considered not to meet the requirement of practicing classroom language as suggested by Slattery and Willis [20]. According to them, when “teacher” is assigned to perform a certain activity, the student(s) must only do what they actually told by the teacher. However, in the teaching practice, the tutees and another senior tutor interfere when the tutors have no idea what to teach. Moreover, after the role-play the video is put aside without being analyzed. Consequently, the supervisor and the student tutors cannot evaluate what is proper or improper and how to cope with the problems the tutors have encountered. The feedback on the teaching practice is important to increase their skills in the real tutoring.

The tutors already joining BBC for two semesters have been accustomed to the term of classroom instruction or classroom language. Yet, for the new comers, although they have frequently heard from their English teachers in class, using classroom language might be new experience for them.

B. Using Classroom Language in BBC Program

The student tutors’ efforts to use the classroom language as frequently as possible is quite significant. The tutors who are still at senior high school level, they are able to implement five out of eight types of classroom language in a meeting. Munir [23], who conducted a research on PSETs doing microteaching and practicum, also found that PSETs used five out of eight BTSs (Basic Teaching Skills). It means that student tutors implementing all types of classroom language in one session is hardly possible. Their ability to use the classroom language, then, is their significant development after attending the prep training and learning as well as using it in the real needs of the tutees and the student tutors themselves.

During the tutoring program, the student tutors employs some strategies to use the classroom language that make the tutees able to understand the English expressions and instructions. The strategies work and enable them to establish the activities as stated in the lesson plan. According to Salaberri [18], the tutors should not force the children to give verbal responses beyond their productive competences. As children undergo a silent period to acquire language, the meaning of the language can be shown by using gestures and actions [18].

The tutors using English and Indonesian is in line with the findings of Rabbidge and Chappell [24]. It is impossible for primary school teachers to exclusively use English in everyday classroom situation, so they use both target language and mother language to maintain interactions and students’ motivation. Thus, elementary school teachers can utilize techniques, namely exclusive use of L1, exclusively use of TL, use of L1 or TL immediately followed by the equivalents in the other language[25].

The tutoring program result to the improvement of the tutors’ fluency and pronunciation [12] [13] as the existence of BBC has provided opportunity for the student to develop their learning on the target language.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

BBC preparatory and tutoring program has been a media for the students not only to serve their community but also learn English either for the tutees or themselves through the use of classroom language.

Some suggestions are offered to maximize students’ attainment of knowledge and skills. First, providing different sessions for material delivery and teaching practice in the prep training is crucial that the students, particularly the new ones, have sufficient time to learn more about the classroom language and prepare for the teaching practice. Second, implementing the teaching practice procedure as suggested by some experts is beneficial for them to get the most out of the prep training. Lastly, taking part actively since the beginning of the prep training and tutoring program is signified as the tutoring program is a natural and real context to learn, practice, and develop the student tutors’ knowledge and skills in English.

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