

# EFL teachers' speech styles and the implications for teacher professional development

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## EFL teachers' speech styles and the implications for teacher professional development

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**Abstract:** This study highlights the varied speech styles in a classroom context, particularly those used by English teachers in language classrooms. Teachers' speech styles in the classroom reflect the way they treat their students, whether they are close to them or keep a distance from them. This study aims to find out: 1) What types of speech style the EFL high school teachers speak in the classroom, and 2) What communication purposes the EFL teachers provide through particular types of speech styles in a classroom setting. By observing and interviewing two English teachers of a high school in Samarinda, it was revealed that the teachers generally applied three types of speech styles in their teaching practice, including formal, casual, and consultative. Age and teaching experience caused the different use of speech styles among the participants. Moreover, each speech style is diverse one another depending on their communicative purposes.

Keywords: speech styles, EFL teachers, teacher talk, classroom interaction

### Introduction

Language has a critical function in human's life. People use language to share an idea, information, and knowledge. Moreover, people have their styles to express what they want to share. As we know, nobody speaks the same style even though he/she speaks the same language. Thus, speech style makes one person different from another person. According to Chaika (1982, p. 29) cited in Hosen (2010), style forms a communication system in its right one that determines how a social interaction will proceed at all if it continues, style tells how, whether formally or informally. Style may also tell the listener how to take what is being said: seriously, ironically, humorously, dubiously, or in some other way. Speech style can be called "way" to express something related to the language that someone uses in communication to the other it can be in the form of oral and written style of language involve choosing manner of expressing and patterning of choices opinion and selecting a form to convey what the researcher wants to express.

In any situation, linguistic choices will generally reflect the influence of one or more of the following important factors: 1) Who is speaking and whom are they speaking to? (participants),

2) Where are they speaking? (setting), 3) What is being talked about? (topic), 4) Why are they speaking? (function), and 5) What is the relationship between the participants? (social distance, formality). Those questions are basic components in sociolinguistic explanations of why all people do not speak the same way, and why they do not all speak in the same way all of the time. Teacher's Speech styles in the classroom also reflect the way they treat their students, whether they are close to them or keep a distance from them. The lesson in the classroom may also lead the teachers to use different speech styles, even in one meeting. In this study, the researcher is interested in investigating the speech styles used by English teachers in the classrooms when the teachers deliver some teaching materials to the students. Therefore, two research questions were formulated:

1. What types of speech style do the EFL high school teachers speak in the classroom?
2. What communication purposes do the EFL teachers provide through particular types of speech styles in a classroom setting?

## **Review of related literature**

### Speech styles

Joos (1967) in Brown (1987) differentiated five levels of formality in language use. They are described as follows:

#### 1. Frozen style or Oratorical style

Frozen style, or also known as oratorical style, is defined as the most formal style and rich variety that reserved for very important or symbolic moments (Joos (1967) in Brown (1987)). It is usually used in the situation which is celebrated with respect and legitimate or formal ceremonies. An oratorical style is used in public speaking before a large audience; the wording is carefully planned, intonation is somewhat exaggerated, and numerous rhetorical devices are appropriate.

#### 2. Formal style or Deliberative style

Formal style is defined as the style of language that is used for important or serious situation. Additionally, the formal style is usually a single topic-oriented, and it is related to the fact that formal writing is technical. Thus, most scholar or technical reports use this style. Formal style is generally used in a formal situation, where there is the least amount of shared background knowledge and where communication is one-way communication with little or no feedback from the audiences, for example in graduation ceremony which belongs to medium or large groups. However, it may be used in speaking to a single hearer, for example between strangers.

#### 3. Consultative style

The consultative style is the usual style of speech in small groups, chance acquaintances, and strangers. Business transaction, doctor-patient conversation, teacher-student conversation and the like are usually consultative. The consultative style is used in the most orally conducted everyday business transactions, particularly between chance acquaintances.

#### 4. Casual style

Casual style is simply defined as a style that is used for the conversation in our relaxed or normal situation that appropriates to the conversation with our friends, the background information so freely inserted into the casual conversation.

#### 5. Intimate style

An intimate style is one which is characterized by the complete absence of social inhibitions. Talk with family, beloved ones, and very close friends, where you tend to reveal your inner self, it is usually in an intimate style. The intimate style is also a completely private language developed by families, lovers, and the closest of friends.

Those five styles reflect the different linguistic as well as sociolinguistic views in communication. The consideration of individual participants in certain situations would help speakers, particularly non-native speakers, avoid offense and wrong impressions by mixing elements from several registers in speech and writing.

### Teacher talk

Teacher talk is used in class when teachers are conducting instructions, cultivating their intellectual ability and managing classroom activities (Qican, 1999 in Yan, 2006). Teachers adopt the target language to promote their communication with learners. In this way, learners practice the language by responding to what their teacher says. Besides, teachers use the language to encourage the communication between learners and themselves. Therefore we can say teacher talk is a communication-based or interaction-based talk.

### Research methods

#### Research design

This study investigated the styles used in the spoken discourse of two high school English teachers in the classroom setting. Therefore, the qualitative analysis was used in this study since

the researcher was trying to analyze teachers' speech styles in the classroom.

The data were collected through recordings in classroom settings from the interaction between the teacher and students. The teaching and learning processes were also recorded using a video camera. The researcher also conducted a direct observation and interviewed the informants to obtain in-depth information concerning the speech styles used by the teachers in the classroom setting.

Research participants

The participants of this current study were two English teachers of one of the favorite senior high schools in Samarinda. The first teacher is a senior teacher who has been teaching English for more than 20 years. She taught English to the twelfth-grade students. The other one is considered a junior teacher since he started teaching English around five years ago. He taught English to the eleventh graders. In this study, these two teachers were labeled T1 (the junior teacher) and T2 (the senior teacher).

Data analysis

The data were analyzed using qualitative analysis through some stages. First, after the data were recorded, they then were transcribed. Second, the data were classified based on the types of speech styles. Then the codes were given to each datum. Afterward, the researcher analyzed the data and interpreted them to answer the research questions. The analysis was also based on the interview and the transcription of speech used by the teacher in the classroom.

Data collection

Findings and discussion

According to the teacher, the use of formal

Table 1 Data Display 1.

Teacher's extract	Speech style	Sentence structure	Communication purposes
<i>Once again students, in TOEFL test, as I mention, there are three parts. Part one is a short conversation followed by some questions</i>	Formal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The sentences consist of full structure, a subject, a predicate and a complement/object.</li> <li>- Passive voice signals formality in a sentence</li> </ul>	The teacher describes the formal instruction of a standardized test which is TOEFL.

**Formal speech style**

In Table 1, T1 spoke formally while providing some information about the TOEFL. The formal speech style was used when he described the formal instruction of a standardized test, TOEFL. In this instruction, the teacher informed his students about three parts of TOEFL listening section, part A, B, and C. This speech was included as formal speech as it used grammatical utterances which consisted of full structure, a subject, a predicate and an object. The teacher also used passive voice which can signal formality in a sentence.

speech in this situation was because he needed his students to pay attention more to his explanation. The formal speech in teaching or lecturing was a good way to attract students' attention since it showed the teacher was serious with the instruction. T1 explained, "And I use formal language also when I teach people older than me or when I teach TOEFL. When I use formal language, I have to use good English, good grammar" (T1 int).

In Table 2, T2 spoke formally to one of the students. The formality can be seen from the sentence structure which is grammatical and

complex. T2 confirmed, “Based on my experience, formal language is language that needs good structure, some perfection; informal/casual language not really use good grammar. For example, asking a question “do you know...?” is informal language. For the formal language you can ask “Would you like to tell me...?” (T2 int).

Table 2 Data Display 2

Teacher's extract	Speech style	Sentence structure	Communication purposes
<i>Take a look at the first article that you see. This one. If you cannot see clearly from your paper you can read the article.</i>	Formal	Each if the two examples consist of two clauses, main and subordinate clauses. First sentences: Take a look at the first article (main clause), that you see (subordinate clause). Second sentence: If you cannot see clearly from your paper (subordinate clause), you can read the article (main clause).	Not only does the teacher instruct her students, but also because the students have already gotten confused to answer the question, so the teacher tries harder to explain it again.

### Casual speech style

Table 3. Data Display 3

Teacher's extract	Speech style	Sentence structure	Communication purposes
<i>I am gonna tell you three idioms. Moreover, you gotta listen.</i>	Casual	The phrases “gonna” and “gotta” are the informal forms of “going to” and “got to” used in informal situations.	The teacher explains the meanings of idioms in informal language to lessen the formal level between the teacher and his students.
<i>Ready? Yea. Listen.</i>	Casual	- No auxiliary verb and a subject (It is supposed to be “are you ready?”) - There is an omission of an unstressed word, particularly at the beginning of sentences.	To confirm the students' readiness to follow the lesson. Was assumed that the students know that the question is addressed to them though there is no “you” in it.

In Table 3, T1 used the sentence structure categorized as the casual speech style. First, the phrases “gonna” and “gotta” in “I’m gonna tell you three idioms” and “you gotta listen” were the informal forms of “going to” and “got to” respectively. These phrases are usually used in

informal settings, for instance, in the conversation between friends. In addition, they usually occur in informal speaking while it is inappropriate to use in writing. Second, the teacher also asked a question by using a single word “ready?” which means to confirm the

students' readiness to follow the lesson. This word was used without an auxiliary verb and a

Subject (are you ready?). This was one of the characteristic features of casual speech where there is an omission of an unstressed word, particularly at the beginning of sentences, and also the sentence is short (Joos, 1967 in Brown (1987)).

T1 believed that when he used informal language, he could produce the English language spontaneously and instantly without thinking. Also, he could speak fluently by using the informal language instead of the formal one. It can be seen from the interview as follows, "I

prefer to use informal language because when I use informal language, I can produce the English language spontaneously and instantly without thinking. That is the main reason. I can speak fluently when I use informal language." (T1 int).

Table 4 shows that T2 tried to make sure that one of the students was unfamiliar with "Bullying" before delivering the same question to the other student. In this situation, T2 used "You do not know?" with a bit strong intonation which created a quite casual situation with her student. Additionally, the pattern of the question did not follow the standard grammatical rule of English question.

Table 4. Data Display 4

Teacher's extract	Speech style	Sentence structure	Communication purposes
<i>You do not know?</i>	Casual	The pattern of the question does not follow the standard grammatical rule of English question. Instead, it converts the position of the subject "you" with the auxiliary verb "don't."	The teacher is wondering whether the student already gives a right answer. That is the reason why the teacher asks a question in a negative affirmative form.
<i>Ella/ what is a bully? In your mind.</i>	Casual	The first part is the question "what is a bully?" having a good pattern of the question, while the second part "in your mind" is supposed to be put right after or before the first part.	To ask the similar question as the previous student cannot answer the question.

### Consultative speech style

Table 5. Data Display 5

Teacher's extract	Speech style	Sentence structure	Communication purposes
<i>Mmm...They want to make a sensation/ can you clarify that word? Aha I see Yea ow?</i>	Consultative	Some back-channel occur in the extract.	The teacher and the student seem to have a dialogue discussing the issue of bullying. In this situation, the teacher tries to make good responses to her student's answers so that the student speaks comfortably and is interested in giving more and more opinions.

Table 5 seems to be like a conversation between the teacher and the student discussing the issue of bullying. Some phrases like *aha, I see, yea,*

*Ow?* were the signals of consultative speech style. The typical occurrence of consultative speech is between two persons. In this situation, T2 tried to make good responses to her student's answers so that the student spoke comfortably and was interested in giving more opinions.

To sum up, each of the teachers has their styles which are different from one to another, even though the styles belong to the same criteria. Furthermore, the age, teaching experience, and communication purposes play a significant role in determining the use of speech styles in the classroom setting.

#### **Research implications for teacher professional development**

This study brings about some implications which are beneficial for teacher professional development. First, the data of this study show that speech style preference is not static and predictable, depending on the social relationships between the interlocutors; instead, communication purposes which include the interactional goals in a given situation. Second, the findings of this study can contribute to the design of teacher professional development by helping EFL teachers become more analytical of their own instructional practices. By having the information from this study, EFL teachers will be assisted to provide a richer language

environment for students with regard to speech styles. Third, this study confirms the significant role of teacher talk in socializing L2 learners into appropriate use of the target language, for instance, by using the casual style in self-addressed speech, teachers effectively modeled for students how to ask self-addressed questions, deliver exclamations, and talk to other people in a friendly and casual way in the target language.

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