Formulaic Language Performance of Teachers and Students in Blended Speaking Classroom Using Edmodo

Abstract---The distinction between teachers and students in their use of the identified formulaic sequences may not be a matter of competence as some researchers assumed. The finding revealed that formulaic sequences promote efficiency in tasks in general as the time needed to finish the tasks decreases when more identified sequences were used. The discourse function of formulaic sequences, however, differed in the sense that they helped subjects construct longer discourse in the picture task but shorter discourse in the problem-solving task. Teachers in this study used more identified formulaic sequences than students but this difference was only significant in the picture task but not in the problem-solving task. However, among the teachers and students, three styles of formulaic sequences use could be identified. The first pattern was that subjects used more formulaic sequences in the picture task than in the problem-solving task. The second pattern was vice versa; and the third pattern was subjects have similar use of identified formulaic sequences in both tasks. As these three groups balanced each other, t-test between all subjects' use of formulaic sequences in the two tasks was not statistically significant.

Keywords: formulaic language, formulaic performance, teachers performance, students performance, blended speaking classroom using Edmodo

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the important components in Communicative Competence’s Theory by Celce Murcia [1] is formulaic competence which enables students to create natural and fluent spoken and written texts. This competency refers to recurrent fixed chunks/expressions used by native speakers to communicate in daily life such as collocations, idioms, lexical frames, and routines. Other competencies which are closely related to formulaic competence are linguistic and socio-cultural competencies. In creating a text, students learn grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation but they also have to be aware of social factors by which the language is influenced so that the text will be socially accepted.

Students rarely used and applied formulaic expressions in classroom interaction, deal with the poor formulaic speech of students, the teacher can foster the students to be exposed more to activities, lessons, and practices to improve their formulaic competence. Formulaic speech needs to be introduced to students as a preparation before they hand the real communication. In some universities, the demand for learning English rises from time to time because English used as a medium of instruction in blended learning classroom. Even though the status of English is a foreign language in Indonesia was so lack genuine situation to speak the language.

In everyday speaking, English native speakers tend to use lexical bundles, collocations, idioms, etc, which I refer here to formulaic expressions. So, students should be exposed to formulaic expressions to be in native-like fashion. In fact, many University students have great difficulties to produce formulaic expressions thus their utterances sound unnatural and foreign to English natives. Kecskes [2] argues the reason why non-native speakers find difficulties to produce natural expressions because non-native speakers have different language experiences from English native speakers. Language experience cannot be separated from speakers’ everyday reality and the reality of speaking in English culture tends to contain lots of formulaic expressions to communicate.

In other words, formulaic speech can help students develop their formulaic competence and strategic competence. The memorized expressions can also help students develop their linguistic competence because they can refer to the structure of the fixed expressions they use. In fact, they can also learn about the target culture through the expressions, when and how the expressions are said appropriately within certain discourse. Up to this point, the writer argues that formulaic competence is crucial for a second language speaker and writer. The formulaic speech can help students survive in unpredictable language use.

The information of the study background reveal the reasons why this study is essential to do. They are, first, most EFL student teachers in Indonesia stated that they experienced difficulties due to unfamiliar vocabulary and a limited number of examples in formulaic expressions. Second, based on preliminary research at Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang in May 7th, 2018, it is revealed that Second Language
L2 learners of English tend to produce incorrect or deviant collocations in their L2 spoken outputs, because of their failure to recognize it as a formulaic expression to be learned.

A study on competence and performance of communicative competence in learning and teaching English were carried out by [3]–[5] Epstein, Flynn, & Martohardjono, 1996; Newby, 2011; Tuan, 2017 pointed that low discourse competence among learners is influenced by their low English language exposure and less focus of this dimension in the teaching of English. Structurally, the low discourse competence is accounted to the fact that English language is treated as a foreign language and not as a second language. Such policy in the country impedes the development of language proficiency of the learners in the English language. Specifically, the field of specialization spells out differences in communicative competence of the learners in as much as the expected level of communicative competencies in different professions vary. Finally, grammatical and discourse competence among learners is influenced by their English language exposure. The more exposed the learners in the English language, the higher is their communicative competence.

Sinclair [6] conduct a research creates an empirically derived, pedagogically useful list of formulaic sequences for academic speech and writing, comparable with the Academic Word List (Coxhead 2000), called the Academic Formulas List (AFL). The AFL includes formulaic sequences identified as (i) frequent recurrent patterns in corpora of written and spoken language, which (ii) occur significantly more often in academic than in non-academic discourse, and (iii) inhabit a wide range of academic genres. It separately lists formulas that are common in academic spoken and academic written language, as well as those that are special to academic written language alone and academic spoken language alone. The AFL further prioritizes these formulas using an empirically derived measure of utility that is educationally and psychologically valid and operationalizable with corpus linguistic metrics. The formulas are classified according to their predominant pragmatic function for descriptive analysis and in order to marshal the AFL for inclusion in English for Academic Purposes instruction.

A study on formulaic expressions used in conversation text was carried out by Mustapa, Yaholil & Agustien, 2017; Sugiani & Rukmini, 2017 [7], [8] showed that there are four forms of formulaic expressions identified in the conversational texts. There were only four out of five formulaic expressions types as formulated by Biber et al. (1999) [9]. They were lexical bundles, idiomatic phrases, collocations, and inserts. Based on these findings, there are many conversational texts that do not sound natural; consequently, there must be some revisions. Another study on formulaic expressions used in students interaction and casual conversation were conducted by [10], [11] Khusnita, Dafi & Rukmini, 2016; Neno & Agustien, 2016 revealed that that formulaic expressions are very important for EFL students to be sound natural and fluent in speaking. The result showed that the students used collocations, lexical bundles, inserts, idioms, and binomial expressions. The most frequent types were collocations and lexical bundles since the students were more familiar with literal meanings instead of idiomatic meanings. However, there were many unnatural expressions in their interactions therefore formulaic expressions have to get more attention in teaching instruction. Furthermore, it is found that learners’ problem in realizing formulaic sequences includes the tendency to simply use the expressions they heard from any sources without considering the appropriateness of the expressions, the difficulty in using correct formulaic sequences to be used in the given situation, the idiomaticity of formulaic sequences, the tendency to translate Indonesian expressions into English literally word by word, and problems related to grammar.

A research on classroom interaction pattern was conducted by Rafieerad, 2010 [12] revealed that it is necessary for the teachers to reorganize the activities which can foster more interaction in the classroom, such as brainstorming and problem-solving, role play, simulations, and discussion. Using such activities in the classroom, teachers will be able to motivate students to learn in a more involving way. These kinds of activities can provoke a very positive attitude towards language learning since they resemble real-life events. Moreover, students must be persuaded to interact positively and effectively in the language classroom. Teachers should incorporate more real life like activities into their teaching practice such as ‘problem-solving’, ‘information-gap tasks’ and the like.

The above-mentioned studies inspired me to conduct a study in the same area, formulaic expressions, but with a different focus. I am willing to investigate the real use of formulaic expressions by Indonesian EFL teachers and students in blended learning classroom interaction using Edmodo. Teachers here analogized with the term of “Native Speaker”, in case of the competence of Teachers in English Education Study Program which almost have the same competence with Native Speaker. And Students here analogized with the term of “Non Native Speaker”, in case of the competence of students which still needs to be improved more in the use of formulaic language. The participants of the study are the teachers and also students of the first and second semester of English Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang.

The study purposes is to investigate on how teachers and students differ in their use of formulaic sequences in other conditions such as task types.
Other aims of this study were to explore empirically the relationship between formulaic language and fluency and discourse functions of formulaic language.

II. METHODS

After a review of literature, it turns out that the difference between teachers and students should be worth more investigation. This study set out to extend the investigation on how teachers and students differ in their use of formulaic sequences in other conditions such as task types. Other aims of this study were to explore empirically the relationship between formulaic language and fluency and discourse functions of formulaic language. In the review of literature, it is found that many researchers have reported their observations or speculations about the function of formulaic language in enhancing fluency and improving discourse organization but there is a lack of empirical evidence. So in this study, aspects of fluency and discourse organization were measured and tested to see if and how they are related to formulaic language.

The research design is a corpus-based studies or corpora analysis. This kind of study is suitable in order to determine the use of linguistic features in a text likewise meta discourse features. Baker, 2007 [13] states unlike qualitative research design, corpora analysis implements more quantitative design for instance by using frequency of linguistic features in texts. Additionally, Biber, 2009 [14] point out that corpus-based studies depend on both quantitative and qualitative research design. It states ‘associations patterns’ refers to quantitative relations using to measure the characterizations exist in different pattern associated with contextual patterns. Nevertheless, functional interpretation (qualitative design) is also an important design in corpora analysis.

The subjects in this study were 10 teachers and 10 students in blended speaking classroom using Edmodo. The two groups of 10 participants were randomly assigned to form pairs with other members in their group and do the two tasks. Researcher use two instruments in this study, two types of tasks used as an instrument of the study, namely a picture task and a decision-making task, were investigated. In the picture task, there were two sets of pictures; each containing 6 frames. The decision-making task contained three letters to the Agony Aunt, each specifying a problem related to love affairs. The three problems too easy or too difficult. The subjects’ task was to work in pairs and tell the story in the pictures to their partner, who did not have the pictures with them. When the first speaker finished his/her story, the listener raised questions about the story and then the first speaker had to answer the questions. When the listener had no more questions, the partner starts telling the story in his/her own set of pictures.

The decision-making task contained three letters to the Agony Aunt, each specifying a problem related to love affairs. The three problems should be interesting to the subjects and they did not find the problems too easy or too difficult. The subjects’ task was to work in pairs to negotiate with their partner and agree on one solution to the problem. Before the interactions started, subjects were given 10-minute individual planning time to look at the pictures or the three letters and to plan what they wanted to say about them. The subjects were allowed to write notes but they were not allowed to look at the notes when they did the task. For all pairs of subjects, the picture task was done first, followed by the problem-solving task.

2.1 The Tasks

In this study, two types of tasks, namely a picture task and a decision-making task, were investigated. In the picture task, there were two sets of pictures; each containing 6 frames. The first set of pictures was about two children going on a picnic and the second set of pictures was about getting back a football from a big hole. The pictures were clearly drawn and the idea was very straightforward such that the plot behind the pictures could be understood easily by both the subjects and their partners. The subjects’ task was to work in pairs and tell the story in the pictures to their partner, who did not have the pictures with them. When the first speaker finished his/her story, the listener raised questions about the story and then the first speaker had to answer the questions. When the listener had no more questions, the partner starts telling the story in his/her own set of pictures.

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2.2 The Subjects

The subjects in this study were 10 teachers and 10 students in blended speaking classroom using Edmodo. The subjects were not asked to do proficiency tests for this study but their English proficiency should be around intermediate to upper intermediate considering the language proficiency requirement for entrance into the university and the fact that the participants of the English language courses were usually those who had difficulty using English in their academic studies. The two groups of 10 participants were randomly assigned to form pairs.
with other members in their group and do the two tasks.

2.3 Data Collection

Each session of data collection was done in a quiet and comfortable room by the researchers with each pair of subjects. When the researchers finished introducing themselves, the subjects were told what they needed to do in the experiment and that their performances would be recorded. When the subjects were ready to start after 10 minutes’ pre-task planning time, they talked until they had nothing more to add. The researchers did not interrupt when the subjects were interacting. Adding up the planning time and task time, the two tasks took around 40 minutes to finish. There were also individual interviews immediately after each of the two tasks in which questions about the subjects’ planning behavior were asked. However, data from the interviews were not analyzed because the primary focus was put on the subjects’ use of formulaic sequences.

2.4 Data Analysis

The performances of the subjects in the two tasks were recorded using a digital audio recorder. The two hours of recordings were transcribed to form a 20,000-word corpus. The transcribed texts were then analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The first step was to identify formulaic sequences with the help of a corpus tool called Word Smith 4.0. As mentioned in the previous sections, formulaic sequences were operationalized in this study as a continuous sequence of at least 3 words that occurred in the same form (inflections of plural and tense excluded) at least 4 times in at least 4 out of the 20 transcripts in the corpus. In the search, abbreviations like ‘–s’, ‘-ll’, ‘-d’ were taken as equal to their original form is, will, would, and thus he’ll are two words.

In order to preserve the objectivity of the study, all recurrent sequences extracted by automatic retrieval were not filtered. The unit of measurement for the use of formulaic sequences was number of sequences per minute. For the relationship of formulaic performance with fluency and discourse organization, the data were coded with time features with a sound wave editor software called Goldwave Version 4.26. This editor software helped to process the digitized recordings by visualizing the sound waves on the screen. Combining audio and visual evidence, the researcher was able to measure, correct to milliseconds, the duration of each turn and pause. Following Freed, 1995 [15], a pause in this study was defined as an unfilled (silent) pause of 0.4 seconds or longer. With the information about the duration of turns and pauses, fluency-related indicator variables such as speech rate and pausing rate, number of turns, mean duration of turns were calculated.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Use of Formulaic Expressions by Teachers and Students

Based on the identification criteria stated in previous section, 670 tokens in total of formulaic expressions were found in this study. In other words, 4.81 formulaic sequences were used per minute by students and 7.01 sequences per minute by teachers (refer to table 5). The fact that the teachers used significantly more formulaic expressions (t=2.84, p<0.05) than students in this study confirmed the findings of the other studies from Granger, 2008 [16]. However, with the teachers, the standard deviation for the use of formulaic expression measurement was also greater than that of the students, meaning that the teachers showed greater individual variations than the students in this respect.

Table 1. Use of Formulaic Expressions by Teachers and Students

| Types       | Tokens | Mean number of formulaic expressions per minute |
|-------------|--------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Students    | 41     | 4.81 (SD=1.10)                                |
| Teachers    | 47     | 7.01 (SD=2.18)                                |

3.2 Interaction Between Teachers/Students Factor and Task Type

By further dividing the mean use of formulaic language by teachers and students according to task type, it was found that teachers in the picture task and students in the picture task recorded respectively the highest and lowest amount of formulaic expressions use (refer to table 6). In the middle was teachers in the problem-solving task, followed by the students in the problem-solving task.

Table 2. Mean Use of Formulaic Expressions per minute by teachers and students in the two tasks

| Task Type | n  | Mean  | SD  |
|-----------|----|-------|-----|
| Picture   | NS | 10    | 3.90| 1.81|
| Problem   | NNS| 10    | 8.52| 3.58|
| solving   | NNS| 10    | 6.37| 2.81|

Even though the teachers were found to have used more formulaic sequences in the two tasks than the students, the difference between them in the problem-solving task was very small. While teachers and students in this study differed significantly in their use of formulaic sequences in the picture task (t=3.64, p<0.01), there were no statistical significance in their difference in the problem-solving task. (t=1.13, n.s.).

Correlation between subjects’ individual performance in the picture task and the problem-solving task, surprisingly, was not significant (r=1.15, n.s.). This means the subjects’ pattern of use of
formulaic expressions in the two tasks was not consistent as people normally expect. Some subjects used more formulaic expressions in the picture task than in the problem-solving task but others just demonstrated an opposite pattern of use. So it will be interesting to find out what affects individuals’ unconscious decisions about when to use more or less formulaic expressions.

3.3 Analysis of Individual Performance

As table 1 and 2 show, the distribution of use of formulaic expressions in this study was not biased against a few subjects. Nonetheless, the subjects’ pattern of use of formulaic expressions in the two tasks was not consistent and three patterns were observed. The first pattern was some subjects used more formulaic expressions in the picture task than in the problem-solving task. The second pattern was some subjects used more formulaic expressions in the problem-solving task than in the picture task. The third pattern was some subjects had similar use of formulaic expressions in both tasks. As these three patterns were represented in the data, paired-sample t-test between subjects’ performances in the two tasks was not statistically significant (t=0.46, n.s.).

Table 3. Mean Use of Formulaic Expressions per minute by teachers and students in the two tasks

|       | Picture Task | Problem-solving Task | Mean |
|-------|--------------|----------------------|------|
| T1    | 7.99         | 5.88                 | 6.78 |
| T2    | 3.69         | 8.23                 | 6.30 |
| T3    | 4.62         | 5                    | 4.83 |
| T4    | 4.57         | 3.74                 | 3.93 |
| T5    | 4.5          | 4.83                 | 4.76 |
| T6    | 3            | 4.16                 | 3.71 |
| T7    | 2            | 4.73                 | 3.88 |
| T8    | 4            | 3.87                 | 3.93 |
| T9    | 3.33         | 4.65                 | 4.28 |
| T10   | 1.33         | 7.29                 | 5.74 |

To sum up the findings presented so far, task type alone seem to have no effect on individuals’ use of formulaic sequences (t=.46,n.s.). But when teachers/students factors came into play, the picture task distinguished between the teachers and students (t=.64, p<0.01) but the problem solving task does not (t=1.13, n.s.). This suggests task type had an effect when it interacted with the teachers or students factor. But as statistics showed, the teachers/students factor appeared to be more fundamental than the task type factor in predicting formulaic language use.

3.3 Fluency and the Use of Formulaic Language

In this analysis correlations between mean use of formulaic language and speech rate (words per minute), standardized number of pauses and mean duration of each pause (in seconds) where calculated separately for the two tasks. However, none of these correlations was statistically significant. Subsequent calculation of the correlations between fluency and use of formulaic language by separating the teachers and students groups, however, found that use of formulaic sequences by teachers was highly correlated with mean duration of each pause, r=-.64, p<0.05. In other words, the more formulaic sequences used by teachers in the picture task, the shorter the pauses.

As table 5 below shows, the teachers and students groups differed significantly in fluency measures including standardized number of pauses in the picture task and speech rate including and excluding pauses in calculation in both tasks. Specifically, teachers paused more but spoke faster than students.
Table 5. Mean Duration of Each Pause, Number of Pauses and Speech Rate for Teachers and Students Across the Two Tasks

|                      | Picture Task | Problem-solving Task |
|----------------------|--------------|----------------------|
|                      | Mean        | SD                   | Mean        | SD                   |
| Duration of Each Pause |             |                      |             |                      |
| T                    | .77         | .20                  | .88         | .20                  |
| S                    | .84         | .23                  | .77         | .20                  |
| t                    | t=.75,n.s.  |                      | t=1.19,n.s. |                      |
| Standardized Number of Pauses |             |                      |             |                      |
| T                    | 21.14       | 4.77                 | 19.47       | 3.67                 |
| S                    | 27.84       | 8.77                 | 18.63       | 3.70                 |
| t                    | t=2.12,p<.05|                      | t=.51,n.s.  |                      |
| Speech Rate Including Pauses |             |                      |             |                      |
| T                    | 131.1       | 22.9                 | 130.3       | 29.61                |
| S                    | 178.8       | 49.0                 | 206.5       | 67.10                |
| t                    | t=2.78,p<.05|                      | t=3.28,p<.01|                      |
| Excluding Pauses     |             |                      |             |                      |
| T                    | 171.3       | 28.2                 | 177.6       | 48.28                |
| S                    | 198.1       | 57.7                 | 237.6       | 97.1                 |
| t                    | t=2.18,p<.01|                      | t=2.57,p<.05|                      |

Bearing in mind the previous findings that 1) teachers and students in the picture task represented respectively the highest and lowest use of formulaic language and 2) they only differed significantly, as shown in the t-test result, in the picture task but not in the problem-solving task, the findings about the standardized number of pauses shown in Table 5 above appear interesting. The teachers demonstrated the greatest number of standardized pauses and this number differed significantly from that of the students (t=2.12, p<.05) only in the picture but not the problem-solving task. This pattern of pauses looked similar to the pattern of formulaic language use. From the means calculated, perhaps it can be suggested that the number of pauses may be related to the use of formulaic language in the sense that teachers choose to pause and/or use formulaic sequences when they need to plan online so that when teachers do speak, they can maintain a high speech rate.

The fact that all values of t related to the speech rates in Table 5 are greater than 2.5 suggests that teachers had significantly higher speech rates than students across the two tasks. For students, their speech rate was incomparable to that of the teachers and they used less formulaic sequences and paused less. This means they did not quite use pausing nor formulaic sequences to help with their speech rate.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Before conclusion you must make discussion to explain the result with theoretical basic. This study has set up the relationship between fluency and the use of formulaic sequences in the two tasks. Under the big framework of research on the effect of task types on fluency, accuracy and complexity as stated by Crookes, 1987; Ellis & Yuan, 2004; Foster & Skehan, 1996 [17]–[19]. It will be interesting to explore: 1) the causal relationships among the three factors, namely, task types, fluency, and use of formulaic language. While it is known that task type affects fluency, it is still unclear if formulaic language is a step in the middle that has been neglected. In other words, there is the possibility that task type influences the use of formulaic language which in turn influences fluency of the speakers. 2) the relationship between the use of formulaic language and accuracy or complexity.

As formulaic sequences are found to play important roles in fluency in speech, organization of discourse and social interactions, answering the question of how formulaic sequences can be taught is not only to interest language teachers, but also bridges the gap between research and pedagogy. Linguistic research needs to be closely linked to pedagogy so that what is achieved is a researched pedagogy. In the ending note of early formulaic language research studies, some researchers suggested that the way to enhance learners’ competence of formulaic sequences was to have learners imitate, practice and repeat the phrases spoken by native speakers and develop some kind of formulaic sequences phrasebooks for learners to memorize.

To sum up the main findings reported in this study, teachers in this study used more identified formulaic sequences than students but this difference was only significant in the picture task but not in the problem-solving task. However, among the teachers and students, three styles of formulaic sequences use could be identified. The first pattern was that subjects used more formulaic sequences in the picture task than in the problem-solving task. The second pattern was vice versa; and the third pattern was subjects have similar use of identified formulaic sequences in both tasks. As these three groups balanced each other, t-test between all subjects’ use of formulaic sequences in the two tasks was not statistically significant.

Fluency, measured by speech rate (both including and excluding pauses in calculation), number of pauses and mean duration of each pause, was not found to correlate with the use of formulaic sequences in general. The only high and significant correlation was between the use of formulaic sequences and mean duration of each pause for the teachers data. As the correlation value was negative, it means the more formulaic sequences used, the shorter the duration of each pause.

Findings of this study may suggest that, first, teachers may not always outperform students in the use of formulaic expressions as researchers assumed. In fact, as this study showed, teachers and students may not statistically differ in their use of the identified formulaic expressions in the problem-solving task. Therefore, task type is very likely one of the factors that influence the speakers’ use of formulaic expressions although this influence of task
type turns out to be different depending on individuals.

The discourse function of formulaic expressions, however, differ in the sense that they seem to help speakers construct longer discourse in the picture task but shorter discourse in the problem-solving task. Finally, it is found that formulaic expressions are uttered obviously and consistently faster than the rest of utterances no matter for teachers or students. That means changes in the rate of articulation can be an indicator of formulaic expressions and there is the possibility that this can be developed further into a method of identification for formulaic expressions. When this methodology is successfully tested in large corpora, it will provide an important solution to the difficult methodological problems that researchers face. Then it will be a breakthrough in formulaic language research.

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