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Linguistic Features of Lecturers' Talk in the English Classroom at UKI Toraja: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

This article reports one objective of a qualitative classroom discourse study: to identify and analyze the linguistic features of lecturers' talk in the English classroom at Universitas Kristen Indonesia (UKI) Toraja. The study is grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis because lecturer talk is understood not only as instructional language but also as discourse that organizes classroom authority, participation, and knowledge. Data were drawn from classroom observations, transcript analysis, and lecturer interview evidence. The findings show five dominant linguistic features: directive and instructional language, questioning strategies, repetition and emphasis, code-switching, and evaluative or feedback language. Directive language appeared as the most dominant feature, especially through imperatives, obligation markers, softened directives, inclusive directives, and step-by-step instructional structuring. Questions were used mainly to check comprehension, although referential questions also appeared in discussion segments. Repetition, emphasis, and code-switching supported comprehension, salience, memory, and classroom rapport. Evaluative and corrective feedback encouraged participation while guiding language improvement. Overall, lecturers' talk was pedagogically functional because it promoted clarity, order, and confidence; however, it also tended to maintain lecturer-centered interaction. The article suggests that lecturers combine clear instructional talk with more dialogic follow-up, longer wait time, and wider student responses.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, EFL classroom, lecturer talk, linguistic features, UKI Toraja

INTRODUCTION

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Indonesia gives the classroom a central role in language learning. Since students often have limited exposure to English outside formal education, classroom interaction becomes the main source of input, practice, feedback, and academic language development. In higher education, this situation is more significant because students are expected to understand concepts, participate in discussion, and develop confidence in using English in academic contexts.

Within this context, lecturers' talk becomes a crucial pedagogical resource. Lecturers use talk to explain concepts, give instructions, ask questions, manage tasks, correct errors, and provide feedback. Therefore, lecturer talk is not only a medium for transferring

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information. It also shapes how students understand classroom activities, how they are invited to participate, and how authority is organized in the learning process. When lecturers speak clearly, sequence instructions carefully, and provide supportive feedback, students are more likely to follow the lesson and respond with confidence.

Previous classroom discourse studies have shown that teacher or lecturer talk usually contains recurring features such as directives, questions, repetition, code-switching, and feedback. These features are pedagogically useful because they support classroom management and comprehension. However, from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), they also need to be understood critically because language can construct power relations. Imperatives, obligation markers, rapid evaluation, and lecturer-controlled turns may produce a teacher-centered interactional order even when the classroom atmosphere appears supportive.

The present article is based on research conducted in English classrooms at Universitas Kristen Indonesia (UKI) Toraja. Unlike the thesis version, which contains more than one focus, this article includes only one objective: to identify and analyze the linguistic features of lecturers' talk in the English classroom at UKI Toraja. This objective is selected because the linguistic features provide the most direct evidence of how classroom language supports instruction and shapes interaction. The article therefore focuses on what forms of lecturer talk appear in the classroom and how those forms function pedagogically and discursively.

The significance of the article lies in its attempt to connect classroom language features with teaching practice. By identifying the dominant features of lecturers' talk, the article can help lecturers reflect on how their language choices support students' comprehension, confidence, and participation. At the same time, it can show where classroom discourse remains strongly lecturer-centered and where more student-centered interaction may be developed.

RESEARCH ELABORATIONS

Research Objective

This article focuses on one research objective only: to identify and analyze the linguistic features of lecturers' talk in the English classroom at UKI Toraja. The objective is operationalized through five analytical categories: directive and instructional language, questioning strategies, repetition and emphasis, code-switching, and evaluative or feedback language.

Research Design

The study used a qualitative classroom discourse design with Critical Discourse Analysis as the main interpretive framework. A qualitative approach was appropriate because the study examined meanings, interactional patterns, and classroom language practices rather than numerical measurement. CDA was also relevant because the study did not simply describe language forms; it interpreted how those forms organized classroom authority, task completion, participation, and learning support.

The research was conducted in English classrooms at UKI Toraja. The setting was selected because English functions as a foreign language in this context, making classroom talk an important source of input and interaction. The participants consisted of English lecturers and students in selected classes. The lecturers' talk became the main object of analysis, while students' responses were considered as contextual evidence showing how lecturer talk functioned in interaction.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data were obtained from classroom observation, transcript analysis, and interview evidence. Classroom observation provided contextual information about how lecturers delivered instructions, asked questions, used gestures, and responded to students. Transcript analysis provided the main linguistic evidence because it captured actual utterances such as commands, questions, repetition, switching between English and Indonesian, and feedback. Interview evidence helped clarify lecturers' intentions in using particular language features.

Data analysis was conducted through three linked steps. First, the classroom talk was read and coded according to the five linguistic features. Second, each feature was interpreted based on its classroom function, such as managing tasks, checking comprehension, supporting memory, clarifying meaning, or encouraging participation. Third, the findings were interpreted through CDA to examine how those linguistic choices also reflected classroom authority and lecturer-centered interaction. Triangulation across observation, transcript, and interview data strengthened the interpretation.

RESULTS OR FINDING

The findings reveal that lecturers' talk in the English classroom at UKI Toraja is characterized by five dominant linguistic features. These features are not incidental; they are used purposefully to manage classroom activities, make input comprehensible, maintain lesson flow, and support students' affective engagement. However, the same features also show that the lecturer remains the central organizer of classroom discourse.

1. Directive and Instructional Language

Directive and instructional language was the most dominant feature. It appeared in direct commands, softened requests, inclusive expressions, and step-by-step procedural talk. Direct directives were realized through imperative verbs and obligation markers, for example, 'Open your book page 25' and 'You must submit your assignment.' These utterances clearly positioned the lecturer as the person who initiated classroom action and determined what students had to do. Functionally, such language reduced ambiguity and helped students follow tasks immediately.

The observation data showed that direct directives were often delivered in a firm tone and supported by non-verbal cues such as pointing to textbooks, writing instructions on the board, or maintaining direct eye contact. Students generally complied immediately by opening books, preparing materials, or completing tasks. This indicates that direct directives were effective for classroom management and task completion. The interview evidence also confirmed that lecturers used direct language when clarity was needed, especially because students might become confused by indirect or complex instructions.

Softened directives also appeared in the data. They were marked by expressions such as 'please,' 'try,' or polite invitations. For instance, 'Please try to answer the question' maintained the lecturer's instructional purpose but reduced the pressure placed on students. Observation notes showed that softened directives were often accompanied by smiles, nodding, and a gentler tone. These forms encouraged hesitant students to participate, although the responses usually remained short.

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Inclusive directives, such as 'Let's discuss this together,' created a more collaborative atmosphere. The use of 'let's' suggested shared participation and reduced social distance between lecturer and students. Nevertheless, the lecturer still controlled the topic, turn-taking, and evaluation. Thus, inclusive directives softened authority but did not remove the lecturer's dominant role. Instructional structuring was also frequent. Lecturers organized tasks through sequences such as 'open your book, read the text, then answer the questions.' This helped students understand what to do first, next, and finally. From a CDA perspective, directive language supported learning while also maintaining asymmetrical power relations because classroom action was largely initiated and controlled by the lecturer.

2. Questioning Strategies

The second major feature was questioning strategy. The analysis found two main types of questions: display questions and referential questions. Display questions were more frequent. These are questions for which the lecturer already knows the expected answer, such as 'What is the main idea of the text?' Their main function was to check comprehension after reading activities or explanations. Students usually responded with short factual answers, and the lecturer often moved quickly to the next question after confirming the answer.

Display questions were useful because they helped lecturers monitor whether students understood the material. They also maintained lesson pace and allowed the lecturer to identify whether students could recall key information. However, their limitation was that they tended to produce brief responses. Students were positioned mainly as respondents who demonstrated understanding rather than as speakers who developed ideas. In this sense, display questions supported comprehension but also reinforced a pattern close to Initiation-Response-Feedback interaction.

Referential questions also appeared, especially in discussion segments. An example is 'What do you think about this issue?' Such questions were more open-ended and invited students' opinions or interpretations. They had the potential to create dialogic interaction and student voice. However, observation data showed that students often responded hesitantly and briefly. In many cases, lecturers did not extend the discussion through follow-up questions. As a result, referential questions created opportunities for student-centered interaction, but those opportunities were not always fully developed into extended dialogue.

3. Repetition and Emphasis

Repetition and emphasis were used as important strategies for supporting comprehension. Repetition appeared at lexical, phrasal, and prosodic levels. For example, the utterance 'This is important, very important for your understanding' repeats the word 'important' and intensifies it through 'very.' This form of repetition directs students' attention to essential content. Lecturers also repeated phrases, restated instructions, slowed down speech, and stressed key words to make important information more noticeable.

The findings show that repetition functioned as scaffolding. When lecturers introduced new vocabulary, difficult concepts, or task instructions, they often repeated or rephrased information so that students could process it more easily. This was especially useful in the EFL classroom because students needed more exposure to unfamiliar words and structures. Repetition reduced cognitive load and gave learners additional time to connect form and meaning.

Repetition also clarified meaning. When students looked confused or gave uncertain responses, lecturers repeated the explanation in a slightly different form. This made repetition a real-time repair strategy. It helped maintain the flow of communication and prevented misunderstanding. In addition, repetition supported memory retention. Students were more likely to take notes, focus, and recognize important points when information was repeated.

However, the data also showed that repetition was mostly lecturer-initiated. Students usually listened, nodded, or wrote notes, but they were rarely asked to repeat, paraphrase, or explain the idea in their own words. Thus, repetition supported understanding but did not always promote active student production. To make repetition more dialogic, lecturers could invite students to restate concepts, summarize instructions, or explain key terms to peers.

4. Code-Switching

Code-switching between English and Indonesian was another prominent feature. The data show that lecturers used code-switching for conceptual explanation, emphasis, comprehension support, and classroom rapport. When concepts were difficult, lecturers shifted to Indonesian to clarify meaning. For example, 'This concept refers to motivation... motivasi itu dorongan dari dalam diri' shows how the English term was immediately connected to an Indonesian explanation. This function helped students understand abstract or unfamiliar concepts.

Code-switching also highlighted important information. In expressions such as 'Submit your assignment on time, jangan lupa ya,' the shift to Indonesian strengthened the reminder and made the message more salient. Observation data indicated that lecturers often used Indonesian when delivering warnings, deadlines, or important instructions. This suggests that code-switching was not merely translation; it was also a rhetorical strategy for emphasizing urgency or importance.

Another function was comprehension support. Lecturers used bilingual checks such as 'Do you understand? Paham semua?' when they wanted to ensure that students followed the lesson. This form of switching was responsive to hesitation, silence, or unclear responses. It helped prevent communication breakdown and enabled the lesson to continue smoothly. Code-switching also functioned interpersonally. Expressions such as 'Good job, kalian hebat sekali hari ini' created warmth, reduced social distance, and made the classroom atmosphere friendlier. Therefore, code-switching operated as both a cognitive bridge and an affective resource.

5. Evaluative and Feedback Language

The fifth feature was evaluative and feedback language. Lecturers used positive feedback, corrective feedback, affirmation markers, and motivational expressions. Positive feedback appeared in expressions such as 'Good job,' 'Excellent,' 'Very good,' and 'That's right.' These expressions validated student responses and encouraged students to continue participating. Observation data showed that positive feedback was often delivered immediately after students answered, which strengthened its reinforcing function.

Corrective feedback was also present. Lecturers sometimes combined praise with correction, as in 'That's correct, but you need

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to improve your pronunciation.' This pattern helped maintain encouragement while still guiding language improvement. Corrective feedback was important because it allowed students to notice errors in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, or clarity. The way feedback was delivered mattered: balanced correction helped students improve without discouraging them from speaking.

Evaluative language was realized through several linguistic markers. Affirmation markers such as 'yes' and 'that's right' confirmed correct responses. Adjectival praise such as 'good' and 'excellent' signaled approval. Contrastive structures using 'but' introduced correction or improvement. Feedback also had motivational value because it shaped students' confidence and willingness to participate. However, feedback was often brief and general. More specific feedback could help students understand exactly what they did well and what they needed to improve.

Taken together, the five linguistic features show that lecturers' talk at UKI Toraja is strongly functional. Directive language organizes classroom action; questions check comprehension and invite limited discussion; repetition and emphasis make input clearer and more memorable; code-switching supports understanding and rapport; and feedback validates performance while guiding improvement. These features show lecturers' awareness of students' needs in an EFL context.

At the same time, the findings reveal that classroom interaction remains largely lecturer-centered. Most directives, questions, repetitions, language switches, and feedback moves are initiated by lecturers. Students respond, comply, answer, or listen, but they have fewer opportunities to initiate topics, ask extended questions, or produce longer contributions. Therefore, lecturers' talk supports learning, but its effectiveness could be strengthened by more dialogic strategies such as follow-up questions, student paraphrasing, peer discussion, longer wait time, and opportunities for student-initiated interaction.

The findings of this study are generally consistent with earlier research on lecturer or teacher talk which emphasizes that classroom discourse is not only a medium for delivering information but also a tool for organizing interaction. Lestari (2017), for example, found that lecturer-student interaction is shaped by recurring classroom talk patterns. The present study supports this view because the lecturers at UKI Toraja also used directive language, questioning, repetition, code-switching, and feedback to manage classroom activities. However, this study provides a more detailed explanation of how those patterns are linguistically realized through imperatives, obligation markers, softened directives, inclusive forms, display questions, referential questions, and evaluative expressions.

The findings also support Zuhri Dj and Musfirah (2020), who described lecturers' talk in a listening class by emphasizing the types and functions of lecturer utterances during instruction. Similar to their study, the present research shows that lecturer talk performs practical pedagogical functions, especially giving instructions, checking comprehension, explaining concepts, and providing feedback. Nevertheless, the present study differs by interpreting those functions through a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective. It shows that instructional talk does not only support comprehension but also constructs classroom authority, controls turn-taking, and positions students as respondents within a lecturer-centered discourse pattern.

In relation to Seli et al. (2022), who examined lecturers' talk in a Business English classroom, the present findings confirm that lecturer discourse helps students understand learning materials and participate in classroom activities. Both studies show that lecturer talk is central to classroom management and student comprehension. The difference lies in the analytical focus. While previous research mainly described the pedagogical role of lecturers' talk, this article highlights the coexistence of support and control. For instance, code-switching and feedback helped students understand the lesson and feel more confident, but these strategies were still mostly initiated and controlled by the lecturer.

The finding on questioning strategies is also in line with Brock (1986), who argued that referential questions can encourage longer and more meaningful learner responses than display questions. In this study, referential questions such as asking students' opinions created opportunities for participation. However, the classroom data showed that students' responses often remained brief and hesitant. This means that open-ended questions alone are not sufficient to create dialogic interaction unless they are supported by follow-up prompts, wait time, and opportunities for students to elaborate their ideas.

The use of code-switching in this study is consistent with Hall and Cook (2012), who view the use of the learners' first language as a legitimate pedagogical resource when applied strategically. The lecturers' movement between English and Indonesian supported conceptual explanation, comprehension checking, emphasis, and classroom rapport. However, the present study adds that code-switching also has a discursive function: it can reduce social distance and create warmth, while still keeping the lecturer as the main controller of meaning and classroom flow.

The findings on feedback are also related to Lyster and Ranta's (1997) explanation of corrective feedback and learner uptake. The lecturers in this study used positive feedback, affirmation, and correction to guide students' language performance. This supports previous research showing that feedback is important for language development. At the same time, the present findings show that feedback was often brief and lecturer-evaluated, meaning that students had limited opportunities to negotiate correction or produce extended self-repair.

Finally, this study strengthens Walsh's (2002, 2011) argument that teacher talk can either construct or obstruct learner involvement. The findings show both possibilities. Lecturers' talk constructed involvement by clarifying tasks, supporting comprehension, and encouraging students through praise and Indonesian-language rapport. At the same time, it could obstruct deeper involvement when directives, display questions, repetition, and evaluation remained mostly lecturer-controlled. Therefore, compared with previous studies, the contribution of this article is its emphasis on the dual role of lecturers' talk as both a pedagogical support and a discourse practice that reflects institutional authority in the EFL classroom at UKI Toraja.

CONCLUSION

This article has presented one objective of the research: to identify and analyze the linguistic features of lecturers' talk in the English classroom at UKI Toraja. The findings show that lecturers' talk is characterized by five dominant features: directive and instructional language, questioning strategies, repetition and emphasis, code-switching, and evaluative or feedback language. These features are used deliberately to support classroom management,

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comprehension, task completion, memory, rapport, and student confidence.

The most dominant feature is directive and instructional language, which enables lecturers to organize learning activities clearly and efficiently. Questioning strategies help monitor comprehension, although they often produce short responses. Repetition and emphasis support clarity and retention. Code-switching bridges English and Indonesian, making concepts more accessible and classroom interaction warmer. Evaluative and corrective feedback encourages participation while guiding language development.

The study concludes that lecturers' talk is both pedagogical and discursive. It helps students understand and participate in the lesson, but it also reflects the institutional authority of the lecturer. Compared with previous studies, this article confirms that lecturer talk supports classroom management, comprehension, and participation, while also extending the discussion by showing how linguistic features construct power relations and shape the limits of student engagement in EFL classroom discourse. Therefore, lecturers need to use directive language, questions, repetition, code-switching, and feedback not only clearly but also dialogically, so that classroom talk can support both instructional effectiveness and student-centered participation.

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