

## INITIATION, RESPONSE, AND FEEDBACK (IRF) PATTERNS USED BY THE TEACHERS AND LEARNERS IN ESP SPEAKING CLASSES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MUHAMMADIYAH MALANG

Oktaviana M.F.Q. Bobe

STKIP Sinar Pancasila Betun

Email: [Viaqueiros@gmail.com](mailto:Viaqueiros@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** *This research was intended to analyze the IRF patterns used by the teachers and learners and to investigate the gender differences of the teachers and learners in using the IRF patterns. This research employs descriptive qualitative method especially in the form of conversation analysis. The subjects of this research were four teachers and their learners of different gender from ESP speaking classes at the University of Muhammadiyah Malang. The data were collected by using the video recording, observation field note, and interview guide. The findings show that all the patterns are used by the teachers and learners, they are, elicitation, directive, and informative from initiation move, then reply, react, and acknowledge from response move, and followed by accept, evaluate, and comment from feedback move. Additionally, the interaction in the classroom was not following the rigid IRF patterns. Regarding the gender differences, the male teachers provided equal initiation and feedback towards the male and female learners, whereas the female teachers provided more initiation to the male learners and delivered limited feedback. Besides, the learners who were taught by the male teachers offered equal response, meanwhile the classes who were taught by the female teachers showed that the male learners provided more response than females.*

**Keywords:** *English for Specific Purpose, Initiation, Response, and Feedback (IRF) Patterns, Gender differences, the Teaching of Speaking.*

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pola (IRF) yang digunakan oleh pengajar dan mahasiswa dan menyelidiki perbedaan gender dari pengajar dan mahasiswa dalam menggunakan pola (IRF). Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif khususnya dalam bentuk analisis percakapan. Subyek penelitian ini adalah empat pengajar dan 40 mahasiswa dari gender yang berbeda dalam kelas berbicara bahasa Inggris untuk keperluan khusus di Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang. Data dikumpulkan dengan menggunakan rekaman video, catatan observasi lapangan, dan panduan wawancara. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa semua pola (IRF) digunakan oleh pengajar dan mahasiswa, yaitu *elicitation*, *directive*, dan *informative* dari langkah inisiasi, kemudian *reply*, *react*, dan *acknowledge* dari langkah respon, dan diikuti oleh *accept*, *evaluate*, dan *comment* dari langkah umpan balik. Sebagai tambahan, interaksi yang terjadi di dalam kelas tidak sepenuhnya mengikuti urutan pola (IRF). Mengenai perbedaan gender, pengajar laki-laki

memberikan inisiasi dan umpanbalik yang setara kepada mahasiswa laki-laki dan perempuan, sedangkan pengajar perempuan memberikan lebih banyak inisiasi dari pada umpan balik. Selain itu, mahasiswa yang diajar oleh pengajar laki-laki memberikan response yang sama, sedangkan mahasiswa yang diajar oleh pengajar perempuan menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa laki-laki lebih banyak memberikan respon daripada perempuan.

**Kata kunci:** Bahasa Inggris untuk Keperluan Khusus, Pola Inisiasi, Respon, dan Umpan Balik, Perbedaan Gender, Pengajaran Berbicara.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

For EFL learners, speaking is one of the important skills which has to be obtained. The learning of English is not only aimed at how they can understand the foreign language uttered or written, but also expected to enable people to communicate accurately and fluently. As stated by Khomarudin (2012), in EFL classroom, most of the learners expect themselves to produce the English language orally to acquire the goal of learning English. It is not only the fluency, but also the accuracy to build good communication in the teaching and learning process.

Regarding the aims and the expectations of learning speaking, the learners need help through the teaching of speaking. The teaching of speaking has a fundamental role in aiding the learners to communicate in English. Hutchinson and Waters (2000) illuminate that the teaching of speaking is necessary to aid the learners to achieve their needs in order to enrich the quality of their interactive life or work. It means that teacher can support the learners to advance their speaking skill so they are able to cooperate with others.

Nonetheless, recent studies showed that there are some issues regarding the teaching and learning process of speaking. Alonso (2014) found that the teachers did not invite the learners to speak with both their friends and the teachers themselves using English. Furthermore, Brown (1994) found that in the classroom, the learners sometimes did not get questions from the teachers although it was needed in the classroom to enhance their oral

communication. He appended that the success of a classroom depends on the questions and feedbacks given by the teachers.

Concerning the issues about the teaching of speaking, the Initiation, Response and Feedback (IRF) patterns could be as an alternative solution for the teachers in encouraging the learners to speak in the classroom. This was because the teachers could use the interaction patterns regularly to engage the learners' participation by giving their opinion and idea orally and enhance their oral communication. These patterns are developed by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) for classroom discourse with the rank scale to deal with three sequences of classroom interaction.

Initiation is the first turn to acquire the response in teaching exchange between the teacher and learners. Sinclair & Coulthard (1992) illuminate that to initiate means to make the first move by leading, asking, requesting, and introducing the idea or concept to declare one's own will and to gain the response. They categorized initiation move into three classes of act which possibly occur in the spoken discourse, they are *elicitation*, *directive*, and *information*. *Elicitation* is known as a question, and its function is to request linguistic response. *Directive* is known as a command which is used to request the non-linguistic response. *Informative* is used to give the idea, opinion, or new information to the learners.

Response is an action which is given after the initiation that has been delivered. Sinclair & Coulthard (1992) explain that to respond means to take action after an initiation, to counter, to amplify or to react to ideas which have

already been expressed, to conform or even to comply to the will expressed by others. It is divided into three classes of act, they are *reply*, *react*, and *acknowledge*. *Reply* is recognized as a statement which is established to respond the questions or the elicitation. *React* is given by the learners to the teacher's direction. *Acknowledge* is identified as a verbal or non-verbal response which indicates that the learners have listened or understood the teachers' information.

Feedback is a follow up move provided by the teachers for learners' answer to let them know whether their answer is correct or incorrect. Sinclair & Coulthard (1992) divide feedback into three classes of act, they are *accept*, *evaluate*, and *comment*. *Accept* is realized as a closed class of items such as "yes, no, good, fine" with neutral and low intonation or the repetition of the learners' reply. *Evaluate* is realized by the statements or tag questions to the learners' reply with high intonation to request the learners' correct answer. Comment is used to exemplify, expand, justify and provide the additional information to the learners' answer.

Besides, the IRF patterns in one classroom might be different from that in other classrooms. There were some factors affecting the use of IRF patterns in the classroom interaction. One of the factors was gender differences. Gender refers to the role of a male and female in society (Sunderland, 1999). Santrock (2001) defines gender as the broad categories that reflect the impressions and beliefs about the behaviour that is appropriate for male and female. It relates to the attitude, action, and expression typically

associated with either males or females. Thus, gender is not about being male or female but how the expression, behaviour, and characteristics come from male and female in interacting with others.

The way how they communicate can be different from each other. Males might have diverse manners of using the language and vice versa. The female teachers might be more attractive in engaging learners to participate in the classroom, and the male learners might be more eager in responding to the teachers' initiation. AsRashidi (2010) found that female teachers provided more positive feedback in which we know as the third move to the learners, and they gave more inspiration than male teachers. Meanwhile, male learners more enthusiastic in answering the teachers' questions.

Hence, the researcher is interested to conduct this research in order to analyze the IRF patterns used by the teachers and learners in contributing in ESP speaking classroom and the way the teachers and learners of different gender used the IRF patterns.

## **II. METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH**

This research belongs to descriptive qualitative method especially in the form of Conversation Analysis (CA). It was conducted at the University of Muhammadiyah Malang, especially in ESP speaking classes. The University was chosen because it provides many ESP programs, and has many teachers and learners of different genders. Besides, it is one of the favorite private colleges in Malang which means that it is able to offer the data about the interaction patterns. Regarding the subjects, two male and two female novice

teachers from ESP speaking classes and the learners who were taught by them participated in this research from two departments and four classes of ESP program; Psychology (Class A and C) and Law (A and D). In collecting the data, the researcher used observation and interview techniques with the instruments of video recording, observation field note, and interview guide. Besides, there were some steps in collecting the data, first is locating the site, purposefully sampling, gaining access from the participants, observing the teaching and learning process, recording the teaching and learning process, interviewing the teachers and learners. In analyzing the data, the researcher transcribed the video, identified the IRF patterns, coded the IRF patterns based on their types, counted the types of IRF patterns, tabulated the types IRF patterns, drew the conclusion.

### III. RESULT

The findings of this research are presented based on the research problems. They are: (1) the types of IRF patterns used between teachers and learners, (2) the gender differences of teachers and learners in using IRF patterns.

#### 1. The types of IRF patterns used in ESP speaking classes

The research findings indicated that the teachers and learners used various head acts of IRF patterns during the teaching and learning process. Based on the result of data analysis, there were three head acts, the first is Initiation with its classes of acts, *elicitation*, *directive*, and *informative*, then

Response with its classes of acts, *reply*, *react*, and *acknowledge*, and followed by Feedback with its classes of acts, *accept*, *evaluate*, and *comment* as proposed by Sinclair & Coulthard (1992). The detail explanation is provided below.

Based on the result of the data analysis, it was found that the teachers used Initiation move to open up the sequence in the classroom interaction. This move was sometimes used by the learners to ask the teachers' response. There were three classes of acts used in the classroom, namely, *elicitation*, *directive*, and *informative*.

Regarding the response, the finding of data analysis showed that Response was frequently expressed by the learners. It was used to react, answer to the ideas which had been already expressed. The Response was also delivered by the teachers when the learners asked some questions. There were three classes of acts, they are *reply*, *react*, and *acknowledge* which were found in the classroom interaction.

Furthermore, based on the result of the finding, it was found that the teacher used various types of Feedback during the classroom interaction. There were three types of feedback, namely, *accept*, *evaluate*, and *comment*.

To sum up, all types of IRF patterns were used during the classroom interaction between the teachers and learners and it was not following the rigid IRF patterns in which after the last turn, the learners still offered the *acknowledge* act.

## 2. The Gender Differences of Teachers and Learners in Using IRF Patterns



After doing the observation, the researcher found that there was a difference between the male and female teachers and their learners in using the IRF patterns. The data is presented below. The finding indicated that the use of IRF patterns was different based on gender differences. Below is the summary of the use of IRF patterns between the male teachers and their learners during the classroom interaction.

**Table 1. The Frequency and Percentage of Male Teachers and Their Female-Male Learners in Using the IRF Patterns**

Head acts	Classes of acts	No. of occurrence (Male teachers)	Percentage	No. of occurrence (Female learners)	Percentage	No. of occurrence (Male learners)	Percentage
Initiation	Elicitation	126	33.2 %	8	4.2%	6	3.5%
	Directive	10	2.6%	0	.0%	0	.0%
	Informative	44	11.6 %	0	.0%	0	.0%
Response	Reply	10	2.6%	149	78.5 %	134	78.4 %
	React	0	.0%	10	5.2%	10	5.9%
	Acknowledge	0	.0%	23	12.1 %	21	12.2 %
	Accept	111	29.3 %	0	.0%	0	.0%
Feedback	Evaluate	48	12.7	0	.0%	0	.0%

	Comment	30	% 8%	0	.0%	0	.0%
	Total	379	100%	190	100%	171	100%

For the **Initiation** move, the finding showed that the male teachers preferred to use the *elicitation* with a percentage of 33.2%. In addition, the female and male learners also used the *elicitation* with the function of asking the information that they did not know. It took a percentage of 4.2% of the females and 3.5% of the males which means that there was a little difference between female and male learners regarding the *elicitation* used.

Concerning the **Response** move, the learners mostly used *Reply* act to respond the teachers' first move. It was seen by a portion of 78.5% of the female learners and 78.4% of the male learners.

The last part is the **Feedback** used by the male teachers were also as much as the *elicitation* or questions posed by the teachers. It took the percentage of 29.3% of *Accept*, 12.7% of *evaluate*, and 8% of *comment*.

In short, the male teachers provided the equivalent questions and feedback to the learners' answer during the classroom interaction. In addition, the response which was given by the female and male learners was almost the same.

Furthermore, below is the summary of the use of IRF patterns between the female teachers and their learners based on the data analysis.

**Table 2.The Frequency and Percentage of Female Teachers and Female-Male Learners in Using IRF Patterns**

Head acts	Classes of acts	No. of occurrence (Female teachers)	Percentage	No. of occurrence (Female learners)	Percentage	No. of occurrence (Male learners)	Percentage
Initiation	Elicitation	164	54.1%	5	4.3%	8	4.9%
	Directive	9	3 %	0	.0%	0	.0%
	Informative	25	8.2%	0	.0%	0	.0%
	Reply	19	6.2%	85	72.6%	125	77.2%
Response	React	0	.0%	9	7.7%	9	5.6%
	Acknowledge	0	.0%	18	15.4%	20	12.3%
	Accept	53	17.5%	0	.0%	0	.0%
Feedback	Evaluate	6	2%	0	.0%	0	.0%
	Comment	27	9%	0	.0%	0	.0%
	Total	303	100%	117	100%	162	100%

The finding showed that the female teachers also used more *elicitation* as the first turn or the **Initiation** during the classroom interaction with a portion of 54.1%. Thereunto, the learners also delivered several *elicitation* to the teachers but it was not much diverse with a percentage of 4.3% of the females, whereas 4.9% of the males.

Regarding the **Response**, the male learners gave a little more answers by using the *reply* act to the teachers' *elicitation* with a percentage of 77.2%,

while the females have a percentage of 72.6%. It is because the female teachers provided more questions to the male learners.

For the third move or **Feedback**, it was delivered not as much as the questions provided with a portion of 17.5% of *accept*, 2% of *evaluate*, and 9% of *comment*.

In summary, the finding revealed that the female teachers provided more questions and delivered limited feedback. Whereas, the male learners delivered a little more response towards the teachers' question but there is not significance difference.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

In connection with the first research question, the finding showed that all types of IRF patterns were used by the teachers and learners, they are, *elicitation*, *directive*, and *informative* as the **Initiation** move, then *reply*, *react*, and *acknowledge* as the **Response**, after that *accept*, *evaluate*, and *comment* as the **Feedback**. However, the interaction in the classroom was not following the rigid IRF patterns in which after the last turn, the learners still offered the *acknowledge* act. Later, the *accept* act was given to the learners' reaction. Sinclair & Coulthard (1992) elucidate that feedback is the last turn given by the teachers toward the learners' answer, and *acknowledge* is used to respond the teachers' information. They also explain that the *accept act* is realized as the closed class which is used to the learners' *reply*. Their explanation is not the same as the researcher's finding, therefore, the researcher concluded that

the interaction that happened in the classroom was not always following the rigid patterns.

Based on the finding, the **Initiation** that consists of *elicitation*, *directive*, and *informative* were delivered by the teachers as the first turn to open up the sequences in the classroom interaction to invite the learners to speak, request the learners to do something, and deliver information. The similar finding was also found by Marzban (2012) who discovered that the initiation was the first contribution of the teachers. Besides, the researcher also found that sometimes the learners also initiated the teachers several questions to ask a certain information.

Afterwards, regarding the second turn or **Response** which consists of *reply*, *react*, and *acknowledge* was produced by the learners to answer the teachers' question or to indicate that they have listened and understood the teachers' command and instruction. Lei (2009) found that the second turn was always given by the learners to respond the teachers' question. Yet, the researcher discovered that the response was sometimes given by the teachers if the learners initiated a question. Hence, the response was not always given by the learners.

After the second turn, there was **Feedback** which consists of *accept*, *evaluate*, and *comment* which were provided by the teachers toward the learners' response. This finding is similar with Nassaji & Wells (2000) who indicated that feedback refers to the third turn given by the teachers as a perception to the learners' answer. From the research finding, it could be

concluded that generally all they types of IRF patterns were used by teachers and learners. Moreover, IRF patterns were the common patterns used by the teachers and learners during the classroom interaction.

Regarding the second question related to the gender differences of teachers and learners showed that there was a difference. Based on the data, the male teachers provided equal interactive to the male and female learners. It was signified by the initiation given by the teachers to the learners were the same and the response given by the learners of different genders were almost the same. The similar finding was found by Sadker&Sadker (2000) that the interaction between male teachers and the learners of different genders was equally. Besides, regarding the IRF patterns, the male teachers mostly used *elicitation* act as the initiation with a percentage of 33.2% to ask questions and examine the learners' knowledge. Afterwards, the *accept* which is known as feedback mostly delivered by the male teachers with the portion of 29,3%, and followed by 12,7% of *evaluate*, and 8,0% of *comment*. It was used as the feedback to provide the perception towards the learners' answer from the teachers' elicitation. From the finding, the researcher concluded that the male teacher provided equal elicitation and feedback to the learners. This was contrast with Mannysalo (2008) who indicated that the male teachers provided more questions and gave limited feedback to the learners. Furthermore, regarding the gender differences of learners, they gave more *reply* act as the response to the teachers' elicitation. Both males and females had not significance difference in replying the teachers' *elicitation*. It was seen by a

portion of 78.5% of the females and 78.4% of the males. They all were active in answering the teachers' question. It was contrary with Yepez (in Hassakhah and Zamir, 2013) who found that the male learners gave more response towards the male teachers' question.

Concerning the female teachers, the researcher found that they tended to interact more with the male learners. It was also obtained by Jones (2000) that the female teachers interact more with the male learners by initiating them more questions. Related to the IRF patterns, the female teachers provided more elicitation or questions and offered limited feedback to the learners of different genders. It was revealed with a percentage of 54.1% of *elicitation* as the initiation and 17.5% of *accept*, 2.0% of *evaluate*, 9.0% of *comment* as the feedback which was given to the learners. This finding was diverse from Rashidi (2010) who discovered that the female teachers provided more positive evaluation as the feedback to the learners' answer. With regard to the response, the male learners delivered a little more response by using the *reply* act to the female teachers' initiation. It was seen by the percentage of 77.2% of the males, and 72.6% of the females. Rashidi (2010) also found that the male learners more likely to interact with their teachers rather than females. From those findings, the researcher concluded that gender played an important part in the classroom interaction especially the gender differences of teachers.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, some conclusions regarding the types of IRF patterns between the teachers and learners, and gender differences in using the patterns can be taken as follows.

Firstly, all of the types of IRF patterns were used by the teachers and learners, and they were the common patterns found in the classroom interaction. Nevertheless, the interaction in the classroom was not following the rigid IRF patterns because there was an acknowledge act given by the learners towards the teachers' feedback in which it had to be delivered to the teachers' initiation. Additionally, accept was delivered to the learners' reaction in which it had to be offered to the learners' reply.

Secondly, regarding the gender differences in using the IRF patterns, the male teachers interacted with both male and female learners and provided equal initiation and feedback to the learners, whereas the female teachers tended to interact more with the male learners and initiated more questions than providing feedback to the learners. Related to the learners, both male and female gave their equal response to the male teachers, while the classroom who were taught by female teachers showed that the male learners offered a little more response than females.

In accordance with the findings, some suggestions are proposed to the teachers, learners, and further researchers. The suggestions are presented below.



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