

IRE Pattern and Teacher Feedback in English Classroom

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The purpose of this study is to suggest the interaction patterns in the English class. Two teachers, one female and one male, led the 2nd grade middle school English classes. The analysis of the script data was collected from the middle school classrooms. The data from the scripts of the class reveal that the typical classroom interaction has a sequence of the IRE pattern (Initiation-Response-Evaluation). The pattern, however, led by a teacher is usually modified in order to meet the need of the topics in the class. Depending on the types of initiation, the IRE sequences determine the modified pattern in three dominant categories. The six types of teacher feedback also support the teacher strategies in conducting the tasks of the class. However, the feedback can be different from other ESL studies. In this study the results show that the teacher utterances in EFL class largely depend on the topics, the student response, and teacher intention regardless of typical patterns.

Keywords: [classroom interaction/teaching English through English(TETE)/turn taking/teacher talk/IRE pattern/교실영어/영어로 하는 영어수업/교사말/말차례/IRE형식]

1. Introduction

This study focuses on the types of teacher talk and students reactions from 'speaking a foreign language' or 'teaching English through English (TETE).' It analyzes classroom interaction in EFL middle school classrooms. The purpose is to find out the attributes dominant in the EFL classrooms as opposed to ESL ones, the patterns of teacher talk in each period of a class, and the teacher

strategies as feedback in order to elicit students reaction. The need is to study if the utterance occurs in the real classroom setting comparing with other ESL researches.

This work is composed of two parts; the first part summarizes some previous studies concerning classroom interactions or teacher talk. The literatures are based on the setting of a teacher-centered or teacher-fronted class. Therefore, this study tries to find out that teacher's efforts in the English classroom can be practiced effectively by eliciting the communicative process itself between teacher and students, especially for low level learners.

Second, the scripts from two classes were transcribed in the broad transcription system. The scripts were recorded during 16 periods of each class and analyzed within the framework of IRE patterns. Also each of teacher's and students' utterances was analyzed as a unit of meaning.

2. Literature Review

The study of underlying structure of classroom language has been characterized as a pattern of acts in many studies: an initiation act(teacher), a response act(student), and an evaluation act(teacher), commonly referred to as IRE (Mehan, 1979; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). The IRE pattern is actually taken from an actual second language classroom, in which the teacher conducts a lesson for low or intermediate level of class (Johnson, 1998). Erickson (1982) has worked on the levels on various learners and describes verbal interaction in the classrooms as containing two interrelated structures: academic task structures and social participation structures. Cullen (1998) introduces the important function of the content feedback. There can be six types of feedbacks to help students answer, elicit their following reaction, or continue the sequence in the classroom. Richards and Lockhart (2005) points out that the repetition is such a frequent feature as an instruction for students.

Other researchers conducted teacher talk and students response in authentic

EFL context. First, Kim and Suh (2004) studies teacher talk and analyzes the recorded data from six middle school teachers. The result shows that the teachers account for about 60% of the classroom talk on average, which is 4.5 times more than the student talk. Second, Park (2005) analyzes teacher talk in primary classrooms. He concludes that most of teacher talk are display questions, direction, and evaluative feedback. There are, however, few chances for students to interact with their teacher. Lee (2005) compares teacher talks from three different primary school ESOL teachers (one native speaker of English and two Korean teachers). The results show that there are differences between teachers depending on their proficiency in English.

3. Research Method

In the study about classroom setting, Hatch (2001) states that there are a variety of ways in which classroom talk may be organized, but that four typical types in the elementary classrooms are the teacher interaction with all the students, some students as a group (as in reading or writing groups), students' work at their own desks independent of the teacher, and group work that students themselves run with little supervision from the teacher.

The participants in this study consist of two middle school English teachers teaching the second-year students. They led two different classes in Seoul for two weeks in the spring semester of 2005. The textbook used in the school was Middle School English II (Chang, Yong Hee, et al. 2005), published by Doosan Publishing Company. Teachers could teach one chapter for six or seven class hours, and they sometimes had enough time to review what the students have learned before. In reality, the teachers finished one chapter for six or seven class hours. The recording tapes were all numbered according to the period of the class. There were 16 periods led by two teachers, so each class such as class A and class B has eight recording tapes respectively. Therefore, the excerpts have the class numbers after transcription and the turn number with a meaning unit. Table 1 summarizes the participants' data: teachers and students, class size, and grade.

Table 1
Participants: Teachers and Students

		Teachers			Students	
	In-service	Gender	teaching experience	Grade	Gender(number)	
Class A	2nd grade	female	8 years	2nd grade	male(18)	female(17)
Class B	2nd grade	male	12 years	2nd grade	male(17)	female(13)

In this study, the expressions appropriate for the EFL setting were in order to produce short and simple utterances. Richmond (1990) listed expressions that teachers use to motivate students to carry out tasks: "It will be fun," "I'll give you an A," or "It's your turn." His examples are typical utterances and transcription systems in the EFL middle school classroom. Based on this model, the transcription symbols suitable to the setting are required. The transcription notation symbols are from Lazaraton (2002). Each turn is chunked by a unit that has a minimal meaning in the utterances. The transcription can not record phonetic symbols because the research just focuses on the meaning of interactions and their patterns.

4. IRE Pattern

4.1 The IRE Sequences

Most of the teacher-student interactions follow the IRE interactional sequence. The IRE sequence begins with teacher initiation, followed by student response, and then teacher's evaluation to students' response (Mehan, 1979). The structures of teacher's evaluation are different depending on whether the student's responses are correct or not. If student's response is incorrect, the teacher ignores it and simply gives a second initiation.

Excerpt 1 (Class 01 B)

210	T: Shouldn't? ... louder...	Initiation
211	S: Camper fire, there makes a fire...	Response
212	T: Oh very good,	Evaluation
213	Very good.	

In each excerpt the class number means the class period, and the letter such as A and B means the side of a recording tape. In the excerpt 1, the teacher asks a question as a form of initiation and makes an evaluation after student's response. In some cases, a teacher makes use of an affirmative evaluation to the student response. The teacher praises student's answer with two turns of repetitions, for the teacher recognizes that the student's response is correct. In line 212, the teacher takes student's turn with praise after he/she realizes that the student answer is correct. After the evaluation, the teacher repeats it to the students in line 213. The second evaluation also represents that the teacher prepares for a new initiation.

4.2 Types of Initiation**4.2.1 Request and Giving Direction**

In the classroom interaction, teacher speaks some types of initiation to students (Cullen, 1998; Johnson, 1998; Mehan, 1979; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). The main types of teacher initiation are display or referential question, order, request, and giving direction (Shim, 2006). The types are largely dependent on the teacher motivation and the class topic that they treat during the period of class.

Excerpt 2 (Class 01 A)

001	T: Let's see page eighty-one	giving direction
002	S: yes, (noise)	
003	T: Lesson five.	giving direction
004	Lesson five of lesson five.	

The excerpt 2 indicates teacher initiates as a feature of 'giving direction.' The

feature mostly begins with the introduction of the class task or topic by the teacher. In the lines 001 and 003, the teacher gives direction so that the students may concentrate on the lesson. The pattern is similar to the task of 'request' in eliciting students concern.

The excerpt 3 shows the 'request' which usually occurs in eliciting or explaining new information by the teacher. In lines 027, 029, and 031, 'request' is weaker utterance than 'order' relatively. The teacher makes use of it as a type of request repeatedly in directing the tasks of game or dictation. In this task, the teacher tries to control students in order to help them concentrate on the class.

Excerpt 3 (Class 03 A)

025	T: Well, are you ready for to play the game, ok?	giving direction
026	S: Wait! ...	
027	T: Listen carefully and please follow the direction.	request
028	S: Wait! ...	
029	T: Please write the month you were born.	request

The tables 1 and 2 indicate the teacher initiation as request and giving direction in each period of class. The tasks that each teacher treats are different though they intend to initiate their turn for students response. The teachers frequently choose 'request' task more than 'giving direction.' The rate of 'giving direction' is 4.7% in class A and 3.5% in class B, which is quite similar in frequency.

Table 2
Request and Giving Direction in Class A (Unit: turn)

Class	01A	01B	02A	02B	03A	03B	04A	04B	Total (%)
Request	10	43	55	17	42	18	14	14	213(8.5%)
Giving direction	16	3	4	4	25	21	21	24	118(4.7%)

Table 3
Request and Giving Direction in Class B (Unit: turn)

Class	05A	05B	06A	06B	07A	07B	08A	08B	Total (%)
Request	161	112	36	53	85	115	66	41	669(19.7%)

Giving direction	31	14	28	32	8	0	1	6	120(3.5%)
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The rate of 'request,' however, differs from in two classes. Class B employs request type almost twice times more than class A. The figure indicates that class A focuses on giving information provided directly for the students in order to make them understood in the teacher intention, while class B prefers to lead the communicative environment so that the students may react to the teacher initiation.

4.2.2 Question, Confirmation, and Order

The excerpt 4 shows the example of 'display question' in teacher initiation. The task of display question means that a teacher already knows the students' answer and just tries to check their response. The lines 003 and 005 show the teacher initiation for students' formulaic reaction in the beginning of the class. After practice of display question, the teacher changes the topic into a review part while she explains the grammar points.

Excerpt 4 (Class 04 A)

003	T: Everyone, what day is today?	display question
004	S: June twelfth.	
005	T: What date is?	display question
006	S: Wednesday!	
007	T: Good, Wednesday, ok.	confirmation

Other minor factor in teacher initiation is the task of 'order' that is a type of strong expression to the students. From the beginning of a task in the class, the teacher initiates a weak form of expression to the students in line 533 as 'request.' The teacher asks the students with a step further and compels them to answer the request. The second type that the teacher speaks is the 'order' in line 535. Because the teacher does not receive the students reaction, the teacher speaks 'order' again with high intonation in line 537.

Excerpt 5 (05 B)

533	T: Read three sentences, any volunteer?	request
534	Ok, good.	
535	Ready, go.	order
536	S: ... ()	
537	T: Loudly, loudly.	order

Table 4
Frequency of Confirmation and Order (Class A)

Class	01A	01B	02A	02B	03A	03B	04A	04B	Total (%)
Confirmation	9	25	25	12	12	42	31	26	182 (7.2%)
Order	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4 (0.2%)

In the tables 4 and 5, the teachers speak 'confirmation' task more frequently than 'order' as a minor task. The teachers stress the text contents or their idea by confirmation, while they hardly speak 'order' type.

Table 5
Frequency of Confirmation and Order (Class B)

Class	05A	05B	06A	06B	07A	07B	08A	08B	Total (%)
Confirmation	42	32	0	10	21	29	18	4	156 (4.6%)
Order	0	2	1	4	0	0	0	1	8 (0.2%)

4.3 Modified IRE Patterns

The IRE can be modified during discourse because situation and task are different in the classroom. Erickson (1986) admits that the IRE is an ideal model of classroom communication. In reality, teachers and students make a variety of adjustments in these structures during classroom events. When students give unexpected or incorrect responses, teachers must make adjustments to either the academic task structures or the social participation structures, or both (Johnson, 1998).

4.3.1 Teacher Initiation-Tape Listening-Teacher Initiation-Student Reaction

In the EFL English classroom setting, the technical instruments such as a CD

or a cassette tape player assist the class tasks. The instruments are sometimes played as a role of native speaker, especially in listening and speaking tasks. With the instruments the teachers can practice the modified classroom patterns in that they add more than one turn before teacher initiation. Total recording time counted by Windows Media Player is seven hours, twenty-two minutes, and forty-six seconds. Mean time of tape listening (12.06%) is the second in each class, which is more than the amount of student talk. The data show that it is not easy to elicit students' utterance in teacher-centered classroom though teachers try to give them various cues.

Table 6
Talk Time: Teacher, Student, and Tape Listening

	Teacher	Student	Tape listening	Total
Class A	81.40%	7.11%	11.49%	100%
Class B	86.08%	9.27%	12.64%	100%
Mean	83.74%	08.19%	12.06%	100%

The example is a typical pattern of classroom discourse with cassette recording aids during English class. In this task the teacher begins the class with the tape listening. After listening to the sentence of the textbook in line 251, the teacher gives the second initiation as explaining in line 252. When the teacher recognizes that the students cannot understand the passage, he continues giving initiation to the students in line 253.

Excerpt 6 (Class 05 B)

250	T: Ok, next one.	teacher initiation
251	Tape: I was sad because the little mermaid died.	tape listening
252	T: What john's feeling?	teacher initiation
253	I was sad because, why?	

With the aid of tape listening, IRE can be added to two tasks: teacher initiation-tape listening. It also changed into other pattern: teacher initiation-tape listening-teacher initiation-student reaction-teacher evaluation. The

modified pattern is effective in students listening and understanding.

4.3.2 Tape Listening–Students and Teacher Repeating

The pattern occurs quite simply in listening and reading practice before the students listen to the teacher explaining. The pattern is also effective to students' pronunciation as well as listening practice, and teacher can control the class effectively without any feedback during the task. The excerpt 7 represents 'tape listening–students repeating' pattern. After listening to the scripts in the textbook, the students and the teacher repeat the sentences simultaneously. The symbol of bracket in line 268 and 269 indicates the overlap that they speak the sentence from the tape. While they interact each other, the tape listening plays as a native speaker.

Excerpt 7 (Class 02 B)

267 Tape: What does he look like?
268 S: [What does he look like?]
269 T: [What does he look like?]

4.3.3 Teacher Reading–Students Repeating

The turn in excerpt 8 is the example of 'teacher reading–students repeating' that shows two parts of interaction between a teacher and students. The students take one turn in order to repeat it after they listen to the teacher reading.

The excerpt 8 indicates a different teacher role in students' response. The teacher tries to be active in order to expect students reaction in reading practice. The teacher sometimes gives feedback to the students taking turns in lines 433, which can motivate the students to participate in the class. Teacher feedback is sometimes optional in the sequence of teacher reading–student repeating, which may be more effective in reading.

Excerpt 8 (Class 05 A)

430 T: Ok, ok, listen and repeat.
431 I am very upset.

432 S: I am very upset.

433 T: One more time.

In addition, the patterns are frequently employed as pronunciation and word learning practice. The teacher confirms the spelling of a word after playing the tape and asks the students to repeat the word with variable features in pronunciation. Rubin (1975) stresses that pronunciation practice is a primary strategy that directly affects learning. O'Malley and Chamot (1995) proposes that the strategy training in vocabulary studies be given individually or be provided to the groups using special audio equipment for each subject. That is, a teacher can present listening material to the students and asks them to repeat the words until they can pronounce the word correctly.

4.4 Six Types of Feedback

Feedback is related to the error correction provided by teacher. There can be six types of feedback to help students answer or elicit their following reaction and continue the sequence in the classroom (Cullen, 1998). Lyster and Ranta (1997) argues that there are two types of feedback in the classroom interaction. The structure-based feedback means that a teacher usually tends to concern with the structure that students make. On the other hand, the communication-based feedback occurs where the lesson focuses primarily on the meaning and the communication of messages.

The examples in this study represent the different types of feedback that the teachers usually choose as a critical strategy in the classroom interaction. The excerpts can be found in almost all classroom situations regardless of the periods of the class.

4.4.1 Explicit Correction

Explicit correction refers to the explicit utterance of the correct form by a teacher. When a teacher provides the correct form, he or she clearly indicates that what the student said is incorrect as shown in the excerpt below. The teacher correct the student's grammatical mistake with explicit explanation; S:

The dog run fastly. T: 'Fastly' doesn't exist. 'Fast' does not take '-ly.' (Lyster and Ranta, 1997)

Because the tasks of a class are not the same between ESL and EFL classes, the teacher technique and the classroom size can be different depending on the class types. Therefore, this study takes a similar conduct to the second language class. In this study there are some similarities in conducting the second language class.

Excerpt 9 (Class 05 A)

- 085 T: Right now, what is he doing?
 086 S: What he, *muri*[head]. doing,
 087 He doing ...
 088 T: Ok, *muri manjijo*[touch a head?] explicit correction
 089 How about *manjida*[touching] in English?
 090 S: Touch.
 091 T: He's touching, he's touching ... explicit correction

There are two types of teacher correction in the excerpt. When the student's answer is not correct, the teacher provides the correct form with speaking mother tongue in line 088. The teacher gives a new form of sentence when the student can not distinguish the tense.

4.4.2 Recast

Recast frequently occurs where a teacher repeats student's utterance by speaking correct form when students make mistakes. However, a teacher does not draw attention to the error but tries to maintain the meaning as a central focus between them. Therefore, the recast of meaning involves the teacher's reformulation of all or part of student's utterance. As a result, recast appears implicitly because a teacher does not intend to indicate or correct the student response directly. A teacher just introduces the correct form as a feedback indirectly while they are talking. In other words, a teacher provides a grammatical knowledge for students without any formal or direct instruction as observed in this research.

Excerpt 10 (Class 01 A)

- 219 T: Oh, what did a boy say?
 220 *Muerago iyagihajetjee*[what did you say?]
 221 S: Oh, heavy ...
 222 T: Boat is very heavy. recast

In the example, the teacher who does not give a full correction explicitly to the student makes use of recast in line 222, while she takes turn and completes the sentence implicitly. The teacher cares for students' anxiety or nervousness during interaction.

4.4.3 Clarification Request

Clarification request means that a teacher wants to know if his or her utterance has been misunderstood by students and the utterance is incorrect in some ways. Therefore, the confirmation of repetition or reformulation is required. Lyster and Ranta (1997) points out that a clarification request includes phrases so that a teacher may elicit the students' response such as 'Pardon me ...' It can also require a repetition feedback so as to indicate the student's error as a form of 'What do you mean by ...?'

Excerpt 11 (Class 05 B)

- 287 T: Mary was happy, why?
 288 She ...
 289 S: She...
 290 T: Who is she? Who is she? clarification request
 291 Little mermaid, the little mermaid, explicit correction
 292 Met who? clarification request
 293 Prince, right? explicit correction

4.4.4 Metalinguistic feedback

Metalinguistic feedback implies comments, information, or questions related to the well-formedness of the student's utterance though it does not explicitly provide the correct form. Metalinguistic comments generally indicate that there

is an error somewhere (for example, 'Can you find your error?'). That is, a teacher usually points to the nature of error by commenting on or providing information emphasizing on the form of a student's utterance (for example, 'Can you see where you made a mistake?') (Lyster and Ranta, 1997). The excerpt here shows very similar pattern of metalinguistic feedback to the ESL one.

Excerpt 12 (Class 01B)

- 041 T: *Ja*[Let see], let's check the answer.
 042 *Dabeul hwaikinhea bopsida*[Let's check the answer]
 043 *Ja*[Let see], look at *daeme muoyotsuo*
 [what's the next turn?]
 044 S: Look at ...
 045 T: Look at ... *chodabayo*[let's look at it.] metalinguistic feedback
 046 Look at them. recast

The line 045 from the excerpt of class 01B explains the petition feedback, for the teacher first takes the student's turn while he or she repeats the phrase. On the other hand, the teacher gives comment or information related to the student's utterance in order to support a clear meaning. While he or she employs metalinguistic strategies in line 045, the teacher also gives a clear answer to the student in line 046 as recast.

4.4.5 Elicitation

Elicitation has three types of strategies that a teacher intends to elicit and correct students' utterance explicitly. First, a teacher elicits it by completing his or her own utterance. Second, a teacher asks a question to provide correct forms. Third, a teacher occasionally asks students to employ the exact form of their utterance.

Excerpt 13 (Class 01 A)

- 242 T: *jumsim sigan iya*. [It's time to lunch.]
ie pyohyuneul eyounghaseyo [using this expression.]

243	It's time for ...	elicitation
244	S: Lunch... oh!...	
245	T: Oh: you! you can do it.	affirmative feedback
246	<i>Ja, Gee-whan, teebee volsiganiya</i> [Well, Gee-whan, it's time to watch TV.]	
247	S: It's time for ...	
248	T: It's time for...	elicitation
249	S: ...watching TV.	
250	T: It's time for watching TV... right?	recast, confirmation

The line 245 from the excerpt of class 01A shows the similar example of recast or praise with an affirmative response to the student reaction after the teacher gives them elicitation in line 243. The teacher speaks another feedback in line 248. After taking the student turn in line 247, the teacher gives feedback to the student as elicitation in line 248, which helps the student to complete sentences in lines 247 and 249. Finally, the teacher gives confirmation feedback to the student in line 250, which also indicates the teacher recast because the teacher completes student's turn as a full sentence.

4.4.6 Repetition

The repetitive nature of teacher's requests and instructions typically happens in teaching (Richards and Lockhart, 2005) the student's wrong utterances. In most cases, a teacher tries to adjust the intonation so as to highlight the error, so the repetition is frequently followed by recast. Teacher repetition occurs in a response to the student's answer which is shown in the excerpts of class 05A of section 4.4.3 [Teacher Reading-Students Repeating] in 4.3 [Modified IRE Patterns]. The teacher also speaks with a high intonation by stressing on the word, 'upset.' The teacher frequently stresses the specific words or phrases in order to emphasize them or lead the students to concern with the class. The type of repetition is somewhat similar to the pattern of echoing between teacher and students, especially in listening and reading class.

5. Implications

Lyster and Ranta (1997) analyzes the different feedback types in the content-based French immersion classes. They insist that all teachers employ recast more than any other type of feedback. The different types of feedback are presented in the order of the highest to lowest frequency. They find out that recasts accounted for more than half of the total feedback provided in the four classes. Repetition was the least frequent feedback type provided. The other types of corrective feedback fell in between. They say that some types of feedback occur in combination with each other. The order of feedback in their experiment is from recast through repetition: recast → elicitation → clarification request → metalinguistic feedback → explicit correction → repetition.

In the excerpt of class 14, the teacher reacts to the student response as metalinguistic feedback in lines 127 and 128. The teacher takes the student turn and intends to give the student more information on the word. As the student can not pronounce the word exactly, the teacher makes use of metalinguistic feedback as a question form.

Excerpt 14 (Class 01 B)

- 124 T: Well ... Who appeared?
 125 A ...
 126 S: Square, *claramgee*[squirrel]...
 127 T: How can you read it? metalinguistic feedback (question)
 128 Square square. It means four-angles? metalinguistic feedback (question)
 129 S: (Squirrel) ...
 130 T: Squirrel, squirrel, squirrel, right? recast, repetition, confirmation
 131 Please read it.
 132 S: (Squirrel).
 133 T: Oh, squirrel, very good, well... repetition, praise

The data also show the multi-function of feedback in teacher talk, which indicates that teacher's feedback implies more than one feature after taking the student response. For example, the teacher expresses recast or repetition to the student's answer in line 130. The teacher tries to correct the student's

pronunciation of a word and repeats it many times. The teacher's feedback also implies the confirmation check though Lyster and Ranta (1997) does not include it as a category of feedback. In this study, the line 133 also has two functions of teacher's feedback: repetition and praise. From the excerpts, however, the researcher insists that the categories of teacher's feedback should be extended to meet the teacher intention, especially in low level EFL classroom context.

6. Conclusion

This study analyzes the classroom interaction in the middle school English classroom in EFL context. The scripts from two classes show that a teacher systematically uses elicitation, response, and feedback. The results implies that a teacher makes use of some strategies in order to negotiate with the students.

First, there some types of teacher initiation mentioned by other ESL studies. Depending on the class topic that the teachers teach, the initiations are different. The dominant types are request and giving direction in treating the class topic or at the beginning of the class, while they use other types such as question, confirmation, and order during the class.

Second, the IRE patterns mostly can be modified depending on teacher's intention that a teacher treats in each period of class. The excerpts in the scripts prove that a teacher usually changes the sequences by employing modified patterns such as teacher initiation- tape listening- teacher initiation- student reaction, tape listening- student and teacher repeating, and teacher reading- students repeating. The new sequences indicate that a teacher gives corrective feedback to the students or help their uptake.

Third, the six types of teacher's feedbacks can be observed. This study, however, tries to find out whether the order of feedbacks observed in the ESL environment can be applied to the EFL class. The boundaries of classification are not clear enough to distinguish the differences. That is, there may be unclear situations depending on teacher intention or students recognition during their interaction.

A teacher tries to adjust some tasks by giving and developing additional

tasks. Though the data comes from two classrooms of the second-year middle school, it is meaningful in that the analysis of the scripts is based on the natural classroom setting without any interference or anxiety such as visual supports, class attendance, or interview with students.

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