

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The study is aimed at investigating the types of formulaic expressions used in interactions between teacher and EYL learners in semi-immersion classroom context. The issues regarding the linguistics and sociocultural influences during the interactions were also investigated. Celce-Murcia (2007) argued that having only the ability in understanding grammar and pronunciation is seen as not enough for learner to be able to create good communication; it is believed then, that learners need also to understand a competence known as formulaic competence. By having the ability to comprehend this type of competence, it is hoped that learners could express more natural and fluent language. This section, further, is divided into six parts. It explains the background of the topic, scope of the study, research problems, research objectives, research significances, and research proposal organisations.

1.1. Background

A statement by Foster (2011) who shows that at least one-third to one-half of language is composed of formulaic element might be one of the reasons why doing research regarding the use of formulaic expressions is really needed. Recently, there has been a growing interest in the nature and role of formulaic language units. Researchers mostly agree that formulaic language is basic to language development, processing, production, and learning and that understanding formulaic expressions is seen as useful to create good flow in conversation and deliver meaning appropriately in context. Celce-Murcia (2008) who is well-known for her theory of the revised communicative competence, stated that language learners must not only learn grammar and pronunciation but also formulaic expressions to communicate. According

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to her, the goal of teaching and learning is enabling students to communicate fluently and accurately by creating texts based on the context. Formulaic competence, as one component in communicative competence is believed as ‘tool’ to help students having the ability to encounter nature language in the communication. That competence refers to those fixed and prefabricated chunks of language that are used in everyday interactions including collocations, idioms, lexical frames, and routines (Murcia, 2008). Conklin & Schmitt (2008) added by saying that formulaic sequences are becoming increasingly obvious that much of the communicative content of language is tied to the expressions which are linked to a single meaning or pragmatic function giving them considerable semantic or pragmatic utility.

A growing body of studies, further, try to relate the expressions with language acquisition and production. Studies believe that ready-made chunks or preferred sequences of words play a significant part in language acquisition (Ellis, 2005). He argued that those multiword lexical units are integral to first and second language acquisition as they are segmented from input and stored as wholes in long-term memory. It is why Ellis proposes that an emphasis to input and interaction to facilitate acquisition of a repertoire of formulaic language will then be beneficial. The role of the teacher is then said to be important. A teacher needs to give appropriate assistance to help learners successfully acquire the language. In the case of young children learning as second/foreign language, participating in classroom activities helps promoting learning of language and other cognitive skills, and taking advantage of classroom resources to shape one’s own language learning experiences. There is then, a need for involving formulaic expression in a more explicit and rigorous classroom activity to make it part of learner’s language repertoire (Celce-Murcia, 2000). This type of learners needs guidance to gain the knowledge they are learning which means that the existence of adults to support their learning plays an important role.

The idea is in line with the sociocultural theory proposed by Vygotsky (1980). The theory believed that human cognition is formed through engagement in social activities and that social relationships are seen as important in language acquisition process. It is believed that social interaction plays an important role in student learning. It is through social interaction that students learn from each other, as well as adult (teacher). The area in which the students need the interaction from teachers is called Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) where the most powerful form of learning takes place (Thompson, 2013). ZPD explains that the language acquisition is accomplished through teacher's guidance and collaboration with more capable peers. It is believed that student will learn best when working together with others during joint collaboration, and it is through such collaborative endeavours with more skilled person that student learns and internalize new concepts, psychological tools, and skills. Instruction and learning are then occur in the zone of proximal development. It is said that when students are in this zone, they can be successful by having such instructional help, especially form the teacher. Swain, Kinnear, and Steinman (2011) stated that through collaboration and interaction, students achieve more than they could have achieved if they had been working alone.

Regarding young learner learning language, Mercer and Fisger (1992) in Corden (2000) added by saying that the factor in determining young learners' learning potential will be nature of discourse and the quality of the teacher's intervention. It is then, the duty of the teacher to build up classroom interaction through learning experience to encourage learners to stay in practice. A guidance, support, and aid from teacher or peers are very useful to achieve the desired expressions emerged in the interaction in order to be learners' comprehensible input on how to use the language appropriately.

This study is then interested in investigating the use of formulaic expression in teacher-student interactions since there are not many studies trying to observe the production and acquisition of the expressions, especially in young learner classroom context. Fourth-grade of primary school students as the representation of young learners and their classroom teacher were chosen to be the sample of the study. Both subjects were chosen since it would be crucial to analysed the teacher's production of formulaic expressions instead of just analysing the students' production. By analysing also the teacher's production, the input would be investigated to further try to correlate the input and the output of students' formulaic expressions. The way the learners acquired and produced formulaic expressions as well as the problems encountering them was being observed. This was crucial since by knowing the problems surrounding, it was hoped that further some solutions could remove the upcoming problems. In relation to sociocultural theory proposed by Vygotsky; observing linguistic and sociocultural influences in the interactions between teacher and learners especially while producing formulaic expression was also taken into consideration. This was also related to the framework of the study proposed by Celce-Murcia about communicative competence that all competences are actually interrelated and that sociocultural influences exist in learning language. General attentions of formulaic competence presented in the seminal work by Pawley and Syder (1983), Pawley (1992), Nattinger and DeCarrito (1992), Celce-Murcia (2008), Biber et al (1999; 2004), Ellis (1994) will be used as the main frameworks in this study.

1.2. Scope of the Study

The study is limited merely at examining the use of formulaic expressions in teacher-student interactions. It focuses on the types and frequency of formulaic expressions employed in the

interactions and the problems encountering the students in the production of formulaic expressions. Besides, its linguistics and sociocultural influences in producing formulaic expressions in the interactions is also taken into consideration. Formulaic expressions, as mentioned in the study are those proposed by Murcia (2008) which defines it as those fixed and prefabricated chunks of language that speakers use in everyday conversation; meanwhile the types of formulaic expressions used in the study follows what Biber et al. (1999) stated in Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English which consists of multi-word units (MWUs), collocations, idiomatic phrases, binomial expressions, inserts, and lexical bundles.

1.3. Research Problems

These following questions are addressed to achieve the stated purpose:

1. What are the types of formulaic expressions employed in teacher-student interactions and how frequent are they used in the interactions?
2. What problems do students encounter in using formulaic expressions in the interactions?
3. What are -if any- linguistics and sociocultural influences in using formulaic expressions in the interactions?

1.4. Research Objectives

Based on the research questions, the following objectives are proposed:

1. To investigate the types and frequency of formulaic expressions employed in teacher-student interactions.
2. To investigate the problems that students encounter in using formulaic expressions in the interactions.

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3. To investigate linguistics and sociocultural influences in using formulaic expressions in the interactions.

1.5. Research Significances

Two areas are presented for having significances regarding the study. Theoretically, the study aims at examining the types and frequency of formulaic expression employed in teacher-student interactions, as well as the problems encountering students in using the expressions and its linguistics and sociocultural influences while producing the expressions. This study is intended to support the theory proposed by Celce-Murcia (2008) about communicative competence especially the formulaic competence one. The results are then hoped to enrich the literature on the area of formulaic competence.

Practically, this study can help raising teachers and students' awareness on the importance of using formulaic expressions in interaction and the role of it to improve fluency and naturalness in communication. The information in this study will also be beneficial for young learner teachers to help young learners acquire formulaic expressions.

1.6. Definition of Terms

The following are key terms which are used in the study.

1. Formulaic expressions

Formulaic expressions are “those fixed and prefabricated chunks of language that speakers use heavily in everyday interactions” (Celce-Murcia, 2008).

2. Sociocultural or Sociolinguistic Competence

According to Johnson (2004:87), sociocultural or sociolinguistic competence can be defined as “the ability to use the grammatical rules that are appropriate to a given social context”.

1.7. Research Organization

This research is organized into five chapters. Chapter I is aimed at giving general description and background regarding the topic of the research. It examines the background of the topic, scope of the study, research problems, research objectives, research significances, and definition of terms. Chapter II describes the theories underlying the research. This chapter involves review of related literatures which are grouped into the following sections; (1) the nature of communicative competence, (2) formulaic expression: types and relation to children language acquisition, (3) teaching formulaic expression to young learner, (4) portraying Vygotskian sociocultural theory and the zone of proximal development, and (5) language problems encountering ESL learners. Review of previous studies under the topic of formulaic competence is also presented in the chapter. Chapter III deals with research methodology which includes research design, data collection techniques, and data analysis techniques. Chapter IV presents findings and discussions of the data which had been collected in order to answer the research questions proposed. At last, chapter V presents conclusion and suggestions based on the study.

