Reconstructing Teachers' Language Intervention for Phonological Aspects in EFL Classroom

Susanto[1,2]*, Deri Sis Nanda[1], Wan Irham Ishak[3]
[1]English Education Department, Universitas Bandar Lampung, Indonesia
[2]Center for Studies in Linguistics, Universitas Bandar Lampung, Indonesia
[3]Akademi Pengajian Bahasa, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia

Abstract: Teachers' language intervention can play a key role in helping students in the classroom interaction to learn a foreign language. In this paper, we discuss the teacher's language intervention for phonological aspects in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. We used a qualitative descriptive approach with a phenomenological research design. As the data, we recorded the language exchanges between the students and their teachers at the fifth year of a Primary School (_Sekolah Dasar_) in Bandar Lampung, Indonesia. We categorized three types of teachers' language intervention, i.e. focalization, correction, and solicitation. Focalization intervention is manifested by the production of a lexical element. The intervention was observed in three situations, namely when reading familiar and unfamiliar English short stories, and playing a game with cards containing English words with their respective pictures, introduced in the stories. The teachers' language interventions were coded in relation to phonological aspects, i.e. phoneme, syllable, and rhyme. The results show that there are 159 interventions in total. The teachers' language interventions have the number of speech turns and the duration of the interactions varied in accordance with the context of situation., the Speech-turns mostly occur in reading unfamiliar English stories either for focalization, correction, or solicitation. Thus, this study concluded that teachers intervened more often in reading time of unfamiliar English stories, used focalization more frequently in the intervention, and utilized syllables more preferably as the focus in the intervention. As the implication, variability in the frequency and nature of interventions by the teachers could be at the origin of the differences observed in the performance of students.

INTRODUCTION

Language interventions are broadly defined as instructional interactions designed to improve language competency (Neugebauer et al., 2017; Vonkova et al., 2021; Weiss, 1993). It is a deliberate setting of experiences which can enhance students' understanding and language expression. The language intervention of a teacher is able to play a key role in helping students' interaction in the classroom to learn a foreign language (Chang & Lin, 2019; Schmid, 2010). The different atmosphere which involves an interaction between a teacher (adult) and a student (child) such as reading books, (Huebner, 2000; Karrass & Rieker, 2005), singing children songs (Baleghizadeh & Dargahi, 2010; Bryant et al., 1989; Riordan et al., 2018; Sayakhan &

Bradley, 2019), and playing games (Chou, 2014; Gozcu & Caganaga, 2016; LeMonda & Bornstein, 2002; Silvén et al., 2002), has significant impacts in improving language competency. In such contexts, the adult speech productions in process of language exchanges with the child, and also correlations between such exchange frequency and language skills of the child show that the exchanges favor the acquisition of vocabulary and the development of language skills. For instance, the discussion on reading stories can give students an opportunity to discover new words (Mart, 2012).

In addition to reading stories, learning rhymes also can help them to develop vocabulary. It also provides a chance for teachers to teach students about the phonological aspects by telling them that the words can be broken down into separable sound elements (Chard & Osborn, 1999; Graaff et al., 2009; Høien et al., 1995; Vihman et al., 2004). It then enables teachers to correct inappropriate speech productions of students (Huebner, 2000). Further, they also can facilitate the perception of the phonological characteristics of words due to the greater articulatory precision of language addressed to the students. Their speech intelligibility can be linked to phonological skills and the development of phonological representations (Carroll & Snowling, 2004).

With the language intervention, teachers can train students by encouraging them to repeat new words and correct pronunciation errors. Hence, the teacher can contribute to increasing students' vocabulary. This solicitation allows students to have the precise phonological representations of the words which can be practiced by correcting a badly pronounced sound or an incomplete syllable. The teacher can encourage students to correct their own articulation. This can be exercised through language games such as finding words that end in certain rhymes. Furthermore, the teacher can encourage students to make analogies between different rhymes.

One of the problems faced by students is in learning English vocabularies (Indrayadi, 2021; Mariyam & Musfiroh, 2019; Neugebauer et al., 2017; Yang et al., 2020). Although there are many contributions that have been made by teachers through their language interventions in classrooms, few have analyzed the teacher's language interventions for phonological aspects in foreign language teaching. As such, this research focusing on teachers' language interventions for phonological aspects hopefully can contribute for the module development of vocabulary learning. In this research, it explores and discusses the language interventions conducted by teachers in EFL classrooms based on Weiss' study on language intervention (Weiss, 1993) and McMahon's study on the phonological aspects of English (McMahon, 2002).

According to Kaiser and Roberts (2012), there has been a progress in research related to language interventions, for example in terms of discussing social, symbolic and pre-linguistic foundations for spoken language, language interventions applied by parents, language bases for literacy, the relationship between language and social behavior and use of additional modes of communication. Another relevant research is analyzing phonology in a second language (Hummel & French, 2010), phonological constraint analysis in EFL class (Al-Rubaat & Alshammari, 2019), phonological analysis and foreign language anxiety in distance language learning (Bosmans & Hurd, 2016), analysis of phonological problems at school meetings (Thakur, 2020), in which each of those studies recommended the intervention measures.

In this research, we focused on the teacher's language interventions in three categories, i.e. focalization, correction, and solicitation. Focalization intervention

is manifested by the production of a lexical element. Correction intervention corresponds to the rectification by the teacher of the student' error. Solicitation intervention refers to the way in which a teacher uses procedures in order to make students produce certain knowledge. We observed those interventions in three situations, namely when reading familiar and unfamiliar English short stories, and playing a game with cards containing English words, with their respective pictures, introduced in the stories. Then, the teachers' language interventions were coded in relation to phonological aspects, i.e. phoneme, syllable and rhyme.

METHOD

In this study, we used a qualitative descriptive approach with a phenomenological research design (Creswell, 2012, 2017; Johnson & Christensen, 2014), through which we described the language intervention that the teachers did for the phonological aspects. With this approach, we were able to investigate the experiences of the teacher and student with language interventions in the classroom, so that we could gain deeper insights. The participants are the students (n = 18) and the English teachers (n = 3) at the fifth year of a Primary School (*Sekolah Dasar*) in Lampung Province, Indonesia, i.e. SD Muhammadyah 1 Bandar Lampung. To collect data, we recorded the language exchanges between the students and their teachers in an EFL classroom. The recording has been done for four months with Sony ICD-TX660 Digital Voice Recorder. The language exchanges being observed were classified into three situations. The first situation corresponded to a reading time during which the teachers read English stories to the students. The stories, in which the students were familiar with, were selected by the teachers. The second situation also corresponded to a reading time, but the stories were new or unfamiliar to the students. Finally, the third situation was playing a game with cards consisting of English words, with their picture on each of them introduced in the story.
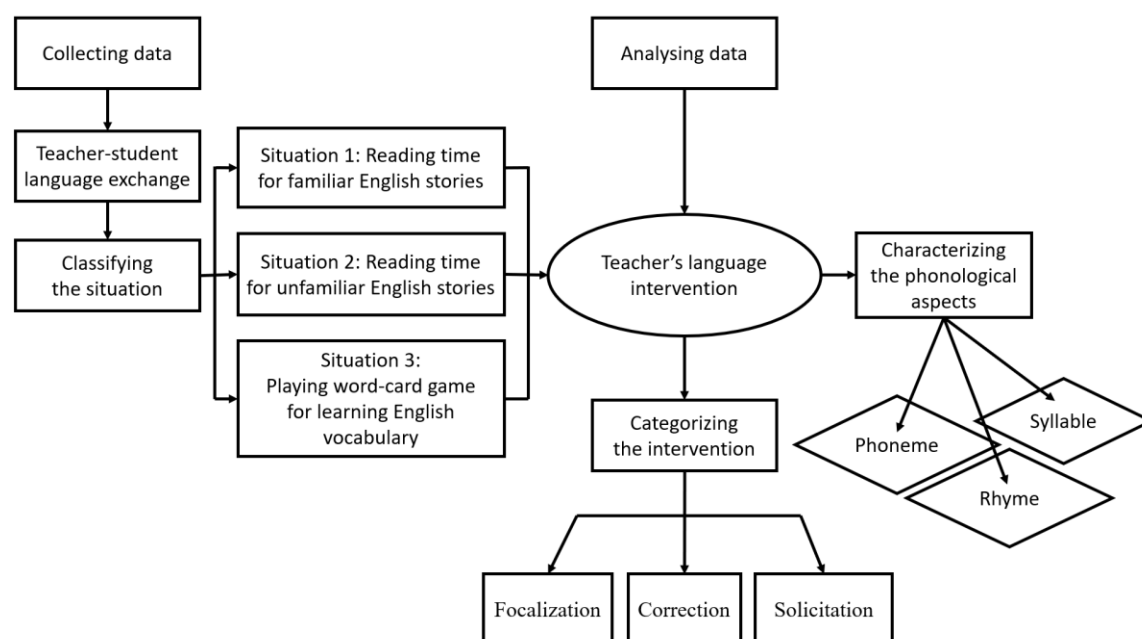
Figure 1. The Flowchart of Research Procedure from Collecting the Data to Analyzing the Teacher's Language Intervention

In this study, we used five English short stories entitled "Jack and the Beanstalk", "The Sneaky Rabbit", "Little Red Riding Hood", "Spy Cat", and "The Clever Monkey" derived from www.britishcouncil.org (British Council, 2017). The flowchart of research procedure from collecting data of a teacher-student language exchange for analyzing the teacher's language intervention is shown in Figure 1.

In analyzing the teachers' language interventions for phonological aspects, the data were characterized in accordance with their nature and the unit concerned, i.e. phoneme, syllable and rhyme. Then, we also categorized three types of interventions, i.e. focalization, correction, and solicitation. Firstly, focalization intervention is manifested by the production of a lexical element, either formulated in isolation or separated from the rest of the statement with a pause. Here, focalization allows the teacher to highlight not only a word but also phonemes, syllables and rhymes, by segmenting it and putting an intonation on this specific unit, or even by pointing the images to the rhyme of the segmented units. Secondly, correction intervention corresponds to the rectification by the teacher of an error in the word produced by the students. The teacher repeated the words correctly for the students. This correction shows the teacher's sensitivity to a word whose unit is incorrectly pronounced. Thridly, solicitation intervention refers to the way in which the teacher uses procedures in order to make the students produce certain knowledge. As an example, the solicitation corresponds to the syllable deleted by the teacher, then expecting the students to complete and find the word.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this study, we find that the teachers' language interventions have the number of speech-turns and the duration of interactions which vary in accordance with situations. As described in Figure 2 for the situation of reading time, there are two kinds of situations. The first, the teacher is reading familiar English stories for the students. The second, the teacher is reading unfamiliar English stories for the students. One of the familiar English stories is "Jack and the Beanstalk" because the students have known it from their previous class. The students have known the characters and the plot of the story. Then one of the unfamiliar English stories is "Little Red Riding Hood" because the story is new for the students.

(a)   (b)

Figure 2. The Situation of Reading Time in the Classroom; (a) Situation 1: Reading Familiar English Story "Jack and the Beanstalk", (b) Situation 2: Reading Unfamiliar English Story "Little Red Riding Hood"

In both situations, the teachers conducted language interventions: focalization, correction and solicitation (Table 1). For the third situation, namely playing a game with cards in which there are pictures for describing the English words introduced in the stories (Figure 3), the teachers also carried out those three kinds of language interventions.

Table 1. Examples of Focalization, Correction and Solicitation Interventions

	Focalization Intervention (from Situation 1 with the story "Jack and the Beanstalk")
T1	When Jack's mother saw the beans, she was very …?
	Do you know what it is? (The teacher points to the picture expressing "angry face")
S8	Face
T1	Face, angry face. Angry /æŋ/ - /gri/. (The teacher segments the word "angry" into syllables)
	She was very … (pointing to the face picture expressing "angry")?
S8	Angry
	Correction Intervention (from Situation 2 with the story "Little Red Riding Hood")
T2	The woodcutter hit the wolf over the head. (The teacher points the picture of a wolf)
S15	Wolf. (The students pronounced /wolf/)
T2	/wʊlf/ (The teacher corrects the word "wolf" which is mispronounced by the student)
	Solicitation Intervention (from Situation 3 with the story "The Clever Monkey")
T3	What is it? (The teacher points the picture of "crocodile")
S18	Mmm… (The student cannot answer the question)
T3	It is a croco…? (The teacher says /krɒkə/ and deletes the syllable /daɪl/)
S18	Crocodile.

Notes: "T" means Teacher; "S" means Student.
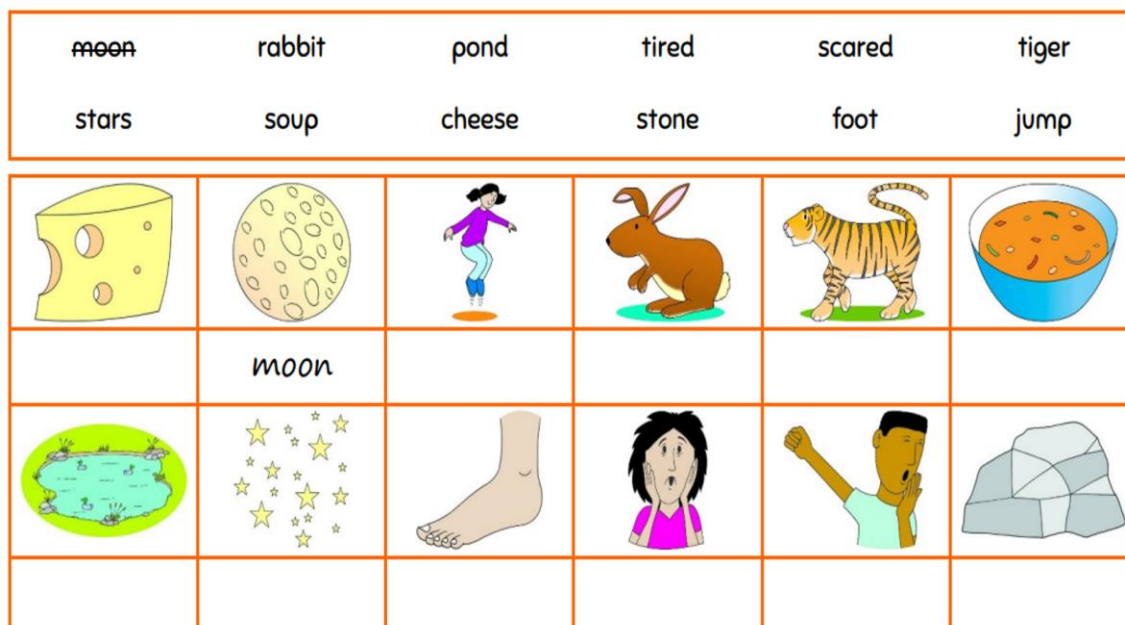
Figure 3. Some Words and Pictures being Used in the Word-card Game (Situation 3) (British Council, 2017)
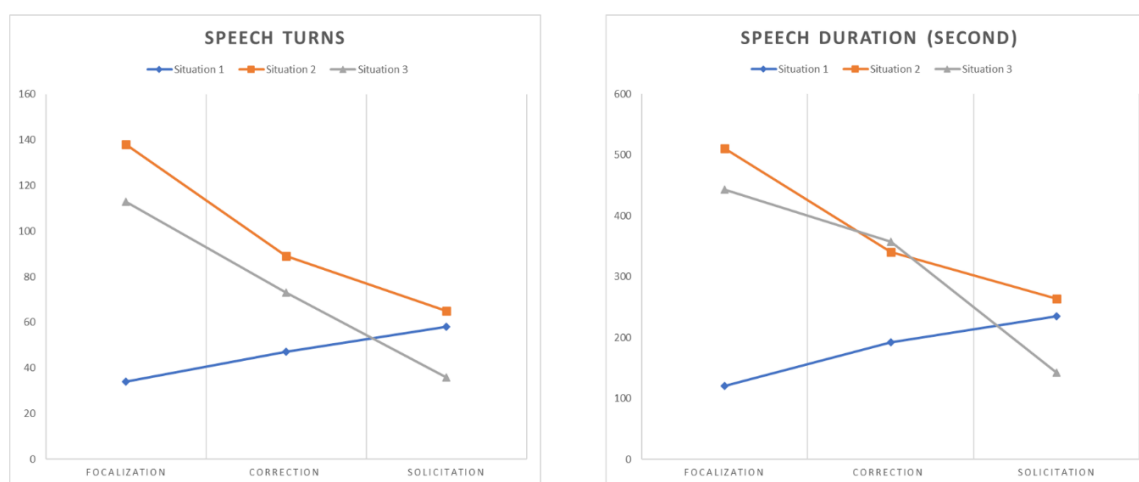
For the speech turns and the duration of the interactions as described in Figure 4, the speech turns range from 34 (focalization in Situation 1) to 138 (focalization in Situation 2) and the speech duration ranges from 120 seconds (focalization in Situation 1) to 510 seconds (focalization in Situation 2). Mostly the speech turns occur in Situation 2 either for focalization (138), correction (89), or solicitation (65).

Further, the speech duration of focalization (510) and solicitation (264) in Situation 2 is longer than the others, but it competes with that of correction (357) in Situation 3 which is a little bit longer than that of correction (340) in Situation 2. The speech duration in both Situation 2 and Situation 3 turns down from focalization (510; 443), correction (340; 357) to solicitation (264; 142) respectively. Yet, the speech duration in Situation 1 turns up (i.e. 190, 192 and 235).

If the speech turn and the speech duration can scale up the dynamic language exchange (Os et al., 2020; Oviatt et al., 2004), then it is able to be interpreted that the dynamic interaction is mostly occurred in the reading time for unfamiliar English stories (Situation 2). It is triggered by a curiosity of the students who know more about the stories read in the classroom. We can also find the high dynamic interaction in the playing word-card game (Situation 3). The students actively respond the pictures shown to them by uttering spontaneously the words by which they have learned from the stories.

Figure 4. The Speech Turns and the Duration of the Interactions

Moreover, based on data, we find that there are interventions in terms of focalization, correction, and solicitation in all situations. As exemplified in Table 1, in the focalization intervention, the teacher highlighted the word "angry" by first deleting it from the interrogative sentence *"When Jack's mother saw the beans, she was very...?"*. Then with the picture of "angry face", the students were stimulated to utter the correct word. When they cannot answer it correctly, the word was segmented into syllables /æŋ/ and /gri/. It finally urges them to complete the sentence.

In addition to the correction intervention, the teacher tried to rectify the students' error in uttering English words as in the word "wolf" by which the students were uttering it as /wolf/ instead of /wʊlf/. In that case, the teacher was reading the sentence "The woodcutter hit the wolf over the head" from the story "Little Red Riding Hood". Then the teacher showed the picture of a wolf and tried to help the students to pronounce the correct vowel sound /ʊ/ in the word which was previously pronounced incorrectly.

Meanwhile, in the solicitation intervention, the teacher used procedures to help the students produce certain knowledge such as the names of animals in English as exemplified in Table 1. In that case, the teacher displayed and pointed the picture of the animal "crocodile", and asked the students the name of such animal. The students cannot answer the question. Then the teacher said

"It is a croco…?" where the syllable /daɪl/ was not pronounced after saying /krɒkə/ with rising intonation and long duration of the last syllable with the hope that they can complete and find the correct word. From such process, the students finally can answer it correctly by saying "Crocodile" together.

In data analysis, we have 159 interventions in total as presented in Table 2 which shows from all interventions conducted by the teachers, the most used mode of intervention is focalization (70) or representing 44 % of all interventions, following correction (52) representing 32.7 %, and solicitation (37) representing 23.3 % respectively. Yet, the preferred mode of intervention varies, relying on the teacher. The Teacher 2 and the Teacher 3, in fact, used focalization more frequently than correction and solicitation, while the Teacher 1 used correction more frequently than focalization and solicitation (Figure 4).

Figure 5 shows that focalization (31) and solicitation (14) interventions were mostly used by the Teacher 3. Meanwhile, correction intervention (20) was mostly used by the Teacher 2, and it also can be seen that the Teacher 1 used the least interventions among the teachers in the classroom, i.e. focalization (15) and solicitation (10). However, for the Teacher 1, correction intervention (17) was mostly done. The frequency of the interventions conducted by the teachers could be influenced by the situation in the classroom, so that the preferred modes of interventions are variously found.

Table 2. Interventions Conducted by the Teachers

	Focalization	%	Correction	%	Solicitation	%	Total	%
Teacher 1	15	9.4	17	10.7	10	6.3	42	26.4
Teacher 2	24	15.1	20	12.6	13	8.2	57	35.9
Teacher 3	31	19.5	15	9.4	14	8.8	60	37.7
Total	**70**	**44.0**	**52**	**32.7**	**37**	**23.3**	**159**	**100**
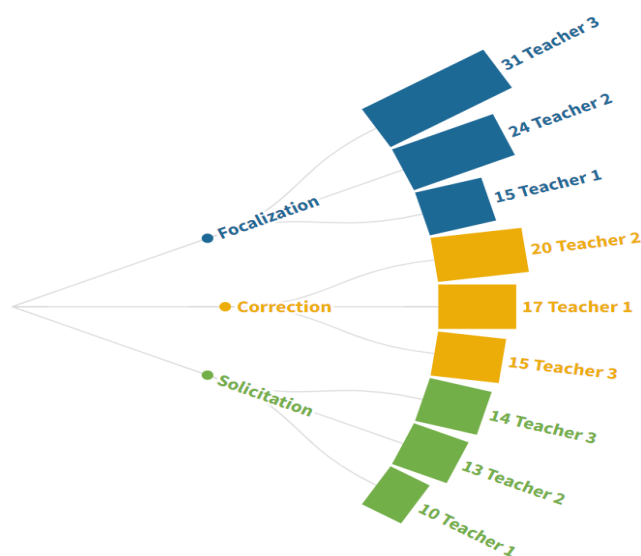
Figure 5. Language Intervention by each Teacher

According to the individual practices of the teachers, the context of interaction also have an impact on the frequency of intervention methods. As seen in Table 3, the interventions were most frequently used in Situation 2 (71 out of 159; 44.6 %) and least frequently used in Situation 1 (33 out of 159; 20.8 %). Meanwhile, in Situation 1, the solicitation (13) and correction (12)

interventions are mostly preferred to the focalization (8); and in both Situation 2 and Situation 3, the focalization (34; 28) is mostly preferred to correction (22; 18) and solicitation (15; 9) respectively.

Table 3. Interventions in the Context of Interaction

	Focalization	%	Correction	%	Solicitation	%	Total	%
Situation 1	8	5	12	7.6	13	8.2	33	20.8
Situation 2	34	21.4	22	13.8	15	9.4	71	44.6
Situation 3	28	17.6	18	11.3	9	5.7	55	34.6
Total	**70**	**44.0**	**52**	**32.7**	**37**	**23.3**	**159**	**100**

For all of the teachers, the phonological units in their interventions, as described in Table 4, were related mostly to syllables (99 out of 159; 62.3 %) and next to phonemes (43 out of 159; 27 %), but least to rhymes (17 out of 159; 10.7 %). Among the teachers, the Teacher 3 is the one who used the most interventions related to syllables (39; 24.5 %) and rhymes (10; 6.3 %). Meanwhile, the Teacher 2 is the one who used the most interventions related to phonemes (20; 12.6 %). In the context of interaction, as observed in Table 5, in all situations, syllables are the phonological units mostly used for the intervention, i.e. from the higher frequency Situation 2 (51; 32.1 %), Situation 3 (25; 15.7 %), to the lower frequency Situation 1 (23; 14.5 %).

Table 4. Phonological Units in the Teachers' Interventions

	Phoneme	%	Syllable	%	Rhyme	%	Total	%
Teacher 1	12	7.5	26	16.4	4	2.5	42.0	26.4
Teacher 2	20	12.6	34	21.4	3	1.9	57.0	35.9
Teacher 3	11	6.9	39	24.5	10	6.3	60.0	37.7
Total	**43**	**27.0**	**99**	**62.3**	**17**	**10.7**	**159.0**	**100**

Table 5. Phonological Units in the Context of Interaction

	Phoneme	%	Syllable	%	Rhyme	%	Total	%
Situation 1	6	3.8	23	14.5	4	2.5	33.0	20.8
Situation 2	16	10.1	51	32.1	4	2.5	71.0	44.7
Situation 3	21	13.2	25	15.7	9	5.7	55.0	34.6
Total	**43**	**27.0**	**99**	**62.3**	**17**	**10.7**	**159.0**	**100**
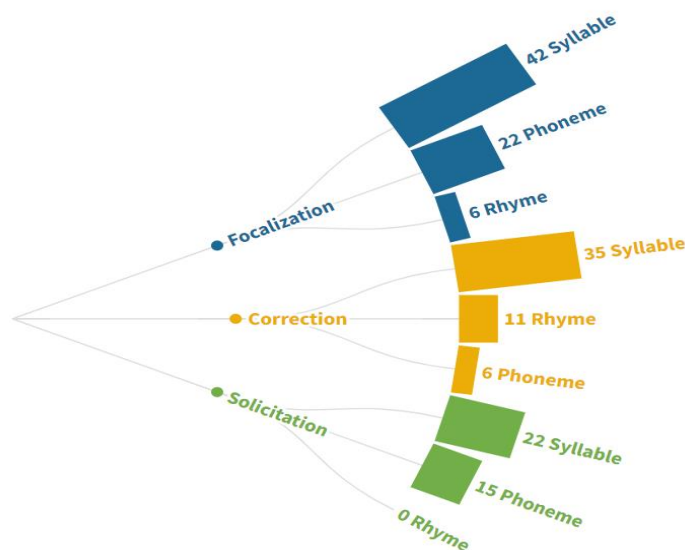
Figure 6. Phonological Units (Phoneme, Syllable and Rhyme) Focused on each Intervention

For the phonological units focused on each intervention, as seen in Figure 6, syllables (42; 35; 22) are mostly utilized in focalization, correction and solicitation respectively. The least frequency of phonological units utilized in focalization is rhymes (6) and in correction is phonemes (6). In addition, rhymes are used as the second preference in correction (11), the least one in focalization (6), and no preference in solicitation (0). It shows that the teachers prefer to focus on the phonological unit of syllables in their language interventions.

The analysis of the teacher's language intervention found in the language exchanges between the teachers and their students in EFL classrooms confirms the existence of the teacher's various interventions (Lovett et al., 2008). As discussed by Kaiser and Roberts (2012), children's phonological and vocabulary skills can be improved by language interventions. They can improve their limited vocabulary. They can also overcome difficulties in understanding the meaning of words and in learning the phonological system of language. In this study, we discuss more specifically on the categorization of the teachers' language interventions and what phonological aspects being the focus in the intervention process. In the analysis, categorizing different interventions based on their nature points out the type of interventions mostly used by the teachers is focalization, i.e. being manifested in the production of lexical elements, either formulated separately or made separate from the rest of the statements with pauses. We find that the teachers intervened more often in reading new English stories for the students (Situation 2), and utilized syllables more preferably.

Therefore, this study has shown that the environment has an influence on language development of the students through the language intervention done by the teachers. One of which is the emergence of phonological skills as in the influence of feedback from the adult (Hecht & Close, 2002; Mayo et al., 2003; Schuele & Boudreau, 2008; Smith, 1992; Snowling & Hulme, 1994). The students' linguistic environment comes into play and their linguistic skills are put in a place from the models presented by the teachers through their focalization, correction and solicitation interventions. The teachers' feedback makes it possible for the students to rule out unsuitable productions and to reinforce those which are adequate. The teachers' focalization intervention involves phonological aspects (phoneme, syllable and rhyme) of the language and this could help the students break up the words they learn into units. Through this way, the students can learn about segmentation knowledge early on. Similarly, the impulse created during the teacher's solicitation intervention makes students sensitive to the sound structures that can form words. Yet, such request is least frequent in interventions. This process may seem difficult for the students because the instructions involve in processing units that are more explicit. In addition, in the correction intervention, the teachers can contribute to the quality of phonological representations by correcting the student's errors. Therefore, the teachers have interventions that aim to isolate or draw students' attention to a particular unit or to increase the accuracy of word representation in learning a foreign language.

The frequency of the teachers' different interventions much relies on the situation. For instance, the focalization intervention is mostly used in the situation of reading new stories, both familiar and unfamiliar stories, and playing word-card games for learning vocabularies. This can be seen through the knowledge of the words or at least the words they are familiar with. The students know more words in the familiar reading situation than in the new reading and playing

situations. By focalization, the teachers stimulate the students to say the new words learned in the new story and in the game. In fact, this intervention can also be done to make students recall what they have learned in familiar stories. The teacher also uses the correction intervention in the activity of reading new stories in which the students could say the words incorrectly. Compared with the situations of reading familiar stories and playing games, the correction intervention is mostly found in the situation of reading new stories. This may explain that the students have less vocabulary in the activity reading new stories that they produce wrong words. They make more errors on the whole words or they do not know the words at all. Therefore, there are more corrections.

Variability in the frequency and nature of interventions by the teachers could be at the origin of the differences observed in the performance of students. The more frequent interventions of the teachers on the syllable are consistent with the work on the development of phonological skills (Maclean et al., 1987). In this way, the teachers would adjust their segmentation to the students' phonological skills because the syllable is more prominent in oral language and, therefore, it is easier to spot by the students. Then, for future work, it is important to find out the correlations between the level of the students' phonological skills and the teachers' interventions. Apart from the differences caused by the quality of students' verbal production, the observed data in the teacher interventions could be explained by a greater or lesser sensitivity to students' cognitive needs in the area of foreign language learning that should be explored.

In general, we have presented the data to enrich our understanding of the diversity of the teachers' interventions in the EFL classroom. In this last part, it is necessary, particularly in the subsequent studies, to ensure the influence of the teachers' interventions on the students' productions by learning both interventions and interaction situations. It would also be appropriate to take into account the phonological skills of the students, such as the quality of speech articulation and prosody utilization (Susanto, 2016) and to explore more the students' knowledge and learning strategies (Nanda & Susanto, 2021), since they might determine the interventions of the teachers.

In this study at exploring the teacher's language intervention for phonological aspects in EFL classroom, we find some difficulties such as selecting the English stories which are used in the classroom and transcribing data of the teacher-student language exchanges. The context of the selected stories should be adapted in line with the cultural and wisdom values of the local community where the students live. Since the stories are derived from the other countries with different culture, this task should be conducted carefully as the pre-activity or preparation in the research. The proper choice of the stories will help the teachers in discussing the moral value of the story which is usually related to ideological value. Moreover, in transcribing the data, we find the difficulty when some parts of the sound recordings are much noise from the students. Therefore, intensive and extensive listening to the recordings was required for this case.

As the implication of this study, some insights on the pedagogical aspects in EFL teaching can be derived. By knowing the problems experienced by the students in pronouncing English words, there are several things to use for developing vocabulary learning modules such as materials on English words with few and many syllables. This vocabulary knowledge can be extended not only for developing the students' speaking skill but also for intensifying their writing skill (Berman & Verhoeven, 2002; Gardner, 2004; Olinghouse & Wilson, 2013; Viera,

2017). The material on the classification of sounds and syllables can be discussed when students work on assignments with English public speaking as well.

CONCLUSION

In the study on the language exchanges between the students and their teachers in the EFL classrooms at the fifth year of a Primary School (*Sekolah Dasar*) in Indonesia, we find there are three types of the teachers' language interventions, namely focalization, correction, and solicitation. Those language interventions were observed in different situations and phonological units that focus on the interventions. Moreover, this study shows that the teachers intervened more often in reading time of new English stories and used focalization more frequently in the interventions, as well as utilized syllables more preferably as the main focus in the language interventions. These findings hopefully can enrich the understanding of the diversity of the teachers' language intervention in the EFL classroom. As the limitation in this study, we did not discuss the effects of the teachers' language intervention. Thus, for future studies, it is necessary to ascertain the effect of teacher interventions on the students' language production by studying the correlation between the intervention and interaction situations. It is also appropriate to consider students' phonological skills to explore more their knowledge and learning strategies because they might determine language interventions carried out by the teachers in foreign language teaching.

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