

# Exploring EFL teachers' use of written instructions and their subsequent verbal instructions for the same tasks

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## Abstract

Instructions are what English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers use in order to draw students' attention to a task, engage them in the task, run classroom activities, and prompt them to provide a product for the purposes of assessment. The focus of this descriptive, naturalistic, and observational study is to explore how the teachers use written instructions and their subsequent spoken instructions given by the same EFL teachers for the same tasks. The data were gathered from two classroom teaching episodes of two EFL teachers to see how verbal instructions compliment written instructions. An analysis of the features of the EFL teachers' written instructions and their subsequent spoken instructions reveals that there are many different spoken instruction features used to enhance written instructions. These features result ultimately in the students understanding the task requirements. The findings can be useful for lesson preparation and for raising teachers' awareness that spoken instructions provide features which enhance students' understanding of the written instructions for a task.

Keywords: written instructions, spoken instructions, directives, teacher talk, mode

## 1. Introduction

EFL classroom practices have been significantly influenced by the belief that language equates with communication, and learning a language is equal to learning how to use the language communicatively (Canale 1983; Widdowson 1978). This belief can be dated back to the increasing popularity of Communicative Language Teaching in the mid-1970s. Two pedagogical practices inspired by this belief include the judicious use of the mother tongue in classroom interaction and authentic classroom communication being paramount (Richards & Rodgers 2014).

While there are several classroom interaction activities between a teacher and learners in which the target language is used communicatively, this current study focuses merely on giving instructions; a type of teacher talk in which classroom interaction between the two parties and in which

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communicative language use, either written or spoken, can be located. The next section presents the functions and interactional features of directives.

### *1.1 Speech acts: Directives*

According to Austin (1962), one function that language performs is that it impacts in some way on the hearer. Extending Austin's work, Searle (1976) introduced illocutionary acts, one kind of which functions as "attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something" (11). The process of this function goes as follows: when one requests another to do something and the request is properly understood by the other, the other then honors this request. This is called the directive function of language. This practice of the directive function can be explained by Schegloff and Sacks' (1973) adjacency pairs, which consist of two turns by two different parties performing a conditionally relevant sequence of action. This is explained in the diagram below.

- |    |                             |          |
|----|-----------------------------|----------|
| A: | Directive                   | (Turn 1) |
| B: | Relevant response or action | (Turn 2) |

Diagram 1: Sequence of directive

Diagram 1 presents the interactional practice where one person gives a directive to the other (i.e., the first-pair part). The other then performs a certain action (i.e., the second-pair part) (Schegloff & Sacks 1973). It is important to note that both turns can be produced verbally, nonverbally, or in writing. For example, A may tell B to shut the door (verbal -> nonverbal), while pressing an index finger to the lips to request others to be quiet (nonverbal -> nonverbal). In today's digital society, we can see how people send a typed text message to others (i.e., writing the first-pair part), requesting them to, for example, check an email, reply to an email, or call back.

This function of language, as outlined in Diagram 1 on turn 1 above, can be observed in the form of questions, invitations, suggestions, requests, and advice. The function can be found in everyday encounters and communication (e.g., 'pass the bottle please', or 'this is how you use a corkscrew to open a bottle, there are only four steps, very easy, OK') and institutional interaction (e.g., "all rise"). The EFL classroom, where action and learning are intertwined and where power between people is

asymmetrical, is no exception. The next section discusses the use of directives in language classrooms.

### 1.2 EFL classrooms: Directives and instructions

In EFL classrooms, most of the time, the teachers, who are older and more knowledgeable than the students, request the students to perform a certain action (Holmes 1983) in order for learning to take place. What teachers do to make students take a particular action are known as directives and instructions. It is found that teacher talk is devoted significantly to directives and giving instructions (He 2000; Waring & Hruska 2012). Taken from a private classroom observation, the example below shows how the teacher uses instructions or directives.

#### Example 1 (Classroom observation)

Tr <sup>1</sup> :	Can I have your attention please? Guys	(1) <sup>2</sup>
	Please look at exercise three on page twenty-eight	(2)
	Exercise three on page twenty-eight, two eight.	(3)
	Have a look at the picture of this family, the Browns	(4)
	(0.3) <sup>3</sup>	
	What I want you to do is	(5)
	(0.2)	
	Change active form into passive form	(6)
	Put the answer in blank below	(7)
	In the second blank below the first one, change it into a	(8)
	yes- no question	
	Ed, go back to your seat	(9)
	Write a yes no question on the third blank	(10)

The teacher in Example 1 gives instructions to a language class on how to complete a grammar assignment. The step-by-step instructions are located on turns 4-8, and turn 10 because they engage the students in the task, while the teacher's turns 1-3, and turn 9, which are considered directives,

<sup>1</sup> In this study, Tr stands for teacher.

<sup>2</sup> In spoken dialogues presented in this study, (N) located in the right column represents the turn or line number.

<sup>3</sup> In spoken dialogues presented in this study, (0.N) suggests the length of pause. In this case, (0.3) means a third of a second.

are designed to deal with non-task. Instructions, as we can see, come as a series and explain how to accomplish a task. They therefore function as a tool for engaging students in the task. Directives, on the other hand, help prepare students for the task and create an atmosphere in which the task can be best accomplished. In this study, both instructions and directives will be inclusively referred to as instructions.

Instructions are truly teacher language. They function as a direction or a request which results later in students' behavior, responses, actions, products, and ultimately learning outcomes. In other words, with the function of guiding students to perform an activity/task, instructions introduce, instruct, and support students' performance. This can be shown in the diagram below.

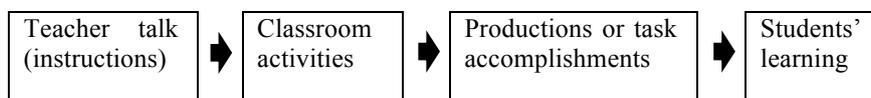


Diagram 2: Relationship between instructions and learning

From Diagram 2, it can be concluded that instructions are not related directly to language *per se* in the language classroom. However they create circumstances under which language teaching and learning are most likely to be effectively created and facilitated. Once students know what they are expected to do and how to do it, before being engaged in the task, then language learning is likely to happen (Jarvis & Robinson 1997; Johnson 1997; Walsh 2002 2006).

While an exhaustive list of giving instructions strategies can be found elsewhere (for example, Hatch 1992; Tapper 1994; Ur 1996; Watson Todd 1997), this study pays attention only to how the EFL teachers make use of different types of modes in giving instructions. Like other communicative activities, instructions can be given by teachers in two different modes; written and spoken. The next section presents each mode's features and then discusses the differences between these two modes.

### *1.3 Written and spoken language modes: Differences and functions*

The purpose of this study is to explore how the teachers use written instructions and their subsequent spoken instructions for the same tasks. It

is not designed to compare the two modes or to suggest a better mode for giving instructions. This is due to the fact that, as Halliday (1989: xv) convincingly asserts, "writing and speaking are not just alternative ways of doing the same things; rather, they are ways of doing different things". As will be shown later, each mode is chosen for different purposes in instructions given by the EFL teachers.

Because the instructions investigated are given in two different modes, it is important here to devote some paragraphs to talking about each mode in general. However, note that writing has undergone significant changes where digital technologies are involved<sup>4</sup>, as a result, the descriptions summarized below may not accurately apply to technologically-mediated language. What follows presents the differences between speech and writing.

Traditionally, language has been broadly classified into written language and oral (or spoken) language according to modes and medium (Halliday & Hasan 1976). Several scholars have differentiated one from the other (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan 1999; Brown 1978; Chafe 1982 1985; Chafe & Tannen 1987; Lippi-Green 1997; Schafer 1981; Tannen 1982). Speech is delivered through phonics and prosody, while writing is typically delivered through graphics and symbols. As a result, speech and writing are deciphered differently by a reader and a recipient before understanding can be created.

These physical features are also the reasons for the ephemerality of speech and permanence of writing. Written language is static or fixed, while spoken language is dynamic. These features create flexibility during the process of speaking, which allows the listener to comment on or respond to what was previously said.

When we speak, we do not maintain the same speed and loudness (i.e., vocal properties). Vocal inconsistency includes stress, intonation, and rhythm. Speech, because it is not static, can be interrupted by the listeners (Gardner 2002; Jefferson 1986) or by its owner (Goodwin 1980; Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks 1977; Tannen 1980). It gives the speaker an opportunity to add new information, make corrections, change the topics, or design upcoming talk instantly. Therefore, immediateness is another feature of speech.

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<sup>4</sup> 'Internet discourse' is the term some scholars have coined for this new mode.

Other evidence of the immediateness of oral language is an interrupted flow of talk which occurs when there is a pause, restart, repetition (Goodwin 1980), or same-turn self-initiated repair (Schegloff et al. 1977). The motive of interruption can be related to, among other things, insufficient or unavailable information when due, an audience's lack of participation or familiarity with the topics, debatable topics being discussed, or even an audience's over-attentiveness and over-collaboration.

Written language is controlled by font sizes, pages, lines, capitalizations, punctuation marks, and writing format (Baron 2003). Writing is fixed and the audience is absent during the text production process. Therefore writing does not invite interruption from or involvement of the audience (Lippi-Green 1997). When paralanguage typically found in speech has to be delivered in writing, in many cases, the written texts only represent the sound and pronunciation of paralanguage, not the intended meaning. Writers' tone, intention, and emotion cannot usually be accurately represented by written texts, and there is always mismatch between writers' intentions and readers' interpretations.

Time and speed are other factors that differentiate written and oral language. In general, writing requires a certain amount of time to produce and to organize the ideas, while spoken discourse is characterized by the spontaneity of face-to-face communication. As a result, written language is referred to as planned, and spoken language as unplanned (Ochs 1979). Writing is never as fast as speech; the time length needed for text composition is greater than for speech. The length of time in text production, in addition to the endless revision permitted, allows written text to be more syntactically complex than speech.

When relating language to context, spoken discourse is considered to be highly context-bound for two significant reasons (Tannen 1982). The first reason concerns the existence of immediate surroundings visible to both speakers and listeners. This enables a speaker to refer to it at any time if listeners cannot understand. The second reason is the opportunity of asking for a clarification on the spot if listeners are confused about some points, which is impossible for readers to do. As a result, the clarification creates the interaction between a speaker and listeners which is absent in written discourse. In addition, because speech involves face-to-face interaction, it results in high social involvement with the audience.

The other feature of the two modes that might help explain why one mode is chosen for giving instructions is lexical density (Halliday 1987). Lexical density is measured through the ratio between content words (i.e., nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) and function words (i.e., preposition, pronouns, conjunctions, and interjections). The fact that writing contains more content words than function words implies that writing contains a higher density of new information than speech does. As a result, writing increases the cognitive load on the recipient.

Overall, writing and speech are different to each other in many ways. Such differences might impact the recipient's understanding of the message and therefore the speaker or writer's intention. This study aims not only to compare written instructions and their subsequent spoken instructions given by the same EFL teachers for the same tasks, but also to explore how the teachers make use of the features of written and spoken modes in giving instructions for the same tasks. The next section presents the research methods followed in this study.

## *2. Research methodology*

### *2.1 Research questions*

This study is designed to examine how two teachers used two modes of instructions, written and spoken, to help their EFL students properly understand how to complete tasks. Research questions are as follows.

- A. What are the differences between teachers' written instructions and their subsequent spoken instructions?
- B. How did the teachers make use of the features of written and spoken modes in giving instructions for the same tasks?

### *2.2 Participants*

This study involved two Thai participants who taught EFL at tertiary level in Bangkok, Thailand. These two teachers were MA students in an Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching program, who usually used written instructions, in the form of PowerPoint, in their classes. Both have been trained in Language Teaching Methods and Classroom Language and were well aware of the importance of giving instructions. There were thirty

to thirty-five students in each class. Their classes met for three hours each, twice a week.

### *2.3 Research instrument*

The instrument in this study is an audio-recording set up in two classes of the participants. It recorded the teachers' spoken instructions, while the written instructions came from the PowerPoint files of the same tasks the teachers prepared. Before the classes, the participants gave the researcher copies of written instructions they intended to use in their classes.

### *2.4 Data, data collection, and data analysis*

Only the audio recordings of the teachers' spoken instructions were transcribed and then compared with their counterpart, the written instructions; both were from the same activities. That is, the data are both the spoken instructions and written instructions intended for the same tasks. Spoken instructions that are not accompanied by written instructions, or vice versa, are not data for this analysis.

## *3. Findings*

This section presents the teachers' written instructions and their subsequent spoken instructions that were used to explain to the students how to complete the tasks.

**Data Set 1: (5/2013)****Written Instructions****Excerpt<sup>5</sup> 1**

Instructions:	
Work in groups of 2-3	(1' <sup>6</sup> )
Write a story for which you are given a title called 'what a mystery!'	(2')
Use your imagination or your experience to help	(3')
Remember to make your story interesting	(4')

**Spoken Instructions****Extract<sup>7</sup> 1**

Tr:	So in paragraph one	(1)
	Paragraph one	(2)
	In paragraph one	(3)
	When you write a story	(4)
	You need to have what	(5)
	เวลา เรา เขียน เรื่อง เรา ควร จะมี อะไร	(6)
	(When we write a story what should we have?) <sup>8</sup>	
	(0.2)	
	Have what?	(7)
Sts <sup>9</sup> :	ตัวละคร	(8)
	(Character)	
Tr:	มี characters	(9)
	(there are)	
	And in paragraph two	(10)
	Ah paragraph two	(11)
	You can introduce another character here	(12)
	You can have many characters	(13)
	And in paragraph three=	(14)
	=Paragraph three	(15)
	You need to say something mysterious=	(16)

<sup>5</sup> The term 'excerpt' is used in the data presentation to refer to the teacher's written instructions.

<sup>6</sup> In this study, (N<sup>?</sup>) in written instructions represents the line number.

<sup>7</sup> The term 'extract' is used in the data presentation to refer to the teacher's spoken instructions.

<sup>8</sup> When participants in the study speak Thai, it will be translated in the bracket below.

<sup>9</sup> In this study, sts stands for students.

	=Mysterious thing	(17)
	And in paragraph four	(18)
	Ah ending	(19)
	You can end with the question	(20)
	You can end the problem that you want to	(21)
	ให้ใช้ imagination	(22)
	(Use)	
	What is imagination?	(23)
Sts:	จินตนาการ	(24)
	(imagination)	
Tr:	จินตนาการ หรือ ให้ใช้ ประสบการณ์	(25)
	(Imagination or use experience)	
	เรื่อง ลึกลับ ก็ ให้เขียน	(26)
	(story mystery can be written)	

### 3.1 *Communicative functions*

The task introduced in class was about ‘writing a story’. The written instructions aimed to introduce the task to the students and permitted them to see an overview of the task; the number of students per group (line 1’), the task and task name (line 2’), the tips (line 3’), and the broad requirement (line 4’). However, the written instructions do not explain the task or how to complete it in detail.

Meanwhile, the series of spoken instructions given later in the same class outlined the task components and requirements in more detail. The spoken instructions informed the students that the written assignment was expected to consist of several paragraphs (lines 1, 10, 15, and 18). To write a story, the teacher elicited what was to be included in each paragraph, i.e., characters (lines 6, 7, 9, 12, and 13), and suggested how to end a story in the fourth paragraph (lines 20 and 21). Like line 4’ of the written instructions, the genre was recommended in lines 16 and 17.

This section suggests that there are components of instructions which can be best delivered either verbally or in writing. A few reasons that might explain why written instructions were used at the beginning of these class activities (Orlich, Harder, Callahan, Trevisan, Brown, & Miller 2011; Williams & Burden 1997) are as follows. First, written instructions marked the boundaries between two consecutive activities. They showed the recipients that a new activity was going to happen. Second, they caught students’ attention. While the written instructions may not have solely

acted as an attention-catching device *per se*, the change between the modes of speech and writing did. Third, the presence of written instructions not only introduced but also formalized the upcoming activity.

The details of the task completion can be another factor that dictates the density of information (Halliday 1987) and therefore the mode of interactions. Although it is true that each reader has different reading speed when it comes to understanding the detail of the task, spoken language allows listeners to understand simple words presented in a simplified syntactic structure. As speech is faster than writing, and therefore time-saving, this allows speakers to add additional details in the spoken instructions.

### *3.2 Change in noun-phrase pattern*

Excerpt 1 shows that the teacher used 'mystery' (line 1') as a task name. The word 'mystery' was not defined and how to make the work mysterious was elaborated later in Excerpt 1. However, Extract 1 reveals a change in a noun-phrase pattern in the spoken instructions. First, the teacher used a noun-plus-adjective pattern in line 16 (i.e., 'something mysterious'). Later, she corrected herself by switching to an adjective-plus-noun pattern in turn 17 (i.e., 'mysterious thing'). That is, the teacher immediately corrected herself by replacing what she said with what she should have said in order to provide the students with a familiar structure. The motivation can be explained by the fact that an adjective-plus-noun pattern is often used in a classroom and in textbooks.

It can be concluded here that spoken discourse allows the speaker to self-correct, monitor his or her language use, and make an immediate change of words or language patterns (Biber et al. 1999), where, in this case, the two forms (i.e., noun and adjective) are placed adjacently. Simplified language structure and redundancy are two of many features of speech which, in turn, help to make speech more understandable.

### *3.3 Partial repetition*

Excerpt 1 shows that there are several keywords (e.g., 'story', 'mystery', 'imagination', and 'experience') and expected behavioral actions (e.g., 'write a story', 'use your imagination', 'use your experience', and 'make

your story interesting’). However, none of these words or behavioral actions were emphasized and repeated in Excerpt 1.

A close look at Extract 1 reveals that it comprises many repetitions. Turns 2 and 3 (i.e., ‘paragraph one’ and ‘in paragraph one’) are partial repetitions of turn 1 (i.e., ‘so in paragraph one’). Another partial repetition is located in turns 18 and 19, when the teacher constantly mentioned ‘character’. The function of repetition in this extract is to draw the students’ attention to ‘paragraph’ and ‘character’. That is, repetition functions as an attention-calling device. While repetition is found in spoken instructions, it is not observed in the written version of instructions. Turns 1’, 2’, 3’, and 4’ are new, not repeated, pieces of information, and each is continuously built on the previous one.

To summarize, brevity and conciseness are expected in written language, while the issue of length is relatively relaxed in speech. Verbosity as typically found in speech, however, permits the occurrence of similar pieces of information conveyed in a variety of language features (Biber et al. 1999).

### *3.4 Interactiveness*

One feature of written language is that it does not involve the audience in the production process (Chafe & Danielewicz 1985). This is true for the written instructions illustrated above which represent one-way communication, while the spoken instructions in Extract 1 do the opposite. The spoken instructions consist of several display questions the teacher used to prompt a response from the students (lines 5-7). These questions were designed to serve the same purpose, i.e., to prompt the word ‘characters’ from the students. In other words, the teacher wanted to check the students’ understanding before continuing the spoken instructions. Periodically-inserted questions from the teacher function as an understanding-checking device. It can be seen that the first question in line 5 was unsuccessful; as a result, the second question in line 6 was then delivered. The second question was also unsuccessful, so the third question in line 7 was asked and was successful, as evident in line 8 where there was a response from the students.

Another question-answer sequence was inserted during the spoken instructions (line 23-24). Like the question-answer sequence in lines 5-8 discussed above, this inserted sequence functions as an understanding-

checking device, which was used by the teacher before resuming the interrupted instruction (line 33 and onward). Unlike questions in lines 5-8, this interactive sequence was completed within two consecutive turns. The next section presents a translation technique which is found, in this study, to be unique.

### *3.5 Translation: An intermodal phenomenon*

Translation is usually found in social encounters where the interactants can speak and understand two or more languages. In this study, translation is also found in the instructions, where the teacher verbally translated from English to Thai and vice versa. However, more importantly, an analysis of the written and spoken modes of the instructions reveals that there was a translation between these two modes; the teacher translated verbally what was written.

In Excerpt 1 from Data Set 1, there are three words that the teacher subsequently verbally translated from English to Thai: 'mystery' (line 2') which was the topic of the task, and 'imagination' and 'experience' (line 3') which are the hints or suggestions for how to look for a story and complete the task. However, there is no written explanation of these three words in the Excerpt. In class, it is too time-consuming to add definitions in the written instructions, so it is faster to deal with them verbally.

Using spoken mode, in Extract 1, the teacher said 'imagination' (line 22, 'ใช้ imagination' or 'use imagination') which is immediately followed by a question about its meaning (line 23, 'what is imagination?'). The students answered it correctly in Thai (line 24). After acknowledging the students' answer, the teacher continued the talk by immediately translating 'experience' into Thai (line 25), while 'mystery' was translated right afterwards (line 26). It is necessary to point out that there is a translation between the two modes of the same instructions, i.e., what is written is translated, not in writing, but by speaking. This phenomenon is termed, 'intermodal translation'. This is made available by the "on-the-fly" (Biber et al 1999 1048) feature of speech.

In conclusion, Data Set 1 shows several differences and relationships between written instructions and their subsequent spoken instructions. As written language is fixed, it does not allow the EFL teachers to make changes on the spot, so they employed several features of spoken language to help the students understand the task. Data Set 2 below presents

additional analysis of the two modes of instructions and reveals how an EFL teacher employed both of them.

**Data Set 2: LNG 103 (2/2014)**

**Written Instructions**

**Excerpt 2**

**Real World Task – “My impression” 10%**

- Describing feeling, emotion, and thought, students need to make at least 2 posts on Facebook (1’)
- Also, you have to make responses to friends’ comments (2’)

**Deadline:**

- 01/21/2014: Facebook activities (1st post)
- Request a FB member. The class group is LNG103 SEC5 2/2013 (3’)
- Post a picture with an 80-word description. (4’)
- At the end of the post, write down your name and last name. (5’)
- Due 01/24/2014 noon. (6’)
- After 24th noon, comment on your classmate’s post (10 words: due Jan 28th noon) (7’)

**Spoken Instructions**

**Extract 2**

- Tr: Your job is to look for a picture that you like any picture (1)
- Picture of a country (2)
- Picture of food (3)
- Picture from a movie (4)
- Or a link from YouTube (5)
- A song that you like (6)
- Post it on Facebook (7)
- Anything that you like (8)
- Food (9)
- Clothes (10)
- Friends (11)
- Good picture of your family member (12)
- Your mother’s picture (13)
- Picture of a place (14)
- One picture (15)
- One picture (16)
- Now what you have to do with the picture (17)
- You have to write a description (18)

(0.2)	
Eighty words	(19)
Write something about the picture	(20)
Your feeling, why you like it	(21)
Why do you enjoy it	(22)
Why do you enjoy it	(23)
Eighty words	(24)

There are features that were introduced in Data Set 1 that can be identified again in Data Set 2, while there are new features that are specific to this Data Set.

### 3.6 Continuous exemplification

In Excerpt 2, there is a list of instructions, while the instructions in line 4 appear to be most related to the task because they suggest the nature and requirements of the task. Nevertheless, the one-step instructions (line 4) do not give details or examples of the task, while 'a picture' might raise a question about the specification of a picture. Therefore, the teacher, when giving spoken instructions, explained this requirement and focused on the issue for several turns.

In Extract 2, the phrase 'a picture that you like any picture' (turn 1) might not be clear and helpful to the students. To give an idea of what a picture might be for this assignment, the teacher listed several possibilities: 'picture of a country' (line 2), 'picture of food' (line 3), 'picture from a movie' (line 4), 'food' (line 9), 'clothes' (line 10), 'friends' (line 11), 'good picture of your family member' (line 12), 'your mother's picture' (line 13), and 'picture of a place' (line 14).

As mentioned above, the reason the teacher repeatedly gave the list may be because she wanted to give the students some ideas about a picture, or provide them with possible options, or because their facial expressions suggested a lack of understanding. No responses from the students were expected, which is different from a responsive list construction strategy introduced by Lerner (1994), which later invites students' verbal responses. It should be noted here that spoken instructions allow the exemplification to continue endlessly, while this is rare in written instructions.

### 3.7 Full repetition and paraphrasing

In 3.3., partial repetition, where the teacher repeated some parts of what she said earlier, is introduced. An analysis of teacher's verbal instructions in Data Set 2 reveals that she fully repeated what she said. The first full repetition is located in lines 15 and 16 ('one picture'), while the second repetition is in lines 22 and 23 ('why do you enjoy it'). To repeat 'one picture' twice, the teacher emphasized the fact that each student was expected to look for only one picture. This practice does not occur in the written instructions. While repetition is employed to emphasize the same piece of speech which helps focus the recipients' attention on the important information, it in fact also helps the speakers relieve "online planning pressure" (Biber et al. 1999 1049).

It is important to point out that while what happened in lines 22 and 23 is considered full-repetition, the teacher used this full-repetition to replace what she said in lines 20 and 21 ('write something about... why you like it'). The teacher made it easier for the students to understand not only by using direct speech, rather than indirect speech, but also by paraphrasing it (i.e., like -> enjoy). Other evidence of paraphrasing is found together in line 18 ('You have to write a description'), line 19 ('Eighty words'), and line 20 ('Write something about the picture') where she paraphrased line 4' ('Post a picture with an 80-word description'). As well as being a feature of spoken instructions, paraphrasing located here is, in fact, one part of another technique called 'information division', which is discussed next.

### 3.8 Information division

There are two pieces of information in line 4': 1) post a picture; and 2) an 80-word description. To help the students understand line 4' in the written instruction, the teacher divided the instructions into small sets of words and delivered them at different times or turns throughout her spoken instructions. It can be seen that what the teacher said in Extract 2, lines 1-4, line 7, and lines 9-16 elaborates what types of picture can be used for this assignment, how many, and how to submit it.

The second half of line 4' from the written instruction is about 'an 80-word description'. It can be observed that Extract 2, lines 17-24 are devoted to the elaboration of this '80-word description' requirement. Information given here includes writing a description, the meaning of

description, an example of what is considered description, and the number of words in the description. Two episodes of paraphrasing discussed in 3.7 are a part of this second half.

Briefly, a one-turn in written instructions which consists of several pieces of information (Halliday 1989) is divided into several speaking turns, allowing each piece of information to be exemplified, clarified, and elaborated. Because of the flexibility of spoken language, the EFL teacher, when giving spoken instructions, not only gives examples, and divides and elaborates upon some points, but also speaks information that is not given in the written instruction.

### *3.9 Information emphasis and reorder*

Line 4' in the written instruction (i.e., 'Post a picture with an 80-word description') presents what students were expected to do, or the requirement of the task. The instructions written are clear and self-explanatory. However, this requirement was explained in class orally (see Extract 2) and can be divided into 8 parts chronologically:

- Part 1) examples of pictures the students can use (lines 1-4)
- Part 2) the submission method (line 7)
- Part 3) examples of pictures the students can use (lines 8-14)
- Part 4) the number of pictures (lines 15-16)
- Part 5) describing the task (lines 17-18)
- Part 6) the number of words (line 19)
- Part 7) describing the task (lines 20-23)
- Part 8) the number of words (line 24)

While Line 4' in the written instruction (i.e., 'Post a picture with an 80-word description') describes the product the students were expected to produce, it does not explain how to do it. Although the spoken instructions explain the process, an analysis of the chronological parts of the spoken instructions above shows that there are three parts (parts 1, 5, and 6) that were repeated later (parts 3, 7, and 8, respectively). In other words, part 1 is revisited in part 3, part 5 in part 7, and part 6 in part 8. As a result, the new order is 1, 2, 1, 4, 5, 6, 5, and 6. This reorder observed in the spoken instructions aims to give additional examples (i.e., part 1) and to emphasize the important information about the task (parts 5 and 6).

#### *4. Discussions*

It is necessary to begin this section, again, with Halliday's (1989) remark that suggests that writing and speech do not substitute for each other, but each is used for different purposes. This study explores for which purposes each mode was employed by the EFL teachers and how they made use of each mode when giving instructions. The findings and discussions may not generalize in other contexts due to the fact that turns-at-talk, whether or not they function as instructions, are context-bound. What is discussed below describes how the EFL teachers made use of these two modes in delivering instructions.

An analysis of the written and spoken instructions in the EFL classrooms of this study shows that the teachers used spoken instructions, which are usually dynamic, spontaneous, and unplanned, to enhance the written instructions, which are static, pre-arranged, and planned. Chronologically, the teachers first planned the written instructions, showed them to the students, and then gave spoken instructions. Because two unique features of spoken mode are interactiveness and time-saving, the teachers were found to use different features of spoken language to support their written instructions.

The spoken instructions features found in this study are a) communicative functions, b) change in noun-phrase pattern, c) partial repetition, d) interactiveness, e) translation (intermodal), f) continuous exemplification, g) full repetition and paraphrasing, h) information division, and i) information emphasis and reorder. There are issues about these functions in relation to written instructions and spoken instructions that merit further discussion below.

##### *4.1 Spoken instructions enhance written instructions*

Both written language and spoken language have weaknesses and strengths. One strength of written language is that it is permanent. As a result, it leaves a trace (Baron 2003). When instructions are written and then shown to students in the EFL classroom, the students have time to interact with the language, the written words, and the content simultaneously. Because reading ability among students varies, written instructions support individual differences and learning styles, i.e., one manages one's own reading pace. If one has problems understanding or

making sense of the content, one may refer back and forth during reading at any time (Harmer 2015; Watson Todd 1997).

From the analysis, written instructions alone might not be clear and effective enough to help EFL students understand the task requirements. While written instructions allow EFL students to read at their own pace, they may consist of new words or even keywords (see Excerpt 1, lines 2' and 3') or a complicated structure (see Excerpt 2, line 4'). Not understanding these words or structure, the students may not be able to complete the task. This study finds that several features of spoken instructions, such as, change in noun-phrase pattern, all kinds of repetition, paraphrasing, and translation are used to improve students' understanding of the written task.

If the written instructions have words familiar to EFL students and the syntactic structure is not complicated, but there is a density of information, then the spoken features which the EFL teacher can employ are information division and information reorder. Both allow information to be divided and reorganized and emphasized; as a result, it is easier for students to follow. An analysis of the data shows also that continuous exemplification should be a feature of subsequent spoken instructions if the teachers want to give EFL students general and possible ideas about what they can choose to work on. The students may choose what they want to work on from the teacher's spoken list and get a better idea about the scope of work.

Normally, instructions contain important information about the task completion, task components, and task submission. All kinds of verbal interactional activities, such as repetition, paraphrasing, and information provision and reorder can help EFL teachers emphasize and remind students of the important pieces of information. As these interactional activities can be used to prevent problems in understanding, they deserve a more detailed discussion. The next section talks about interactivity in instructions.

#### *4.2 Interaction as an understanding-checking device*

One major difference between written and spoken instructions in the analysis of this study is that the latter permits interaction between teachers and students. In general, written language is static and is a one-way communication. Spoken instructions, on the other hand, involve

interactants in a social practice called ‘intersubjectivity’ (Schegloff 1992), an interactional process through which interactants display to one another their analysis and understanding of one another’s talk, principally through sequence organization of turn-taking.

An analysis of Excerpt 1 and Extract 1 shows that interactiveness not only permits the teacher to introduce a new word (e.g., character) which the students should know before writing the story, but also to ask students if they know the meaning of a word (e.g., imagination) before the teacher resumes the spoken instructions. In other words, interactiveness helps teachers assess students’ knowledge and understanding to see if elaboration is needed. Compared to written mode, spoken mode can provide more opportunities for teachers to check students’ comprehension during the instruction-giving process. Orlich et al. (2011) have suggested the use of informal assessment of the students can be directly applied when there is an interaction between the teacher and students; responses from the latter allow the former not only to check whether they understand what is taught, but also what they are expected to do.

#### *4.3 Planned or unplanned dichotomy of discourse: Prepared instructions*

As discussed above, written discourse is normally described as a planned mode of communication, while speech (as in verbal interaction) is unplanned (Ochs 1979). Being planned means that producers of written discourse have time to produce the message, carefully go over the written message, and make changes in the written message during the message production process. This is also true for written instructions which are prepared by the teachers before they come to class.

To prepare the written instructions in advance does not guarantee that there will be no problems or changes when the teachers later give the instructions in class. As this study shows, there are changes in language use and the way in which instructions are given in class afterwards. This does not suggest that the planned instructions contain insufficient or inaccurate information. Changes in language use and the way in which instructions are given later in class may be explained by how teachers perceive students’ immediate reactions to the instructions.

The second possible cause in such changes can be explained by Giles’ (1973) Communication Accommodation Theory which claims that, when people speak, they adjust the message and how it is conveyed to

accommodate others. This theory can elucidate how EFL teachers adjust their language, message, and presentation when giving classroom instructions verbally to ensure that students clearly understand tasks.

In conclusion, this section demonstrated how the EFL teachers made use of the features of two modes which can, chronologically, start from the preparation of instructions; the instructions can be written prior to the class. The lack of interactiveness of writing allows the careful selection of words and structures. In class, written instructions mitigate individual differences, as each student has a different reading rate, while the sequential use of two modes increases the channels through which the message can be delivered to the students, resulting in a higher chance that the teacher's message gets understood. At the end, speech permits the teachers to constantly adopt what Kounin (1970) calls 'with-it-ness' (74) when and after the instructions are verbally given.

### *5. Conclusion*

The focus of this study is to explore the differences between written instructions and subsequent clarifying, verbal instructions made by EFL teachers, and how the EFL teachers make use of the features of written and spoken modes simultaneously in giving effective instructions.

One important feature of spoken language is that it allows the speakers to make changes in their speech along the way. Because speech is not fixed, it allows changes in forthcoming words and sentences, changes in the direction of talk, and the current talk to be put on hold so that one of the speakers can deal with unexpected causes of miscommunication either detected by the speaker or expressed facially by the listeners. Oral instructions can be put on hold at any given time, allowing the teacher to change language patterns, partially or fully repeat what was said, translate what was said into another language, endlessly give examples, paraphrase, emphasize important information, and to help EFL learners understand better by dividing information into smaller units.

Of the nine features of spoken instructions this study identified, neither of the teachers was explicitly aware of these identified features beforehand. The features came from the EFL teachers quite naturally as they gave spoken instructions in class after showing students their written instructions. Identifying these spoken-mode features enables them to be introduced to EFL teachers. Teachers who are aware of possible features

to use when giving spoken instructions in their classrooms will also be able to determine the best features for each purpose, including; calling students' attention, checking understanding, giving options and ideas, emphasizing important information, helping process the instructions, and creating interaction. Effective use of spoken instruction features by EFL teachers will increase students' understanding of written instructions, and the classroom task, allowing learning to occur.

One limitation of this current study is the exclusion of modes (i.e., gestural interactions of both parties, or students' observable codes) other than these two modes in the analysis. Such modes might have been designed to call for the EFL teachers' use and moment-by-moment delivery of spoken instructions. Future studies should include variables such as the complexity of the task and the number of students in the class. Another issue includes the quality of written instructions which may have impacts on the EFL teachers' use of spoken instructions.

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