CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the problem of the study. It starts with the background of the study describing classroom speaking activities within a conversation class and the reasons to conduct the study. The purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, scope of the study, and clarification of technical terms follow it. This chapter is completed with organization of the paper.

I.1. Background of the Study

It is fair to say that among other language skills, mastery of speaking is the most demanding skill for many English as a foreign or a second language (EFL/ESL) learners. This is due to the fact that most language learners tend to focus on how much they have improved in their speaking skill as a parameter of their language learning effectiveness as well as its success (Richards, 2001).

Despite its importance, learning speaking in EFL or ESL context has great challenges. Brown (2001) sees that learners are often puzzled by discourse constraints such as how to say things, when to speak, and how they make a choice among many possible grammatical sentences. Internally, EFL or ESL learners usually feel insecure about their level of English and they face problems in communicating as well as expressing their ideas in the target language. As a result, they rather remain silent as they are afraid of making mistakes and do not participate actively in speaking lessons.
To cope with the challenges of learning speaking in EFL or ESL context, teachers are required to be able to create and employ certain activities in order to achieve language learning’s goal, i.e. Communicative Competence. In so doing, it means that the teacher plays an important role in determining what activities can best encourage students to participate in a class as well as increase students’ speaking proficiency.

Concerning with speaking proficiency, Nunan (1991) stated:

“to most people, mastering the art of speaking is the single most important aspect of learning a second or foreign language, and success is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversational in the language.”

Thus, speaking proficiency must have been given more attentions since human beings communicate and interact with others using that language proficiency. To develop English speaking proficiency, students should get as many speaking opportunities as possible and their speaking time should be slowly but steadily to prepare them for various communicative situations. The teachers should provide them with a conducive environment that will help them develop their speaking proficiency. In this case, there is a great role for the language teachers to assist and help their students improve speaking proficiency.

There are relatively much pedagogical research which have been conducted to find out or even to develop learning activities for reading or writing, but speaking has likely received little concern due to its complexity and impracticality of this skill to be investigated (Lengkanawati, 2007). Consequently, due to its importance proper activities for speaking class are badly needed, whether the activities are about direct approaches focusing on specific features of
oral interactions (e.g. turn-taking, topic management, questioning strategies), or indirect approaches creating conditions for oral interaction through group work, task work, and other strategies (Richards, 1990).

Based on the information and statements above, the study attempts to investigate how the process of classroom speaking activities is conducted by the teacher within a conversation class to improve students’ speaking proficiency. Besides, it is also crucial for this research to explore students’ responses to those activities.

I.2. Research Questions

The study is going to explore classroom speaking activities conducted by the teacher within a conversation class as well as their impacts to students’ responses. To focus on the issue, the study aims at addressing following questions:

1. How is the process of classroom speaking activities within a conversation class?
2. What are students’ responses toward those classroom speaking activities?

I.3. Objectives of the Study

The study intends to do the followings:

1. to investigate the process of classroom speaking activities within a conversation class, and
2. to investigate students’ responses to those activities.
I.4. Significance of the Study

This research may give some contributions as follows:

1. It attempts to expound what are speaking activities as well as their process within a conversation class. This can be a model for developing English speaking proficiency in the EFL/ESL class.

2. It attempts to elucidate variety of activities in teaching speaking dealing with certain circumstances or reasons.

3. It is also expected to be able to investigate students’ responses to those strategies. This process has something to do with their experiences in classroom activities dealing with speaking instruction. This will be beneficial for the English teacher to increase the quality of speaking instruction which can impact on the improvement of Students’ speaking proficiency.

As Pandian (2002) asserts, what teachers know and can do, affect all the core tasks of teaching. Moreover, Harmer (2001) states that the teacher can be as a controller, organizer, assessor, prompter, participant, resource, tutor, and observer for the learners. So, the position of teachers is important in this program.

I.5. Scope of the Study

The study focuses on investigating the process of classroom speaking activities and the impact of the activities on students’ responses. The activities were examined within the main activities of the conversation class since the class
has focused on conversation labelled as conversation class and categorized as Basic, Intermediate, and Advance Conversation class.

I.6. Research Methodology

I.6.1. Research Design

The study employed a case study. Gay (1987: 207) states that the primary purpose of a case study is to determine the factors and relationship among the factors that have resulted in the current behavior or status of the subject of the study. Furthermore, Robert K. Yin (2003) mentions that case study is varied based on the type of research question posed, the extent of control an investigator has over actual behavioral events, and the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events. He further emphasizes that case study is the preferred strategy when “how” or “why” questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context. The researcher applies case study in this research because he tries to investigate the process of classroom speaking activities in teaching speaking as well as students’s responses to those strategies.

I.6.2. Data Collection Techniques

I.6.2.1. Site & Respondents

The respondents of the research were an English teacher as well as the students of advance conversation class at Darul Hikam Junior High School. The school has come up with a formal program of conversation class focusing on speaking activities. The school has put its primary focus on speaking with the
existence of conversation class separated from general English subject since 2006. This special program categorizes the students into three different classes, i.e. Basic, Intermediate, and Advance, separated from class categories in general English class. It means that students as well as the teacher of Darul Hikam Junior High School have already contacted with considerable activities of English speaking.

I.6.2.2. Procedure

This study was started by doing observation in the classroom to see the process of speaking activities within the class. The observation was conducted in ten meetings. The next step done afterward was interview. For the teacher, the interview was needed to validate or strengthen the observed information. For the students, the interviews were needed to answer the second research question.

I.6.3. Data Analysis

The writer analyzed the data by using qualitative case study. Since the case study generally utilises a range of methods for analysing data rather than being restricted to a single procedure (Nunan: 1992). The writer explained and elaborated the data descriptively by using words and numbers. Then, the writer analyzed and interpreted the data. The last process of this analysis was finding the appropriate data to answer the research questions based on their relevance to the research questions, which are the process of classroom speaking activities as well as students’ responses to those strategies.
I.7. Clarification of terms

In order to avoid misinterpretation, the terms used in this study are defined as follows:

1. Investigation: in the free dictionary, it is stated that investigation is the work of inquiring onto something thoroughly and systematically. In addition, some similar definition say that investigation is a detailed systematic search and examination to uncover facts and determine the truth of the factors (who, what, when, why, where, and how) of accidents www.chrl, Ubc.ca and moodle.esp-c.org.


5. Activity: something that somebody takes part in or does. (Encarta Dictionary Tools: 2007)

I.8. Organization of the paper

This paper is divided into five chapters. Chapter one presents the background of the study. It highlights various aspects regarding to the realization of the research. This chapter gives general description of the introduction to the
topic of the research, i.e. by presenting the background of the study and research questions. Meanwhile, the theories that support the study will be presented in chapter two. This chapter will review related literature that is relevant to the present study. Chapter three will discuss research methodology giving description about where the study was conducted, who the participants were, how the study was designed, how the writer collected and analyzed the data. In chapter four, the paper will present data presentation and data analysis result. Finally, this paper will be concluded in chapter five, in which it draws conclusions and also puts forward some recommendations.