

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is devoted to delineate briefly the background of the study, research questions, research objectives, and significance of the research. It also provides the clarification of terms organization of the thesis.

1.1. Background of the Study

This study investigates classroom interactions between teachers and students in a science class as a part of the implementation of fledgling international standard school. The implementation of the policy on fledgling international standardized school (henceforth RSBI) in Indonesia has been officially started by the government since 2006 based on the Law No. 20 year 2003 about national education system. Prior to the establishment of the International Standard School, the school should set forth an initiation program (the so called ‘fledgling’ or *Rintisan* (R)) until it is credible within four years (Depdiknas, 2007). The implementation of Fledgling International Standard School program is aimed at improving the quality of education in Indonesia in order to have the same level as that in developed countries (Depdiknas, 2007). More specifically, such implementation will enable students to compete in the global era.

Actually, the implementation of Fledgling International Standard School is not an easy thing to do. Zaenuri (2007) says that the implementation faces numerous problems such as teachers’ readiness, learning resources,

infrastructures, and facilities. From all these problems, teachers' readiness to teach in the classroom is the most crucial problem, whereas it is one of the requirements of the Fledgling International Standard School implementation in science and mathematics classes as required by Indonesian Curriculum Centre (*Puskur*). More specifically, the use of English as a medium of instruction in the teaching learning process has become the most crucial problem concerning the teachers' readiness.

From the facts above, it can be concluded that in order to comprehend the content of the language used, the teacher and the students need to negotiate meaning. In other words, the success of learning in the classroom can be determined by meaning negotiation (Stevens, 1999). Thus, to highlight this issue, this research focuses on meaning negotiation in the classroom interactions between teachers and students. In meaning negotiation, once meaning is established, comprehension follows (Long, 1983). Then, Long and Pica (1983) affirm that the comprehension approach to language learning assumes that learning can only occur when meaning is involved and meaning must be negotiated in any teacher-student interaction.

Meaning negotiation as an area of study can be traced through the work of Long (1983), Pica (1987) and Gass and Veronis (1985). Besides, some research studies investigating meaning negotiation have also been conducted in various disciplines. In the field of economy, Chang (2006) states that meaning negotiation is intended to get better communications in selling product. Then, in politics Meadow (2010) asserts that meaning negotiation aims to get better

communication between parties. In education, Ying and Maria (2010) propose meaning negotiation as a way to get a better learning process.

Based on the statements above, the results typically show that meaning negotiation is important in the process of making an outcome to get the goals of understandable communication. In the context of language learning, it is shown that meaning negotiation is very important in teaching learning process. It is because the success of learning also depends on the success of meaning negotiation (Pica, 1983; Stevens, 1999; Foster and Ohta, 2005).

Pica (1983) investigated meaning negation between NNS (Non Native Speaker) of English and NS (Native Speaker) of English by formulating a research question regarding the relationship between interaction and meaning negotiation. This research aimed to discover the interactions between teacher and students by employing several strategies as Confirmation Check, Clarification Request, and Comprehension Check. The result revealed that the students and the teacher reached mutual understanding by using these strategies. It means that the teacher was successful in negotiating meaning with the students during the class.

Furthermore, Stevens (1999) investigated meaning negotiation by analyzing modified interactions such as Trigger, Indicator, Response and Reaction Response (TIRR) to answer the research question concerning the way the teachers negotiate meaning in delivering a task. The results revealed that the teacher was successful in negotiating meaning by using the TIRR strategy.

Differently, Foster and Ohta (2005) investigated the meaning negotiation and peer assistance in second language classrooms which focused on discovering the kinds of classroom activities that gave the learners the greatest benefits from

the interaction. In this case, meaning negotiation was conducted between NNS (non native speaker) and NS (native speaker). The result revealed that meaning negotiation could be reached by using various activities such as peer assistance, group work, and discussion.

On the basis of the previous studies, the present study examines meaning negotiation between teachers and students in science classrooms at a fledgling of international standardized school on the basis of modified interaction which is proposed by Long (1983) cited in Abdullah (2011). However, the present study differs from the previous ones in terms of participants and research questions. This study does not focus on NNS and NS but NSS and NSS namely teachers and students in the teaching learning process. Besides, the focus of research question is different from the previous study. The research question in this study deals with the ways meaning is negotiated between teachers and students in a Fledgling International Standard School at science classes as well as the problems in negotiating meaning in classroom interactions. In terms of methodology, this study uses qualitative approach with some quantification proposed by Long (1983) in Abdullah (2011). This study uses the analysis of meaning negotiation strategies namely of Confirmation Check, Clarification Request, Comprehension Check, Other Repetition, Self Repetition, Approximation, and Self Correction.

Prior to conducting this research, the writer has done a pilot study to several science and mathematics teachers at the research site in his hometown. From the observation, he found that teachers used several ways to negotiate meaning with their students as suggested by Long (1983). Accordingly, the present study was conducted to discover more about the real process of meaning

negotiation to enhance our understanding of what and how teachers should do in teaching-learning processes in a science class.

1.2. Research Questions

This study is designed to answer the following questions:

1. How is meaning negotiated between teachers and students in a Fledgling International Standard School at a science class?
2. What are the teachers' problems in negotiating meaning in the classroom interactions?

1.3. Research Objectives

With reference to the problems which will be examined, this study is aimed at:

1. reporting the meaning negotiation that takes place between teachers and students in a Fledgling International Standard School at science class; and
2. discovering the teachers' problems encountered in negotiating meaning in the classroom interaction dealing with the implementation a Fledgling International Standard School.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study is aimed at investigating meaning negotiation strategies and the problems of meaning negotiation in classroom interactions. Meaning negotiation consists of several strategies namely non verbal and verbal (see Abdullah 2011:109). By using non verbal strategies, meaning negotiation could also run successfully. To avoid ambiguity, this study only deals with verbal strategy stated

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by Long in Abdullah (2011). It consists of comprehension check, clarification request, confirmation check, approximation, self correction, self repetition and other repetition.

Moreover, there are several problems in meaning negotiation in classroom interactions namely linguistics and non linguistics problems. However, this study only discusses some linguistics elements namely pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. According to Meshito, et al. (2008), linguistics elements such as pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar are parts of meaning negotiation problems.

This study has characteristics of case study because it employs qualitative data analysis. A case study was chosen because this research was carried out in “small scale, a single case” (Stake in Emilia, 2005:74), i.e. at four science classrooms in an International Standard School. These classes were chosen due to some reasons. First, even though English must be used in all classes in a Fledgling International Standard School, the preliminary study indicated that the four science classes used English more frequently than the other classes such as Mathematics. Secondly, the teachers had already taken a short course of teaching science in English. Hence, the teachers had more experiences in teaching science by using English compared with other teachers (see Table 3).

1.5 Significance of the Research

The result of the study will academically have contributions at least in two ways. First, it is expected to give some information about the actual condition of teaching learning process that in turn will become an informative input for the

policy of education in Fledgling International Standardized School, particularly junior high school curriculum about teachers and students interaction in a science class where English is used as a medium of interaction.

Second, even though Fledgling International Standard Schools are no longer exist in Indonesia, bilingual classes are still found in many schools nationwide. Therefore, this research expected give significant information for the teachers to use English more frequently in the classroom as a way of negotiating meaning. By the success of meaning negotiation, the material can be comprehended by the students more easily.

Third, it can be useful information for teachers to conduct better teaching practices and enhance their professionalism. The teachers will be able to get some teaching techniques and approach that can be implemented to conduct teaching and learning process in the classroom.

1.6 Clarification of Terms

To avoid readers' misunderstanding, it is better to define each keyword which is used frequently in this study as follows:

1. Meaning negotiation is the exchanges between learners and their interlocutors as they attempt to resolve communication breakdown (Long, 1983, cited in Shrum & Glisan, 2005:1).
2. Classroom Interaction is a kind of verbal exchanges among students and between students and teachers (Whitmer, 2011).

3. International Standard School (SBI) is a school which implements the National Curriculum based on the *Standard Nasional Pendidikan* (SNP) and the international standardized curriculum (Puskur, 2006).

1.7 Organization of thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter One gives general description of the introduction to the topic of the research. Chapter Two presents relevant theories which underpin this study. The theories deal with meaning negotiation, strategy of meaning negotiation, principles of fledgling international standard school and some related research. Chapter Three outlines the methodology of the study. This includes research design, participants, setting, data collection and analysis of the conversation. Chapter Four focuses on the findings and discussion from the observation and conversation analysis. Finally, Chapter Five provides conclusions drawn from the findings and discussion in the previous chapter as well as some recommendations for further research.

1.7 Conclusion

After looking at the introduction which provides a basis for the present study, the forthcoming chapter delineates some underlying theories concerning meaning negotiation, classroom interaction, fledgling international standard school and some previous related research.