

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter will delineate the issues related to the concern of this study, i.e. to analyze the nature and pattern of teacher-student interaction in EFL classes, and to reveal the factors inhibiting the EFL teachers to promote communicative interaction with their students in EFL classes. It includes the background of the study, problem investigated, research question, objectives of the study, organization and overview of chapters, and definitions of terms.

Background

The purpose of EFL classes is to help students acquire and develop English in their inter-language system. Among various teaching approaches, the common one widely adopted in recent years is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. The priority and key focus in EFL classes adopting CLT is to train up students to be fluent and communicative competent in genuine communication (Hatch 1978; Nunan, 1987). In CLT classes, the role of EFL teachers is therefore more pivotal in helping students engage in meaningful reciprocal interaction (Thomas, 1987). It is EFL teachers' responsibility to facilitate and 'orchestrate' the meaningful verbal interaction within the classroom (Brein, 1998, p.119); they are also expected to encourage students to produce more target-like output and re-align their inter-language in English (Long, 1983a, 1996; Gass & Varonis, 1985, 1994; Pica, 1987; Larsen-Freeman, 1991). These highlighted responsibility and expectation shift the teachers' paradigm from merely 'focus on form' to more 'focus on message' (Larsari, 2011, p.2).

In such CLT classes, EFL teachers are expected to facilitate communicative interactions that allow collaboration and scaffold comprehension and comprehensibility (Donato, 1994; McCormic, 1997; Swain, 1997). Such interactions should also provide opportunities for students to comprehend received messages, produce modified output and attain to the target language form to develop their interlanguage (Krashen, 1982; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; Swain & Lapkin, 1995). How EFL teachers facilitate such communicative interactions in an EFL CLT based classroom is therefore critical to what students ultimately acquire English in their inter-language system (Gass & Mackey, 2007, p.87; Tsui, 1995, p.1; Johnson, 1995, p.81).

Managing meaningful teacher-student interaction which can promote genuine communication in CLT based class is quite challenging. Despite EFL teachers' efforts of developing learners' communicative capability in real life situation, some research studies reveal that EFL teachers often fail to establish the genuine or natural communication (Nunan, 1987 p.137 cited in Seedhouse, 1996; Kumaravadivelu, 1993 p.12). One of the reasons is because this kind of interaction requires not only EFL teachers' know-how technical skills of provide appropriate input (Krashen, 1981, 1985), various interactional adjustments, feedback (Long, 1983, 1985, 1996) or encouragement to students' output (Swain, 1995), but also require the solid quality of the teachers' communicative competence in linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic. The way they talk and hold the conversation can determine whether EFL teachers can either succeed or fail in implementing their plans (Nunan, 1991).

Various studies have proved that the achievement from completing EFL classes in the countries where English is non-native language is often below average (Larsari, 2011, p.2). The outcome of going through such EFL classes for many years is that students are very often unable to express themselves in English functionally outside classroom (Suhardi and Kurniawan, 2005).

Apart from students' personal capability and aptitude issues, one of the common causes leading to this disappointed outcome is related to the unsatisfied quality of teacher-student communicative interaction in English (Sadtono, 1997; Darjowijoyo, 1977; Jayadi, 2004; Kwelju, 2004; Mantiri, O., 2004). Among others, in Indonesia, this unsatisfied quality of teacher-student communicative interaction in English is often related to local EFL teachers' low proficiency in English and their inadequate knowledge of facilitating appropriate communicative interaction in classes. Limited teachers' competence in areas of linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic (Savignon, 1983; Canale and Swain, 1980) is, on the other hand, likely to reduce the quality of teacher-student communicative interaction. To complicate the situation, what EFL teachers believe towards their interaction and communicative competence can lead to different teaching practices and communicative interaction approaches (Johnson, 1999) which, in turn, deliver different learning experiences and outcomes to their students.

Knowing the pivotal role of the teachers in facilitating effective teacher-students communicative interaction in EFL classes adopting CLT approach, limited studies on this subject are available. Xie, X. (2008), Tognini, R. (2007), Isharyanti (2005), Fauziah (2009) and Ma' ruf, (2011) had previously studied around this subject but they did not fully focus on teacher-student communicative interaction in CLT based classes. To provide the insightful knowledge on this subject in order to help EFL teachers, particularly those from Indonesia, succeed in this pivotal role in their CLT classes, this study calls for the willingness to portray the nature of teacher-student communicative interaction in CLT based classes, and to reveal the factors that inhibit teachers to interact with students to promote communicative interaction.

Research Questions

1. What is the nature and pattern of the teacher-student interaction in EFL classes adopting CLT?
2. What factors inhibit the EFL teachers to promote communicative interaction with their students in EFL classes adopting CLT?

Objectives of the Study

Based on the research background stated above, a study entitled “Portraying Teacher-Student Interaction in EFL Class” (A Case Study in 7th and 8th EFL-CLT based classroom) was conducted, aiming at:

1. Portraying the nature and pattern of teacher – student interaction occurring in the observed EFL classes.
2. Revealing the factors that can inhibit the EFL teachers to promote communicative interaction with their students in EFL classes adopting CLT?

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The scope of this case study is focused on the nature and pattern of the verbal interaction that can trigger students to actively communicate in the communication in the perspective of CLT. Besides that, this study has an attempt to reveal the factors emerging from teachers’ belief, perception and communicative competence which can be potential factors that limit their communicative interaction towards students. Thus, this study will cover how teachers put efforts to manage effective interaction towards their students by providing accurate high quality input,

application of negotiation of meaning, interactional adjustments, provision of feedback, and encouragement of students' output will be identified. Factors emerging from teachers' belief, perception and communicative competence that influence their ways of communicative interaction will also be analyzed. This study is very limited since it was conducted only on the 7th and 8th EFL classes in one Private Junior High School in Bandung adopting Cambridge International Curriculum. With very small samples in very limited research site, it's impossible to generalize the findings to larger population. However, as a non-participatory researcher, I put in extra effort to better understand and have broader perspective of the teaching-learning process within these classes.

Significance of the Study

The result of this case study is expected to be able to give feedback to EFL teachers in general so that they can reflect whether their verbal and pattern of interaction can promote genuine communication in EFL classes adopting CLT. Besides that, knowing to what extent teachers' beliefs and communicative competence can give influences and inhibit their ways of communicative competence are also seen pivotal. After knowing their strengths and weaknesses, EFL teachers are expected to improve their ways of verbal interaction towards students. The results provided are also helpful input for the school and the stakeholders to see the qualification of verbal interaction and communicative competence of their EFL teachers. The same results should serve as useful information to other EFL teachers that CLT class requires more negotiation of meaning. Thus, teachers should be more student-centered and the class environment should provide more negotiation of meaning to promote genuine communication.

Other schools that adopt CLT approach should also be able to use the findings here as the starting point to draft up their teaching guideline in dealing with EFL classes.

Definitions of Key Terms

SLA : Second Language Acquisition focused more on the acquiring the language and not on the learning process.

Communicative Competence: a term in linguistics which refers to a language user's grammatical knowledge of syntax, morphology, phonology, and the like, as well as social knowledge about how and when to use utterances appropriately.

CLT : emerged as a response to the other approaches like audio-lingual method and puts more focus on the importance of genuine communication in EFL classes.

Interaction : When two or more people or things communicate or react to each other.

Interactional Hypothesis : is a theory of second-language acquisition which states that the development of language proficiency is promoted by face-to-face interaction and communication. Taken from Michael Long (1996), the theory claims that comprehensible input needs to be comprehended through meaning negotiation

Comprehensible Input : A hypothesis that learners will acquire language best when they are given the input which is 1 step beyond their current level.

The input should come at level $i+1$. This theory is an essential component in Stephen Krashen's Input Hypothesis.

Output hypothesis : Developed by Merrill Swain, the comprehensible output (CO) hypothesis states that learning takes place when encountering a gap in the linguistic knowledge of the L2. By noticing this gap the learner becomes aware of it and might be able to modify his output so that he learns something new about the language. Although Swain does not claim that comprehensible output is solely responsible for all or even most language acquisition, she does claim that under some conditions.

Thesis Organization

This thesis consists of 5 chapters with the organization presented as follows:

- Chapter 1 presents the background of the study, the objectives of the study, the research methodology in brief, the scope and limitations of study, the significance of the study, the definition of terms and the organization of the thesis.
- Chapter 2 elaborates the theoretical foundations of this study, which includes the insight of the background overview, second language acquisition covering input, interaction and output hypothesis, the relationship between input and interaction, principles and models of classroom interaction, the common patterns of classroom interaction, the understanding of the nature of the classroom, and communicative competence.

- Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology and how to address the research questions with valid and reliable methodology.
- Chapter 4 discusses the data presentation, analysis, and findings of the results, based on those obtained from the classroom observation, questionnaires and teacher-student interview towards the teacher-student interaction in EFL classrooms.
- Chapter 5 concludes the study with identified conclusion, limitations, and highlights the opportunities for further research.

