A classroom discourse analysis of teacher-students interaction: A case study on Sinclair and Coulthard’s model at Madrasah Tsanawiyah NU 15 Jurangagung

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Abstract: This study analyzes the classroom interaction between teacher and students in MTs NU 15 Jurangagung using Sinclair and Coulthard’s model. This study aims at describing how the teacher initiates the exchanges, how students respond to the initiations, and how the teacher follows up the exchanges. The researcher found that the interaction was teacher-centred. It meant the teacher dominated most of the exchanges. He also found that the interaction is sufficient for the students to pass the exam, but not for them to acquire the skills. Several reasons such as most of the students were not expected to go to college, English was being the least important language they learned, and their parents who expected them to learn Arabic more play the part on why the English language skills acquisition was not effective.

Keywords classroom interaction, IRF, Sinclair and Coulthard’s model.


Introduction

In a language learning context, interaction has a prominent role in communicative language teaching for it is the essence of communication (Brown, 2001). In line with that, Thoms (2012) remarks that interaction is the fundamental resource for what to learn and how to learn a language. In other words, interaction is regarded as both the tool and the goal in the language learning process.

Regarding English as a foreign language, the interaction in language learning is done mostly in classrooms. Unlike in another social context, classroom interaction is premeditated and meaningful (Sundari, Rafli, & Ridwan, 2017). It means that the interaction must follow the teacher’s plan. His or her feedback, questions, and corrections ought to improve students’ language competencies. Moreover, Brown (2001) notes that classroom interaction challenges learners to produce the target language in communication. It also pushes them to express meaning beyond their current linguistic competence level (Saville-Troike as cited in Mulyati, 2013). Additionally, good classroom interaction can encourage the students to communicate with others in a real situation (Runmei, 2008). These are the reasons why an effective classroom interaction is essential to the success of the language learning process.

A successful classroom interaction determines the success of the language learning process. Consequently, the classroom discourse is important to be analyzed. It can reveal the strengths and weaknesses of teacher and student’s communication, thereupon improving the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process.

Sinclair & Coulthard proposed to break classroom discourse down into five structured ranks: lesson, transaction, exchange, move and act. The following is a diagram of discourse analysis model rank-levels based on Jones (2009: 5) consisting of the lesson at the topmost, then broken down into transaction, exchange, move, and the bottom act. They are making a hierarchy relation with a lesson at the top and act at the bottom. The hierarchic presentation can be presented in the following.
For this analysis, the researcher only focuses on the interrelation between an exchange, move, and act. Acts realize move, and sequence of moves realizes exchange. It will be presented further in the sections below. Sinclair and Coulthard classify exchange into two types: boundary exchanges and teaching exchanges (Cited in Raine, 2010: 7). Additionally, Jones remarks that boundary exchanges are initiated by the teacher to signal the shift of the classroom exchanges, whereas teaching exchanges are functioned to inform, direct, elicit, check students’ responses, as well as to identify any problems that may occur to carry the pedagogic content (2009: 5). Teaching exchanges consist of I (initiation) R (response) and F (follow-up) moves (Raine, 2010). Teacher’s initiation (I) has several functions; 1) to convey information to the students, 2) to elicit verbal and non-verbal responses from the students, 3) to see the students’ developments, and 4) to identify any problems the students might have. After the initiation, students are expected to respond (R), which function is to convey information to the teacher. Lastly, the follow up (F) function to elicit verbal or non-verbal responses from the students and also to check students’ progress (Raine cited in Nicholson, 2014).

As for the bound exchanges, they normally do not need initiation. They are bound to the previous exchanges. Moreover, they have several functions. Those functions are: 1) to generate a response to an unanswered question, 2) to induce a correct response, 3) to restrain evaluation after further responses, 3) to provoke a repetition of a response (Raine cited in Nicholson, 2014). Moves are a combination of several acts, which are the lowest rank of the Sinclair and Coulthard model. An act is defined as the function of utterances made by the teacher and students (Nicholson, 2014: 202). The functions of acts in the opening move of exchange are usually as a request to a linguistic response, as well as a non-linguistic one such as writing or listening and to deliver facts or ideas (Brown, 2010: 32).

Methodology

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach as their research method. All the data were analyzed in the form of description and not in a form of numbers (Amaluddin, 1999). Although the data were presented in a form of words, some basic statistics were also be presented (Wilkinson, 2000).

The subject of this research is students of the eighth grade of MTs NU 15 Jurangagung. The school is located in a rural area where everyone speaks the regional language to serve their communicative needs. In this community, Bahasa Indonesia is rarely used in everyday communication by the community. The nearest town is about 30 minutes drive. English is a strange language for the students. None of them has mobile phones and even most of their parents do not have one. The researcher uses a mobile phone as the indication of students’ familiarity with English since Indonesian students are exposed to English mostly through social media. Consequently, English is a language that they encounter only in English class.

The writers used recorded audio to see the interaction between teachers and students within the classroom of the 8th grade of MTs NU 15 Jurangagung. After that, they categorized the initiations, responses, and follow-ups of the recorded interaction. Lastly, they analyzed the efficacy of the classroom interaction.
Results

The five ranks scale model consists of five ranks; those are lesson, transaction, exchange, move, and act were found in the classroom interaction in MTs NU 15 Jurangagung. Based on the analysis result, the classroom discourse has one Lesson that is Text Type Discussion. The Lesson is divided into four Transaction, those are Opening, Introduction, Main Activity, and Exercise. Each transaction contains some exchanges which are developed from moves that are formed by some (speech) acts.

The first transaction was transaction 1 that consisted of opening. The opening is an activity that is done at the beginning of the lesson. It is a starter point in which the teacher set the condition in the classroom and gets the students to be ready for the materials. It usually has several steps such as greeting, asking and answering about conditions, talking about current issues, checking attendance, and so on. In this class, however, the teacher only uses two steps, greeting and review. In the exchange 1, greeting was employed by greeting the students using salaam in Arabic meaning peace for all of you, mercy, and blessing of Allah be upon you. The students respond also using salaam. Then, in the exchange 2, review was done by noticing. The teacher used Bahasa Indonesia in the interaction. This is one thing that comes often in the later interactions. She first initiates the students to stop their commotion and to pay attention to her. The students’ response is not verbal. They did what they were told. She then jogs the student’s memories by asking them the lesson they learnt before. So, the teacher initiates the students using questions and unfinished words or Phrases. She does this many times in the later interactions. Additionally, she also uses questions and unfinished words or Phrases for the follow ups to obtain further responses.

In the transaction 2 included Introduction that the teacher introduced the topic they would learn in the class. She used pictures in a book and asked them to describe those pictures. She also uses drills to warm up the students for the main activity. There were 4 exchanges in this transaction. The exchange 1 consisted of Introduction that was done by the teacher by introducing the lesson they were going to learn. There were only two moves. The teacher initiated by introducing the lesson directly, and the students were responded by silence. There was no follow up either to obtain a further response or to check whether the students’ understanding. The student’s response was non-verbal.

The exchange 2 consisted of the order to open the book. The teacher orders the students to open their books on a certain page. The students’ response is non-verbal which is the action of opening their books. The teacher then follows up by checking the students if they had opened their book on the page mentioned by her. Although it is not shown in the table, she takes her time checking the students’ actions.

Then, the exchange 3 was the order to look at the picture. In this exchange, the teacher uses two initiations, verbal and non-verbal. Firstly, she orders the students verbally using English then translate it into Bahasa Indonesia. However, the sentence in English is grammatically incorrect. She said, “What picture is.” Secondly, it is the action of pointing at the picture in her book. The students respond accordingly. There are three follow ups in this exchange. They use the same pattern as mentioned before. First, she uses an unfinished word. Second, she uses questions. The last she uses an unfinished Phrase.

The last exchange in the transaction 2 was exchange 4. It was warming up. In this exchange, the researcher put this exchange as warming up and not in the main activity is because the teacher merely asks the students about the picture in Bahasa Indonesia. She has not asked them to translate it into English yet. Additionally, many of the students have not fully focused on the lesson. For instance, the students respond only using one word at the beginning. The teacher then follows up by using a perfect sentence. It seems the students pick it up later on because they later answer using a perfect sentence such as shown in act 15.

The third transaction was transaction 3 that consisted of main activity. This main activity consists of 32 exchanges. The exchanges are categorized into moves and acts and will be explained separately. The first exchange was exchange 1 that consisted of the order to repeat the teacher. This exchange consists of two acts. It is shown that the teacher starts to use English for the instruction. The students’ response is a non-verbal one. Then, the exchange 2 was drilling. In this exchange, the teacher’s first act is the follow up of the last exchange. She reads the sentence on the book word by word for the students to repeat. The students’ response is repeating the teacher’s word. The third was exchange 3 that was the order to repeat the sentence. In this exchange, the teacher directs the students using English and then translates it into Bahasa Indonesia. It is shown in acts 1 and 2. The teacher will do it again in the later exchanges. The exchange is started by a follow up for it is a follow up from the previous exchange.
The next exchange was exchange 4. It was drilling. This exchange is similar to transaction 3, exchange 2 where the teacher read a sentence from the book word by word. One thing that is not shown in the transcription is that the teacher keeps mispronouncing the word “floor.” And this happens throughout the lesson. The exchange 5 was the order to repeat the sentence. This exchange is similar to transaction 3, exchange 3. The teacher uses English and again translates it into Bahasa Indonesia. Also similar to transaction 3, exchange 3 is started by a follow up because it is a follow up from the previous exchange. The next exchange is exchange 6. It was also drilling. This exchange is similar to transaction 3, exchange 2 where the teacher read a sentence from the book word by word.

The exchange 7 was the order to repeat the sentence. This exchange is similar to transaction 3, exchange 3. The teacher uses English and again translates it into Bahasa Indonesia. The first act of this exchange is also the follow up from the previous exchange. The exchange 8 was drilling. This exchange is similar to transaction 3, exchange 2 where the teacher read a sentence from the book word by word. The exchange 9 was the order to repeat the sentence. This exchange is similar to transaction 3, exchange 3. The teacher uses English and again translates it into Bahasa Indonesia. The first act of this exchange is also the follow up from the previous exchange. The exchange 10 was drilling. This exchange is similar to transaction 3 exchange 2 where the teacher read a sentence from the book word by word. The first act of this exchange is also the follow up from the previous exchange. The exchange 11 was the Order to repeat the sentence. This exchange is similar to transaction 3 exchange 3. However, the teacher only uses Bahasa Indonesia. The first act of this exchange is also the follow up from the previous exchange. The exchange 12 was drilling. This exchange is similar to transaction 3 exchange 2 where the teacher read a sentence from the book word by word.

The exchange 13 was the order to repeat the sentence. This exchange is similar to transaction 3 exchange 3. Like the previous exchange, the teacher only uses Bahasa Indonesia. The first act of this exchange is also the follow up from the previous exchange. The exchange 14 was the Review of the drill. In this exchange, the teacher points her finger to one of the students and asks him to read all the sentences they have read before. She uses Bahasa Indonesia for the instruction. The students laugh as a response. The appointed student hesitated because of the laughter. She then follows up using English instructing him to read. Once more, the first act of this exchange is also the follow up from the previous exchange. The exchange 15 was word by word translation. In this exchange, the teacher asks the students to translate the sentences. Her initiation is by speaking the word in English. They respond by uttering the translation of the word. There is no follow up in the exchange. The exchange 16 was the explanation of the formula. This exchange shows the teacher explaining the formula of present continuous tense. In act 4, she asks the students about verbs in present participle form (verb-ing). The students’ response is silence. They seem confused by the question. The teacher understands this and follows up by asking the verb used in the sentence. She then explains it further.

The exchange 17 was the examples of the formula. In this exchange, the teacher uses the example in the books to explain the formula. The first act is a follow up from the previous exchange. Furthermore, in some of the follow ups, she elicits students’ responses using unfinished such as “menya... ”. The last follow up is a function to emphasise the function of the formula. The Exchange 18 was the order to make notes. In this exchange, there are two acts. The first one is the initiation by the teacher. She verbally orders the students to prepare the textbooks. The second one is a non-verbal response by them. The exchange 19 was the review of previous lessons. This exchange happens while the students are taking notes. The teacher uses the time to remind them about the previous lessons and inform them about the examination. She, again, uses Bahasa Indonesia. The first five acts are all initiations by the teacher. The students’ response is a non-verbal one. It can be noticed that this exchange is not connected either to the previous or the next exchanges. The exchange 20 was the order to open the book page. This exchange happens after the students finished making notes. The teacher makes four acts to initiate the students. The first three are verbal, and the other one is non-verbal. Their response is a non-verbal one.

The exchange 21 was the explanation of the notes. In this exchange, the teacher follows up the previous exchange using examples and a question. The function of the follow ups is to elicit responses from the students. Their response is just one-word “sedang”. She then proceeds to elicit the students’ response using an unfinished phrase, “Kalimat yang menceritakan hal yang sedang . . . “. The exchange 22 was further explanation. The first move contains five acts by the teacher which all are follow-ups from the previous exchange. The students respond at the same time which makes it unclear. She then
follows up to clarify their responses. In addition, the students’ responses are mostly in one word of Phrase. In act 9, the teacher follows up on the students’ responses. However, she does not give them time to make another response. She proceeds to the next act. She, again, uses an unfinished phrase to obtain their response. She says "bila subjeknya . . .". The exchange 23 was the explanation of negative and interrogative form. In this exchange, the teacher initiates the interaction using unfinished words such as “kali . . .” expecting the students to finish the word “kalimat”. This exchange is not a follow up because it explains a different topic. The exchange 24 was the further explanation. In this exchange, the teacher mostly uses the question to elicit responses from the students. However, she uses an unfinished Phrase again the act 10. The students respond using a word.

The exchange 25 was the order one of the students to write on the board. This exchange consists of three acts. Two of them are non-verbal ones. The teacher initiates the students verbally asking for a volunteer. One student responds and steps forward. The exchange 26 was the order another student to write on the board. The Exchange starts with a follow-up. The first act is the follow up from the previous exchange. The teacher asks another volunteer. The students respond by pointing at one of them. She then follows up by making a compliment to the student. The exchange 27 was the order the other students to write on the board. This exchange is the follow up from the previous exchange. Once, more, the teacher asks for another volunteer. In act 6, she appoints a student to answer other students’ respond by laughing at him. The exchange 28 was asking the students about the lesson. In this exchange, the teacher checks whether the students understand the lesson. In act 4 and act 8, she asks two students personally. Although they respond that they do not understand, for some reason she ignores them. The exchange 29 was drilling. This exchange is similar to transaction 3, exchange 2 where the teacher reads a sentence from the book word by word. The exchange 30: was asking the students about the lesson. In this exchange, the teacher checks whether the students understand the lesson they are given. It is the follow up from the previous exchange. The exchange 31 was dividing the class into two groups and drill. One thing to note is that “S l” means Students on the left and “S r” means students on the right. In this exchange, there is an initiation that is not from the teacher. In Act 5, the students on the left initiate and students on the right response. The exchange 32 was the order to exchange the role. This exchange is the follow up from the previous exchange. She uses direct order to elicit the response from the students. They are shown in act 1, act 2, act 7, act 9, act 11 and act 13. Additionally, she also follows up on a student’s responsibility to correct it as shown in act 5. The last exchange was exchange 33 that was the order to finish the notes. This is the last exchange of the main activity. It consists of two-act, initiation and response. It stands on its own for it is not connected to the previous exchange.

The next transaction was transaction 4 that consisted of exercise. The exercise consists of 12 exchanges. It is shown in the following table. The exchanges will be broken down into moves and acts and will be explained separately. The exchange 1 was the order to open the book. This exchange consists of two acts, initiation and response. The teacher initiates the students verbally to open the book. Their response is a non-verbal one. The exchange 2 was the order to look at the pictures. This exchange is related to the previous one. That is why the first act is a follow-up. The teacher uses English and then translates them into Bahasa Indonesia for both of the instructions. They are shown in acts 1 and 3. The exchange 3 was the explanation of the first picture. Similar to the previous exchange, this one is also the follow up from the previous one. The teacher uses questions to elicit a response from the students. They are shown in act 1, act 3 and act 6. Additionally, she also corrects students’ responses which are shown in act 7. The exchange 4 was the explanation of the second picture. This exchange is also the follow up of the previous one. The teacher uses questions to elicit a response from the students. They are shown in act 1 and act 4. In addition, she uses an unfinished word as shown in act 6. Lastly, she follows up on a response from one of the students to confirm it. The exchange 5 was the order to take out the exercise books. This exchange is not connected to the previous one as it is a separate exchange. It consists of two initiations as shown in act 1 and act 4. The response for the initiation in act 1, according to the teacher, is to check whether the students are paying attention or not. The indication for that is because bringing the exercise book in class is a must. Initiation in act 4 on the other hand is to elicit a non-verbal response which is for them to start doing the exercise. The exchange 6 was the explanation of the first task. This exchange is the follow up from the previous one. It explains the exercise mentioned in the previous exchange. The teacher follows up using questions to obtain students’ responses as shown in act 1, act 2, act 6, act 9 and act 15. On the other hand, the follow ups in act 4, act 8, act 14, and act 17 are to confirm students’ responses.
The exchange 7 was the student’s answer of the question. In this exchange, the students make an initiation by asking a question and then one of them clarify the question. It is shown in act 1 and act 2. The teacher responds by confirming the student’s question. She then initiates by asking one of the students a question as shown in act 4. Lastly, she follows up on the student’s response in direct order. The exchange 8 was checking the students’ works. In this exchange, the teacher moves around the classroom to check the students’ works one by one. At one point, a student makes an initiation by asking a question. She responds by confirming the student’s question. The exchange 9 was making inside jokes. In this exchange, the teacher makes two initiations using inside jokes. The students laugh as a response. Although the jokes are about a picture in one of the exercises, the exchange is not connected to the previous exchange. The exchange 10 was checking the students’ works. In this exchange, the teacher initiates using questions as shown in act 1. The students respond by suggesting one of them. However, she ignores it and follows up using other questions as shown in act 3, act 4 and act 5. Lastly, she follows up by confirming the students’ responses. The exchange 11 was checking the students’ understanding of the lesson. This exchange is started by an initiation by the teacher. She asks the students if they had any questions about the lesson. She uses English and then proceeds to translate it into Bahasa Indonesia as shown in act 1. The student’s response is making a noise as some of them talk to each other. She then follows up using a question in Bahasa Jawa. Only one of the students responds. The exchange 12 was the order to submit the exercise books. This is the last exchange as the time is up. The teacher initiates the students to submit the exercise books to her desk. The students then proceed to submit their books and leave the room.

The efficacy of the classroom interaction was expected to produce two results, language skills acquirement and academic achievement. The students are expected to attain language skills and also to pass the examination. However, these two results do not always go hand in hand. The reason why these two results are not in line, according to the findings, is because the teacher focuses on the latter. It can be seen in transaction 1 exchange 2 act 12 and transaction 3 exchange 19 act 5, the teacher reminds the students about the examination. She also prioritizes teaching grammar. Additionally, she mostly uses Bahasa Indonesia in the interaction. It means the students are prepared to do tasks and not so much in practical application.

The researcher found that the students were doing well in the examination and classroom exercise. Most of them passed the examination with good grades and could do the exercise well. However, he did not see they were doing well in their language skill practice.

The teacher focused on academic achievement was because English was the language the students were least exposed to. Besides Bahasa Jawa and Bahasa Indonesia, they had to learn Arabic before they learn English. Arabic is a compulsory subject and also they use it in their afternoon classes. As for English, they were exposed to it mostly only in English class.

In conclusion, the interaction in the classroom was sufficient enough for the students to pass the examination. However, it was lacking in acquiring language skills. The teacher focused on more on academic achievement and not for practical use because it was the language they used the least other than Bahasa Jawa, Bahasa Indonesia, and Arabic.

**Discussion**

The purpose of this research was to find out the interaction pattern that happened in a classroom of MT’s NU 15 Jurangagung using Sinclair and Coulthard’s IRF model and also the efficacy of the interaction. Sinclair and Coulthard remark that a classroom interaction followed a rigid structure (Jones, 2009). A typical classroom exchange normally contained three basic moves: initiation, response, and follow up. The teacher initiated the exchange, the students responded to the initiation, and the teacher gave a follow up to the students. However, the variations of the moves might be vary.

From the findings, there were three points to be noted. The teacher mostly dominated the exchanges; there were several ways she used to elicit the students’ response and effectiveness of the interaction. Firstly, the finding showed that in every exchange the teacher mostly dominated the interactions. The acts in every exchange were mostly done by her. She used several sentences to convey an order. For instance, in Transaction 3 exchange 21,

*Perhatikan!*

*Kalian tadi sudah menterjemahkan, sudah membaca, memahami halaman 103.*
Anak laki-laki dan anak perempuan sedang membersihkan kelas, contohnya.
Atau ada kalimat begini: dia sedang membaca al-Quran.
Atau, bu Ina sedang mengajar di kelas 8 A.
Khas dari kata yang saya ucapkan itu kata apa?
It means she used several acts to initiate responses from the students.
To respond to the initiation, the students’ replied are usually short. They responded only with one word “sedang” for the act shown above. They usually replied only using a phrase, a word, or even a syllable. They rarely replied using a full sentence. If they did, they only used sentences within the textbook.

Secondly, the teacher elicited responses from the students using three ways: direct orders, questions, and unfinished words or phrases. She used direct order such as “perhatikan,” “open the book in 103,” or “ulangi” in several exchanges. Responses for direct orders were usually non-verbal, but they could also be verbal ones in a form of a phrase or questions. However, the students’ responses to those direct orders were usually non-verbal.

Other than a direct order, the teacher also used questions such as “gambar apa ini?”, “sudah ketemu semua?” or “apa yang dilakukan siti?”. Initiations in a form of questions often lead to elaborate answers. In this case, however, the students often responded only in one word of one phrase.

Next, the teacher used unfinished words or phrases. Some examples of those are “clean berubah menjadi clean...” or “menya...”. The students were expected to respond by completing the phrases or the words. As expected, they responded accordingly.

Lastly, Mts NU 15 Jurangagung is an Islamic school. It means that English is not prioritized. The school regards Arabic as a compulsory subject. This is relevant because the students are exposed more to Arabic than English. In addition to regular class, the students also learned Arabic in afternoon school. Moreover, some of them went to Islamic boarding school after they graduated.

In comparison to English, the students were exposed to the language mostly only in English class. None of them had social media accounts where they can learn the language more. It makes acquiring English skills were hard for them. For those reasons, the teacher focused on more on academic achievement. They learned English so they could pass the examination. In conclusion, the interaction in the classroom was adequate enough to help them academically, but it was lacking for them to acquire language skills.

Conclusion

From the previous chapter, the researcher concludes several points related to the classroom interaction in MT’s NU Jurangagung. The first point was the domination of the teacher in the classroom interaction. The initiations and follow ups made by her were more common than the responses from the students. She made several acts within the initiations and followed up to elicit responses. Sometimes she repeated herself in giving direction. The responses, however, were very short. It varied rare for the students to respond in a full sentence. They usually responded using only just one word, one phrase or even one syllable. Then, the teacher used direct order, questions, unfinished words and unfinished phrases in order to elicit responses. The responses for direct orders are usually non-verbal. She often used unfinished words or phrases provoking the students to finish them. For instance, she used, “menggambarkan he...” expecting the students to complete the word “hewan”. Another example was the utterance, “kita sudah belajar simple present ...” expecting the students to compete for the phrase “simple present tense.” Moreover, the interaction was effective enough to help the students to pass the examination. However, it was inadequate for them to master the skills. The reason for that was that the teacher focused on the lesson more on academic achievement rather than language skills. Then, the English teaching and learning process could be effective. However, it was handicapped by several things. The school did not prioritize English. Other than Bahasa Jawa and Bahasa Indonesia, the students had to learn Arabic before they learned English. Additionally, the parents expected them to learn Arabic for the students to learn Islamic subjects. Lastly, Most of them did not go to university after high school; therefore, English is the least important language for them.
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