Classroom Interaction Analysis in the EFL Speaking Class  
(A Study at English Department of IAIN Imam Bonjol, Padang)

ELISMAWATI

English Department, IAIN Imam Bonjol, West Sumatera, 2500, Indonesia  
elismawati_1957@yahoo.com

Abstract—The success of teaching depends to a large extent on the way teachers talk and interactions that occur between teachers and students. The happening of interaction is affected directly by ways of teacher talk. This study entitles “Classroom Interaction Analysis in the EFL Speaking Class” aimed at analyzing the categories of teacher talk, student talk and classroom interaction types used during EFL speaking class. The research employed a qualitative design and applied a case study. Subjects of the research were an English teacher and 35 students at the second semester at English Department of IAIN Imam Bonjol Padang. The data were gained through naturalistic observation and document analysis. The data were analyzed by using Foreign Language Interaction (FLINT) system. The findings revealed that both teacher and students applied all categories of talk as mentioned in FLINT system and classroom interaction types.

Keywords—Classroom interaction; FLINT analysis; EFL speaking class.

1. INTRODUCTION

Speaking is considered as one of the most important skills in foreign language learning. Some experts tend to say that it is the most difficult skill of the four (listening, speaking, reading and writing). Classroom practices normally focus on mechanical and artificial grammar points which are not relevant to the real world. Moreover, speaking is usually taught without consciously considering its close relationship to the social context. As the result, students easily get frustration since they cannot understand or be understood by others, even though they do a good job in the language classroom.

The need for English speaking mastery has been increased due to the status of English as a global language recognized in every country and used for international communication. English has a function as the main gate to get a better job since it is used as the working language in international organizations and multinational companies (Nazara, 2010, p. 1). The need for getting a better job and globally participation become the main reasons for non-native speakers to learn and master English, either as a second language (ESL) or a foreign language (EFL), particularly focused on speaking skill.

However, speaking is a complicated skill and needs a long time to develop. In developing speaking skill, people need to practice it as often as possible and get a sufficient experience everywhere, including in language classroom. In order to get experience in English communication, they need to interact regularly using the target language since interaction is the heart of communication (Brown, 2001, p. 165). Interaction occurs as long as people are communicating each other and giving action and receiving the reaction in one another anywhere and anytime, including in the classroom setting. Dagarin (2004, p. 128) argues that classroom interaction is “two way process between the participants in the language process, the teacher influences the learners and vice versa.” Furthermore, interaction in the classroom is categorized as the pedagogic interaction which means the interaction in the
teaching and learning process (Sarosdy et al., 2006).

In the recent years, teaching English has developed dramatically because of globalization impact and everyone should understand English as their international language. The success of teaching depends to a large extent on the way teachers talk and interactions that occur between teachers and students. Teacher talk is an indispensable part of foreign language teaching in organizing activities, and the way teachers talk not only determines how well they make their lectures, but also guarantees how well students will learn. Learning of English in Indonesia takes place mainly in classrooms and is usually done under the guidance and supervision of teachers.

The interaction between teachers and students constitutes a most important part in all classroom activities. Appropriate teacher talk can create harmonious atmosphere and at the same time promotes a more friendly relationship between teachers and students, and consequently creates more opportunities for interactions between teachers and students.

During the past 20 years, teacher talk has become a focus in the research area of second language acquisition. Pioneered by Gail (1977, 1979) and Henzle (1979), the research on teacher talk began in the 1970s, followed by Long (1981, 1983), Long & Sato (1983), Welche & Ready (1985), Ellis (1985) and Chaudron (1988), who made studies of teacher talk types in college classrooms. Futhermore, teacher talk has drawn more attention of scholars and researchers worldwide, such as Lindholm-Leary (2001), Seedhouse (2004), Berlin (2005), Ellis & Barkhuizen (2005), Wright (2005), Robinson (2006). These studies focus their attention mainly on classroom conversation features, talk turns between teachers and learners, and by using what languages teachers could manage the class well. In China, and many of the researchers, such as Hu (2004), Sun (2005), Wu (2006), Sun, Zhao & Zhao (2007), have been focusing on how teacher should provide feedbacks to students’ language errors. In “Developing professional skills of Teaching Foreign Languages” by Zou (2008), a whole chapter is devoted to language errors and feedback types, discussing in what proper ways language teachers should response to learners’ error in language learning class.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. CLASSROOM INTERACTION

The word interaction, in the era of communicative language teaching, seems to be very important for language teachers since this is, in fact, the heart of communication and this is also what communication is all about. Through interaction teachers are enabled to do various jobs for the success of their language teaching.

Classroom interaction is collaborative exchange of thought, feeling, or ideas between two or more people resulting in reciprocal effect on each other in other ways the action performed by the teacher and the students during instruction interrelated.

Teaching language is not only a matter of transferring knowledge but this is also a matter of how to make students understand about using the target language correctly either actively or passively as what has been demanded by nowadays competitive era.

Teaching and learning process is suggested not to focus only on the matter of passing the knowledge. However it must also take into consideration on the presence of appropriate classroom management. This is due to the fact that appropriate classroom management may yield students’ convenience to follow the entire learning process from the beginning till the end of the learning session. Besides this is also one way to generate good class room interaction which possibly determines students learning outcome (Englehart, 2009., p. 13). How teachers interact with their students in the class room may describe the equality of teaching being instructed.

Interaction is the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings or ideas between two or more people, resulting in a reciprocal effect on each other. Theories of communicative competence emphasize the importance of interaction. As human beings use language in various contexts to "negotiate" meaning or simply stated, to get an idea out of one person's head and intro the head of another person and vice versa. From very beginning of language study, classrooms should be interactive. Wilga Rivers puts in this way:

Through interaction, students can decrease their language store as they listen to or read authentic linguistic
material, or even the output of their fellow students in discussions, skits, joint problem-solving tasks, or dialogue journals. In interaction, students can use all they possess of the language—all they have learned or casually absorbed-in real-life exchanges....Even at an elementary stage, they learn this way to exploit the elasticity. (Wilga River, 1987, p. 4-5)

Away from the managerial or directive role and allow students, with teachers’ Guidance and gentle prodding, to find their own pathway to success. A facilitator capitalizes on the principle of intrinsic motivation by allowing students to discover language through using it pragmatically, rather than by telling them about language.

B. TEACHER TALK

Classroom is the main place where they are frequently exposed to the target language for foreign language learners. The kind of language used by the teacher for instruction in the classroom is known as teacher talk (TT). For this term, Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics defines it as “that variety of language sometimes used by teachers when they are in the process of teaching. In trying to communicate with learners, teachers often simplify their speech, giving it many of the characteristics of foreigner talk and other simplified styles of speech addressed to language learners” (Richards, 1992, p. 471).

Having studied the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) for many years, Rod Ellis (1985, p.145) has formulated his own view about teacher talk: “Teacher talk is the special language that teachers use when addressing L2 learners in the classroom. There is systematic simplification of the formal properties of the teacher’s language studies of teacher talk can be divided into those that investigate the type of language that teachers use in language classrooms and those that investigate in the type of language they use in subject lessons.” He also commented “the language that teachers address to L2 learner is treated as a register, with its own specific formal and linguistics properties” (Ellis, 1985, p. 145). In this research, it is the oral form of teacher talk instead of written form that is under this investigation. It refers to the language that teachers use in language classrooms rather than in other settings.

Based on the definitions, firstly we can see that teacher talk in English classrooms is regarded as one special variety of the English language, so it has its own specific features which other varieties do not share. Because of the restriction of the physical setting, special participants as well as the goal of teaching, teacher talk has its own special style. Secondly, we can see that teacher talk is a special communicative activity. Its goal is to communicate with students and develops students’ foreign language proficiency. Teacher talk is used in class when teachers are conducting instructions, cultivating their intellectual ability and managing classroom activities (Feng Qican, 1999, p. 23). Teachers adopt the target language to promote their communication with learners. In this way, learners practice the language by responding to what their teacher says. Besides, teachers use the language to encourage the communication between learners and themselves. Therefore we can say teacher talk is a kind of communication-based or interaction-based talk.

C. FOREIGN LANGUAGE INTERACTION (FLINT) SYSTEM

In analyzing the interaction during speaking class, FLINT system developed by Moskowitz (1971, as cited in Brown, 2001, p. 170) was used. This analysis system has several benefits; it is helpful in developing interactive language teaching since it gives the researcher a taxonomy for observing teachers, set a framework for evaluating and improving the teaching, and helps to set a learning climate for interactive teaching (Brown, 2001, p. 168-169).

Aspects to be analyzed during interaction are teacher talk and student talk. Teacher talk is defined as any words or sentences said by the teacher during the interaction in teaching learning process, including when the teacher gives explanation, feedback, ask question and so on (Mujahidah, 2012). It indicates that any kind of talk spoken by the teacher is called teacher talk. The teacher talk plays an important role in teaching process since it can increase students’ language store as they listen to the real authentic
material (Rivers, 1987, p. 4-5). Another importance of teacher talk in the language classroom is that the role of the teacher as the provider of comprehensible input. Harmer (2001, p. 66) notes, “Teachers are ideally placed to provide comprehensible input since the students can react appropriately although the students do not understand every word they said, but they understand the meaning of what is being said.”

The teacher talk has seven categories, namely (1) deals with feelings, (2) praises or encourages, (3) uses ideas of students, (4) asks question, (5) gives information and corrects without rejection, (6) gives direction, and (7) criticizes students’ response and behavior (Moskowitz, 1971 as cited in Brown, 2001, p. 170). Students talk can be used by the students to express their own ideas, initiate new topics, and develop their own opinions. Categories of students talk including students response (specific), students initiated, silence and confusion (Moskowitz, 1971 as cited in Brown, 2001, p. 170).

In the foreign language classroom, the interaction occurs variously. Malamah-Thomas (1987) as cited in Mingzhi (2005, p. 59) divide types of classroom interaction into seven types, namely (1) teacher speaking to the whole class which is established when a teacher talks to the whole class at the same time (Dagarin, 2004, p. 129), (2) teacher speaking to an individual with the rest of students as the hearers that can be used for an informal conversation at the beginning of the lesson or for leading students into a less guided activity (Dagarin, 2004, p. 129), (3) teacher speaking to a group of students which refers to the teacher participating students’ group work (Mingzhi, 2005, p. 59), (4) student speaking to the teacher that refers to the students’ initiation (Mingzhi, 2005, p. 59), (5) student speaking to the student related to the pairwork activities that involves collaboration and self-initiated with only two students (Brown, 2001, p. 178), (6) student speaking to group members which is related to the group work (Mingzhi, 2005, p. 60), and (7) student speaking to the whole class which is commonly applied when the speaking activities are students-fronted, for instance in presentation and workshop (Mingzhi, 2005, p. 59).

III. RESEARCH METHOD

This study applied a qualitative research design. Qualitative design was chosen in order to explore and understand the social phenomenon (Creswell, 2009, p. 22). The strategy applied was a case study since it explored in depth activity in one or more individuals (Creswell, 2009, p. 30). The research was undertaken at the second semester of the classroom interaction in speaking class at English Department of Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Education, Imam Bonjol Islamic State Institute Padang. The participants involved in this research were an English teacher and 35 students at the second semester of English Department who had been taking the ‘Speaking 2’ subject and an English teacher who taught the ‘Speaking 2’ subject. Creswell (2009, p. 166) notes that “data collection procedures in qualitative research include collecting information through un-structured or semi-structured observation and interviews, documents and visual materials, as well as establishing the protocol for recording information”.

In this research, the data was collected through naturalistic observation and document analysis. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2009, p. 442), “Naturalistic observation means observing individuals in their natural settings, simply observes and records what happens as things naturally occur.” In this research, the classroom interaction was observed through video recording. Observation has a number of advantages covering (1) researcher can record information as it occurs, (2) researcher has a first-hand experience with participants, (3) usual aspect can be noticed during observation, and (4) it is useful in exploring topics that may be uncomfortable for participants to discuss (Creswell, 2009, p. 167). The other method for collecting data was document analysis. Document analysis is defined as “a technique which enables a researcher to study human behavior in indirect way through an analysis of their communicatio” (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2009, p. 472). Document analysis has advantages, namely it is useful as a means of analyzing observational data and a researcher can delve into records and documents (Fraenkel and Allen, 2009, p. 483).

In this research, the document analyzed was video’s transcription of teaching-learning process in the speaking class at the second semester of
English Department of Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Education, Imam Bonjol Islamic State Institute Padang. The videos were documented in 12th April up to 17th Mei, 2015. To display the language used in the classroom, the videos were then transcribed. The videos comprised five sessions of English speaking class at the second semester English Department with various topics of speaking activities including class discussion, presentation, public speaking as a part of simulation, and role play as an example of communication games.

Furthermore, to investigate the classroom interaction appeared between teacher and students, this research employed FLINT analysis framework adopted from Moskowitz (1971) as cited in Brown, 2010, p. 170). While, to investigate types of classroom interaction in the speaking class, the researcher used Malamah-Thomas’s (1987) framework as cited in (Mingzhi, 2005, p. 59) about types of classroom interaction. In analyzing the data, the data from video recording were firstly transcribed to show the interaction and language used by teacher and students during English speaking class.

Secondly, the transcripts were coded by using several categories of teacher talk and student talk as well as types of classroom interaction. Thirdly, the data were then calculated and analyzed the amount of each category of teacher talk, student talk, and classroom interaction type.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on four times observation that have been conducted at the second semester of English Department at IAIN Imam Bonjol Padang, it was found that all categories both in teacher talk and student talk as mentioned in FLINT system (Moskowitz, 1971 as cited in Brown, 2001, p. 170) had been applied by the subjects. The category of “gives information” was mostly used by the teacher and “student specific response” category was most dominant spoken by students. In addition, all types of classroom interaction based on Malamah-Thomas’s (1987, cited in Mingzhi, 2005, p. 59) framework has been applied with “student speaking to the whole class” was mostly applied in the EFL speaking class.

Deals with feeling

Transcription from first meeting:

T : “Good morning.”
Ss : “Good morning.”
T : “How are you today?”
Ss : “I’m fine, thank you, and you?”
T : “Not so bad, thank you.

Interaction in language classroom, particularly in using “Deals with students’ feelings” category, is essential to strengthen relationship between a teacher and students and also to break the ice because the students feel nervous, especially at the first time they meet their teacher. In addition, the teacher seemed to be aware that she needs to make the students familiar with English expression.

Praising or encouraging

S : “Jadi begitu ya.”
T : “Okay Please attention for a moment?”
Ss : “Okay.”
T : “She has a talent for cooking. Very delicious cook.”
Ss : “Fried chicken ”

This category is important as well since it determines relationship between teacher and students. In addition, praising and encouraging will help them to be more confident when speaking. However, the teacher hardly used this category in teaching speaking.

Using ideas of students

Transcription from forth meeting:

T : “Okay. Tree students to perform in front of the class. First one?”
S : (a student raises his hand) “Ada yang bawa spidol?”
T : “Does anyone bring the marker?
Agus, maybe you can give a clue before
You give the games to your friends.”

The teacher used student’s idea by translating his questions from the native language to the target language. It is assumed that the teacher tried to provide students the input when being spoken by their fellows using native language.

Asking Questions

Transcription of fourth meeting:

T: “I will check your absence list, who calls the name say present. Who is present four
times that you say four present. But if you
absent one time, that you present three
present. Be honest, please. Understand all
of you?”
Ss : “Yes Mam."

In asking questions, the teacher frequently
asked the students about their understanding
related to the materials and directions given by
asking “Do you understand”, “Understand all of
you?”, and “Is it clear?”. Asking students using
those expressions are less appropriate since they
only need simple responses and polar answers, just
by saying yes or no. However, if the teacher
wanted to check students’ understanding, it is
more appropriate to give knowledge questions, for
instance “What did you get from my explanation?”. This question strategy will create the interactive

**Giving information**

Transcription from the third meeting:

T : “Pictorial game is how to create or show
the picture to students to make understand. This is relevant with
enriching the vocabulary. Ini salah satu contohnya. Nah, setiap anak setiap siswa,
next, harus menemukan satu permainan
to be instructor in front of your friends. Is
it clear from me?”
Ss : “Yeah”

The transcription reveals that in giving
information, the teacher used Bahasa Indonesia in
order to make students more understand about
materials delivered and to avoid misunderstanding.

Transcription of forth meeting:

S : “I got just tree papers.”
T : “Papers. It’s plural.”
S : “Yes. Just tree papers.”

It shows that the teacher attempted to correct
student’s mistake of grammar without using words
or intonation leading to the criticism.

**Giving direction**

Transcription from the first meeting:

T : “Speak up, please.
Count your number, please.
One, two, three, four. Back
to one, one, two, three, four.

Begin from here.”
Ss : [Students counting]

This transcription tells about the teacher gave
direction to the students when applying group
work speaking activity. This category of “gives
direction” is commonly applied when the teacher
acts as a director which directs the students in
doing group work activity.

**Criticizing student’s behavior**

Transcription from forth observation:

T : “I know before that you didn’t pay
attention to her explanation. Please, pay
attention.”
Ss : “Yes.”

This transcription reveals that the teacher tried
to ask a student to be quiet by saying “Please, pay
attention.” It was related to the students’ behavior
in the classroom.

**Students’ response**

T : “Okay, before doing our activity, I will
give you some materials. Please, clean
the whiteboard!”
S : [The student got up and did what the
teacher was asked]

This transcription shows that in responding to
the teacher’s talk, the student used gesture or non-
verbal response. It indicates that the student
understood the teacher’s language. However, this
response is categorized as the simple and limited.
Another type of student response with limited and
simple response is found as follow.

T : “What is topic of today?”
Ss : “Hayati.”
T : “Hayati that was killed by someone ?”
Ss : “Ex-boyfriend.”
T : “Ex-boyfriend. For our topic today is
about Hayati. Using /eitc/ or?”
Ss : “No.”

**Students’ initiation**

This category means the students respond to
the teacher with students’ own ideas, opinions,
reactions and feelings. For example
S1: “If we show the picture and ..”
T : “Yeah.
Pictorial games ini according to Harmer, yah, Harmer. Pictorial games is how to understand students vocabulary……”

The “student initiated” category emerged when students had their own ideas about speaking task. This category seemed to be applied in third and fourth meetings, when they have already been trained by the teacher with a number of speaking activities that promotes the interaction.

Silence
Silence means pauses in interaction during which there is no verbal interaction. This also include silence in which a piece of audio and visual equipment. For example

T : “Class discussion. What happens in a class discussion? [the teacher wrote the material on the whiteboard for three minutes and no verbal interaction] Finish?”
Ss : “Not yet.”

The “silence” category happened when the teacher wrote the material. During that time, there was no verbal interaction. It was happened in the first meeting of ‘ Speaking 2’ subject and still the teacher that was dominating the interaction.

Confusion
Confusion means that more than one person at time talking, so the interaction cannot be recorded. For example

T : “Make topic about Hayati.”
Ss : [Group discussion was started for more than 20 minutes]

The transcription above shows that students at the same time talking and discussing the topic given by the teacher, so the interaction could not be recorded. However, the interaction during group discussion refers to the interaction among group members. During group discussion, the students tended to use their native languages, either in Indonesia or Minang language.

Types of Classroom Interaction
Teacher speaking to the whole class
This type of interaction occurred when firstly, the teacher greeted students in the beginning of the lesson and gave the material. Secondly, it was also applied when the teacher gave a several feedback for students’ performances in the end of lesson. The last, when the teacher gave information about next speaking activities.

Teacher speaking to an individual
This type of interaction was applied when the teacher checked students’ attendance, directed and asked a student in speaking activities such as ice breaking as a part of communication games. Furthermore, it was applied when the teacher corrected students’ mistakes in pronouncing and related to grammatical mistakes as well.

Teacher speaking to group of students
This type was used when speaking activity conducted seminar as the example of simulation. In this type of interaction, the teacher told about the score of each group and corrected their mistakes.

Student speaking to teacher
This type refers to the student’s initiation to ask or interact with the teacher. It occurred in the last meeting when the students performed their speaking in front of their classmates.

Students interacted with the teacher
when they tried to present and to ask some vocabularies which they did not know in the target language. In addition, it was applied when they asked the teacher about speaking activities in the following meeting.

Student speaking to student
This type of interaction is called pair work and it occurred when the classroom conducted simulation and communication games activities.

Student speaking to group members
The speaking activities which applied this type were class discussion in the first meeting and communication games in the fourth meeting. Unfortunately, they tended to spend their times to interact with their fellows using native languages, Minang and Bahasa Indonesia.

Student speaking to the whole class
This type was applied when students performed in front of the class as the presenters in class discussion, speakers in simulation, and performer in communication games. This interaction gave the same opportunity for each student to speak during speaking class.

V. CONCLUSION

This present study aims to discover categories of talk spoken by teacher and students according to FLINT system. The findings revealed that during interaction in the EFL speaking class, the teacher tended to act as facilitator which facilitated students to speak with several student-fronted speaking activities, such as class discussion, presentation, simulation and communication games, a director that directed them in conducting speaking activities, and a resource providing information needed by students. In addition, the students had more opportunity to speak and interact in EFL speaking class by doing speaking activities focused on group-work activities and presentation.

However, the usage of native language during interaction was frequently used. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended for the teacher to motivate students to speak and interact using the target language during EFL speaking activities, to praise them for what they have done for building up their confidence, and to encourage them to interact by applying question strategies which are able to develop their communicative competence.

REFERENCES