

Classroom Interaction Patterns in the EFL Task-Based Classroom

Bobi Arisandi*

STKIP Muhammadiyah Kotabumi, Indonesia

DOI: 10.22236/JER_Vol3Issue2pp186-192

The research was conducted to find out the interaction pattern that emerged when lecturer used Task-Based Instruction (TBI) in the EFL classroom at the third semester of a higher institution in Lampung province, Indonesia. The data was taken by using three instruments: observation, questionnaire, and interview. The result of this study revealed two conclusions. First, there were two kinds of interaction in the classroom during the use of TBI. The interactions that emerged were student-lecturer interaction and student-student interaction. The second conclusion, it was revealed that there were strategy and method that increase interaction in the classroom. The strategy was the use of referential question while the method was Group Discussion (GD) method. The findings of this research can be useful for lecturers to broaden their understanding of classroom interaction.

Keywords: classroom interaction, task-based instruction, interaction pattern

Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk menemukan pola interaksi yang muncul ketika dosen menggunakan Task-Based Instruction (TBI) di kelas bahasa Inggris. Data diambil dengan menggunakan tiga instrumen penelitian, yaitu observasi kelas, kuosioner, dan wawancara. Hasil penelitian ini mengungkapkan dua kesimpulan. Pertama, ada dua jenis interaksi di dalam kelas selama menggunakan TBI. Interaksi yang muncul adalah interaksi mahasiswa-dosen dan interaksi mahasiswa-mahasiswa. Kesimpulan kedua mengungkapkan bahwa ada strategi dan metode yang dapat meningkatkan interaksi di dalam kelas. Strategi tersebut adalah penggunaan referential question sedangkan metode yang digunakan adalah diskusi kelompok. Hasil penelitian ini berguna bagi dosen untuk memperluas pemahaman terhadap interaksi kelas.

* Corresponding author. Email: bobi.arisandi07@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The development of English as a foreign language is still very significant. It might be due to the fact that almost all non-English speaking countries in this world include English as a compulsory school subject. Indonesia, for example, includes English in its education to achieve many purposes. One of them is to make students able to communicate in English. However, this objective is still difficult to achieve. The problem causing the difficulty might be lecturers themselves. Not all Indonesian English lecturers are qualified in terms of language skills and pedagogy. With regard to the pedagogy, the lecturers need to have appropriate approaches, methods and techniques. They also need to update their knowledge on new techniques. Of course, they also need to be critical to select appropriate techniques which are similar to and work for their own teaching context.

Beside this, the lecturers need to have communication skills and build good communication to students. However, the most important thing the lecturers need to do is building communication among students, thus promoting learner-centered approach. Moreover, Indonesian English learners, who are studying English in a non-English speaking setting, need to experience real communicative situations in which they will learn how to express their own views and opinions and to develop their oral fluency and accuracy. This can only be done if the lecturers provide opportunities and enough activities for interaction during teaching-learning processes. Therefore, creating interaction is a crucial and useful matter. This is supported by Khadidja (2010) who states that interaction is a way of learning in general and developing the language skills in particular.

Khadidja (2010) defines the concept of interaction as reciprocal events that require at least two objects and two actions, and interaction occurs when these objects and events naturally influence one another. It can be inferred that interactions do not occur only from one side; there must be mutual influence through giving and receiving messages in order to achieve communication. That is why in creating interaction during teaching learning processes, lecturer's role is significant. Lecturers need to choose the most appropriate strategy and method to trigger productive interaction among students. However, creating the productive interaction among students is not easy; even experienced lecturers may still face difficulty.

This condition is still found in the Indonesian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) setting. Based on the researcher's interview with one of the lecturers at one of private universities in Lampung province, Indonesia, it was revealed that classroom interaction seemed passive. For instance, when a lecturer attempted to interact with students by asking them questions, there was no response even though they understood the question and knew the answer. This, according to him, was because the students did not have confidence to answer. Therefore, they tended to be passive and did not give sufficient respond.

Dealing with the students' passivity, a lecturer needs to find appropriate methods. One of the methods that could make students more active to interact among them in the EFL classroom is TBLT (Task-Based Language Teaching) which is also known as TBI (Task-Based Instruction). The ability of TBI to create interaction among students is stated by Nunan (2004) that:

A piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form. The task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right with a beginning, middle and an end. (p. 4)

The concept of interaction itself has been misinterpreted. Even some lecturers sometimes think that interaction is only an action created by a lecturer and reaction produced by student after the given action; however, the concept has deep meaning. Celce-Murcia (as cited in Rashidi and Rafieerad, 2010) defines interaction as a process whereby two or more people engage in reciprocal action. Similarly, Thomas (1987) states interaction is “acting reciprocally, acting upon each other” (p. 46). Dagarin (2004) argues that classroom interaction is a two-way process between the participants in the learning process. The lecturer influences the learners and vice versa. In the case of teaching, a student interacting with lecturers, technology, and course content can be defined as classroom interaction.

As mentioned, interaction in the Indonesian EFL setting is still found passive. TBI can be used as one of the alternatives to solve the problem. This research, therefore, used TBI as teaching instruction to investigate the patterns of classroom interaction. In this article, the researcher uses task-based classroom which refers to language teaching learning activities in the classroom where TBI is implemented. Task-based classroom is different from another method, for instance CBI (Content-Based Instruction). In the task-based classroom, lecturer uses TBI method in which the assessment is based on the completion of the real world task instead of focusing on language form only, while in the language classroom that using CBI, teaching learning activity is based on a particular subject matter used as the facilitator for language learning.

Kind of and Studies on Classroom Interaction

The literature, to date, has divided four kinds of interaction in the classroom: student-lecturer, student-student, student–technology, and student-course content interaction. There have been several studies investigating interaction (Edstrom, 2015; Jakonen & Morton, 2013; Suryati, 2015; Tulung, 2013). Jakonen & Morton (2013), for example, did a study at a secondary school in Finland in which teaching learning activity was done by using content language integrated learning (CLIL). Their research focused on Epistemic Search (ESS); it is a kind of pattern that is applied by students if they do not know particular knowledge or answer with regard to the task that assigned to them. This research investigated peer interaction in content-based classroom in three areas such as the affordances of peer interaction for learning in contrast with lecturer-led ‘known-answer’ sequences; how learners manage rights and responsibilities around knowing or not knowing; and how learners discover and work on their own learning objects. The findings of this research have significant impact to understand peer interaction applied by students to acquire answers regarding questions they could not find.

Tulung (2013) investigated student interaction during completing two kinds of communicative task: jigsaw and decision making. Participants of the study were pre-medial school students learning English. Findings of the study showed that the tasks gave contribution to trigger students’ awareness to communicate and create interaction. Besides,

the tasks could provide students with the opportunities to produce language in the EFL learning setting.

In her research, Suryati (2015) revealed that much of the lecturer-student interaction in lower secondary schools relied on the material mode, skill, and system mode, and most frequent strategies that lecturers use during teaching learning activity to create interaction were initiation response feedback (IRF) patterns, display questions, lecturer echo, and extended lecturer turns. Besides this, the research revealed that there were at least two kind of interaction patterns during teaching and learning activity. The first one was lecturer-fronted interaction. Lecturer-fronted interaction was interaction between lecturer and whole class. Lecturer in this case was creating interaction with one of the students in the class and expecting that the whole students would pay attention on their interaction. The second was student-student interaction. Student-student interaction was a kind of interaction among students when they worked in a peer work task.

METHODS

Participants of the research were students of a higher institution in the province of Lampung taking speaking course. They were in the third semester and chosen due to their sufficient proficiency to deal with TBI, as can be seen in the table below:

Table 1. Participants of the research

Class	Amount of students
A	25
B	15
Total	40

Source: administration staff of STKIP Muhammadiyah Kotabumi

This research adopted questionnaire, observation, and interview. The observation was used as primary data to find out patterns of classroom interaction. The researcher observed the teaching learning activities in the classroom when TBI was implemented. The classroom observation gave an opportunity for the researcher to see reality in the classroom closer and more objective. For instance, the researcher saw how the lecturer conducted teaching learning activity in the speaking class, what strategies that the lecturer used, how lecturer solved a problem during learning processes, and how lecturer assessed students' speaking performance when the students completed one of the tasks, such as role play and debate. The observation was carried out four times, and during the observation the researcher recorded and made notes of English conversation or activity done by the learners.

As mentioned, this research also used questionnaire. The questionnaire was used as secondary data to support primary data from observation. The questionnaire was adapted from Khadidja's study (2010). There were 15 items for students' perception of interaction patterns. To explore the questionnaire data, the researcher used descriptive statistic. With regard to interview, semi-structured interview was adopted. Almost half of the students were interviewed to get more thorough information. Interview results were used to support the whole data analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

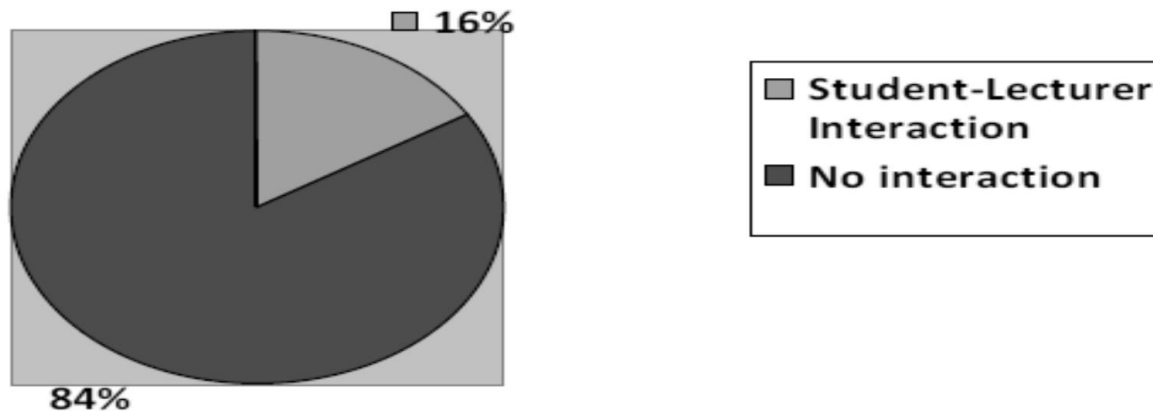
The research found that there were only two kinds of interaction: student-lecturer and student-student interaction. The other two kinds of interaction, namely student-technology and student-course content interaction, were not found in this study.

Student-Lecturer Interaction

Student-lecturer interaction was one of the interactions that emerged during the implementation of TBI in the classroom. Student-lecturer interaction was an interaction in which student and lecturer were involved in a reciprocal action one another. Based on the data analysis procedure in classroom observation, the researcher used two kinds of way to decide whether there was or there was no interaction in the classroom. The first way was indicated by Reciprocal Action (RA), and the other way was based on the existence of classroom discourse features: initial, respond, feedback/evaluation (IRF), probing, and argumentation.

According to the data from classroom observation, it was revealed that there were 5 patterns of reciprocal actions (RA) which occurred in the classroom. Besides the existence of RA, the researcher also saw some features of discourse that indicated interaction during the action. The feature of discourse found was IRF/E (initial, respond, feedback/evaluation), as can be seen in the following figure.

Figure 1. Student-lecturer interaction frequencies



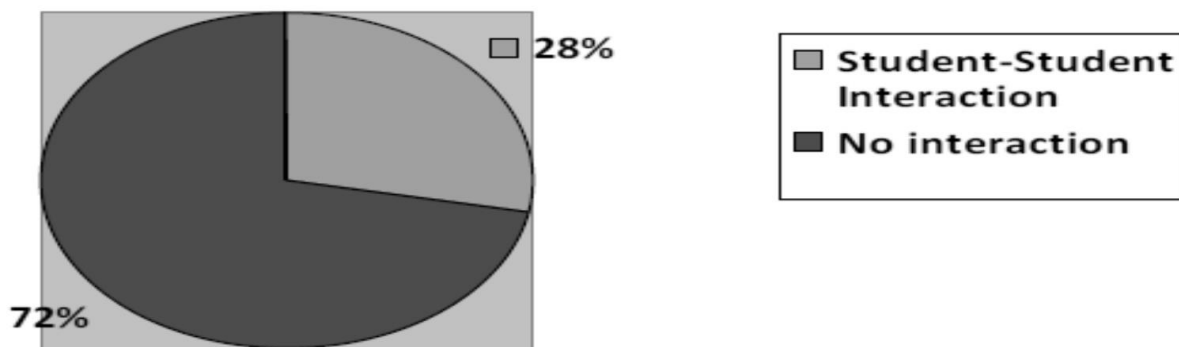
The figure showed the student-lecturer interaction frequency in the classroom. It was clear that the occurrence of the interaction was still low. In the diagram, only 16% of student-lecturer interaction occurred during the teaching learning activity. It means that there were 8 interactions (5 RA and 3 IRF/E) of student and lecturer from 50 cluster activity that happened in the classroom during overall lecturing activity. While the percentage of 84% showed that there was no interaction during that one month of lecturing (4 sessions of meeting). This significant amount represented the total of 42 cluster activities, out of 50, in which there was no interaction in it. So, based on the diagram above, it can be seen how small the portion of interaction among the students and lecturer compared to the whole lecturing activity.

Student-Student Interaction

Student-student interaction was another interaction that the researcher found in the classroom during the implementation of task-based instruction. The student-student interaction was an interaction among the students that occurred in the classroom. The finding was based on the analysis of the classroom observation and interview data.

Based on the classroom observation data, it was revealed that the student-student interaction was based on two procedures. The first procedure was indicated by the existence of classroom discourse features, which occurred among students. The second was by analysis whether student-student interaction was reciprocal action. Based on the observation, the researcher found at least there were one feature of classroom discourse which occurred in the whole lecturing activities in four observations. Meanwhile, the researcher found at least thirteen reciprocal actions (RA) and one IRF/E occurred. It meant that there were at least fourteen student-student interactions occurred in the classroom. The description of the total percentage on student-student interaction toward the overall lecturing activity can be seen in the figure below:

Figure 2. Student-student interaction frequencies



The figure showed that student-student interaction that happened in the classroom was still low. A large proportion of 72% showed that there was no interaction during one month lecturing activity, out of 50 cluster activity that occurred in the classroom. On the other hand, the students only interacted with their friends for fourteen times (thirteen RA and one IRF/E) that was represented by 28% in the diagram. Moreover, the duration of the interaction was very short in which the students were usually restricted to asking and answering. Moreover, the existence of student-student interaction was also supported by the data from the interview. The interviewees said that there were two kinds of interaction. The first was the student-lecturer interaction, and second was the student-student interaction.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals two kinds of interaction: student-lecturer interaction and student-student interaction. What it means by student-lecturer interaction is an interaction that occurs between lecturer and students, while student-student interaction is an interaction that happens among students. The two interactions were indicated by the existence of classroom discourse features (IRF/E, probing, and argumentation) and reciprocal action. Since there are some

limitations in this research, further research can explore the limitation for the further research. The limitation of this research can be seen in term of duration of research. The research was done only one month; therefore, the data collected was limited.

REFERENCES

- Dagarin, M. (2004). *Classroom interaction and communication strategies in learning English as a foreign language*. Faculty of Education, University of Ljubijana.
- Edstrom, A. (2015). Triads in the L2 classroom: Interaction patterns and engagement during a collaborative task. *System*, 52, 26-37.
- Jakonen, T & Morton, T. (2013). Epistemic search sequences in peer interaction in a content-based language classroom. *Applied Linguistics*, 36(1), 73-94.
- Khadidja, K. (2010). *The effect of classroom interaction on developing the learner's speaking skill*. Unpublished master thesis, Mentouri University-Constantine, Constantine, People's Democratic Republic of Algeria.
- Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-based language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.4.
- Rashidi, N., & Rafieerad, M. (2010). Analyzing patterns of classroom interaction in EFL classrooms in Iran. *ASIA TEFL*, 7(3), 93-120.
- Suryati, N. (2015). Classroom interaction strategies employed by English lecturers at lower secondary schools. *TEFLIN Journal*, 26(2), 247-264.
- Thomas, M. (1987). *Classroom interaction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tulung, G. J. (2013). Oral discourse generated through peer interaction while completing communicative tasks in an EFL classroom. *TEFLIN Journal*, 24(2), 220-236.