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A Case Study of Interactive Teaching in a Listening Session at a Language Institute

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Abstract

Improving listening skills is one of urgent problems in education. Insufficiency of students' linguistics and non-linguistics knowledge or background knowledge to comprehend ideas during listening could be solved by providing them with interactive tasks since to learn to listen is to learn to respond and to continue a chain of listening and responding. This study aims to uncover interactive teaching in a listening session at LBPP-LIA Kalimalang Jakarta. The subjects of the study were the students of Intermediate 3 together with their teacher. The object of the study were the aspects covered by classroom interaction: student-student and student-teacher interactions. Data collection consisted of audio-recording of the spoken exchange and note taking of all observed activities during the listening session. As a qualitative study, the findings were described in terms of words. The result showed the teacher seemed to be aware that interactive tasks in pair/group work would benefit the students. The interaction patterns taken place among participants involved in a discussion reflected an interactive teaching. However, the teacher should have developed his roles. He needed to vary his techniques in maintaining the interaction, therefore, the students were motivated to volunteer information, comment, or questions.

Key words: listening skills, interactive tasks, pair/group work

Abstrak

Peningkatan keterampilan menyimak merupakan salah satu permasalahan penting dalam pendidikan. Ketidacukupan pengetahuan bahasa dan bukan bahasa atau pengalaman terdahulu para siswa untuk memahami ide-ide selama melakukan aktifitas menyimak dapat diatasi dengan memberikan mereka tugas-tugas yang bersifat interaktif karena belajar menyimak juga berarti belajar merespon dan terus melanjutkan rangkain aktifitas menyimak dan merespon. Penelitian ini bertujuan menyibak pengajaran interatif pada sesi menyimak di LBB-PP LIA Kalimalang Jakarta. Subjek penelitian adalah siswa-siswa kelas Intermediate 3 dan seorang guru mereka. Objek penelitian adalah aspek-aspek yang terdapat dalam interaksi kelas, yaitu interaksi antar siswa dengan siswa, serta interaksi antar siswa dan guru. Data terdiri dari rekaman pembicaraan dan catatan seluruh aktifitas yang diperhatikan selama sesi pembelajaran menyimak. Sebagai penelitian kualitatif, temuan dideskripsikan dalam bentuk kata-kata. Hasil temuan menunjukkan bahwa guru telah mengetahui bahwasanya tugas-tugas yang bersifat interaktif dalam kelompok atau kelompok berpasangan akan memberikan manfaat pada para siswa. Pola-pola interaksi yang terjadi diantara partisipan dalam diskusi merefleksikan suatu pengajaran yang interaktif. Namun demikian, guru tersebut harusnya sudah dapat mengembangkan perannya. Guru perlu memberikan variasi teknik agar interaksi terus berlanjut, sehingga para siswa termotivasi memberikan informasi secara suka rela, memberikan komentar dan pertanyaan.

Kata kunci: keterampilan menyimak, tugas-tugas interaktif, kelopak/kelopok berpasangan

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INTRODUCTION

The role of English as the medium to reach an advancement, particularly in Indonesia, is essential. Many students participate to take an English course although they learn English in formal school. The government effort to encourage the teaching of English can be seen from the fact that English has been taught since elementary school, particularly in Jakarta. The four English skills namely reading, listening, speaking and writing are taught separately in a university which has the faculty of English. However, any effort conducted does not seem to facilitate most students learning how to listen in English. These students face problems when practicing listening in class.

A researcher has found problems in teaching the listening skill. Shima M. Hwaidar (2017) from Aligarh Muslim University in India conducted a study to investigate the most problematic areas in teaching the listening skill. The findings revealed a set of problems that encounter teacher in teaching listening and consequently contribute to the difficulty of the listening skill. The non-linguistics problems are the main hindrance to teaching listening in the context of the study including problems relating to the students, teachers, and teaching environment which have mostly led to neglecting this skill. The linguistic problems are observed in the pronunciation, stress, intonation, vocabulary, and syntactic structure.

To cope with all the problems, particularly the linguistics problems faced by most students, it is wise for teacher or lecturer to re-examine the ways he or she teaches listening in class. The teacher can create an interactive teaching environment in which the students together with the teacher are actively involved in group class discussion or engaged in several types of overt activities such as a student talking with another person who can be a peer, a teacher, a tutor. Brown (2000:254) says that to learn to listen is also to learn to respond and to continue a chain of listening and responding. Good listeners in conversation are those who are good responders. The students can be trained as good listeners by actively participating in speaking activities, as the listening itself apparently is an active process. Listening is more active and interpretive process in which the message is not fixed but is created in the interactional space between participants (Nation and Newton 2003:39). The process to create a message by participants involved in an interaction is the core of the active process of listening. Hence, implementing a group discussion or other speaking activities after listening the material in class facilitates students practicing their listening and responding abilities at the same time. The students may develop their critical thinking as well since they need to formulate what they are going to say after listening. Moreover, the involvement of students in class discussions have benefits over the traditional realms of education. These positive effects are seen at personal and social levels, bringing forth more dynamic aspects of culture (Masoureh Hajhosseini :2017)

Listening as an Active Process

Listening as one of the four basic skills taught in language learning is not a passive process. Goh (2003) says that listening is a mental process in which linguistic and non-linguistic information are processed through a number of cognitive systems: attention, perception, and memory. A student listening to a lecture or news, for example, is paying attention to and trying to perceive information that a teacher or an anchor is informing. He will keep the information in his memory before using them for certain purposes. When the student is paying attention and trying to perceive the information, he is actively processing the information by the use of his own linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge.

Nation and Newton (2009: 39) identify two types of the listening process: bottom up and top down processes. A student using bottom up process when listening will assemble messages piece-by-piece from a speech stream to larger levels: auditory-phonetic, phonemic, syllabic, lexical, syntactic, propositional, pragmatic and interpretive. The processes involved here are perceiving and parsing the speech stream. On the contrary, a student employing top-down process will get involved in going the messages from the whole to the parts. The whole here is the student's prior knowledge of the content (schema) as well as context of communication used to predict what the coming message will contain. Then the student will use the messages that he/she listens to confirm, to correct or to add his/her prior knowledge. The process involved is inferencing (Nation and Newton: 2009, Field: 2003). Almost in line with Nation and Newton, Buck (2001) adds that when the student is implementing the top-down listening process, various knowledge may be involved and can be used to interpret any coming message since they are all capable of interacting and influencing each other.

However, not all listeners, particularly the students learning how to listen to English, have similar and sufficient linguistic and non-linguistic resources. As the consequence, the students will encounter problems to interpret messages when listening. A student listening to a message or any information will undergo the processes of comprehension such as perceiving and inferencing. According to J. R. Anderson (cited in Goh 2003:9) the comprehension process consists of three phases which present different levels of processing: perception, parsing, and utilization. Each phase contains problems that the students might encounter when doing listening. To anticipate the potential problems that can make listening difficult for the students to undergo, a teacher needs to carry out strategies. To train the students to be good listeners and responders, the teacher needs to assign them speaking activities after listening. Therefore, the students have a chance to develop their listening skill in a real dialog.

Aspects covered by classroom interaction

Brown (2000: 165) says that interaction is the collaborative exchange of thought, feeling of ideas between two or more people resulting in a reciprocal effect on each other." The definition implies that the participants involved in an interaction should be able to convey thought and ideas with their own expression, and at the end, with the language they choose, it will bring them to a similar comprehension of a topic they listen and talk. As collaborative exchanges, the expression used may vary but should be spontaneous since each participant will bring different ideas and thought which are needed to be clarified to achieve the reciprocal effect on each other.

According to Brown (2000) an interactive class can be recognized if therein occur the following activities: (1) students are involved in significant amount of pair work and group work, (2) they receive authentic language input in real-world contexts, (3) they produce language for genuine, meaningful communication, (4) they perform classroom tasks that prepare them for actual language use 'out there', (5) they practice oral communication through the give and take and spontaneity of actual conversation, (6) they write to and for real audience, not contrived ones. River (1987) has suggested more characteristics of an interactive class than those above, some blended in with Brown's, while some others are additional. One of River's that is worth considering is that the students should from the beginning listen and speak the target language in reacting to picture and objects, in role plays, in discussion, etc.

Students learning a foreign language need to interact not only with their teacher but also among the students themselves. They can learn the forms of the language and practice how to use them by the interaction. For that interaction to be effective, especially in large classes, students-student interaction can be carried out in a pair/group work, and be provided by the assistance of their teacher. Brown (2000:177) defines group work as a generic term covering a multiplicity of techniques in which two or more students are assigned a task that involves collaboration and self-initiated language, while pair work is simply group work in group of two. The definitions suggest that pair/group work requires the students to conduct various activities to achieve a common goal and they respect each individual's contribution to the whole. Hence, a teacher needs to consider techniques and activities or tasks to maintain the interaction.

Brown (2000:182) selects techniques which are worth considering for pair/group work. Pair work is more appropriate than group work for tasks/activities that are (a) short, (b) linguistically simple, and (c) quite controlled in terms of the structure of the task, such as (1) practicing a dialog with a partner, (2) simple question-and-answer exercises (3) performing certain meaningful substitution "drill", (4) quick (one minutes or less) brainstorming activities, (5) checking write work with each other, (6) preparation for merging with a larger group, (7) any brief activity for which the logistics of assigning group, moving furniture, and getting students into the group is too distracting.

Goh (2003) proposes two-way listening tasks that demand various degrees of oral interaction with a speaker. One or more students have to interact with a speaker by asking questions, offering information and expressing opinions. Two-way tasks may involve the talk of either an interactional or transactional nature, or even both in some situations. The interactional talk between the speaker and the students may be short and more balanced, but it is still possible for the students to ask questions during or after listening. In transactional tasks, however, the person giving the information does most of the talking. Although speaking is an important part of these tasks, the students should get involved more in listening activity. Since the tasks of two-way listening tasks are information-gap and opinion-gap activities with specified communication outcomes, the students need to share information or opinion while completing tasks. The six types of two-way listening tasks proposed by Goh (2003:21) such as are creative dictation, description, simulation, discussion, and presentation. In order to obtain effective and meaningful interaction, the teacher needs to be sufficiently familiar with their roles.

Brown (2000) suggest five teacher's roles worth considering in teaching for interaction to take place, namely, controller, director, manager, facilitator, and resource. The most directive role is the less possibility for interaction to happen and vice versa. A teacher who is fully familiar with these roles is to choose which role is appropriate for which students' background.

METHODOLOGY

This study was an attempt to uncover interactive teaching in a listening session at LBPP-LIA Kalimalang Jakarta. The subjects of the study were the students together with their teacher of Intermediate 3 level. The object of the study were the aspects covered by classroom interaction: student-student and student-teacher interactions. The sources of data comprised the activities in the classrooms during a listening session which included the spoken exchanges between all participants (students and the teachers). Data collection consisted of audio-recording of the spoken exchange and note taking of all observed activities during the listening session. As a qualitative study, the findings were described in terms of words (Creswell: 2010).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Classroom discussion can be seen from the dynamics learning process in the classroom. It covers verbal communication between teacher and students, between student and student, and the degree of involvement of the whole class in the process.

To identify the interactive degree, the writer has made an observation by using a couple instruments. The description of interaction between the students in the classroom is acquired from an investigation using student-student interaction form, a modified version of a form developed by Park (1986) in Richard and Lockhart (1994). This type of form contains a number of questions exploring aspects which support the criterion of classroom interaction. The description of interaction between teacher-student is taken from an investigation using student-teacher interaction form initially developed by Brown (1975 in Richard and Lockhart 1994 . 147-8). It is used to describe and classify pattern of student-teacher interaction in whole-class activities. Whole-class teaching is in its own right teacher-dominated with little opportunity for active student participation. It can be adopted to encouraging more students, for example by stopping by time to time during an activity and asking students to compare a response with a partner.

There are seven categories used for describing verbal exchanges that happen in a whole-class teaching activity (Brown 1975: 67 in Richards and Lockhart 1994: 147-8), namely:

TL: Teacher lecturer – describe, explains, narrates, directs

TQ: Teacher questions about content or procedure which pupils are intended to answer

TR: Teacher responds – accepts feeling of the class, describes past feelings in a non-threatening way. Praises, encourages, jokes with pupils. Accept or use pupils' idea. Builds on pupil responses. Uses mild criticism such as “no, not quite”

PR: Pupil Respond directly and predictably to teacher questions and directions

PV: Pupils volunteer information, comment, or questions

S: Silence – pause, short periods of silence

X: Unclassifiable Confusion in which communications cannot be understood. Unusual activities such as reprimanding or criticizing pupils. Demonstrating without accompanying teacher or pupil talk. Short spates of blackboard work without accompanying teacher or pupil talk.

The data was collected by the above instruments. The analysis is described below.

Student-student interaction of Intermediate 3

STUDENT-STUDENT INTERACTION

No.	Questions	Optional Answers	Intermedi-ate 3
1	How were the students actively involved?	Role play	20%
		Prediction exercises	30%
		Gathering/reporting information	
		Discussion	
		Others	30% 20 %
2	What was the purpose of the students' communication with each other?	To exchange experiences of life	10%
		To talk of home work/ task	
		To talk about the lesson in progress	90%
		Others	
3	What language did the students use in communicating with each other?	Entirely in native language	
		Entirely in English	
		Mixture of native and target language	100%
4	How did you help to develop rapport between the students?	'Getting to know you' starters	10%
		Your model/example	70%
		Encouraging sharing experiences	20%
5	How was the furniture arranged?	In rows	55%
		U shape	
		In groups	45%
		Others	
6	How did the students work?	Individually	
		In pairs	20%
		In groups	30%
		In the whole class	50%
7	Did every one in the class talk/participate with each other or only with the teacher?	With each other	40%
		With the teacher when being asked	60%
		With the teacher voluntarily	

A modified version of a form initially developed by Park 1986 dalam Richard dan Lockhart, *Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classroom*

As we can see from the table above, the interaction between the students is quite various. The students were actively involved in role play, prediction exercise, discussion, and other, in this case listening activity from a types recorder. These activities are common to take place in a language classroom. The teacher led the students to complete prediction exercises on the student book by introducing vocabularies at the beginning. All students did the task in the whole class discussion with their teacher. Since the students were assigned to practise the language in a dialogue, at the beginning they needed to discuss in pair and group works of what they were going to perform as a role play at the end of the session.

The purpose of the students' communication with each other is to talk about the lesson in progress (90%) and to exchange experience in life (10%). The students were not seemed to be allowed to talk about other things in class. This might be caused by the time limited in which the teacher should be able to manage and allocate the time effectively. The students used mixture of their native and target languages (100%). This phenomenon is common to take place in a country in which English is learned as a second language. However, the teacher could have trained the students to speak English during the session. Therefore, the students would have got large exposure to use the language, and the purpose of interaction could have been wider. This can only be possible if the teacher has the capability to build a rapport between the students. From the table above we can see that the teacher acted as the model in order for the students know each other (70%) compared to encouraging sharing experience (20%), and getting to know you starters (10%). This indicated that the teacher was aware of his role as the model in class. However, the teacher also needed to facilitate the students develop their speaking ability by maximizing their chance to use the language. To create the chance, the teacher should consider the furniture arrangement in class. From the table it shows that the student seat most of the time in rows (55%) and in group (45%). It might be caused by the number of the students which make them impossible to move the sits very often. Therefore, the students would only be able to work in pairs (20%), in groups (30%), and the whole class (50%). Consequently, everyone in class talked/participated with each other (40%), and with teacher when being asked (60%). When the students were assigned to practice the language in a group they could talk each other since they had the chance for that, but then these students should wait for the chance to be asked when they seat in rows (55%) while their teacher was explaining. The distance between the students and the teacher might be the reason why the students were reluctant to participate conveying their ideas unless when being asked by the teacher. That's way no student talked with the teacher voluntarily.

Student-teacher interaction of Intermediate 3

Below are the percentages of each category used for describing verbal exchanges taken place in a whole-class teaching activity.

Seven categories used for describing verbal exchanges (Brown 1975: 67 in Richards and Lockhart 1994: 147-8),	Frequency	Percentage
TL = Teacher describes, explains, narrates, directs	10	8 %
TQ = Teacher questions	47	39,16 %
TR = Teacher responds to pupil's response	8	6,66 %
PR = Pupils' response to teacher's questions	47	39,16 %
PV = Pupils volunteers information, comments, or questions	1	0,08 %
S = Silence	4	3,33 %
X = Unclassifiable	3	2,5 %
Total	120	100%

The above table shows almost various interaction between student and teacher taken place in class room. The teacher asked question (TQ) 39,16% and the student answered (PR) 39, 16% are the most frequent verbal exchanges. It indicates that the students were actively involved in learning, particularly when discussing their exercise with their teacher. The teacher responded to the students' answer was 6,66%. It seems the teacher played his role as resource to make sure that the students understand of what they answer. However, at the same time, he should have been a facilitator by giving the students a chance to comment and to question of anything relating to the topic being discussed. It took only 0,08% for the student to question during the session, and 3,33% was silence. This silence was normal and might indicate that the students had no idea of what the teacher was saying. In this situation the teacher should manage this silence by narrating or directing the students to the information they needed. The table show for TL, teacher lecturer – describe, explains, narrates, directs was (8%). There should also have been a sort of student volunteers information confirming of what they had known or being confused of the topic. The students might have shown their confusion by giving unclassified response (2,5%), but still the teacher needed to be pro-active in controlling this situation, therefore effective interaction will take place in a language classroom. In other word, the teacher should have maximized his roles to create an interactive class.

CONCLUSION

Having described the finding of how the interaction took place during listening session in Intermediate 3 above, the writer comes to several conclusion that:

a. Student-student interaction of Intermediate 3

The students were actively involved in role play, prediction exercise, discussion, and other, in this case listening activity from a types recorder. The purpose of the students' communication with each other is to talk about the lesson in progress (90%) and to exchange experience in life (10%). The students used mixture of their native and target languages (100%). The teacher acted as the model in order for the students know each other (70%) compared to encouraging sharing experience (20%), and getting to know you starters (10%). The student seat most of the time in rows (55%) and in group (45%). The students would only be able to work in pairs (20%), in groups (30%), and the whole class (50%). Consequently, everyone in class talked/participated with each other (40%), and with teacher when being asked (60%).

b. Student-teacher interaction of Intermediate 3

TL, teacher lecturer – describe, explains, narrates, directs was (8%). The teacher asked question (TQ) 39,16% and the student answered (PR) 39, 16% are the most frequent verbal exchanges. The teacher responded to the students' answer was 6,66%. It took only 0,08% for the student volunteer, and 3,33% was silence. The students might have shown their confusion by giving unclassified response(2,5%).

SUGESSTION

The teacher should develop his roles as controller, director, manager, facilitator, and resource. He must train the students to use the language they are learning during the listening session. As a model, the teacher should minimize using bahasa and maximize the purpose of the students' communication with each other. To facilitate the students communicate, teacher needs also to consider appropriate students' sitting arrangement. He should vary his techniques in maintaining the interaction therefore an effective interactive teaching can be created.

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