

# ENGLISH CLASSROOM INTERACTION

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## ABSTRACT

This study focused on teachers and students in English classroom interaction based on Sinclair and Coulthard's Model. The aims of this study are (a) to find out the structures that occur in English classroom interaction based on Sinclair and Coulthard's Model, (b) to describe how the exchanges are realized with the structures of the two teachers. This research used qualitative research. To answer the problems of the study, the data were collected in three ways by observing, recording and interviewing. The data were analyzed based on Sinclair and Coulthard's Model (1975). The result of this study were the following, 1) there were three structures that occurred in English classroom interaction. The structures that occurred were initiation, response, and also feedback. There were 88 initiation, 95 responses, and 12 feedback of the overall utterances produced by teacher and students of XI Science 1. There were 111 initiation, 113 responses, and 15 feedback of the overall utterances produced by teacher and students of XI Social 1. 2) It was found that there were six types of exchanges which were realized with the structures between two teachers of two classes. The exchanges, namely: teacher elicit, teacher inform, teacher direct, student elicit, student inform, and check. In XI Science 1, it was found that the teacher inform was three, the teacher direct was three, the teacher elicit was sixty three, the student elicit was four, the student inform was one, and check was fourteen. In XI Social 1, it was found that the teacher inform was four, the teacher direct was fifteen, the teacher elicit was fifty three, the student elicit was three, the student inform was one, and check was thirty five. In teacher inform, teacher direct, teacher elicit, and check is started by the teacher initiate the students by informing, directing, and asking the question of the material to get the students' response. In student elicit and student inform were started by the students initiate the teacher by informing, and asking the question of the material to get the teacher's response or feedback.

**Keywords:**IRF,Free Exchanges, Sinclair and Coulthard's Model.

## INTRODUCTION

### *Background of the Study*

Interaction between teacher and students or student and students are needed in the classroom activities. It will maintain communication to happen in

the classroom. Interaction is the centre of communication. The central goal of foreign language learning in oral or written is communication. Teacher and students need to cooperate and interact. In short, communication is derived from interaction since in communication there must be interaction between people who have something to share (Rivers, 1987).

Classroom interaction is the action performed by the teacher and students in the teaching and learning process in the class or the most important part in teaching and learning process in the class. The purpose of teaching and learning process could be achieved through the interaction. Tsui (1995) states that the students could learn best way through the interaction, and the development and success of a class depends on to a greater of the interaction between teacher and students in the class. Mehan (1979:55) argues that teacher uses the variety of strategies until students understand the questions and give the suitable response. Tickoo (2009) states that in classroom interaction and classroom activities, a productive class hour can be described as follows: First, the teacher interacts with the whole class. Second, the teacher interacts with a group, a pair or an individual student. Third, student interacts with other: in groups, in pairs, as individuals or as a class. And the last, students work with materials or aids and attempt the task once again individually, in groups and so on.

Classroom interaction cannot be separated from the teacher and students because teacher and students are the factors that establish classroom interaction. Both of them must be in balance. Too much teacher talk will make the students passive, they cannot improve their English. It has the certain structure and one of them is IRF structure. This structure stands for Initiation-Responses-Feedback. It is a structure of discussion between the teacher and students. The teacher initiates, the students responds, the teacher gives feedback, commonly known as IRF. This three part structure was first put forward by Sinclair & Coulthard (1975) and is known as the IRF exchanges structure. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) state about IRF structure that the three moves that constitute an eliciting exchange are referred to as initiation, response and follow up. When the teacher gives or asks some question to the students then a student replies the teacher's question, the other students cannot hear clearly sometimes. The teacher needs to repeat the students' words as to make it clear to all students. The most important is that the

teacher should give feedback to the student's answer, to show whether the answer is right or not. Malamah Thomas (1987, Mingzhi, 2005:59) states that a teacher may initiate an interaction by asking students, followed by students' response and the feedback from the teacher.

The reason this study was conducted based on Sinclair and Coulthard's Model especially for the structures of free exchange because in order to know the interaction between teacher and students in the class. So, the researcher could analyze the exchanges and also the structures such as initiation, response, and feedback between teachers and students in English classroom interaction.

The preliminary data would be gained by doing interview with the teachers. Researcher interviewed two English teachers to get the preliminary data about the interaction between teachers and students of grade XI Science 1 and grade XI Social 1 at SMA Negeri 14 Medan. The researcher chose this school because SMA Negeri 14 Medan is one of favorite school, where the students are interested in entering this school. Furthermore, none of the researchers conducted the research about English study. As the researcher observed that the interaction between the teacher and students in the classroom was quite good. Considering the reason above, the research was eagerly interested in analyzing the classroom interaction between teacher and students in the class using Sinclair and Coulthard's Model especially (IRF) Initiation-Response-Feedback structure. Here, is the interview of two teachers.

- Int : Do you give feedback to your students during teaching and learning process?
- T1 : Yes, I, I give feedback to them sometimes when they finish the presentation and sometimes when they can answer my difficult question and if I correct their false statement or when the statement is not clear. But I seldom give feedback to my students.
- T2 : Yes, I do. But I think it is not too often. I seldom give feedback. I give feedback when they do presentation and when correct the wrong answer. Sometimes I also give feedback when they can answer my question, but seldom.

Based on researcher's observation in SMA Negeri 14 Medan, the teachers often initiated the students to make the students more active and not too passive but the teachers also look at the situation. The students also were quite participating in a classroom interaction. As a sequence, when the students were given question by the teachers, they tried to answer the questions in English

although the English was good or not, or they often answered the questions by using Indonesia language to respond their teachers. The teachers were seldom to give feedback to the students. Sometimes the teacher gave feedback when the students did presentation and could answer the teacher's question. It means that the interaction between the teachers and the students was quite good but classroom interaction is supposed to create good atmosphere or interaction in the classroom through communication. When the teachers initiated the question then the students tried to respond by answering the teacher's question and sometimes the teachers gave their feedback based on students' answer. In this case, the researcher wants to know further the interaction between the teacher and the students in the class. The researcher also wants to know more the teachers' initiate and give feedback to the students and how the students give their respond to the teacher initiates based on the exchanges and the structures of Sinclair and Coulthard's Model.

Take a look at the description of the problem especially the teachers and the students at grade XI Science 1 and grade XI Social 1 in SMA Negeri 14 Medan. It seemed necessary to take an action by investigating or observing the real condition in the classroom, especially the interaction between teachers and the students. In this case, the author was interested in observing the teachers in English classroom interaction using IRF (Initiation-Response-Feedback) structures by Sinclair and Coulthard in teaching students. The discussion would be focused on the English classroom interaction between the teachers and the students of grade XI Science 1 and grade XI Social 1 about the structures that occur in English classroom interaction based on Sinclair and Coulthard's Model and how the exchanges are realized with the structures in the English classroom interaction.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **1. Classroom Interaction**

Classroom interaction among teacher and students is the main focus of the research. Classroom can be characterized and described by looking at a range of

interactional features such as teacher elicitation strategies, learner responses, and teacher evaluations (Walsh, 2011:25). Classroom interaction is the form and content of behavior or social interaction in the classroom (Marshall, 1998).

## **2. Sinclair and Coulthard's Model**

Sinclair and Coulthard (1992) states the rank scale format was chosen due to its flexibility. In other words, it was easy to adjust the new model by adding new contributions to it as soon as they were discovered because 'no rank has any more importance than any other' (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1992: 2). Additionally, each rank scale unit consists of one or more units. The rank scale has a lesson as the largest unit of the highest rank, followed by transaction then the next unit is exchange, which is followed by a move, and finally, an act as the smallest unit at the bottom of the scale hierarchy.

### **a. Lesson**

Lesson is something that is to be learned, a learning period or a plan for teaching. A lesson is a fixed period of time when people are taught about a particular subject or taught how to do something.

### **b. Transaction**

Transaction is the process of interaction about agreement between teacher and students during teaching and learning process. There are three primary types of transaction, namely:

- a) Informing transaction: during a lengthy informing exchange from the teacher, learners do little but acknowledge.
- b) Directing transaction: the structure occurs where a teacher-direct exchange stands at the head of transaction, rather than in a subordinate position.
- c) Eliciting transaction: when the teacher is asking the question, the learners contribute continually to the discourse by making verbal response, but they have little opportunity to initiate exchanges.

### **c. Exchange**

Teachers use discourse to tell things to their learners, motivate their

learners to do things, get their learners to say things, and evaluate the things their learners do (Sinclair and Brazil, 1982). Exchanges can thus be differentiated by these functions and separated into teaching or boundary exchanges and there are eleven sub-categories of exchanges.

### **1) *Teaching exchanges***

Teaching exchanges are individual steps by which the lesson progress. There are six subcategories of teaching exchanges, namely:

#### **a) *Teacher inform***

Teacherinform is used to pass facts, opinions, ideas, and new information to the students, to convey information to the students. In other words, this initiation emerged when the teacher want to tell new information to the students and it is optional for students where they want to give response to the information that they hear or they just listen it.

#### **b) *Teacher direct***

Teacher direct is designed to get the student to do but not to say something. Because of the nature of the classroom the response is a compulsory element of structure. This is not suggested to do, but it implies that teacher has right to expect the student to do so.

#### **c) *Teacher elicit***

Teacher elicit is designed to obtain verbal contribution from students. Frequently a teacher will use a series of elicit exchanges to move the class step by step to a conclusion.

#### **d) *Student elicit***

Student elicit function to obtain verbal respond from both the teacher and students. This initiation occurs when students ask question and when they do. They are mainly of the order about “do we put the date?” the crucial different between teacher and student elicit is that the student provides no feedback.

#### **e) *Student inform***

Student inform function as offering information which they think is relevant or interesting.

**f) Check**

Check functions to discover how well the students are getting on, whether they can follow what is going on or it is used by teacher to see how well students are understanding or hearing.

Teaching exchanges are considered among the most frequently occurring types of teacher–students talk in the classroom which is called Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF).

**a. Initiation**

Initiation is also known as opening move. Initiation is the opening of the discourse.

**b. Response**

What is actually performed by the students following the initiation which produced by the teacher.

**c. Feedback**

Feedback or follow up (F) aims to give feedback to the student's response.

**2) Boundary Exchanges**

Boundary helps frame lessons and transition between teacher exchanges. Boundary marks an end or a beginning to a stage of the lesson. A boundary exchange consists of a framing move to signal that the discourse is about to change direction and sometimes occurs with a focusing move. A framing move indicates a boundary and a focusing move tells the class what will occur next. Typical framing and focusing moves are indicated by acts such as “Good, okay, right, all right, well”. In addition to an extended pause, or comments by teacher which summarize the preceding or the following discourse.

**a) Re-initiation (i)**

Re-initiation is used when the teacher gets no response to an elicitation by starting again using the same or rephrased question.

**b) Re-initiation (ii)**

This exchange is used when the teacher gets a wrong response to an elicitation, the teacher starts again. So, the teacher either says with the same

student or move to another students. It is usually realized by “yes”, “no” or a repetition of what the student has just said.

**c) Listing**

Listing is used when the teachers with hold evaluation until they get two or more answer to make sure that more than one student knows the answer. Sometimes they are making sure that more than one person knows the answer.

**d) Reinforce**

Reinforce is teacher direction to tell the class doing something but there is one student is slow or has not fully understood.

**e) Repeat**

Repeat is used when a student does not hear or when the teacher has heard but want a replay repeated.

**d. Move**

Move is consists of acts and combine to form exchanges. There are five classes of moves, which make up exchanges. Firstly, there are *framing moves*, which are used to structure the lesson and are often followed by *focusing moves*, which are there to draw students’ attention to the direction of the lesson (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1992, pg.22).

**e. Act**

The lowest rank of classroom discourse is the individual act, expressed by clauses or single words (Malouf, 1995). Acts are the smallest and “... lowest rank of discourse” Acts are used”... to initiate succeeding discourse activity or respond to earlier discourse activity” (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1992: pg.8).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### *Research Methodology*

This research was conducted by using descriptive qualitative research. Before going to the point of research, we have to know the definition of



descriptive research. Cohen et.al (2007) states that descriptive research “looks at individual, groups, institutions, methods, and materials in order to describe, compare, contrast, classify, analyze, interpret the entities and the events that constitute their various fields of inquiry. Lodico (2006:264) states qualitative research is the research that focus on the study of social phenomena and on giving voice to the feelings and perceptions of the participants under study, this is based on the belief that knowledge is derived from the social setting and the understanding social knowledge is a legitimate scientific process. This research was analyzed by using the data analysis from Rymes (2009). They are four basic steps and the steps were recording real classroom interaction, viewing that interaction and making preliminary observations, then transcribing the talk and action, and finally, analyzing those transcripts-lay the foundation for the work of classroom discourse analysis.

#### *Analysis*

The first step done by the researcher was analysis the sentences of the transcription. It was conducted by having observation for 2x40 minutes in teaching learning process for invitation of two classes and interviewing two teachers. The result of interview indicated that the teacher had problem in teaching English in the classroom.

#### *Findings*

After analyzing data, there were some findings as following:

### **1. The structures that occur in English classroom interaction**

The researcher found that there were three structures that occur in the English classroom interaction of XI Science 1 and XI Social 1. The structures that occur were initiation, response, and also feedback. The total numbers of XI Science 1 interaction were 195. There were 88 initiation (eighty three initiation of the teacher and five initiation of the students), 95 responses (ninety one responses of the students and four responses of the teacher), and 12 feedback of the teacher. Then, the total numbers of XI Social 1 interaction were 239. There were 111 initiation (one hundred and seven of

teacher and four initiation of students), 113 responses (one hundred and ten responses of the students and three responses of the teacher), and 15 feedback of the teacher. Response is the dominant in both of the classes because both of the teachers could make the students be more active than the teachers by asking question to the students to get the students' response and knowledge.

## **2. The realization of the exchanges in English classroom interaction**

It also found that there were six types of exchanges, namely: teacher elicit, teacher inform, teacher direct, student inform, student elicit and check which are realized with the structures of the two classes. In XI Science 1, it was found that the teacher inform was three, the teacher direct was three, the teacher elicit was sixty three, the student elicit was four, the student inform was one, and check was fourteen. Overall utterances produced by the teacher and the students were 88 initiation, 95 responses, and 12 feedback. In XI Social 1, it was found that the teacher elicit was fifty three, the teacher inform was four, the teacher direct was fifteen, the student elicit was three, the student inform was one, and check was thirty five. Overall utterances produced by the teacher and the students were 111 initiation, 113 responses, and 16 feedback. In teacher inform, teacher direct, teacher elicit, and check is started by the teacher initiate the students by informing, directing, and asking the question of the material to get the students' response. After giving initiation, the students would response the teachers' initiation by giving their answer, ideas, or opinion of the question. The teachers also gave some feedback to the students. When the students did not understand about the material, they tried to ask the question to the teacher. The teacher would response the students well or gave some feedback when some of the students asking permission to the teacher. In student elicit and student inform were started by the students initiate the teacher by informing, and asking the question of the material to get the teacher's response or feedback when asking question or permission to the teacher.

### *Discussion*

The researcher gathered the data through the sentences from the transcription of the recording between the teachers and the students of the two

classes. The researcher analyzed the exchanges and the structures that realize and occur in the English classroom interaction.

Based on the data analysis and findings that the researcher found there were three structures (initiation, response, and feedback) were occurred in English classroom interaction. The total numbers of XI Science 1 interaction were 195. There were 88 initiation (ninety initiation of the teacher and five initiation of the students), 95 responses (ninety one responses of the students and four responses of the teacher), and 12 feedback of the teacher. Then, the total numbers of XI Social 1 interaction were 239. There were 111 initiation (one hundred and seven of teacher and four initiation of students), 113 responses (one hundred and ten responses of the students and three responses of the teacher), and 15 feedback of the teacher. Response is the dominant in both of the classes. It means that the interaction between the teacher and the students were good and not passive.

It was found that there were six exchanges, namely: teacher elicit, teacher inform, teacher direct, student inform, student elicit and check which are realized with the structures that produced by the teachers and the students of XI Science 1 and XI Social 1. In XI Science 1, it was found that the teacher inform was three, the teacher direct was three, the teacher elicit was sixty three, the student elicit was four, the student inform was one, and check was fourteen. Overall utterances produced by the teacher and the students were 88 initiation, 95 responses, and 12 feedback. In XI Social 1, it was found that the teacher inform was four, the teacher direct was fifteen, the teacher elicit was fifty three, the student elicit was three, the student inform was one, and check was thirty five. Overall utterances produced by the teacher and the students were 111 initiation, 113 responses, and 15 feedback. In teacher inform, teacher direct, teacher elicit, and check is started by the teacher initiate the students by informing, directing, and asking the question of the material to get the students' response. After giving initiation, the students would response the teachers' initiation by giving their answer, ideas, or opinion of the question. The teachers also gave some feedback to the students. When the students did not understand about the material, they tried to ask the question to the teacher. The teacher would response the students well or gave

some feedback when some of the students asking permission to the teacher. In student elicit and student inform were started by the students initiate the teacher by informing, and asking the question of the material to get the teacher's response or feedback when asking question or permission to the teacher. So, both of the English teachers can build good interaction in the classroom interaction. In teaching learning process the teacher of XI Science 1 seldom to call or point the student because most of the students were active and the students immediately could answer the teacher's question while the teacher of XI Social 1 have to call or point the student when ask the question to make the passive students be more active

## **CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

### *Conclusions*

1. Based on the analysis of the data, there were three structures that occur in the English classroom interaction. The structures were initiation, response, and feedback. Response is the dominant structure.
2. Based on the analysis of the data, there were six exchanges which are realized with the structures of the two classes. The exchanges, namely: teacher elicit, teacher inform, teacher direct, student elicit, student inform, and check. Teacher direct is the dominant exchange of the two teachers. In teacher inform, teacher direct, teacher elicit, and check is started by the teacher initiate the students by informing, directing, and asking the question of the material to get the students' response. After giving initiation, the students would responsethe teachers' initiation by giving their answer, ideas, or opinion of the question. The teachers also gave some feedback to the students. When the students did not understand about the material, they tried to ask the question to the teacher. The teacher would response the students well or gave some feedback when some of the students asking permission to the teacher. In student elicit and student inform were started by the students initiate the teacher by informing, and asking the question of the material to get the teacher's response or feedback. The factors were teachers experience during

teaching, age, and the educations of teachers are influence the way of teachers in teaching the students. The teachers also enthusiasm when asking question, giving task and take care of students' activity, technique of teaching to gain the students' interest in learning, build good interaction to create good atmosphere between teacher and students in the classroom, and giving positive motivation and support to encourage students in learning.

### *Suggestions*

1. The teacher is expected to improve an effectiveness of classroom interaction during teaching and learning process by applying the structures. By using initiation, the teacher can stimulate the students' participations. If the students can get the initiation then response will be appear from the students and teacher should give feedback towards to students' response. So, the class will run actively, interestingly and successfully. And the students are expected to be confident to give their opinion, explore their ideas, and cooperate in the learning process. They can practice their target language skills, to develop knowledge, to interact with others and to participate in communication in the society.
2. For the next researcher, the findings of this research can be used as reference for relevant research to give better understanding. The next researcher is expected to provide additional information and comparison for varied research in other classroom interaction sessions whether it is based on Sinclair and Coulthard model (1975), which will be a very useful reference in teaching and learning process.

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