

SoLLs.INTEC.13: International Conference on Knowledge-Innovation-Excellence: Synergy in Language Research and Practice

Investigating EFL Master Teacher's Classroom Interaction Strategies: A Case Study in Indonesian Secondary Vocational School

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Abstract

This study investigates interaction strategies in Indonesian secondary vocational EFL classroom by a master teacher. The study employs a qualitative method and the data was collected through observing 180 minutes of two teaching sessions of English lesson of grades 10 and 11. The findings show that the master teacher used four types of interaction strategies such as control of interaction or interaction management, elicitation or questioning, speech modification or feedback, and repairing or error treatment strategies. Those strategies were able to promote interactive learning. The implication of this study will contribute to better teaching practice particularly in Indonesian vocational school context.

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Selection and peer-review under responsibility of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

Keywords: interaction strategies; interactive learning; EFL master teacher; Indonesian classroom; vocational school

1. Introduction

Teachers play an important role in the classroom, mainly in an English as a foreign/second language (EFL/ESL) context. Teachers have the role as mediators (Feuerstein in Xiongyong, Samuel, Hua, 2012) and facilitators and monitors (Richards 2011, 2006). In order to successfully fulfil their roles, EFL/ESL teachers are required to possess a number of qualities which include interaction strategies. Throughout the lesson teachers' and students' interaction is considered the most important because through interaction students develop their language system. Teachers have to facilitate learning by encouraging the students to speak and giving opportunities to the students to express their voices (Lee, 2011; Walsh, 2011; Seedhouse, 2010; Richards 2011, 2006).

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In a global context, much study has been carried out concerning teachers' interaction strategies in an EFL/ESL setting (Garton, 2012; Xiongyong, Samuel, and Hua, 2012; Azliza Haniem, 2011; Li and Walsh, 2011; Schwab, 2011; Xie, 2011; Huang, 2010; Yanfen and Yuqin, 2010; Weihua, 2009; Hellerman and Cole, 2008; Marcellino, 2008; Lie, 2007; Chiang, 2006). Several studies have revealed that teachers successfully foster English language learning because they employ such distinctive interactional characteristics (Garton, 2012; Azliza Haniem, 2011; Li and Walsh, 2011; Huang, 2010; Yanfen and Yuqin, 2010; Chiang, 2006). On the other hand, some other studies have demonstrated that the teachers often lead to disengagement with their students since they fail to maximize their pedagogic potential and promote interaction in the classroom (Xiongyong, Samuel, and Hua, 2012; Schwab, 2011; Xie, 2011; Weihua, 2009; Marcellino, 2008; Lie, 2007). Li and Walsh (2011) refer to this as a 'failure' in language classroom practices.

In the Indonesian context, several studies have been conducted concerning teachers' interaction strategies in EFL classroom (Liando, 2010; Fraser, Aldrige, and Soerjaningsih, 2010). A study that has attempted to investigate best characteristics of EFL teachers was conducted by Liando (2010) in higher education setting. By involving 126 students and 28 teachers, the study examines their perspectives toward the best characteristics of EFL teachers. One of the findings shows that the surveyed teachers and students agree that the best EFL teachers should have strong personal characteristic which include interaction feature. Meanwhile, Fraser, Aldrige, and Soerjaningsih (2010) have examined students-teachers interaction in English classrooms in computer sciences and management department in a higher learning institution. Computer sciences students were selected considering their high academic performance while management students were selected considering their lower academic performance. The result indicates the management students perceived their teacher more positive compare to the computer sciences students because the teachers in management department demonstrated an interactive teaching behaviour. This study also reveals that there was a positive correlation between students' outcome (achievements and attitudes) and teacher-students interaction. This study concludes that a high classroom interaction promoted students' better achievement.

This present study aims to investigate interaction strategies in Indonesian secondary vocational EFL classroom by a master teacher. It focuses on four features of interaction strategies which include control of interaction or interaction management, elicitation or questioning, speech modification or feedback, and repairing or error treatment strategies (Walsh, 2011, 2006; Xuerong, 2012). The findings should reflect a typical master teacher's classroom practices which can be used as an informative tool to guide other teachers.

2. Research Questions

This study answers the following research questions:

1. What types of interaction strategies employed by the EFL master teacher?
2. How do the types of interaction strategies enhance interactive learning?

3. Method

This study is part of an ongoing research which investigates pedagogical and interactional characteristics of Indonesian vocational school EFL master teachers. The data was collected by observing two teaching sessions of 90 minute English lessons of grades 10 and 11. The topics were 'Word and Expression of Deciding Event' (Lesson 1) and 'Describing Process' (Lesson 2). The data was recorded in a form of field notes and observation checklist. Then, the data was categorized based on four different types of interaction strategies. After that, an analysis of how the interaction strategies enhance interactive learning was conducted qualitatively.

A master teacher, also well-known as expert and excellent teacher, is purposely selected as the subject of this study. The master teacher is a role model teacher who is selected from her fellow teachers and expected to help the Indonesian government to improve the quality of education (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2012). The specific criteria of selection are teaching experience, mastery of content subject and background of education, and recommendation. The master teacher was required to have attended a master teacher colloquium

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