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CLASSROOM INTERACTION: A KEY TO FACILITATE LEARNING

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Abstract

The study aims to investigate factors that facilitate learning based on classroom interaction analysis at Fledgling International Standard Schools known as *Rintisan Sekolah Bertaraf Internasional* (RSBI). The purposes of this study are in particular to find out how the interactions that take place between teacher-student, student-teacher, and student-student facilitate learning . The site of the research is the Public Senior High Schools located in Padang that are implementing RSBI programmes; and the participants are Physics teachers along with their students. Data of this study is drawn from direct classroom observation, questionnaire and intensive interview; and these data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. Data analyses reveal the following results. Some of the factors that facilitates learning appeared to be constructive explanation, teacher's response to the students' question, and sharing ideas between or among students the so-called collaborative learning.

Keywords: *dynamics of classroom interaction, teacher-student interaction, student-teacher interaction, and student-student interaction*

Introduction

Fledgling international standard schools (FISS) known as *RintisanSekolah Bertaraf Internasional* (RSBI) is national schools which prepare and educate students based on both the Indonesian Education National Standard and International standards (Depdiknas, 2007). This is one of the policies on National Education system made by the Indonesian Ministry of National Education in 2005, based on Law 20/2003 on national education system, that is the central government and local governments have to develop at least one school that has international standard. Each province and/or district has to establish one class or more fledgling international standard schools (FISS) known as *RintisanSekolah Bertaraf Internasional* (RSBI).
The intended outcome of this program is to increase the quality of national education or to improve students' achievement (Bambang, Said, & Mislan, 2012). This quality or students' achievement was assumed to derive from the process of teaching and learning in the classroom. According to Prabhu (1992) teaching and learning are dynamic phenomena. Everything that happens in the classroom happens through a process of live person to person interaction (Allwright, 1984), that take place between teacher-student, student-teacher, and student-student. It is commonly known as classroom interaction. In other words, interaction is central to learning (Van Lier, 1996, as cited in Walsh, 2006), because it can provide assistance to enable learners to accomplish a task and develop understanding (Gibbon & Hammond, 2001:3), as it is known as 'scaffolding' (Chaudron, 1990:10. Therefore, Classroom interaction becomes an important part of instruction . The pattern of interaction in a classoom plays a significant role in facilitating and inhibitng students' learning in the classroom. For example, how teacher uses questioning to engage students learning and providing feedback to students' response. As Tudor (2001) claims that in order to understand teaching as it really lived out in a classroom, it relates to the way in which classroom participants interact with one another.

Given the important role of verbal interaction in teaching and learning process in the classroom. This study is intended to investigate two International Standard Schools of Senior High Schools in Padang. It is an investigation of classroom interaction between teacher and students, students and teacher, and among students themselves, to find out factors that facilitate learning, as the following research question. What factors that facilitate learning?.

With regard to this research question, the process of data analysis began after doing the first observation. The data of classroom interaction obtained from the first observation were then compared with other observational data and recording. The analysis is extended further by coding of factors that facilitate learning, which was initially based on the coding from students' interview. The analysis of the interview was then compared with the observational data and the data of the questionnaire. The results of the analysis constitute the findings of this research question.

Review of Related Literature

Classroom Interaction

The term interaction has been defined and used in various ways. At audio lingual era, the term interaction has been associated with "getting students talking to each other"; the amount of teacher talk in

class was encouraged to be reduced in order to increase learner talking time, 'get them talking to each other,' typically through pair work, group work, in the form of highly controlled drill practice (Allwright, 1984). It then moves from 'getting them talking to each other' to the more complex problems of 'getting them communicating', known as communicative approach, which relies heavily on value of interaction-of live person-person encounters. Today, the term interaction has been recognized not just as "aspect of modern language teaching methods, but as the fundamental fact of classroom pedagogy- the fact that everything that happens in the classroom happens through a process of live person-person interaction. For example: Classroom lesson or knowledge can be said to be socially constructed events (Allwright, 1984; Vygotsky, 1978; Rogoff, 1990; Gibbon & Hammond, 2001; Roehler & Cantlon, 1997). Sociologically the term of classroom interactionis defined as classroom behavior described as the form and content of behavior of social interaction in the classroom. It can be said that classroom interaction is an important part of instruction. It is so central to learning; this is because interaction is the most important element in the curriculum (Lier, 1996, as cited in Walsh, 2006). This idea corresponds with that of Ellis (2000: 209; in Walsh, 2006), 'learning arises not through interaction, but in interaction'. For that reason, interaction needs to be understood if we are to promote learning; an ability to understand interactional process at work is crucial to facilitate learning opportunity (Walsh, 2002, as cited in Walsh, 2006).

Findings And Discussion

Factors that Facilitate Learning

The data on types of interaction that based on observation, the analysis of audio tape recording, questionnaire and students' interview show that there are three factors that facilitate learning, teacher's explanation, responding students' question and problems, and sharing idea/ collaborative learning. Each will be described in detail below.

Teacher's Explanation

Based on the data from observation, interview and questionnaire, it was found that teacher's explanation was one of the factors that facilitate learning. It was due to the characteristics of the teacher's explanation; one of these is the teacher's explanation is constructive. Data of classroom interaction shows that the teacher guided students to follow the lesson systematically. This can be inferred from how a conceptual content was generated to the class. As the teacher continued presenting the topic of the lesson, he led students following the lesson systematically by engaging them cognitively as shown in the excerpt below :

28.	T	:	*Lah kita lanjut jka m_u kita ganti dengan $m_u = \frac{m}{Na}$ massa molekul ===== sudah tu, kalau apak ganti lo K itu dengan ini, ya persamaan umum $k = \frac{R}{Na}$ coba kalian masukkan!* " let's continue, If I change m_u to $m_u = \frac{m}{Na}$, ... then , if I change $K = \frac{R}{Na}$, "now, try to fill it in"	E GD
29.	SS	:	*Tiga per=====.* "three per" zzzzz	CR
30.	T	:	*Teruskan sampai selesai* "continue, till it completely finish".	PE

(excerpt 10, site #A)

The stages of interaction in this excerpt could be seen as constructive explanation, since the teacher involved students in constructing the knowledge together; he engaged them following the lesson. It was found in the field that as the teacher was explaining the lesson, the students listened attentively to the teacher's explanation, and participated actively in responding teacher's questions in chorus (see turn 29). As the teacher assumed that the students were be able to carry out the process, he then withdrew his help and let students on their own to continue it (see turn 30).

The other feature of constructive explanation was due to highly use of questions in the teacher's explanation, as indicated in the chart 4.1 that AQ placed in the second higher occurrence position of teacher-student interaction. In other words, the E was highly interwoven with AQ category. As shown in excerpt 8 below;

16	T	*Relationship between the effective velocity temperature velocity (the teacher wrote this title on the board) dah? Ini hubungannya kita lihat berdasarkan yang pertama pelajaran kita semester 1 energi kinetic rata atau berdasarkan coba rumus energi kinetic dulu pelajaran semester 1?*	E AQ

17.	SS	:	*setengah* mp^2	CR
18.	T	:	*jadi DK sama dengan setengah* mp^2. *Nah sekarang kita buat CPS ya? kali massa sebuah ===== ini V.. tergantung apa lagi ? ya ===== Relation of temperature jadi relation temperature hubungan tekanan. coba yang nomor 4 kemaren? ya* $C = [\frac{2}{-} + 3\ K]$	AUIP E
19.	SS	:	$[\frac{2}{-} + 3\ K]$	CR

(excerpt 8, site #A)

As shown above, the teacher asked question as he was explaining the lesson. He asked questions to draw out students' previous knowledge (turn 91, excerpt 7) and (turn 16, excerpt 8) and to elicited students' idea (turn 18, 2xcerpt). Some of teacher's questions had specific characteristics which were called as authentic question (Nystrand, Gammoran, Kachur, & Prendergast, 1997), see (turn 18, excerpt 8), *"tergantung apa lagi?"* "what does it depend on ?" and *coba yang nomor empat kemaren* ? "how about the number 4 yesterday". These questions aim to get information from the students; They did not aim to see what students know and not to know; that's authentic questions without "pre-specified" answers (Nystrand and Gamorant, 1991a, as cited in Nystrand et al, 1997). The use authentic questions characterizes Dialogic teaching on the part of the teacher and students, where answers are not pre-specified, but incorporated into subsequent dialogue so that pupil responses modify the topic of the discourse (Nystrand et al, 1997, as cited in Lyle, 2008). In line with this, Lyle (2008) claims that Dialogic teaching explores the learner's thought process. It treats students' contributions, and especially their answers to teacher's questions, as stages in an going cognitive quest rather than as terminal point. Therefore, Alexander who is now leading to introduce dialogic teaching initiatives in England, calls for greater focus on teacher questioning which seek to prompt and probe pupil thinking, to promote deep learning through skilful scaffolding.

The teacher's questions can also be identified in the teacher's response to students' answer, as shown below:

1.	T	:	..... *Nah, sekarang ya, kita buat lagi, nah ini yang average, jadi average V4 kita peroleh dari, ya N1 kecepatannya?* [Now, we make, this is the average, so the V4 average is obtained from, yea N1 it's velocity?]	E
2.	SS	:	Z====	CR
3.	T	:	*A..baa ini kita tambahkan, tambah ?* [all right, this is added, added to]	AUP

(excerpt 5 of site #A)

As illustrates in the interaction between the teacher and the student, the teacher was explaining the lesson (turn 1, excerpt 5) he left an unfinished sentence indicating a question to be answered (turn 1, excerpt 5); the students then completed or answered the teacher's question (turn 2). The teacher affirmed the students response, and used the students' idea to raise question *A..baa ini kita tambahkan, tambah ?* (turn 3), which consequently means the teacher takes the students' knowledge forward (Chin, 2006) engaged them (Barkley, 2010) cognitively active.

The types of questions expressed by the teacher is not questioning in traditional lesson where the purpose what (Littleton, 2010) says to test children's factual knowledge or understanding. In this lesson, the teacher's question intent to elicit what student think and to help students construct conceptual knowledge. Thus questioning is used to diagnose and to extend students' ideas and to scaffold student's thinking. Such questions are open, requiring one -sentence or two sentence answers, and the teacher engaged students in higher order thinking (Baird & Northfield, 1992, as cited in Chin, 2006); and learning begins with student's engagement (Shulman, 2002, in Barkley, 2010). The greater the student's involvement or engagement in academic work or the academic experience of college, the greater his or her level of knowledge acquisition and general cognitive development (Barkley, 2010:4).

The occurrence of teacher's question as he/she was explaining the lesson indicates that teacher's explanation was constructive; it is hand in hand with their questions. The teacher's constructive explanation in class interaction above is confirmed by students claim in the interview that the teacher has a habit of guiding, encouraging them and helping them analyze the concepts properly.

The comprehensive and detailed explanation from the teacher helped students psychologically, in which the students used to be scare with Physics subject, but now it is almost not anymore (#3, student of site #A), because Physics is a complicated subject, the teacher helped students to understand it easily and he made his explanation easier for the students to follow the lesson (#1, a student of site #A) .

The teacher's habit of giving explanation constructively in the classroom interaction, as evidenced in the classroom and interview transcripts, and field notes appears to conform to the claim that aspect of effective explanation is not one way process, involving only the teacher imparting the knowledge to students; it requires the active involvement of the students in processing the information. It also requires that the teacher has a good grasp of the nature of the problem to be explained, so that a set of linked key statements can be presented or elicit from students; and the teacher needs to be able to organize the explanation in clear sequence (Brown and Amstrong, 1984, as cited in Tsui, 1995). Similarly, (Brophy, 1969) claims that in teacher – led instruction, information is easier to learn to the extent that it is coherent – the sequence of ideas makes sense and relationship among them appearance. The teacher presents new information with reference to what the students already know about the topic; proceed in small step sequences in ways they are easy to follow. Furthermore Brophy said that questions are intended to engage students in cognitive processing and construction of knowledge; they should be addressed to class as a whole. This also corresponds with the notion of the teacher assisting student performance through zone proximal development which suggests that teachers can guide the discourse on interpsychological plane to support student learning (Chin, 2006). Furthermore, the teacher's way of stating AUIP as he was explaining the lesson to the students in the classroom interaction, as evidence in the classroom appears to conform the claim that the teacher lead students construct knowledge together (Vygotsky, 1978). This consequently means that the teacher's constructive explanation facilitate students'learning

Based on observation, it was obvious that the teacher gave meanings to a concept being explained by relating it into real life situations or it was followed by its application. In other words, having animation while the teacher was explaining the lesson helps students to figure out the real situation of the object or process, which may help students feel easier to digest and understand the lesson better; therefore it could facilitate learning.

RespondingStudents' Questions(RSQ).

The other factor that facilitates learning is the teacher's response to the student's asking questions.The teacher's response on the student's question helps students solve the problems (Table 4.1). For example; Students sometimes had different perceptions in analyzing or understanding task; asking friends or the teacher about that problem is a best solution in overcoming the problem (#3, student of site #A). The question addressed to the teacher was asked when the students did not completely understand how to make sense the problems of the task and how to solve them out; This was even when they had tried to do them together with their friends (#1, #3 students of site #A. In other words, asking question to the teacher is a solution in overcoming their problems. This is supported by classroom interaction analysis, as the followings;

1.	S	:	*Tanya pak? Untuk rumus energi genetic ini pak a disitu kan kita bisa pakai P dengan nrp ===== , terus kalau cari energi dalam jadikan F n x nrp nya jadi pembulatannya berbeda tu pak a jadi hasil*	SI
2.	T	:	*bedanya terlalu besar?*	AQ
3	S	:	*ndak, ribuuannya pasti sama*	IR
4	T	:	*Ndak apa apa beda dikit perbedaannya ndak terlalu besar. karena faktor pengali dari*	RSQ
5	S	:	*[konstanta]*	
6	T	:	*[konstanta] seharusnyakan misalnya yang A itu kan 1.38 sebetulnya bukan 1.38 aja kan? ada ===== jadi kalau angka depan agak beda dikit salah*	RSQ
7	S	:	*terus kalau ujiannya bagaimana pak?*	SI
8	T	:	-	
9	S	:	*makasih ya pak*	PE

(excerpt 17, site #A3).

As shown in excerpt 17 above, the teacher expressed RSQ when the student asked him a question or problem as they were doing the task (turn 1). The teacher gave response on a student's questions or problems by eliciting some information from the students first by asking a question, *bedanya terlalu besar?* "is the difference too big?" (turn1- 2). From this question, it was assumed that the teacher tried to lead student together to understand her/his problem. This corresponds with what Alexander (2006, as cited in Lyle, 2009) calls for a greater focus on teacher questioning which seeks to prompt and probe student's thinking, to

promote deep learning through skillful scaffolding. The student then responded the teacher's question, *ndak. ribuuannya pasti sama* "no, its thousand must be similar"(turn 3). After listening to the student's response, the teacher, then gave solutions on the student's question or problem (turn 4-6) by explaining and questioning. From this response, it can be inferred that the teacher gives response on students questions related with individual problem. It was also found that as the teacher was explaining the response on the student's problem by eliciting some related information, the student participated attentively. It could be inferred from student's spontaneous participation in expressing a word, "konstanta" (turn 5) as the teacher gave explanation or response on the student's question or problem. This can be indicated that the student engaged with the teacher's response. Barkley (2010) claims that the greater the student's involvement or engagement in academic work or the academic experience of college, the greater his or her level of knowledge acquisition and general cognitive development (2010:4).

The teacher's response to their problem or question helped them a lot in understanding the problems and how to solve it better, and what the teacher offered to their problems or questions was not only a short explanation, but it was a supervision, because the teacher's responses were detail (#3, a student of site #A). The students found that the teacher generally welcomed their problems or questions, and treated them in a friendly way, informally and never show anger, and welcomed the students when they asked the teacher to re-explain his explanation (#5, #1, #4 and #3, students of site #A).

The teacher's habit of giving RSQ to the students in the classroom interaction, as evidenced in the classroom and interview transcript, appears to conform to the claim that learning on the interpsychological plane often involves mentoring provided by more culturally knowledgeable persons, usually elders, who engage in activity with less experienced or knowledgeable persons in a process known as scaffolding (Lee & Samagorinsky, 2000). Scaffolding is defined as providing support to allow a child to think for him or herself that is designed to provide the assistance necessary to enable learners to accomplish task and develop understanding that they would not quite be able to manage on their own. A major feature of scaffolding is its ability to capture the role of 'expert', or more knowledgeable other (typically the teacher), in assisting students' learning, and the role of that knowledgeable other in extending students' current levels of understanding or current capabilities (Hogan, 1997, as cited in Gibbon & Hammond, 2001:1). Also, If many students asked similar problems, he discussed the problems classically with students (#1, student of site #A) by reviewing the lesson for all. In other words, the teacher did not provide a direct answer in responding students' questions or problems, instead he guided the students to gain the appropriate answer. The teacher responded the students' question helped them a lot in understanding the problems and how to solve them better (#3, a student of site# A). This indicates sthat specific guidance or supervision is indeed needed by students for example, in solving the problem of the task, the teacher needs to help students comprehensively, otherwise students would be caught in doubt in understanding and doing the task itself.

The role of teachers' response or teachers' guidance was concerned by the students. It may be concluded that the teacher's response or guidance on students problems may facilitate students' learning, if it meets students need; on the other if the response did not accommodate students problems, it may not facilitate learning, or it could possibly impede learning.

Sharing Ideas among Peers

Data from interview indicate that sharing ideas among peers facilitate learning. This is firstly due to the students have similar way of communication. They generally communicated or interacted informally with their friends using local language, *Bahasa* Minangkabau. As Fanji, (student of site #B) stated that his friends were less active asking questions to the teacher *"teman itu kurang aktif bertanya sama guru."* One of the reasons was due to the factor of communication, in which communication between or among students is less formal or relax as compared to communication with the teacher

This is supported by observational data that students naturally interacted with their peers. They interacted informally with their peers using *Bahasa* Minangkabau, as shown below.

1.	S1	:	*No 4 bara did?*	SI
2.	S2	:	*nol koma tujuh* "zero point seven"	RPIQ
3.	S3	:	*No 2 bara did?*	SI
4.	S2	:	*min satu , duo sambilan* "minus one point twenty nine"	RPIQ
5.	S4	:	*Did, satu kaori bara joule?*	SI
6.	S2	:	*(no answer)*	
7.	S5	:	*ampek koma duo jul* *"4.2 joule"*	RPIQ

(excerpt 22, site #A4)

1.	S1	:	*"K" itu apo?*	SI
2.	S2	:	*konstanta*	RPIQ
3.	S1	:	*bara tu?*	SI
4.	S2	:	*tigo tigo koma lapan kali sapuluah pangkat min duo tigo* "$33.8x10^{-23}$"	RPIQ
5.	S3	:	*aha .. kareh ang men*	PE
6.	S4	:	*salah Fik* "it's wrong, Fik"	RPIQ
7	S5	:	*kalau iko yang ma tu?*	SI
8	S2/4	:	...	
9	S6	:	*cubo den tanyo jo ibuk* "let's me ask the teacher"	SI
10	S2	:	*tanyo lah* "right, you may asked her"	RPIQ

(excerpt 23, site #B2)

As the examples illustrate, they interacted informally between or among themselves (see excerpt 22 and 23). The interaction between or among students contains RPIQ (see turn 2,4,7 excerpt 22, and turn 2,4,6,10 excerpt 23); SI (see 1,3,5 excerpt 22, and turn 1,3,7and 9 excerpt 23); and PE (see turn 5, excerpt 23). The student expressed the SI, when he found problems in doing their task, i.e. *Did, satu calorie bara joule?* "Did How much joule is for one calorie?; a student's question was not answered by his peer (see turn 7-8, excerpt 23, site #B2). Beside asking questions, or expressing ideas, as has been identified above, the students also gave response on peer's questions, *min satu duo sambilan* (see turn 2, excerpt 22); and gave praise on the peer who looks serious in doing a task, *aha.. kareh ang men* (turn 5, excerpt 23). The students' asking question, expressing ideas, responding one's ideas as well as praising his or her friends indicate that they shared ideas among themselves.

Yet, there is tendency that the students tended to ask questions to the similar student (see turn 1-7, excerpt 22, and turn 1-7 excerpt 23). One of the reason is that he is one of the best students in this subject, as seen from the result of UH1 and Mid semester result, that is 100 and 98 respectively (Daftar nilai murni UH1 dan Mid Siswa Kelas XI PA-6 # site Padang Semester 1- 2009/2010 academic year). He is one of the best students in the class. He was also found helpful to his friends, since he was always seen working with other students as he was completing the task, and his friends enjoyed working with him. This can be said that students in these two classes were sometimes guided or assisted by an individual who is more skillfull, which according to Vygotsky (1978) is as part of scaffolding.

Their questions were mostly answered, but one or two questions from the peer were not responded by the similar student (turn 6, excerpt 22, and turn 8, excerpt 23). On that situation, others expressed their idea or response (turn 7 excerpt 22, and turn 9, excerpt 23) on that question, which was supported by his friend. In addition, it was also noticed that not all of the responses were accepted by his peer, one of the responses was rejected (see turn 6). This rejected answer seems to be an unsolved answer. As seen from this interaction, the dynamics of interaction among the peer in solving or finding ways out of the problems can be seen clearly. This interaction comes from their own initiation without any instruction from the teacher, or it happened naturally from the students themselves. For example, as found in the field that students of site #A generally sat and worked together with their friends in pair, group of three or four. They worked collaboratively and discussed their problems together.

In doing so, it was found in the field that some of them came up with different results or answers of the problems. They then generally compared, discussed these problems further, tackled these differences with their friends. Each of them used references, such as their notes to overcome their problems. Some other asked their friends about the problems, checked their answer to make sure what they were doing. They discussed them together, for example, they gave opinions, answered the questions and shared the problems together.

The occurrence of sharing ideas in the class interaction is confirmed by students' claim in the interview that the students sometimes had different perceptions or faced problems in doing the task, so asking questions to their friends can solve the problems; because not all problems faced by the students were asked to their teacher; they prefered to ask those questions to their peer first, then they continued asking questions to the teacher if they still found some difficulties (#1, a student of site #A). This also occurred in the site #B students, in which if they found difficulties in doing the task, they asked their friends (#5, #8, and #9, students of site #B).

The students responses were generally understandable (#6, student of site #B), helpful, effective and logic (#3, #10, Students of site #A), and can solve their problems (#5, student of site #B). The students also claim

that with this collaboration they gained a feeling of freedom, a feeling of relax in doing the task, since they have similar way of communication, which can stimulate them to ask and get answer from their peer effectively (#5 #3, #7, #4, students of site A). As #4 and #9 said that *Kalau ada yg nggak ngerti kita tanya sama teman, ini positive, mereka bisa jawab untuk kita, begitu juga sebaliknya*. Also not all problems faced by students were asked to their teacher, students generally discussed, shared their idea, asked friends about those problems first. This is effective and they feel satisfied (#3, student of site #A). Hence, this presumably can promote a free and mutual exchange of ideas. "With this collaboration, students gained freedom, relax in doing their task, and it helped them a lot. (#4,#3, #7, students of site #A).

Conclusions

The study showed that one of the factors that facilitates learning appeared to be constructive explanation. This constructive explanation is characterized by (a) the teacher's frequent use of questions in explaining the lesson in which some of the teacher's questions have specific characteristics recognized as those of authentic questions (see Nystrand, Gamoran, Kachur, & Prendergast, 1997); and (b) the teacher's detailed and systematic explanation.

The second factor that facilitated learning was the teacher's friendly response to the students' question. Students sometimes had different perceptions in analyzing or understanding tasks. Asking friends or the teacher about their problems was found by students to be a best solution in overcoming their difficulties.

Sharing ideas between or among students the so-called collaborative learning, was also found to facilitate learning to a significant degree.

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