

## **Building Positive Classroom Interaction through Positive Discourse**

ADRIANSYAH ABU KATILI  
*Universitas Negeri Gorontalo*  
[adriansyahkatili@ung.ac.id](mailto:adriansyahkatili@ung.ac.id)

### **ABSTRACT**

*This article discusses how to build positive classroom interaction through positive classroom discourse. It focuses on lecturers' utterances that consist of lecturers' sentence construction and speech acts. The lecturers' speech acts were discussed based on Sinclair and Coulthard's theory of classroom speech acts and Austin's speech acts that were developed by Searle. Both sentence construction and the lecturers' classroom speech acts affect classroom interaction. Positive discourse builds positive classroom interaction. In terms of sentence construction, the lecturer constructed Designedly Incomplete Utterance (DIU). This was designed to drive the students to complete them. In terms of lecturers' speech acts, the lecturers performed elicitation and the students responded to it. The lecturer's negative speech acts were an expressive illocutionary act of anger that built the classroom negatively. The DIU and elicitation were categorized as positive discourse and the anger expression was negative.*

*Keywords: classroom; discourse; interaction; elicitation; DIU*

### **INTRODUCTION**

This article attempts to show how to build positive classroom interaction through positive discourse. It means that the lecturer is proposed to develop discourse to have classroom interaction. Positive classroom interaction refers to an interaction that creates an atmosphere in which the students can learn better. This is indicated by the lecturers' creation of the classroom interaction in which the students can freely express their ideas. To support the main issue of this article, I present a sample of the classroom discourse in the Department of English of a university. The discussion is focused on the lecturers; speech acts in the classroom interaction.

Talking about classroom discourse, we have to refer to discourse analysis. Discourse analysis, as discussed by Locke (2004) is the study of language in context. This definition means that the linguistic form and the meaning of an utterance depend on the context. In terms of the linguistic form, the speaker must consider the acceptability of the context. Hence, there will be, for example, formal and informal language. In terms of the meaning, the context determines the meaning. Therefore, the utterance "Good Morning" might mean to greet or to ridicule. When it is uttered by a student to a lecturer in the morning it is meant to greet. However, when uttered by a lecturer to a student who is late it is meant to ridicule.

The examples in the above paragraph indicate that the discourse is related to social and psychological processes. The social process in the examples is in the social classroom in which the lecturer places a higher position than the students. Therefore, s/he has the right to utter so. In terms of psychological process, the condition of resulted from the student who came late affects the psychological condition of the lecturer, i.e./he felt annoyed that drives him/her to utter the ridiculous utterance. This utterance will also affect the student's psychological condition.

As discussed previously, discourse analysis is the study of language use in certain contexts. In a context in which a speaker activates the language to rule the condition, then there is the so-called Critical Discourse Analysis. Critical Discourse Analysis, as discussed By van Dick (1993) the analysis of language in relation with power. It is the discourse analysis that analyzes the unbalance role in a discourse in which individuals are dominated by others. To conclude this, discourse analysis is the study of the use of language in communication in a certain context. It involves the process of social and psychological. The use of language includes the linguistic form and meaning of an utterance.

### **CLASSROOM DISCOURSE**

Classroom discourse is the language used in the context of classroom interaction. It is the classroom considered by Cazden (2001) as an important aspect in classroom communication. In this sense, Rymes (2008) says that classroom discourse is the use of language to build interaction to conduct the learning process. This implies that classroom discourse determines the quality of classroom interaction which finally affects the quality of learning.

Concerning the discourse and classroom discourse, Walsh (2006) says that lecturers should activate the classroom to build the classroom interaction that supports the students' learning activity. Concerning this, a lecturer should perform speech acts that positively affect the students' learning. The speech acts are to move the students to do certain activities concerning with the subject and the learning objectives. Therefore, when a lecturer performed elicitation, s/he elicits the students about the subject being taught. This will drive the students to think and finally answer it.

Speech act theory was proposed by Austin (1975) and developed by Searle (1985). This theory says that there is an act performed by a speaker within an utterance. The acts were categorized in three level, i.e. locution, illocution, and perlocution. Locution is what the speaker says, or the textual meaning of the utterance. Illocution is the act that the speaker performs within the locution. Perlocution is the result of the speaker's illocutionary acts. Furthermore, Searle (1985) insists that the speaker's illocutionary acts consist of declarative, directive, assertive, and expressive. Therefore, when a speaker I hereby name this ship Queen Elizabeth in a naming ceremonial, in term of locution s/he says that he name a ship Queen Elizabeth. In terms of illocutionary act s/he performs the declarative of naming. In terms of Perlocution the ship has the name of Queen Elizabeth.

## **THE FUNCTION OF LANGUAGE IN CLASSROOM INTERACTION**

According to Brown and Yule (1983), the functions of language are viewed from two points of views. They are transactional and interactional views. In terms of transactional view, language is a mean of communication that functions to transfer information. Thus, when we are listening to the news on TV, we are simply getting certain information and so the language functions as the transactional mean. However, in the reality, both of the functions run together. When communicating through language, both the speaker and the hearer are doing transactions and interaction altogether. That happens in classroom activities. The lecturer and the students, through language, are interacting and transacting at the same time. In a lecture, the lecturer sends information to the students, s/he is interacting with them. In other words, in classroom activities, transaction without interaction is impossible.

Concerning the speech acts, Sinclair and Coulthard (as cited in Nababan, 1992) discuss some speech acts that may happen in the classroom, they are:

Marker, it is an initiation move (framing move).

Starter, it functions to inform something or to get attention. It may be in the form of a statement, question, or order.

Elicitation. This is an act of asking for information.

Checking. This is an act of checking the progress of the students' work or asking their problem in doing a task.

Directive. It is an act of directing someone to do something, e.d. go, do it, etc.

Informative act. This is an act of giving information, eg. "Our topic now is..."

Prompt. It is act of empowering the directive act, eg. "Come on."

Clueing. This is an act of giving clues to help the students to answer the lecturer's question, e.g. "The person is an...."

## **STUDIES ON DISCOURSE OF CLASSROOM INTERACTION**

There are some articles on discourse of classroom interaction. First is that written by Karagiannaki and Stamou (2018). They insisted the importance of language awareness to build classroom interaction that support the learning activity. They said that teacher should have the language awareness in conducting the teaching. The second one is that written by Ong (2020). This article emphasizes on the importance of the teacher classroom speech acts that enbales the students to react. This article concludes that the teacher needs to build classroom interaction through the use of language to create the learning atmosphere. In is reflected on the teacher's speech acts and the students' responses.

The third article is written by Li and Zhang (2018). They that classroom discourse plays important role in scaffolding in class using content language integrated learning. They concluded that the teacher should use language to scaffold the class to encourage the student to apply the high thinking order. The fourth article is written by Waring, (2018). This article emphasizes on the importance of building the classroom interaction to succeed the learning activities. It says that classroom interaction was affected by the discourse and the teacher needs to create the classroom interaction through language.

All of the above come to the same conclusions. They conclude that: (1) building classroom interaction is a necessary. Classroom interaction affects the learning process; (2) classroom interaction was affected by classroom discourse. Inspired by the articles, the writer wrote this article.

### **CLASSROOM INTERACTION**

As has been discussed previously, classroom discourse drives classroom interaction. In this sense, Thomas (1987) says that classroom interaction is built through the use of language. The lecturer as the classroom manager manages the classroom interaction through the classroom discourse. The lecturer performs the speech acts that drive the students to interact during the classroom activities. Furthermore, Thomas (1987) discusses the two kinds of interaction. The first one is verbal interaction, i.e. the interaction between the addresser and the addressee through language in which the addresser produces some utterances and the addressee reacts. The second one is the pedagogical interaction, i.e. the interaction which is conducted based on the pedagogical activities. In other words, pedagogical interaction is in line with the learning process to achieve the learning aims. This is parallel to verbal interaction since it is conducted through language.

There are four types of classroom interaction. The first one is lecturer-the whole class interaction. The second one is lecturer-groups of students' interaction. The third one is lecturer-individual students interaction. The fourth one is student-group of students interaction.

### **POSITIVE DISCOURSE**

As discussed previously, discourse drives interaction. To be more specific, the lecturers' discourse drives the classroom interaction. Concerning speech acts, the lecturer speech acts. Therefore, the lecturers' speech act and utterance construction affect the classroom interaction and the classroom will affect the learning process. The positive discourse will result in positive interaction which finally will affect the learning process positively.

The question now is how to build positive discourse? Based on my research conducted in the classroom of the English Department, there are some methods of creating positive discourse. First, by eliciting the question that triggers the students' critical thinking. If the lecturer elicit the whole class this type of question, then everybody will think, and then there will be a discussion that involves the whole class. The following example was taken from the class of Pengantar Pendidikan (Introduction to Education):

**Lecturer : Lingkungan dan apa? Lingkungan dan keluarga. Oke, ada lagi? Ada lagi?**

**Lecturer: Apa?**

**Lecturer: Ingat teori konvergensi?**

The context of the above utterances was the class of Pengantar Pendidikan (Introduction to Education). The class was conducted in class discussion. The topic was the factors that affect the children's psychological growth. In the above utterances, the lecturer

elicited the two factors that affect the children's psychological growth. The lecturer elicits the students the factors that affect the children's psychological development.

The lecturer's elicitation **Lingkungan dan apa? Lingkungan dan keluarga. Oke, ada lagi? Ada lagi? (Environment and what?** Indicates that she encouraged the students to participate in the class discussion. The lecturer's elicitation **Ingat teori konvergensi? (Do you remember the convergence theory?)** literally means elicitation to ask whether the students remember the theory of convergence. However, implicitly it was meant to direct the students to analyze the behavior of the school pupils based on the theory.

This question triggered the students' critical thinking ability and then drove them to discuss the issue. They were driven to analyze the phenomenon of the naughty students by applying the theory of convergence. The following example indicates the lecturer's elicitation that triggered the students to discuss. In terms of the type of interaction, it is a lecturer-students interaction. The lecturer elicited the questions to the students and every individual student responded it.

The second was by producing the so-called *Designedly Incomplete Utterance*. This method is aimed at enabling the students to think and complete it. It is shown in the following example taken from the class of Reading for General Communication.

Student 6 : yaa. In English please. Last week.

Lecturer : **when we have a, when we talk a .....**

Student 7 : traditional !

Lecturer : **ya, traditional food ... iklan .... ya sorry. Ok today umm we should talk about your final...**

Students 8: project

The above example shows that the lecturer produced two utterances. Both of them are designedly incomplete utterances. The first one is when we have a when we talk a .....

This was completed by student 6 by saying Traditional. The lecturer's other utterance Ok today umm we should talk about your final... This was responded by student 7 by saying **Traditional.**

To conclude this session, I do like to restate that the lecturer can build positive interaction by performing the elicitation act. This act triggered the students to be interactive in the class activities by responding to the lecturers' act. This resulted in the positive interaction.

#### NEGATIVE DISCOURSE

The term negative discourse refers to the discourse that affects the classroom negatively. Negative interaction refers to the classroom interaction that does not support the learning atmosphere. The result of my research shows that the lecturer performed the negative discourse in terms of an expressive illocutionary act in Searle's theory. The following example was taken from the class Reading for General Communication:

**L: (1) jadi, yang bermain, yang tidak serius yang dapalia cuman main-main mo dapatau. (2) Ini kenapa baru datang? (3) Ketiduran, bangun jam brapa tadi? kamu orang mana? (4) Saya tanya , dari mana?**

Students3: jalan Kalimantan

**L: (5) jalan Kalimantan? (6) Kamu dari pulau Kalimantan?**

Students3: Jl. Kalimantan

**L: (7) aa? (8) Ada bamasak tadi? (9) Bacuci? (10) Kuliah jam 8, bacuci jam 7, datang jam 9. (11) Karena saya sering terlambat kamu juga ikutan terlambat, begitu? (12) Jangan ulang lagi aa? (13) Jangan iko saya jaga terlambat. saya kan so bilang saya terlambat karena apa. (14) oke \_ for the main idea, the first paragraph, that's A, the second paragraph that's B, the third that's C, the fourth D, the most important is F, dan seterusnya F, I find the for the pieces is G, the people in the mountain died is H. (15) Okay now your task is to match the 1 until 8 to paragraph A until H.(16) Do you understand?**

S: yees

The context of the above dialogue was in a classroom interaction. The class was discussing when the lecturer noticed that some students did not pay attention to the lesson and a student was late. She expressed her anger to the late student and the other. The anger was expressed in the Indonesian Language.

As I noticed, the whole class was silent during anger time. The discussion of the lesson topic stopped for about 10 minutes. This was categorized as a negative discourse because it did not support the learning atmosphere. The students were silent. It seemed they did not have the chance to talk, while, as insisted by Thomas (1987) that classroom interaction is a very important aspect to support the learning process. Furthermore, he says that the students must have the chance to express their idea.

## CONCLUSION

There are some conclusions of the discussion. First, classroom discourse is a very important component that builds classroom interaction. The lecturers build classroom interaction through discourse. The discourse was in the form of sentence construction and the lecturers' classroom speech acts. In terms of sentences construction, the lecturer applied the so-called Designedly Incomplete Utterances, i.e. the lecturer produced some incomplete utterances and the students are expected to complete them. It seems that the lecturer provide such utterances to encourage the students to be active in classroom talk. This method successfully encouraged the students to interact in the classroom. However, this was resulted in the lecturer-to-students interaction. Such interaction is positive in the sense that the students are able to be active in the classroom activity. However, such interaction was lecturer-to-students interaction.

In terms of the classroom speech act, the lecturer performed the elicitation, i.e. the lecturer asked some questions related to the topics being discussed. This classroom speech act successfully triggered the students to talk. This indicates that there was interaction within the classroom. In other words, the lecturer has successfully built positive interaction. Positive interaction is the interaction that enables the students to think critically express their idea freely. They can discuss with the lecturer and with their classmates.

The second conclusion is that classroom discourse affects classroom interaction. It was shown by the data. The lecturers' elicitation triggered the students to be interactive in the classroom interaction. When the lecturer performed the expressive illocutionary acts, anger, the classroom was silent. The interaction type was lecturer-students interaction. The students had no chance to talk.

There are two pedagogical implications of this discussion. First, the teaching and learning process in the classroom is not merely the matter of setting the aims, implementing the method, evaluation, etc. but also the matter of building interaction that enables the students to learn. Positive classroom interaction refers to interaction in which the students are active and free to think critically and express their idea. Second, classroom interaction is built through language as a means of communication. S/he performs the classroom speech acts and constructs the so-called Designedly Incomplete Utterances (DIU) and expects the students to complete them with correct words or phrases.

To conclude this, I restate that classroom discourse affects classroom interaction. Positive discourse, i.e discourse that supports the students to think critically to express themselves. This is different from the negative interaction, i.e. the interaction that affects the learning atmosphere negatively. Therefore, it is important to build positive interaction.

Based on the conclusions and pedagogical implications, I suggest two things. Firstly, the lecturer should pay attention to classroom interaction. The lecturer should create or build the interaction positively to enable the students to learn freely. To learn freely means the students are free to think critically and express their ideas. Secondly, the lecturer should pay attention to the use of language in classroom interaction. As discussed previously, language use affects classroom interaction. Positive interaction results from positive discourse and vice versa.

## REFERENCES

- Austin, J. L. (1975). *How to do things with words*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press
- Brown, G., & Yule, G. (1983). *Discourse Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Cazden, C. B. (2001). *Classroom Discourse: The Language of Teaching and Learning*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- Dijk, T. A. (1993). Principles of critical discourse analysis. *Discourse and Society*, 4(2), 249
- Karagiannaki, E., & Stamou, G. (2018). Bringing critical discourse analysis into the classroom: a critical language awareness project on fairy tales for young school children. *Language Awareness*, pp. 1-77.
- Li, D and Zhang L (2020). Exploring teacher scaffolding in a CLIL-framed EFL intensive reading class: A classroom discourse analysis approach. *Language Teaching Research*, 1–28
- Locke, T. (2004). *Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Cromwell Press.
- Nababan, S. U. (1992). *Psikolinguistik: Suatu Pengantar*. Jakarta: PT Gramedia Putaka Utama.

- Ong, J. (2017). A case study of classroom discourse analysis of teacher's fronted reading comprehension lessons for vocabulary learning opportunities. *RELC Journal*, pp. 1-18.
- Rymes, B. (2008). *Classroom Discourse Analysis: A Tool for Critical Reflection*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Searle, J. R. (1985). *Speech Acts*. (A. P. Martinich, Ed.). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Thomas, A. M. (1987). *Classroom Interaction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Walsh, S. (2006). *Investigating classroom discourse*. New York: Routledge.
- Waring, H. Z (2018). Teaching L2 interactional competence: problems and Possibilities. *Classroom Discourse*, pp. 157-167.