IMPROVING STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN CLASS BY STRENGTHENING TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTION

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Abstract: This study focuses on the implementation of teacher-student interaction strength in improving students' participation in a bilingual boarding high school in Central Java. The goals of this study are, (1) describing whether and to what extent teacher-student interaction improves the student participation in class, (2) to identify the advantages and difficulties in implementing this strategy in this research. I adopted Classroom Action Research (CAR) which requires four steps, namely planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting. The participants are 23 high school students. The methods of data collection are observation, diary, interview, photograph, pre-test, and post-test. In analyzing data I used (1) constant comparative technique by Burns (1999) (qualitative), (2) descriptive statistic technique (quantitative). After analyzing the data, I found out that the change in participation in class was seen clearly and all the responses from the students were positive. Moreover the average score of students` speaking skill increased from 62.77 to 84.51.

Keywords: *teacher-student interaction, student participation, learning activity, classroom action research*

INTRODUCTION

Walberg (1986) stated ten elements of teaching effectiveness: (1) academic learning time, (2) use of reinforcement, (3) cues and feedback, (4) cooperative learning, (5) classroom atmosphere, (6) higher order questions, (7) advance organizers, (8) direct instruction, (9) indirect teaching and (10) democratic classroom. Teaching effectiveness is built by teacher and students who initiate the interaction each other, which suggests that it is not only teacher`s duty to be well-prepared to conduct an effective learning process. Students' active participation in classroom plays an important role in the success of language learning (Tatar, 2005). When students actively participate in classroom activities, such as responding to the teacher's or other students' questions, raising questions and giving comments, they will acquire English better.

This study focuses on improving student participation by strengthening teacher-student interaction. It is aimed at reaching a good level of student participation in class by implementing several curricular or extracurricular activities between teacher and student. If the participation of student is gained in a good degree then it will help students to achieve more in their education life. Moreover it will provide so many benefits for school and teachers. Students are expected to feel excited about the class as well, as they interact with teacher in other activities. The teacher would not need to force students to answer questions or punish them with extra assignments, because interaction between teacher and student the participation is expected to occur automatically in class.

The lack of participation is one of the basic problems in class; in whole schools all over the Indonesia. Students` unwillingness to get engaged in class activities is one of the biggest problems, which is experienced by teachers. According to teachers, students need something special to participate in class, otherwise they less care about the activities. Thus I decided to conduct this research in a boarding high school in Java.

After visiting one of the lessons in the high school, I observed some points which indicated that the students lacked of participation. The following are the indicators: 1) the students did not answer questions. When the teacher asked questions not all could answer or did not want to answer; 2) the students did not dare to ask questions. While a student tried to ask something from the teacher he/she asked help from another friend to ask the question but not him/her. From their faces it is possible to read the "not me" emotion; 3) the students did not dare to comment or give opinions. When the teacher asked whether they had understood the topic or not, a long silence took place in class. No one dared or claimed to make comments or give opinions; 4) the students paid less attention to the teacher. It could be identified by some examples like, the lack of eye contact, shaking head or responding by reaction; 5) the students did not work on the exercises given by the teacher. During the lesson, they had effort with something else, and when the teacher approached them they just opened the exercise in order to look like they were working on the task; 6) the students lacked of initiative. The teacher had to force some of them for several times to get the answer of a question. Most of them preferred to keep silent than joining the conversation of the teacher.

Street and Herts (2005:5) state that participation refers to young people taking an active part in a project or process, not just as consumers but as key contributors to the direction and implementation of it. Young people are proactive in this process and have the power to help shape the process – their views have the same weight as the adults they are working alongside. Participation in decision-making means 'taking part' but can cover a huge range of ways to be involved in influencing decision-making and influencing change (Fajerman, Treseder &

Connor, 2004:9). Participation can be seen as an active engagement process which can be sorted into five categories: preparation, contribution to discussion, group skills, communication skills, and attendance (Dancer & Kamvounias, 2005). Based on the definitions and explanations above, it can be concluded that participation is the process when someone takes place in an activity or happening.

Pianta and colleagues (Pianta & Steinberg, 1992; Pianta, Steinberg & Rollins, 1995) found that positive teacher-student relationships, defined as "warm, close, communicative," are linked to behavioral competence and better school adjustment. Given that teacher-student relationships have a significant influence on various outcomes; investigations of how the relationships are shaped and what determines the quality of those relationships are of great importance for intervention efforts.

The lack of teacher-student interaction can be analyzed and compared in order to observe on what pitch the teacher-student interaction is important. Conflict and dependency in teacher-student relationships are related to unfavorable outcomes such as negative school attitude and school avoidance (Birch & Ladd, 1997). Without having a good interaction or relationship a teacher looks like a robot who explains children the knowledge. The students may or may not pay attention, gain the knowledge, participate or learn something. The class might be kept in silent but only by forcing. And it is easy to anticipate that the forcing or authority would not give the result expected from pupils.

It is important to overview the psychological aspect of teachers` relationships with students. According to the research on resilience, the caring teachers who express concern for students and act as confidants, role models, and mentors can contribute to children's capacity to overcome personal vulnerabilities and environmental adversities (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994:45).

RESEARCH METHODS

The method that I used in this paper is action research, which is known by many other names, including participatory research, collaborative inquiry, emancipatory research, action learning, and contextual action research, but all are variations on a theme. Put simply, action research is "learning by doing" - a group of people identify a problem, do something to resolve it, see how successful their efforts were, and if not satisfied, try again. While this is the essence of the approach, there are other key attributes of action research that differentiate it from common problem-solving activities that we all engage in every day.

Also, Kemmis and McTaggart (1988:5) support the idea above by defining action research as a form of collective self reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situation in order to improve rationally and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their

understanding of this practice and the situation in which the practices are carried out.

Action research is a method which emphasizes on action, with research as a fringe benefit. It is conducted to solve that the real problems. If the result of the action is not satisfied for the researcher, she or he may try the action research again and again. Action research can also be undertaken by organization or institutions guided by professionals researchers, with the aim of improving their strategies, practices, and knowledge of the environments within which they practice and solving the problems.

This classroom action research was carried out at a boarding high school in 2012-2013 academic year. The classroom is at the second floor. The class is large, so it has enough places for managing every activity. Moreover the campus of the school is available for more extracurricular activities. The research was carried out in October 2012 – April 2013 by strengthening the teacher-student interaction to improve participation in class.

The data of this research were collected by using some techniques of qualitative and quantitative data collection. Qualitative data collection includes: interview, observation, diary, and document analyses. Photograph was also taken during the implementation of the research to provide more accurate data. I used students` scores for speaking class as quantitative data. The action was applied in speaking class because it is best noticeable in speaking class the participation of students in class. The data which were collected in the study consist of the information gained in pre-research, the process and the result of action research implementation. The whole application of the data collection used in this study was summarized in *Table 1*. Test technique was conducted by giving pre-test before the action began and post-test in the end of the action. The tests were oral and focused on testing speaking skill.

Table 1: Data Collection

Steps of the study	Participants	Technique	Data
Pre-Research	*Researcher*	*Observation*	*Observation report*
	Students	*Interview*	*Transcript of the interview*
		Test	*Students` Speaking Scores*
Implementation	*Researcher*	*Observation*	*Field notes*
		Photograph	*Photographs of Teacher-student interacti*
			Students` Speaking Scores
		Document analyses	
		Test	
Result discussion	*Researcher Student*	*Interview*	*Transcript of interview result*

In analyzing qualitative data, I used constant comparative technique. The data are analyzed to get conclusion of each cycle. I used descriptive statistic

technique to analyze the quantitative data.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The research was carried out to find out whether and to what extent strengthening teacher-student interaction can improve the X grade students' participation in class, and to identify the advantages and difficulties in implementing this strategy in this research. During my observations I found out some points which indicated the lack of participation and its causes. The summary of pre-research can be seen in Table 3 and the summary of the causes can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: The Summary of causes for indicators

No	Causes by teacher	Causes by Students
1	The way of teaching was not attractive.	The students did not feel well.
2	The teacher`s voice was not loud enough.	The students did not have enough motivation.
3	The performance of teacher was less inspiring.	The students felt lazy.
4	That the teacher was not close enough with students.	
5	The teacher preferred not to use the modern technology device opportunities inside the class.	

Before I implemented my actions, I observed the class and conducted a pre-test in speaking skill. The students were asked to make groups, and to present a celebrity in front of the class. Their participation was not good enough, they were trying to follow the instruction but not participate voluntarily. The average of the students' score in pre-test was 62.77. Then, I prepared two cycles, the first consisting of three meetings and the second had two meetings. Since the goal was to improve the students` participation in class I prepared and spread actions in each meeting, which strengthened the teacher-student interaction. The actions aimed and developed to improve the students` participation and speaking ability. There was not any deterioration in any student during the research but there were some students whom it took longer than others to improve in participation. Table 4 presents all improvements of research findings meeting by meeting.

During two cycles and five meetings I conducted several interactions which strengthen the teacher-student interaction. I saw the improvement during the process. There were some types of games and some other techniques which I facilitated in order to occur interaction. Games including rewarded questions, questions with more interesting opportunities like letting students out of class, debate themed classes, lesson at the garden are some of the interactions done during the research.

As the summary of all research findings I come up with the occurrence of the improvement in students` participation in class through the

strengthening teacher-student interaction. I briefly present the indicators which indicate the lack of the participation, the situation prior to the research, and into what extent the participation improves throughout each meeting of each cycle. However to be able to see the overall change in participation before and the after study it can be seen in Table 3. The basis and the criteria that I used to observe and measure participation in this study are: preparation, contribution to discussion, group skills, communication skills, attendance, attention, and listening (Dancer & Kamvounias, 2005).

Table 3: The participation of students before and after according to basis

Basis	Participation before	Participation after
Preparation	Low	High
Contribution to discussion	Low	High
Group skills	Medium	High
Communication skills	Low	High
Attendance	Low	Medium
Attention	Low	High
Listening	Medium	High

Also in the research findings I saw that there are some advantages and difficulties in implementing this strategy. As its advantage the strategy is very effective in improving the participation and the achievements of students in class. It creates a better relationship between the teacher and the students and it makes the teachers and the students more sincere and friendly to demonstrate the lesson. However there are some difficulties; teacher needs to be patient, and there are times when the teacher needs to provide financial support.

This research shows that strengthening the teacher-student interaction is improving students` participation in class. The research findings also prove that when the teacher-student interaction is strengthened the students` participation in class improves, as shown in Table 4.

Similar to this finding is mentioned by Schlesser (2004) through his experience in his research titled "The Correlation between Extracurricular Activities and Grade Point Average of Middle School Students." The study focuses on the importance of teacher-student interaction. Schlesser in his study took the sample of 111 pupils from three different eight grade classes. In this study the researcher recorded whether or not the students involved in activities including athletics and extra academic opportunities and their Grade Point Average during that period. In findings the researcher got positive results. As expected, participation in extracurricular activities showed a significant relationship with G.P.A. for both male and female students. It stated by the researcher that the possible reasons for the results are that student involvement

in activities may have encouraged students to excel in academics, teacher bias toward participating students, etc.

Students' active participation in classroom plays an important role in the success of language learning (Tatar, 2005). Teaching effectiveness is built by teacher and students who initiate the interaction each other, which suggests that it

Table 4: The Process of Implementing the Teacher-student Interaction

Students` Competence		Cycle 1			Cycle 2	
Problem Indicator	**Situation Prior Research**	**Meeting 1**	**Meeting 2**	**Meeting 3**	**Meeting 1**	**Meeting 2**
1. The students did not answer questions.	When the teacher asked questions not all could answer or did not want to answer.	Among the 23 students about 7/8 students were willing to answer the questions.	About half of the class were willing to answer the questions.	More than the half students were willing to answer the questions.	All the students were willing to answer the questions.	Anybody among the students could answer the questions.
2. The students did not dare to ask questions.	While a student tried to ask something from the teacher he asked help from another friend to ask the question but not him. From their faces it is possible to read the "not me" emotion.	Only some of the students asked some questions.	Some asked in English and some others asked in Indonesian language.	Some asked in English and some asked questions in English with some Indonesian words.	Most of them asked questions easily.	All the students were confident to ask questions and knew the consequences were good.
3. The students did not dare to comment or give opinions.	When the teacher asked whether they had understood the topic or not, a long silence took place in class. No one dared or claimed to make comments or give opinions.	Only two or three students were confident enough to share their opinions.	About five/six students were willing to make a comment or share their opinions.	More than the half class was caring about making comment or give opinions.	Almost all the students were excited to comment or share their opinions.	All of the students were relaxed and confident enough to comment or give opinion.
1. The students paid less attention to the teacher.	It could be identified by some examples like, the lack of eye contact, shaking head or responding by reaction	Some students paid attention.	More than half class paid attention.	All the students paid attention.	All the students paid attention.	All the students paid attention.
2. The students did not work on the exercises given by the teacher.	During the lesson, they had effort with something else, and when the teacher approached them they just opened the exercise in order to look like they were working on the task.	Most of the students were not excited to work with the exercises.	Some of the students were not excited to work with the exercises.	Most of the students were excited to accomplish the exercises.	All of the students were excited to accomplish the exercises.	All of the students were excited to accomplish the exercises.
3. The students lacked of initiative.	The teacher had to force some of them for several times to get the answer of a question. Most of them preferred to keep silent than joining the conversation of the teacher.	About seven or eight students were willing to attend the lesson fully.	More than fifteen students were interested in with the content of the lesson.	Most of the students were interested in activities and exercises.	All the students had enthusiasm to join and follow what is being taught.	There was nobody who lacked of initiative towards the lesson.
Score of Tests	Pre-test			Test 1	Test 2	Post-test
MRS (Minimum Requirement Standart) – 75.KKM (Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimum) – 75.	The mean of pre-test is 62.77			The mean of the test of the first cycle is 69.29	The mean of the test of the second cycle is 77.17	The mean of the post-test is 84.51

is not only teacher`s duty to be well-prepared to conduct an effective learning process. Thus it is significant to create and design actions which will make the students motivated and encouraged to attend and participate in class.

There are many ways to help the students participate in class. Strengthening the teacher-student interaction is one of them. It occurs by making good activities and interactions in class and even outside the class. Improving the students` participation in class through strengthening the teacher-student interaction is a terrific technique. And it corresponds with all the principles of teaching English or any other subjects. As the result of the implementation of the strength teacher-student interaction the participation of the tenth year of the high school improves.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

After analyzing the data, I draw conclusions based on the results of the study. The conclusions are as follows. The implementation of teacher-student interaction in improving students` participation in class is successful. It lets students to act alive in a non-threatening atmosphere and motivates them to participate and attend the lesson actively in class.

There are some advantages and disadvantages of this technique. The advantages are certain; it is very effective in raising the participation and achievement of students in class, it creates a better relationship between the teacher and the students, the technique makes the teachers and students more sincere and happy to demonstrate the lessons. To assure the fact, at least the change in students` speaking scores can be seen. The

mean of the pre-test was 62.77 and the mean of the post-test was 84.51. However there are some mini disadvantages of the technique. The teacher needs to be a bit patient when the things go in an unexpected way and there are some times when the teacher needs to arrange the financial support; whether give away some charity from private income or request it from the administration of the school. In my research I applied both; give away some charity for students and sometimes I get the financial support from the school.

The students' responses to the implementation of teacher-student interaction are positive. I have to notice that they gave me gifts and wrote me letters. They did not realize that I used the teacher-student interaction as a technique to improve their participation but they have loved the way I treat them during the implementation of research actions and their participation in class also have improved. Moreover I and the students have become good friends, even outside the class they do not hesitate to approach me to talk about anything or to ask for help in any topic. They have promised that they will never forget me and they made me too to promise that I will never forget them; I did so.

Considering the efforts, difficulties and the joys I have experienced during the implementation of teacher-student interaction to improve students` participation in class I would like to give some suggestions to various addressee as following.

To students: The students need to be open-minded in class during all the lessons. They have no reasons to be shy inside the class and to step back or hesitate to participate in lesson. Moreover, during the English classes they need to understand

the significance of English, that the English is a world-wide language, and try to catch and learn more and more everything about English. In order to be successful they need to participate to the lessons and practice and be encouraged and motivated as much as possible.

To teachers: Making the students inside class attend and participate in lesson is not an easy task. The English teacher should be a very good model for their student to imitate from every side. The English teacher should be creative and innovative in choosing a teaching technique and designing the activities. The teacher should consider the students` participation while designing the activities for lessons. The teachers should be able to control the class management well and build a good teacher-student interaction to pull students attention and make them participate in lesson. There is a point I want to focus on, even strengthening teacher-student interaction is a technique which has been proven and approved for building a good interaction with the students, the teacher needs to do it with his/her full soul and voluntarily.

To researchers: Hopefully, this research can be used as the reference to other researchers who want to conduct more qualified action researches from different point of view. In addition, in order to explore more information, other researchers may concern the sources and the references given in the bibliography.

To Teacher Training and Education Faculty: I hope that this research will be useful to the readers of my juniors and everybody in education institution. The readers can enrich their knowledge about action research and they can utilize the strengthening of teacher-student

interaction in more explored way to improve their students` participation.

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