Second Language Acquisition

and

English Language Teaching

Editor
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The Teaching and Learning of EFL
at a Pre-International Standardized School

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The world around us changes very quickly. Our teaching situation—the facilities, objectives, and environment—has changed too. The characteristics of our students now—their learning motivation, learning styles and strategies, as well as behaviors—are different from, say, ten years ago. Consequently, keeping up with the changes and how to deal with them are of paramount importance, particularly with respect to any changes related to the teaching and learning process. We do realize that learning how to teach well will never come to an end. It is for this reason that engaging in professional development activities will lead us to both empowerment and inspiration. Being in charge of our own professional growth as teachers can help to keep us excited about our work and can get rid of what the so-called exhaustion, a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individual (Bailey, Curtis, & Nunan, 2001). It probably happens to all of us. As teachers, we sometimes feel emotionally exhausted, fell depersonalized, and lack personal accomplishment. If we undergo these emotional conditions, how can we help our students learn well? Teachers should manage the classroom well and they are responsible for a large amount of variables in the classroom—materials, the type and order of activities, feedback, error correction, and the class dynamic, that is the creation of lively, friendly as well as conducive situation for learning (Lindsay & Knight, 2006).

Rosas and West (2009) defined classroom management as efforts to oversee the activities of the classroom, including learning, interaction, and students' behavior. Classroom management is perceived to be dynamic and essential for academic success, and therefore creating the best learning en-

vironment is the primary focus of the classroom teacher's responsibility. Rosas and West argued that teachers must provide a classroom environment that supports academic achievement for all students. Thus, teaching is a complex profession requiring teachers to be effective in implementing and maintaining order while delivering an effective instruction. Poor classroom management often leads to misbehaviors which interfere with the teaching and learning process, and produces tremendous stress. It is for this reason that teachers are required not only to be qualified in the content area but also to be competent in the skills necessary to create a safe learning environment that promotes academic achievement.

In line with this, Scrivener (1994) suggested that the teacher's most important job is to create the conditions in which learning can take place. He further said that the skills of creating and managing a successful class are the keys to the whole success of a course. Most of us may still remember joining lessons at schools which we were not involved and, thus, we were "switched off" from what was being taught, or we were awake during the class, but we were not engaged emotionally with what was going on. We were not really curious, passionate, and involved. These kinds of situations may also be parts of our teaching which we are not aware of. Our students may not be engaged, as well as made curious and involved. In fact, successful learning is resulted not only from the quality of the teacher, but also the emotional engagement of the students in the classroom activities. This engagement is a part of classroom management.

Engaging the students in the classroom activities is a necessity, and this automatically contributes to the creation of situation promoting student-centeredness. Student-centeredness refers to the condition when there is appreciation toward students' potentials that is attempted by engaging them in the process of teaching and learning. Let students get involved more and the teachers should facilitate not "transmit" knowledge, particularly in this information era where students may be better informed than teachers.

Closely related to student engangement in the classroom is the Student Talking Time (STT), the amount of time in a lesson when the students speak, which is usually contrasted to Teacher Talking Time (TTT). There is a debate about the amount of time teachers should spend talking in class. Scrivener (1994) urged teachers to maximize student interaction by increasing opportunities for STT. In my opinion, there should be a balance between TTT and STT. This depends very much on the type of lessons and activities,

and on the level of the students (Gower, Phillips, & Walters, 1995). However, "Overuse of TTT is inappropriate because the more a teacher talks, the less chance there is for the students to practice their own speaking" (Harmer, 2007: 38). STT should be much more than TTT since the aim of most language classes is to get the students, not the teacher, use the language. In other words, the best lessons are ones where STT is maximized. Good teachers use their common sense and experience to get the balance right.

Have you ever seen a teacher who just sits all the time or positions himself/herself in front of the class during the teaching session, even after setting up a task for the students to do? Such a teacher may not do or may not know another important skill in managing the class—monitoring. When students are engaged in an activity, teachers need to keep an ear on what they are saying and glance at what they are doing. The aims of monitoring are to see if the students have understood instructions, to assess how well they are performing the task and to evaluate particular language strengths and weaknesses (Gower et al., 1995). Our attention must be taken up with monitoring how well the students, as a group, are getting on and how individual students are reacting. This monitoring process will tell us whether we are going too slowly or quickly, whether most of students are following, and whether particular students need more help. Monitoring is, indeed, as important as teaching.

In addition to monitoring ability, the ability to provide a variety of activities and topics over a period of time becomes a characteristic of a good teacher. This is extremely important since a good activity will be less motivating the fifth time we ask the students to take part in it than the first time it is introduced. Similarly, it is not just the students who become bored by doing the same things all the time, but so do the teachers. For this reason, the teachers' ability to select and adapt materials and activities is a must to avoid burnout syndrome. For example, if we see a course book with monotonous procedures and activities, we need to be adaptive. We may add activities and exercises which extend the students' engagement with the language or topic, omit activities and exercises which are irrelevant, replace the lesson in the course book with more interesting and engaging materials, and make the activities and exercises relevant with the needs of the students. Thus, the ability to select, omit, add, replace, and adapt materials and activities will make the course book suitable for the students. This is a

significant skill that a teacher must have since there is no best course book which suits all students. Variety not only provides the students with unique experiences in learning a language, but also motivates and energizes the class.

Establishing rapport is another essential part in managing the class. Rapport means "the relationship that the students have with the teacher, and vice versa" (Harmer, 2007: 25). Rapport is an important factor in determining whether a class is success or not. Students are prepared to contribute and learn more when the atmosphere of learning is relaxed, positive, enjoyable, and respectful. Lindsay and Knight (2006: 13) pointed out that "effective learning is the result of the partnership between learner and teacher with both taking the responsibilities appropriate to their roles." This occurs as a result of the way we listen to and treat the students in our classroom.

The interrelation of the variables of classroom management can be illustrated as in Figure 1. The figure shows that there are several components that a teacher ought to have in order that the class is motivating, non-threatening, alive, conducive, and engaging.
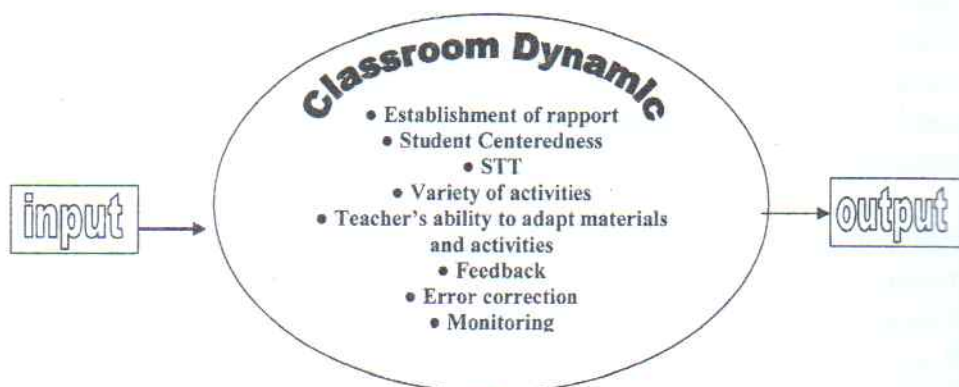
Figure 1. Variables of Classroom Management

The current teaching and learning process in Indonesia making use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) aims at developing students' communicative competence; and even some experts (e.g., Richards & Rodgers, 2003) extended communicative competence into grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. This change leads to changes in the types of learning, teaching activities, roles of learners as well as those of teachers. The learning and teaching

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process is supposed to engage learners in communication and it requires the use of communicative activities. In this instance, teachers have two roles: to facilitate communication process between all learners in the various activities in the classroom and to act as an independent participant in the learning activities (Breen & Candlin, cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2003).

In relation to the teachers' roles, there are three kinds of teacher (Scrivener, 1994). They are the explainer, the involver, and the enabler; we are supposed to move towards the enabler since a teacher should know not only about the subject matter (as the explainer) and the methodology (as the involver), but also the people (as the enabler). The explainer knows his subject matter very well, but has limited knowledge about teaching methodology. This type of teacher relies mainly on explaining or lecturing as a way of conveying information to his/her students. The involver, on the other hand, not only knows the subject matter but also is familiar with teaching methodology. This teacher is able to use appropriate teaching techniques to help the students learn about the subject matter. The last is the enabler who knows about the subject matter as well as methodology, and he/she should have awareness of how individuals and groups are thinking and feeling in the class. He/she can build effective working relationship and a good classroom atmosphere. His/her own personality and attitude should encourage learning. This kind of the teacher can become a guide, counselor, facilitator, motivator and the like depending on what is going on in the classroom. He/she may be hardly visible when a lot of autonomous learning is going on (Scrivener, 1994).

Although many teachers are familiar with CLT and the roles of teachers and learners as well, they may not be familiar with what is meant by communicative activities and with how to determine whether or not an activity is communicative. Based on my observation on some schools and interviews with some teachers so far, teachers just follow the materials and activities from the course book without selection and adaptation, and the course book is not accompanied by the teacher's manual. Even if the speaking activity does take place, it is not communicative and contextualized yet since it does not meet any one of the criteria of being communicative—whether students need to communicate with their classmates to complete the task, whether they all have the same information/ideas, whether the topics are relevant to their lives, whether this is a conversation they might have with their friends, or whether the context is clear.

What is happening in the Indonesian education system now is the emergence of International Standard Schools (*Sekolah Bertaraf Internasional/SBI*), Preparatory International Standard Schools (*Rintisan Sekolah Bertaraf Internasional/RSBI*), Independently-Categorized Schools (*Sekolah Kategori Mandiri/SKM*), and National Standard Schools (*Sekolah Standar Nasional/SSN*). The establishment of SBI is recommended by the Decree No. 20, 2003 about National Educational System. Chapter 50 verse 3 states that the government and/or local government set up at least one education institution at all levels to be developed into internationally-standardized education institution. SBI is a school using National Standard of Education (*Standar Nasional Pendidikan*/SNP) and enriched by a standard of one country of Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and/or another developed country. Furthermore, the changes from SSN to RSBI and from RSBI to SBI require teachers to be ready by keeping up with the current development of teaching methodologies, by incorporating all the above-mentioned variables of classroom management in our teaching, and by engaging in professional development activities.

Indeed, the emergence of RSBI and SBI is very tempting and worth observing since, as the name suggests, the teaching and learning process should also be internationally standardized. It is no use to have RSBI and SBI when the activities in the classroom, the roles of teachers, and the roles of the students are still conventional. It is for these reasons that a study about the variables of classroom management is worth doing. Hence, in general, the study is intended to know whether the English teaching or learning at RSBI meets the international standards as suggested by the University of Cambridge. There are at least thirteen criteria to judge whether classroom activities are already meeting the international standards particularly from the Cambridge University. They are (1) whether the lesson contains pair work or group work, (2) whether the TTT is as little as possible, (3) whether there is a communicative activity, (4) whether the teacher uses mostly English for instructions, (5) whether the teacher builds rapport, (6) whether the students move about a during the lesson, (7) whether the lesson contains a warmer or filler, (8) whether the lesson achieves its aim, (9) whether the materials are interesting, (10) whether the teacher monitors the learning process appropriately, (11) whether the teacher adapts instructional materials, (12) whether the teacher corrects errors appropriately, and (13) whether the teacher uses authentic materials appropriately.

With regard to the criteria, in particular, the study is aimed at knowing:

1. the extent to which TTT and STT are employed in the English class-room,
2. whether the lessons are student-centered or teacher-centered,
3. whether there is monitoring and, if any, how it is done,
4. whether the activities in the class are communicative,
5. whether the materials and activities are selected and adapted, and
6. whether the lessons are put in context.

METHOD

The research was a preliminary case study and was ethnographic in its nature. The word "ethnography" comes from "*ethnos*" which means people, race, or cultural group, and "*graphia*" which means writing or representing and it literally means "writing about people" (Johnson & Christensen, 2004: 369). In this respect, it examined various activities done by the teacher and the students during the teaching and learning process relevant to the aims of the study.

The study was conducted at State Senior High School 3 of Malang, East Java, that is currently endowed with the Pre-International Standard School (*Rintisan Sekolah Bertaraf Internasional/RSBI*) status. More specifically, the subjects of the study were the teacher and students in English classrooms of the school, who did several activities in the teaching and learning of English.

Data on classroom activities were collected by using focused nonparticipation observation. The observation was focused on the catego-ries entailed in the aims or the study. Moreover, it is *nonparticipation* since the researcher was not involved in any of the classroom activities (Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Spradley, 1980). An observation guide (see the Ap-pendix) was used in the observation.

The data was analyzed using the combination of inductive and interpre-tive methods of analysis (Hatch, 2002). This is because the study was in-tended to depict the current phenomenon so as to search for patterns, to give explanation, and to make inferences about the phenomenon.

RESULTS

The results of the data analysis showed that the amount of the TTT is greater than the STT. This means that the students got much less time to practice and produce the target language. For example, in discussing the

techniques of reading, *skimming* and *scanning*, the teacher explained in detailed what skimming and scanning are. Furthermore, in the reading lesson, the students were busy doing abundant exercises to be submitted.

With regard to whether the English lessons were student-centered or teacher-centered, it was found out that, in general, the lessons were still teacher-centered. Although some stages were student-centered, many others were still controlled by the teacher. Students were busy doing the exercises, yet they were not involved and engaged in all activities very well. Some students sitting on the back rows were getting sleepy.

Overall, monitoring was okay, yet it was not effective. For example, after setting up an activity, the teacher did not monitor the activity immediately. Immediate monitoring is very important to check whether the students were doing the task well and to assist if anyone or any group needed help. The teacher monitored the activities, yet he could have done the monitoring function more effectively.

It was found out that most activities were not yet communicative. For example, the teacher assigned the students to have an information gap activity by giving them some worksheet. However, the students did not ask their partners to get the information needed, but they saw their partner's worksheet to get the information. Although the activity was meant to be communicative, it was not communicative when the implementation of the activity was not good. This means that the students need to ask questions to get the needed information.

With regard to materials, the teacher did not adapt the materials. The teacher prepared copies of a number of pages taken from a particular source, gave them to the students, and instructed the students to do all the exercises. For example, when dealing with scanning and skimming techniques the teacher depended on the materials presented in the source book.

In addition, the classroom activities needed to be adapted. The students were set in groups, yet the group consisted of seven students, which was too many. In addition, although the students were set up in groups, they were busy doing the exercises individually. The students did not move at all during the lessons. Consequently, some students lost their interest and attention, and got sleepy. From the beginning to the end of the lessons, the students sat at the same chairs and at the same group. There was no class dynamic where the students moved about during the lessons.

DISCUSSION

In communicative language teaching, in which classrooms in RSBI schools should be managed, STT is expected to be high since it is the time for the students to use the target language. The underlying reason for this is that the more chance for the students to get to use the target language, the more proficient the students will become. If STT is to be high, student active participation in which students work in pairs and/or in group is maintained. This will result in students' engagement in classroom activities, students' greater opportunity to use the target language, and students' greater involvement, which eventually will result in better second language proficiency (Ellis, 1994). For example, when teaching about skimming and scanning it would be much better if the teacher just elicited, by asking about the students' knowledge about the two techniques in reading. STT is indeed extremely important since the students learn English in EFL setting where little or even no opportunity to practice or speak in English outside the classroom is not found. In addition, the fact that the students were given a lot of exercises is just like testing rather than teaching.

In fact, high portion of STT, students' active participation, and students' engagement are supported by contructivist philosophy. In a constructivist classroom, learning is constructed, active, reflective, and collaborative. As the basis of RSBI, constructivism provides significant contribution to classroom activities. Other characteristics of a constructivist classroom include the following. Firstly, the focus of a classroom tends to shift from the teacher to the students. The classroom is no longer a place where the teacher acts like an expert pouring knowledge into passive students. Secondly, the students are active. They are supposed to be the ones who create their own new understanding. The teacher coaches, facilitates, suggests, and allows the students to experiment, ask questions, and try things that do not work. Learning activities require the students' full participation. Thirdly, the students are reflective. They control their own learning process, and they lead the way by reflecting on their experiences. This process makes them experts of their own learning. Finally, the constructivist classroom relies heavily on collaboration among students. There are many reasons why collaboration contributes to learning. The main reason is that students learn about learning not only from themselves, but also from their peers.

Selecting and adapting materials are of great importance in teaching since, for one thing, there is no best course book, and there is no course

book that fits all students. It is for this reason that English teachers need to select materials that they think are good for their students. They should also adapt materials so that they suit the students and the learning goal.

Closely related to the adaptation of teaching materials is the use of authentic materials. There are abundant authentic materials around us that can be used in teaching. The use of authentic materials is intended to make the lesson more contextual so that the students know the uses of the language points being taught. Context in CLT is central, and every language point being taught should be put in context.

Selecting and adapting activities are other important things to take into account. Similar to materials, there is no best activity. Activities need to be adapted in such a way that they suit the students. Selection and adaptation of materials and activities are all intended to make the learning more interesting and enjoyable, and to achieve the learning goals.

CONCLUSION

The teaching and learning of English at the State Senior High School examined in this study has not met the international standards as specified by the University of Cambridge. More specifically, the TTT is still high; some lesson stages have not been student-centered; the teacher has not adapted the materials as well as the activities to meet the needs of the students and the learning objectives; and monitoring was still a problem. Reflecting upon the results of the study, it is then suggested that teachers in RSBI schools work harder to apply what they should do in their English classrooms to meet the international standards.

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Second Language Acquisition and

English Language Teaching provides understanding of the areas of SLA and ELT in the Indonesian context. This book is important for students majoring in English Language Teaching (ELT) and for English language teachers.