

ENDORISING REFLECTIVE TECHNIQUES TO PROLIFERATE STUDENTS' INTERACTIONS AND UTTERANCES IN A DISCUSSION FORUM

Marwito Wihadi

Department of English Education, University of Kuningan, Indonesia

E-mail: m_wihadi@yahoo.com

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Abstract: High Intermediate-2 students' brief responses in a discussion forum cause a long-expected discussion last in a couple of minutes in mixed-ability classes, depicting a minority of students are overtly dominant, while others are precisely passive. What yields discussions endure immaturely stems from both unclear roles of participants and their inadequate techniques to expand both interactions and spoken discourse. Therefore, Teacher-researcher assigned each participant in a discussion group of three to put reflection into practice, referring to the self-selected and discussed topics. The data were gained through non-participant observations, in which the teacher-researcher observed and recorded a singled-out group. A sample recording was, subsequently, transcribed and analyzed regarding with the number of exchanges in a five-minute discussion intake and the number of content words that students generated. It was found that employing reflective techniques, students were able to keep a particular topic being discussed at full. As a result, the number of content words multiplied. These findings resulted classroom teachers in insightful use of reflective techniques as one of the ways to proliferate students' benefits in a discussion forum. Adequately practiced, students would be able to employ the techniques preponderantly, multiplying interactions among discussion members.

Keywords: *reflective techniques, students' interactions, utterances, discussion forum*

INTRODUCTION

Talk taking place in the classroom is one of the media for students to get their exposure to the target language. Holding a discussion forum, subsequently, is one of pedagogic activities that is aimed at triggering students' talks at full. They are facilitated to contextualized language use assisting them to move from a purely semantic analysis of a language to a syntactic analysis of it (Swain, 1985). Hence, they are 'pushed' to produce utterances, expressions in forms of sentences generated in a certain context with a certain intention (Finegan, 1992) in an interactive classroom context mode.

However, some students, as a matter of fact, are not able to benefit to the discussion forum being staged so as not to expand a number of utterances and exchanges - consisting of three moves, namely Initiative, Response and Feedback moves (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975) in (Allwright and Bailey, 1991) due to, among other things, their unadequacy of conversation skills. In other words, they are not equipped with an ability to maintain a topic of discussion as exhaustively as possible by employing a particular technique. Therefore, two aims of a discussion forum - promoting interactions among

members (language learners) and facilitating prolific utterances- are not achieved adequately.

This paper proposed Reflective Techniques (RT) as scaffolding which helps students to stretch their talk interactively in a discussion forum so that both interactions among them and productive utterances are preponderantly facilitated. Student-student interactions are essential in a language acquisition in that they denote comprehensible input and output as stated that the former is in charge of advancement in language acquisition, and output is plausible as an impact of acquired competence (Krashen, 1982).

Referring to Walsh's four modes of classroom discourse (2001), discussion belongs to Classroom Context Mode in which teachers provide opportunities for genuine, real-world type of discourse. It

is asserted that the principal role of the teacher is to listen and support the interaction among students and the appearance of their interactions is expected to promote casual structure discourse (ibid)

Classroom discourse concerns with Exchange Structure (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975). Sinclair and Coulthard classified three basic kinds of exchanges of language: (1) question-and-answer sequences, (2) pupils responding to teachers' directions, and (3) pupils listening to teacher giving information. Taking a basic type of Exchange Structure, Question-and-answer sequences consisted of a minimum of three moves (IRF), namely the Question (Initiation), the answer (Response), and the teacher's feedback (Follow-up). Here is an example of interaction from a second language classroom:

Teacher:	What does your father do?	I
Student1:	Teacher	R
Teacher:	<i>He is a teacher. Good.</i>	F
Teacher:	What does your father do?	I
Student2:	My father dead	R
Teacher:	And what about your father?	I

(Thompson, 1997)

An interaction outside of the classroom has typical IRF patterns. Consider the following example,

Doctor:	I'll give you sick note. It's Mary	I
Patient:	I'm probably known by er Angela at work but	R
Doctor:	Oh.	F
Patient:	I told the receptionist. She said have you got another name. I said Mary. She couldn't find me under my surname.	I

(Thompson, 1997)

The two above interactional examples confirm that the classroom is part of the real world, just as the airport, the interviewing room, the chemical

laboratory, the beach and so on (van Lier, 1988). In addition, Initiations is not always in a question form. In fact, Initiation in the form of affirmative is

also common. A particular Response generates a certain Follow-up, which also affects a substantial Initiation. Similarly, IRF are pivotally interrelated, yielding in numerous exchanges to promote manifold interactions as well as their utterances.

To scaffold students' flourishing real-world interactions, the use of Reflective Techniques (RT) in a discussion forum seems influential. Reflection is a technique where we reflect back the same thoughts or feeling the other person has expressed (We use reflection for a number of purposes, in particular to ask for clarification and to let the other person know that we understand what he or she said. Asking for clarification is then categorized as a referential question- the one that the questioner does not know the answer Long and Sato (1983) in Chaudron (1988). Furthermore, there are two kinds of reflection: Direct Reflection (DR)- we repeat almost the exact words the other person has used and make it into questions- and Interpretative Reflection (IR) - you give your understanding of what the other person has said. Let's take a look at the following example, taken from LBPP-LIA (Lembaga Bahasa dan Pendidikan Profesional) Conversation -3 Book (2003, 30-31)

A: My father decided immediately to set up my marriage arrangement.

B: You father decided immediately to set up your marriage arrangement?
(DR)

It sounds like a big mission (IR)

It sounds like a big project (IR)

Here are the other expressions of Reflective Techniques quoted from LBPP-LIA CV-3 Book (2007, x.ii):

What do you mean by (questionnaire)?
In other words,.....am I right?

Do you mean we need to (lease)?

Does that mean...?

The above Reflective Techniques, in particular Direct Reflection (DR), stem from the concepts of 'negotiated interaction' in which modifications occur during conversation in a discussion forum, leading language learners to practice two processes out of three interactional adjustments as follow:

1. A 'comprehension check' is the speaker's query of the interlocutors (speaking partners) to see if they have understood what was uttered: "Do you understand?", "Do you see what I mean?", or "Do you get what I'm saying?"
2. A 'confirmation check' is the speaker's query concerning whether the speaker's uttered comprehending of the interlocutor's meaning is right: Oh, are you saying that you did live in London? You disapprove of students boarding themselves as they may take advantages of freedom unresponsibly. Am I right?"
3. A 'clarification check' is a request for further information or help in comprehending something the interlocutor has prior said: "I don't understand exactly. What do you mean?", or "What do you mean by a loner?"

(Long, 1983; Chaudron, 1988)

In short, the implementation of Reflective Techniques promoting students' extended utterances as well as multified interactions is worth pedagogically endorsed since the benefits to language learners potentially yield.

METHOD

Of six students, three female senior high school students aged 16 years old were randomly selected to hold a discussion without being capitalized with the

expressions of Reflective techniques previously. Likewise, they had no pedagogic exposure on how to hold a discussion forum as long as possible to enhance their language competence by using the techniques to be exposed. Student 1 (S1) started taking up an English course in In-4 (intermediate level 4). Previously, she has studied at an English Course for one year. Student 2 (S2) and Student 3 (S3) have been learning English in this English course since they were in elementary levels for junior high school students (Step-1 and Step 2). It means they have attended to learn English for about two years.

Three of them have two sessions in a week, and each session last two hours. The ability to speak in English fluently was their main priority as such skill was not much emphasized at their school. In fact as intermediate students, they were already able to deal with unrehearsed situations in that they managed to participate in a spontaneous talk in English without prior writing in a medium of a task, among other things, via a discussion forum. Furthermore, such a fluency exercise enabled to free them from 'having to be always grammatically correct' as saying anything in the target language.

They were simply assigned to discuss a number of statements concerning situations with options recalling the idiomatic expressions in color on the course book after being presented and exposed such topic through reading text and vocabulary targeted exercises such as matching the synonyms or filling in blanks. Also, they were tasked to voice reasons for their respective choice. They had neither writing assignment to answer all statements nor make a note of written

reasons. None was nominated as a moderator, but Student 1 (S1) self-initiated to control the discussion due to the fact that she took the microphone first, then selected any question she wanted to talk over.

Furthermore, thirty minute- tape recorded discussion last as the teacher acted as a non-participant observer. The teacher just observed how the discussion occurred without any interference. After the session was over, the recorded-discussion as fresh data was directly transcribed implementing an adapted transcription system from van Lier (1988) and Johnson (1995), and analyzed by employing the IRF exchange structure as well counting the content words (Finegan, 1992) –principally nouns, verb, adjective and adverb – an indicator of the number of utterances (uses of sentences on a particular occasion or in a particular context) produced (ibid). They carry a high information load and the sense is more and less recoverable using these words alone (Thornbury, 2002). The extract of the utterance after cutting off other functional words is still understandable, conveying the meanings that the interlocutors intend to put forward.

After few sessions, the same procedure was reiterated in that the same female students were singled purposefully on the grounds that they got a task familiarity. Before, everyone in the class was exposed the Reflective Technique expressions written on the white-board. Exposure was conducted via teacher's thorough explanations and demos. Singling a student out, teacher showed the techniques that they would put into practice in the discussion. Similar to the previous classroom episode, the discussion was held after it was preceded by previous reading

exposure and intentional vocabulary exercises. Their learning behavior (the three selected females on purpose) was observed and their discussion was tape-recorded. The same student, Student 1, kicked off the discussion. Subsequently, the recorded discussion was transcribed and analyzed by employing IRF exchange structure and counting the number of content words. Eventually, the two transcripts of (Transcription 1 and Transcription 2) were juxtaposed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students seemed to proceed a rigid pattern of exchanges in the first discussion. S1 read the statement. She uttered her own choice as well as expressed her reasons for the choice. Later, she asked another student about her choices plus the reasons. Finally, she told the other one to tell her both choice and reasons. Such pattern was so typical that it was predominant during the discussion. No wonder, they completed the all 13 topics in 30 minutes, meaning one topic was not greatly elaborated as they moved on one topic to another quite instantly. Each student did not comment on their interlocutors' utterances in line with the topic discussion by making use of the expressions for further topic elaboration.

On the contrary, in the second discussion, I observed that S1 was not predominant to control the pattern of exchanges. A certain topic seemed interested in them much so that they clinked to it for a couple of minutes. Everyone in the group appeared initiative to contribute utterances talking over topics of music. Consequently, there discussed 5 topics out of 10 in 30 minutes. In other words, they kept one topic quite long as each member responded to the interlocutors via the

previously presented and taught reflective techniques. Each seemed familiar with how to keep the discussion on. Let's pay attention the extract of transcription as follows:

S1: Ok. Good afternoon guys we are going to discuss some statements about (I)

Rock music. Shall we start?

S2-S3: /yes/. /of course/ (R)

S1: Ok...for the first statement "In Indonesia only the young enjoy the music(F)/ (I)

er-...for me I disagree with this statement because nowadays...old people also enjoy Rock Music..it depends on their soul may be...if they are they have ...er-...yet full soul...they...they will also enjoy rock music the same as... youngsters...

What do you think, Rizkia? (I)

S2: So...are you saying that er-...old people is also er-... like rock and roll? (R) RT

S1: Yes sure why not if er-...they...they are feeling that way (F)
...er-..why not? (I)

S2: But I think you know old people sometimes is...is you know like old songs (R)
...like classical songs...because my family especially my grandma and grandpa ...er-...like to sing a song like classical music or may be dangdut music so I I disagree with you...
so what do you think Nadia? (I)

S3: Hm..er-...does t that mean that you are...you disagree that...er-...old (R) RT

People doesn't ...eh-...old people like the rock music?

Referring to the above data, complete exchanges emerged and the intervention of RT (Reflective Techniques) occurred. It was possible that the feedback move also functioned as

initiative one. Next, the full 05:04 minute owing to the time constraints, transcriptions of two distinctive different classroom episodes denoted two core findings worth putting forwards. Table 1

below displays the number of a broken-exchange (IR) and a minimum exchange structure (IRF) in the first discussion forum and the second one.

Table 1.

Transcription Number	The number of broken exchange structure (IR)	The number of minimum exchange structures (IRF)	The total numbers of exchanges (IR) & (IRF)
Transcription 1	8	-	8
Transcription 2	6	4	10

The above data revealed that on the first discussion students were not able to develop one topic in a flow of interaction. In other words, they were incompetent to develop or stretch one topic discussion interactively. Eight (8) broken exchange structures notified that none followed up or commented on their friends' initiations. They simply focused on responding or answering their friends' initiations or questions while, at the same time, they neglected commenting by giving feed backs or follow ups. On the other hand, employing the reflective techniques, students were substantially productive in promoting a number of minimum exchange structure IRF. Similarly, they are aware of commenting on their friends' initiations by practicing the instructed expressions of reflection, which subsequently trigger a move 'F'. Thus, the stretched interactions bring about, resulting in the number of content

words produced. Maintaining interactions among them was pedagogically advantageous as they were encouraged to struggle to generate language output as to attain grammatical competence (Swain, 1985). In addition, the negotiation process taking place during the interaction in a language task, for example the discussion forum, promotes the language acquisition (Stevick, 1976) in Allwright and Bailey (1991).

However, the data imparted that they were not used to employing the expressions of reflective technique regardless of the length of taking up English course due to the fact they still produced the broken exchange structure (6) deriving from particular factors needed finding out further.

Furthermore, the table below displayed the number of content words directly affected by the number of exchanges that students generate:

Table 2

Transcription Number	The Number of Content Words
Transcription 1	106
Transcription 2	167

The data informed that students in discussion 2 were more prolific to produce utterances than the ones in discussion 1. As matter of fact, the practiced expressions seemed to push

students to be productive in talking. It was plausible, though that the number of content words was influenced by their familiarity of the topics being discussed or students' motivation to keep talking

in English, Nevertheless, it appeared that their frequent practices of reflective techniques expressions profoundly affected to the number of exchanges as well as content words.

The findings of the action research were in line with Brock's (1986) as cited by Chaudron (1988) asserted that referential questions elicited longer responses in that students made up more utterances, thus creating more content words as an attempt to answer the interlocuter's query via relective technique in the discussion forum. On the contrary, they were against with Moritoshi's action research in that students were surprisingly minimized responses as they were capably uttering more lexically complex answers on account of, one of the clues encountered in a stimulated response interview, their perception of time pressure (Moritoshi, 2001). Hence, it was favaarable to reseach the effects of students' psychosocial factors in responding abundant interactions and utterance-triggering questions via conversation techniques further.

CONCLUSION

The frequent practices of reflective technique expressions seem essential to encourage students to talk in English. Having been exposed once, students won't automatically make us of the taught expressions of reflective techniques in a real time discussion. Yet, It is essential that teacher capitalize students with reflective technique expressions prior to the discussion. At a certain time, teacher may participate in a discussion so that he can exemplify prolific interactions-generating discussion technique. By so doing, he facilitates students with engagingly real-world type of discourse.

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