

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Concerning second language acquisition (henceforth SLA), Ellis (1986) asserts that there are five interrelated factors to be used as a framework for investigating SLA. They are situational factors, linguistic input, learner differences, learner processes, and linguistic output respectively. ¹⁾ As quoted by Stefanus Laga Tukan in his summary, Ellis states that the first factor, situational factors, help shape the nature of SLA of which the production depends entirely on what, who, whom, and where it takes place. The second factor, linguistic input, shapes and controls or just triggers the process of SLA. The third factor, learner differences, such as his L1, age, aptitude and intelligence, motivation and needs, personality and cognitive styles influence the variability of one's SLA. The fourth factor, learner processes,

¹ Rod Ellis, Understanding Second Language Acquisition, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 16.

either cognitive (learning, production, and communication strategies) or linguistic processes (universal principles of grammar or the core rules of every language) provide the learner with a starting point of acquiring the language. The last factor, linguistic output, has a share in giving information about how a learner acquires a L2. ²⁾ (See also Ellis 1986: 16-18)

Although all these 5 factors appear to be essential for investigating SLA, Amy Tsui Bik-may claims that language input and interaction are two factors that have the most important effects on the second language acquisition. ³⁾ Input may take the form of exposure - either spoken or written - in natural settings or formal instruction. ⁴⁾ However, simple 'exposure' to input data is not enough; learners need comprehensible input. As quoted by Ellis, Krashen (1982: 21) argues that to be useful for language acquisition, input should be modified

2 Stefanus Laga Tukan, Key Issues in Second Language Acquisition: A Summary, Unpublished Paper, FKIP Unika Widya Mandala Surabaya, 1988, pp. 6-7.

3 Amy Tsui Bik-may, "Analyzing Input and Interaction in Second Language Classroom," RELC Journal, June 1985, Vol. 16, no. 1, p. 8.

4 Ellis, op. cit., p. 12.

and made comprehensible and yet contains structure a bit beyond our current level of competence ($i + 1$) with the focus on the meaning and not on the form of the message. ⁵⁾ Krashen goes on to say that language input which is simple and modified is easy to be understood by acquirers acquiring language naturally. This input will enhance the acquirers' intake which, in turn, will encourage them to participate in verbal interaction. The more they take part in the interaction, the more they acquire the language. ⁶⁾ This has been proved by Seliger (1977) in his study which finds that learners who interact intensively (high input generators) acquire language at a faster and qualitatively better rate than those who play relatively passive roles in interaction (low input generators). ⁷⁾

Studies done by Tsui Bik-may (1985), Lanawati Widjojo (1988), and Ingrid M. Lukmansyah (1988) have shown that input which is comprehensible and interaction which has been modified best facilitate second

5 Ibid., p. 157.

6 Lanawati Widjojo, Analyzing Verbal Input and Interaction in Two Reading Comprehension Classrooms at the English Department of Widya Mandala University, Unpublished Thesis, FKIP Unika Widya Mandala Surabaya, 1988, p. 1.

7 Tsui Bik-may, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

language acquisition in an environment different from that of the native speaker of the target language. 8)

(See also Widjojo 1988: 81-83, Lukmansyah 1988; 45)

Furthermore, foreign or second language acquisition (in our case English) in a foreign language situation like Indonesia, formal language classroom is best for second language learners who cannot get comprehensible input and opportunity to use the language in natural setting which will lead to second language acquisition. 9)

It is worth noting that throughout this thesis, the writer is on Ellis' side in using the terms SLA and FLA (Foreign Language Acquisition) interchangeably, i.e. referring to formal (tutored) and informal (untutored) acquisition of a language other than one's mother tongue (L2). 10) A reading comprehension classroom, then, may be viewed as a conducive environment for Indonesian learners learning English. As quoted by Widjojo, Krashen and Terrell (1983: 131) claim that in this type of classroom, the students can obtain sources of comprehensible input, such as the talk of the teacher - in the forms of oral explanations and

8 Ibidem.

9 Stephen D. Krashen, Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition, New York: Pergamon Institute of English, 1982, p. 72.

10 Ellis, op. cit., p. 5.

questions which should be simple, modified, varied, and interesting - as well as the reading material itself. (See also Ngadiman 1988: 1-2) This comprehensible input should, in turn, encourage the students to practise using the target language for specific functions; hence, verbal interaction between teacher-students and students-students will take place. ¹¹⁾

As quoted by Tsui Bik-may, to Krashen, a classroom is ideally required as a place where comprehensible input and modified interaction are made available as to facilitate SLA. ¹²⁾ Most Indonesian senior high school teachers, however, seem to be unaware of the important role played by the classroom. The writer's own experience either when she was at the SMA or when she did her teaching-practice program (PPL = Program Pengalaman Lapangan) at SMAK Santa Agnes, tells her that most SMA teachers, particularly when they are teaching English reading comprehension, do not make use of the classroom as it is ideally hoped. They do not care about the input they should provide for their students, let alone the interaction which takes place in the classroom. On the contrary, most of them dominate the classroom talk by initiating a

11 Widjojo, op. cit., p. 2.

12 Tsui Bik-may, loc. cit.

question which is hoped to be responded by the student(s) and then providing feedback to the student's answer. Consequently, the majority of the students play a less active role and it is not surprising that they will have a lower second language acquisition.

As far as the writer of this thesis is concerned, there has been, so far, no comprehensive study on verbal input and interaction in Reading Comprehension classes of SMA students in general and of SMAK Santo Stanislaus Surabaya in particular. What has been investigated so far is verbal input and interaction in two reading comprehension classrooms of S-1 students of the English Department of Widya Mandala University done by Lanawati Widjojo (1988) and the contribution of comprehensible input and **classroom** interaction to oral performance in two speaking classes of D-3 students of the English Department of Widya Mandala University by Inggrid M. Lukmansyah (1988).

As a matter of fact, as Senior-High-School English teachers to-be, we should not pay attention only to the verbal input and interaction in the university classes, but also to those taking place in the senior-high-school classes as well. Realizing

this and attempting to examine what kinds of input and interaction have actually gone on in the English reading comprehension classes at SMAK Santo Stanislaus Surabaya, the writer of this study has conducted a study on verbal input and interaction in the fifth semester of the social-science-program classroom of SMAK Santo Stanislaus Surabaya.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

As stated above, verbal input and interaction, especially in reading comprehension classes, at Indonesian senior-high-school classrooms have never been investigated. The study done by Widjojo was at the English Department of Widya Mandala Catholic University of which the subjects were S-1 students taking Reading II B and IV B. While the study done by Lukmansyah did not analyze verbal input and interaction comprehensively; instead, she investigated the contribution of comprehensible input and classroom interaction to oral performance of which the subjects were 2 classes of D-3 students taking Speaking II A. This study, was, then, planned to be comprehensive in its efforts to answer the following major problems:

1. Does the teacher in the English reading

comprehension class of the fifth semester of the social-science program of SMAK Santo Stanislaus provide the students with comprehensible verbal input?

2. Does the teacher in the English reading comprehension class of the fifth semester of the social-science program of SMAK Santo Stanislaus create modified verbal interaction in the classroom?

The first major problem has 2 sub-problems, they are:

- a. Does the verbal input provided by the teacher affect the immediate output of the students under study?
- b. Does the teacher modify her verbal input to promote verbal interaction with the students under study?

Whereas the second major problem has also 2 sub-problems, they are:

- a. Does the teacher give the students under study the opportunity to initiate the classroom discourse?
- b. Does the teacher give the students under study the opportunity to respond to her initiation?

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

Derived directly from the above formulated major problems, the major objectives of this study were to determine whether:

1. the teacher in the English reading comprehension class of the fifth semester of the social-science program of SMAK Santo Stanislaus provides the students with comprehensible verbal input;
2. the teacher in the English reading comprehension class of the fifth semester of the social-science program of SMAK Santo Stanislaus creates modified verbal interaction in the classroom.

Based on the first major objective, this study intended to see whether:

- a. the verbal input provided by the teacher affects the immediate output of the students under study;
- b. the teacher modifies her verbal input to promote verbal interaction with the students under study.

Then, based on the second major objective, this study intended to see whether:

- a. the teacher gives the students under study the

opportunity to initiate the classroom discourse;

- b. the teacher gives the students under study the opportunity to respond to her initiation.

1.4 The Significance of the Study

Since reading comprehension classroom is one of the places where comprehensible input and modified interaction are made available and since the teacher is an important source of input, the data and information obtained from this study are expected to present a clear picture of what actually has gone on in the English reading comprehension classes at senior high schools. It is also expected that every language classroom teachers, especially in teaching reading comprehension, will analyze what goes on inside his/her own classroom. This analysis will, then, give the teacher insights on how to make reading comprehension classroom a conducive place for second language acquisition. In turn, the insights will be used as a basis in helping the teachers improve the reading comprehension lessons at senior high schools by finding proper strategies to make input comprehensible and to modify interaction so as to affect students to achieve the second language better.

From the theoretical point of view, the findings of this study will support the current theories which claim that comprehensible verbal input and modified verbal interaction best facilitate second language acquisition.

1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The verbal input and interaction discussed in this study were limited to those found in the English reading comprehension classrooms of SMAK Santo Stanislaus Surabaya. This choice was due to the fact that reading can serve as an important source of comprehensible input. ¹³⁾ Furthermore, it is possible to easily analyze interaction in the reading comprehension classroom as it is predominantly teacher-centered, i.e. the teacher gives a question, the student answers the teacher's question and the teacher provides feedback to the student's answer. ¹⁴⁾

The subjects used in this study were those taking the reading comprehension lessons at SMAK Santo

¹³ Stephen D. Krashen and Tracy D. Terrell, The Natural Approach, New York: Pergamon Press and Alemany Press, 1983, p. 131.

¹⁴ Tsui Bik-may, op. cit., pp. 24-27.

Stanislaus Surabaya. The choice was Semester 5 students of the social-science program of the 1989-1990 academic year. After studying English for about 2 years in SMA, the students were supposed to have the ability to understand the teacher's input (mostly in the forms of explanations and questions) in English and give relatively correct responses as to create interaction in the classroom.

As what has been done by Tsui Bik-may (1985) and Lanawati Widjojo (1988) and since this study is a replication of theirs, this thesis analyses were, then, limited to the following aspects:

1. The patterns of verbal interaction.
2. The verbal language input provided by the teacher and its effect on the immediate output of the students.
3. Modified verbal input and interaction, and how effective they were as a means of providing comprehensible input and enhancing interaction.

Due to the inadequacy of the tape recorders for clearly recording some of the categories such as 'marker', 'aside', or 'noise', which did not play a significant part in the interaction, and the non-verbal categories, they were eliminated from the

analysis. ¹⁵⁾ (See also Widjoco 1988: 8)

1.6 Theoretical Framework

This study was based on the theories of (1) Input and (2) Interaction of Krashen, and (3) The Seventeen-Category System of Amy Tsui Bik-may. The theory of input was needed to see whether the talk of the teacher in the classroom which served as an important source of input was modified and comprehensible as well as suited to the structures which were a little beyond the learner's present level of proficiency or not. ¹⁶⁾ Such kinds of input would enable the teacher to create modified interaction between him/her and students and between students and students. Therefore, the theory of interaction was needed to see whether through the modified interaction, the teacher would provide more comprehensible input to facilitate better SLA or not. ¹⁷⁾ To analyze what kind of input the teacher provided for the students and what kind of interaction that took place in the classroom, the theory of the Seventeen-Category System

15 Ibid., pp. 10-11.

16 Ibid., p. 8.

17 Ibid., p. 24.

was needed.

Put in other words, the theories underlying this study state that any conducive classroom should serve as a place where comprehensible input and modified interaction are available to facilitate SLA. What actually has gone on in the language classroom can be analyzed and described by means of the Seventeen-Category System proposed by Amy Tsui Bik-may. 18)

1.7 Assumptions

This study was based on the following assumptions:

1. As quoted by Lukmansyah, Doughty and Pica (1986: 322-323) assume that a classroom teacher plays an important role as one of the sources of input in learning English as a foreign language. 19)

2. According to Krashen (1982: 34), as quoted by Widjojo, in a foreign language situation (in our case Indonesia), classroom is the only plausible place where learners can get input and opportunity to practise using English formally. The classroom also enables

19 Ingrid M. Lukmansyah, The Contribution of Comprehensible Input and Classroom Interaction to Oral Performance: A Case Study, Unpublished Thesis, FKIP Unika Widya Mandala Surabaya, 1988, p. 6.

the learners to interact with their fellow learners as well as with their teacher. ²⁰⁾

3. As quoted by Widjojo, Krashen and Terrell (1983: 131) assume that Reading Comprehension classes are the sources of comprehensible input and interaction, in the sense that the teacher bases his explanations and questions on the given reading passages to which the students react; hence, verbal interaction is created. ²¹⁾

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

In order to eliminate ambiguity, each key term used in this study is defined as follows:

a. Input. In this thesis, quoting Krashen (1982: 21-24), the writer defines input as the language that is exposed to the students by the teacher in the language classroom in order to elicit responses from the students. ²²⁾

b. Verbal. Verbal is expressed in spoken words;

20 Widjojo, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

21 Ibidem.

22 Ibid., p. 9.

oral rather than written. ²³⁾

c. Comprehensible. As quoted by Widjojo, to Krashen (1982: 21-24), comprehensible means simple, modified, and easily understood. ²⁴⁾

d. Comprehensible verbal input. To the writer, comprehensible verbal input is the simple, modified, and easily understood language that is exposed orally by the teacher to the learners in the language classroom as to elicit responses from them.

e. Interaction. As stated by Krashen and Terrell (1983) and Ellis (1986), interaction consists of the discourse jointly constructed as the result of the co-operation between teacher and students and between students and students. ²⁵⁾ (See also Ellis 1986: 127)

f. Verbal interaction. In line with Lukmansyah, what the writer means by verbal interaction is any utterance in the form of discourse in which there is co-operation between teacher and students or between students and students. The teacher is giving or

²³ Philip Babcock Gove, Ph. D. and Merriam Webster, eds., The Merriam-Webster: Webster's Third New International Dictionary: Unabridged, Philippines: Merriam-Webster Inc., 1986, p. 2542.

²⁴ Widjojo, op. cit., p. 9.

²⁵ Krashen and Terrell, loc. cit.

transferring the knowledge to the students while the students are responding to their teacher's or their fellow students' questions as well as asking questions to their teacher. ²⁶⁾

g. Modified. According to Doughty and Pica, modified is altered in some way. The interaction can be modified linguistically (through repetition, simplification, or translation) or conversationally (through clarification requests, confirmation checks, and comprehension checks) as to facilitate comprehension of the intended message meaning. ²⁷⁾

h. Modified verbal interaction. Based on the term "modified interaction" as defined by Doughty and Pica (1986: 306), the writer defines the term "modified verbal interaction" as any utterance in the form of discourse in which the students and their teacher or the students and their friends participate and which is altered in some way, either linguistically (as the result of the modified input in the form of repetition, simplification, or translation) or conversationally (when the teacher does not only dominate the classroom

26 Lukmansyah, loc. cit.

27 Catherine Doughty and Teresa Pica, " "Information Gap" Tasks: Do They Facilitate Second Language Acquisition?", TESOL Quarterly, June 1986, Vol. 20, No. 2, p. 306.

interaction but also gives the learners opportunities to initiate the classroom discourse or to respond to her initiation) as to facilitate the intended message meaning.

i. Discourse. In this thesis, discourse refers to any spoken conversation jointly constructed by the teacher and the students - each acts as a speaker and a listener alternately - within which the interaction takes place. 28)

j. Acquisition. Acquisition is defined as the internalization of rules and formulas which are then used to communicate in the L2. In this thesis, the term 'acquisition' was interchangeably used with the term 'learning', irrespective of whether conscious or subconscious processes were involved. 29)

1.9 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter I deals with the background of the study, statement of the problems and the objectives of the study, the significance of the study, scope and limitations of

28 Ellis, op. cit., p. 138.

29 Ibid., p. 292.

the study, theoretical framework, assumptions, definition of key terms, and organization of the thesis. Chapter II presents a review of the related literature. Chapter III deals with the research methodology which discusses design, population and samples, instruments, procedures of collecting the data, and techniques of the data analysis. The findings and their interpretation of the findings are presented in Chapter IV. Finally, Chapter V is the conclusion of the study which consists of the summary and the conclusion of the study as well as some suggestions.