**Initiation response feedback (irf) technique in**

**Classroom interaction**

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**Abstrak**

*This study aims to analyze the types of IRF (Initiation-Response-Feedback) technique that used by the teacher and students in classroom interaction based on Sinclair and Coulthard. The most dominant structure of IRF is teacher elicit (IRF) that produced by the teacher who is expected to create classroom interaction. The reason of the most dominant structured occurred in classroom interaction because the teacher always stimulated the students by questioning and ordering. This study is expected to be an inspiration for other researchers to conduct more conductive research in the future about Initiation Response Feedback (IRF) technique in classroom interaction.*

*Keywords: Initiation Response Feedback (IRF), Classroom Interaction, Speaking.*

# Introduction

## The Background of the Study

Language plays a very important role in human’s daily activities. The function of the language is to transfer information or messages and express ideas and emotions. In study English, there are four skills that can not be missed the students in mastering the language. Among the four language skills, speaking is the most important for students in learning a language because speaking plays a significant role in a direct conversation.

Speaking is a complex skill which involves an interaction between the speaker and the listener in an active process. There are several essential components of speaking skill.Wachidah, et al in “*Buku Guru Bahasa Inggris: When English Rings a Bell”*(2017) states that the speaking skill consists of fourcomponents: pronunciation, intonation, fluency and accuracy. Thus, the students have to master the entire components to achieve the aim of speaking and to be communicative.

Furthermore, speaking is a skill that needs practices. The more students practice through sharing their idea, the better speaker they become. In addition Davison and Dowson (2003:107) say that pupils need opportunities to speak and listen in a wide variety of context and for a wide range of purpose, in order to increase their thinking ability, to develop their powers of communication and to provide examples of language in use through which to develop their explicit knowledge about speaking and listening.

Speaking is considered as an important skill in our life. It has an important role to communicate with other people in daily life as stated by Thornburry (2005, p.1) that speaking is a part of daily life that we take it for granted. It refers to speaking is an important skill in order to communicate with other people. Therefore, students who learn foreign language, they have to accustom to communicate in target language. To make students accustomed to communicate in target language, Writers think that teacher can create interaction with students in classroom by using target language for the whole interaction. Interaction is an activity that usually conducts in classroom and it has an important role to build communication between teacher and students that communication is a central to all classroom activity.

Classroom interaction plays important role in the teaching learning process. According to Dagarin (2004), classroom interaction can be defined as a two-way process between the participants in the learning process. The teacher influences the learners and vice versa. Moreover, she continues by quoting Brown’s statement (2001, 165) that “...interaction is, in fact, the heart of communication: it is what communication is all about”. Thus, learning will occur when there is co-operation between teacher and student which make communication take place.

Coulthard (1978) stated that communication plays a vital part in the development of such a student motivation, and we have listed below some communication variables useful for increasing the desire to learn.

1. Prelearning preparation (communication variables : information acquisition and processing). In effect, this step simply involves ensuring that students have the basic skills necessary for correct decoding of the new subject matter to be taught. An increase in students' confidence that the knowledge base they have is adequate to begin learning increases motivation.
2. Provide a model of terminal performance (communication variables: decoding; feedback). The assumption operating here is that if students know what is to be done, they can better assess their own ability to do it (self-feed back), can judge the likelihood that they will be able to do it (predicting self-behavior), and can adjust their own behavior to the model of terminal performance.
3. Active responding (communication variable: feedback). Again, opportunity for observing one's own behavior makes it easier to adjust to the particular demands of the learning situation and increases students' confidence.
4. Guidance (communication variables: feedback; perceptions of communication sources). Guidance can be given in two ways: first, by providing students with a model of the desired behavior as exhibited by the teacher (source credibility); and, second, by providing verbal feedback at each stage of the learning sequence.

Classroom interaction cannot be separated from the teacher and students. It has a certain pattern one of them is IRF pattern. IRF sequences are a salient feature of classroom discourse first proposed by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). This pattern stands for initiation-response-feedback, is a technique of discussion between the teacher and learners. The teacher initiates, the learner responds, the teacher gives feedback (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). The definition of three patterns can be traced through the following explanation.

Based on researcher’s observation to seventh grade in SMP Al-Amjad Medan, it was found that the common interaction occurred in the classroom that the students would participated to talk if the teacher initiated, encouraged and ask to the students to talk. The teacher opens the interaction by asking questions. The teacher is dominant in talking to the students. It was found out that the students have some problems in speaking. They often became reluctant to participate in a classroom interaction. For example, there are several students who are not able to express their ideas in English both in written and oral form and it seemed that the students did not have substantial amount of vocabulary mastery and the students often give few respond when the teacher ask the question in the classroom. These problems may be caused by the quality of interaction between the teacher and the students, and the students and the teacher.

Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) is a technique of classroom interaction which provides guidance for analyzing spoken language, which was developed from classroom interaction (McCarthy, 2002). Thus, the researcher uses Sinclair and Coulthard Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) technique as guidance for analyzing teacher and student interaction.

Firstly is *initiation* (I), the movement in which teacher initiates an interaction, as stated by Dayag et al. (2008, p.5) initiation is the teacher ask a question or action to initiate students to do interaction in classroom. It is the effort of the teacher in pushing the students to drop their selves in a communication or interaction. According to Harmer (2009, p. 111), it is the stage “when the teacher has to do something is to get the students involved, engage and ready.” It is also believed that the important way to create the interactive language classroom because it provides the stimuli for the student to interact continually.

Secondly *response* moves (R), what is actually performed by the students following the initiation which produced by the teacher. Dayag et al (2008, p.5) state that response is represent the teacher initiate in response of initiation move by participants act. It means that the students do interact to response the teacher stimuli.

The last is *feedback (F),* the last exchange of a turn which aims to give feedback to students’ response. According to Dayag et al. (2008, p.5) that feedback completes the cycle as it provides closure to the initiation and response. It means that students get immediately the correction or evaluation for their response. Some studies related to IRF and classroom interaction have been investigated and several studies revealed that IRF can build active interaction between teacher and students in classroom interaction such as (Hong, 2009); (Pinkevience, 2011); and (Cohen, 2011). Generally, these studies showed that IRF pattern is the most sequence which occurred in classroom interaction. Nevertheless, the study about analysis of IRF reflection in classroom interaction and the dominant exchange among I, R and F as not numerous as the number of those dealing with the study of the use of IRF. Therefore, this study is conducted to analyze the reflection of IRF (Initiation-Response-Feedback) technique in speaking class and the dominant exchange among I, R and F.

# Review Of Related Literature

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## Theoretical Framework

### English Language Teaching

English language teaching has changed for many years. Several methods have emerged to facilitate English teaching and learning process. Richards (2006) divides the trends in language teaching in the last 50 years into three phases, which are traditional approaches (up to the late 1960s), classic communicative language teaching (late 1990s to the present).

Richards describes the characteristic of traditional approaches, which existed up to the late 1960s. Traditional approaches to language teaching gave priority to grammatical competence as the basis of language proficiency. They were based o the belief that grammar could be learned through direct instruction and through a methodology that made much use of repetitive practice and drilling. The approaches to the teaching of grammar were deductive and inductive. It was assumed that language learning meant building up a large repertoire of sentences and grammatical patterns and learning to produce these accurately and quickly in the appropriate situation. Once a basic command of the language was established through oral drilling and controlled practice, the four skills were introduced. Usually in the sequences of speaking, listening, reading and writing.

Wilkins (1972b) observes that although there have been major changes in the methodology of language teaching over the years the underlying principle has remained the same: 'it has been assumed that units of learning should be defined in grammatical terms, although the precise sequence in which they occurred would be influenced by pedagogic considerations'. Further, he suggests that even those courses which encourage dialogue and improvised drama are structured grammatically and the 'situations that are created are pedagogic, bearing little resemblance to natural language use .

This approach also often employed several techniques including memorization of dialogs, question-and-answer practice, substitution drills, and various forms of guided speaking and writing practice. Great attention to accurate pronunciation and accurate mastery of grammar were stressed from the very beginning stages of language learning, since it was assumed that if students made errors, these would quickly become a permanent part of the learner’s speech. A reaction to traditional language teaching approaches began and soon spread around the world. The centrality of grammar in language teaching and learning was questioned, since it was argued that language ability involve much more than grammatical competence. Attention shifted to the knowledge and skills which were needed to use grammar and other aspects of language appropriately for different communicative purpose such as making requests, giving advice, making suggestion, describing wishes and needs, and so on. What was needed in order to use language communicatively was communicative competence.

### Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is not only widely recognized as one of the vastest, but also the least defined areas in linguistics. The reason for this statement is that our understanding to discourse analysis is based on scholar from a number of academic disciplines that are actually very different from one to another.

The types of learning and teaching activities in communicative language teaching are unlimited. The exercise enable learners to attain the communicative objectives of the curriculum, engage learners in communication, and require the use of such communicative processes as information sharing, negotiation meaning, and interaction. Classroom activities are designed to focus on completing tasks that are mediated through language or involve negotiation of information sharing. (Richards and Rodgers, 2001; 165).

According to (Chang,1999 : 2-3), discourse in a classroom can be divided into fourstructures as follows:

#### IRF (Initiation-Response-Feedback)

IRF may have a traditional pattern of discourse, when the teacher asks a question, the student answers and the teacher evaluates. The teacher continues to ask another question and so the sequence continues. In this typical three-part structure, the teacher initiates a question in order to check a student’s knowledge, a student’s responses, and the student’s response is evaluated with feedback from the teacher. The students’ answers are usually brief and students are concerned about giving correct answers that are expected by the teacher. The main role of the teacher is asking questions, but only a few students are actively involved.

#### Instruction

Another type of discourse is giving instructions. The teacher gives directive or informative statements. The students do not answer verbally; however, they understand the statements as instructions by following them physically.

#### Probing Questions

The probing question is another discourse structure. The teacher asks referential questions or thinking question (Brown, 2001: 171) and the students are encouraged to give longer answers through their thinking. Their answers may challenge the teacher’s position. However, evaluation does not come immediately after the students’ responses.

#### Argumentation

Argumentation can be regarded as probing questions where the teacher involves the students in a challenging situation in order to make them to justify their reasons. The questions asked are commonly Referential questions, which try to elicit predictions, explanations and clarification from the students. The argumentation may be in question or statement forms.

Mehan (1979, as cited in Ellis, 1990: 88) offered three structural components of a pedagogic discourse:

1. An opening phase where the participants inform each other that they are in fact going to conduct a lesson as opposed to some other activity.
2. An instructional phase where information is exchanged between teacher and students.
3. A closing phase where participants are reminded of what went on in the core of a lesson.

McTear (1975, as cited in Ellis, 1994: 577) observed four types of language use in EFL classroom discourse:

1. Mechanical (i.e. no exchange of meaning is involved),
2. Meaningful (i.e. meaning is contextualized but there is still no new information to be conveyed)
3. Pseudo-communication (i.e. new information is conveyed but in a manner that would be unlikely to occur outside the Classroom),
4. Real communication (i.e. spontaneous speech resulting from the exchange of opinions, jokes, classroom Management, etc.).

Relevant to McTear’s argument here about the types of language use is Ellis’s (1990: 86) distinction that «pedagogical discourse is believed to be a product of mechanical and meaningful types of language use, whereas natural discourse is believed to result from real communication type of language use (Ellis, 1990: 86). However, Kramsch (1985, as cited in Ellis, 1990: 86) considers classroom discourse as composed of “a continuum extending from pedagogic to natural discourse poles”. The interaction between group members in a classroom moves between the two poles of this continuum consisting of instructional options. Pedagogic discourse occurs when the teacher and the students act out institutional roles, the tasks are concerned with the transmission and reception of information controlled by the teacher and there is a focus on knowledge as product and on accuracy. Natural discourse, on the other hand, is characterized by much more fluid roles established through interaction, tasks that encourage equal participation in the negotiation of meaning and a focus on the interactional process itself and on fluency.

### Classroom Interaction

Classroom interaction as a form of institutional talk is locally managed but cooperatively constructed speech exchange system (Markee & Kasper, 2004). In other word, classroom interaction could be referred to as a process of passing down vital information from the professional teacher who has undergone a rigorous training to the learners in the classroom. It could be referred to all interaction that takes place between the teacher and the learner in an organizing classroom. Classroom interaction is as a two-way process between participants in the learning process i.e. teacher and students, and among students. The teacher influences students and vice versa.

Interaction is mainly achieved by two means of resources: language and non-verbal means of expression. Non-verbal resources play just as an important part as language does. This holds true for a classroom as well as for other social situation. The one thing that makes a classroom different from any other social situation is that it has a primary pedagogic purpose. Teacher spends a lot of time talking, lecturing, asking questions and giving instructions and so on. The teacher does not only use language for these functions but s/he also demonstrates and uses mimes a lot. In this case, only the language the language as a means of resource used in the data analysis.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that classroom interaction encompasses all types of interaction that goes on in a classroom. There are several different ways to categorize classroom interaction, but all of types of interaction are important to engage learning and to create well rounded young inside and outside the classroom.

#### Participants in Classroom Interaction

According to Komar and Mozetic (2004:129) there are the most frequent ways of organizing classroom interaction, depending on who communicates with whom:

1. Teacher – learners
2. Teacher – learners/a group of learners.
3. Learner – learner
4. Learners – learners

The first form of interaction (teacher – learner) is established when teacher talks to the whole class at the same time. He takes the role of a leader or controller and decides about the type and process of the activity. The primary function of such interaction is controlled practicing of certain language structures or vocabulary. Mostly, they are in the form of repeating structures after the teacher (the model). This type of practice is also referred to as “drill”.

The second arrangement is conducted when the teacher refers to the whole class, but expects only on student or a group of students to answer. It is often used for evaluation of individual students. This arrangement can also be used for an informal conversation at the beginning of the lesson or leading students into a less guided activity.

The third interaction is called “pair work”. Students get an assignment, which they have to finish in pair. The teacher holds the role of consultant or advisor, helping when necessary. After the activity, he puts the pairs into a whole group and each pair reports their work. As with pair work, the teacher’s function here is as consultant and advisor of their individual report work.

The last two ways of organization are particularly useful for encouraging interaction among students. In large classes, they present the only possibility for as many students as possible to use the foreign language. The research has shown (Long et al. 1976:51) that the students use more language functions in pair and work-group than in the other forms of interaction. It has also been proven that the students perceive them as the most pleasant ways of learning, because they feel relaxed and subsequently communicate better (Philips 1983 in Hatch 1992: 93). Such work encourages independent learning and gives some responsibility for learning to students. It approaches real-life communication when students talk to their peers in small group or in pairs. Nevertheless, whole-class organization should not completely be neglected since it is still more appropriate for guided and controlled activities.

The explanation above will be a reference and guidance for the writer to describe the reason why the participants of classroom interaction use kinds of context in classroom interaction. For example, in the context of field, the teacher will decide the type and process of the activity. S/he does this because s/he applies on way of organizing classroom interaction ways, that is teacher – learner way.

#### The Role of Teacher

In a traditional classroom, the teacher had the dominant role of the all-knowing leader who filled the students’ “empty head” with knowledge. This role has changed and the teachers now get many roles depending on the different classroom situation. In a broad sense, he is a “facilitator of learning”, which includes the following (Littlewood, 1981:92):

1. A general overseer of learning, who coordinates the activities so that they form a coherent progression from a lesser to greater communicative ability.
2. A classroom manager, who is responsible for grouping activities into lessons and for their overall organization.
3. A language instructor, who presents new language, controls, evaluates and corrects learner’s performance.
4. In free communicative activities, S/he will act as a consultant or advisor, helping when necessary. He may move around the classroom and monitor students’ progress, strength and weakness.
5. Sometimes, he will participate in an activity as a ‘co-communicator’ with the learner. He may encourage learners without taking their main role.

These roles are frequently interrelated and some others (e.g assessor, observer as explained in Harmer, 2001) could be added. The roles of a consultant or co-communicator encourage classroom interaction most, but they need the support of other roles.

The explanation above will be a reference and guidance for the writer to describe the reason why the participants of classroom interaction use kind of context in classroom interaction. For example, in the context of tenor, the lecture builds the relationship with the students by participating in an activity as a ‘co-communicator’ with the learners. S/he may encourage the learners without taking their main role.

#### The Stages of Teaching

In the context of Curriculum 2013, it is stated in the Regulation of Minister of Culture and Education Number 103 of 2014, when implemented in the teaching and learning process scientific method is conducted through a number of steps.

1. Observing

The aspects of a phenomenon are observed by using the senses (listening, watching, smelling, feeling, or tasting) with or without a tool to identify problems.

1. Questioning

Questions related to the problems are formulated. In this step hypotheses or temporary answers are formulated based on the existing knowledge. The activities can be asking questions, asking and answering questions, and discussing what is not understood or additional information to find out as clarification.

1. Experiment

In this step some activities can be carried out, for example exploring, trying, conducting experiments, discussing, demonstrating, imitating certain movements, and reading various other resources (in addition to textbooks), and collecting data from resource persons through interviews or questionnaires.

1. Analyzing

The data that have been collected are analyzed to draw conclusions by categorizing them, associating or relating phenomena or information to find certain patterns, and finding arguments and concluding the interrelationship between two facts/concepts, and making interpretations.

1. Communicating

In this fifth step, the answers of the questions (conclusions) as the product of analyzing (associating information/data) are presented either in the written or oral form, for example written or oral reports, charts, diagrams, graphs, etc. Up to this step, factual, conceptual, procedural, and/or metacognitive knowledge are already constructed.

## Relevant Studies

In composing this proposal, there are some previous researchers related to this study which become the references.

The first study is written by Maratmi (2013) entitled “*An Analysis On Classroom Interaction Using IRF (Initiation-Response-Follow Up) In Teaching and Learning Process at IXE Grade SMPN 2 Seirit”.* The objectives are to describe types of classroom interaction are used by English teacher and students during teaching and learning process in SMPN 2 Seirit, the function of each type of classroom interaction during teaching and learning process in SMPN 2 Seirit. The result of the analysis showed that there were nine types of Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) theory occurred during the interaction in the class which is known as IRF (Initiation-Response-Follow up). Respectively the types were as follow : question, inform, invitation, direction, prompt, encouragement, ignoring, acknowledgement and response.

The second study is written by Rustandi (2017) entitled *“An Analysis of IRF (Initiation-Response-Feedbcak) on Classroom Interaction in EFL Speaking Class”.* This study aimed to analyzed the reflection of IRF (Initiation-Response-Feedback) in speaking class and investigating the dominant sequence among I, R, and F. IRF is a patterns of classroom interaction found by Sinclair and Coulthard in1975 that stands for teacher initiation, students’ response and feedback by the teacher. The result of this research is students’ response becomes the dominant sequence of IRF in speaking class.

The third study is written by Ramadhan and Aditya (2012) entitled *“ The Use of Initiation-Response-Feedback Pattern in Content-Language Integrated Learning Classroom Interaction”.* This research found that a bilingual classes which involve two different languages as the classroom language. In this case, bahasa Indonesia is used as native language and English as second language. Therefore, the teacher who are non-native English teachers have to teach content subject using English. The objectives of this study are to describe the IRF pattern happens in CLIL classroom interaction, the types of question used an initiation moves and the code-switching between Bahasa Indonesia and English in CLIL classroom.

The fourth study is conducted by Noviana and Ardi (2015) entitled “*Challenges in Implementing Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) Sequences in EAP Class*”. Based on the research findings, teachers took three roles in IRF sequences. However, teachers mostly did initiation and gave feedback in the interaction rather than gave response.

The fifth study is conducted by Rustandi and Husni (2017) entitled *“Analysis Of Irf (Initiation-Response-Feedback) on Classroom Interaction in EFL Speaking Class”.* Based on the data analysis and the result of the study, the interaction during teaching learning activities was full of IRF pattern sequences. It can be concluded that the kind of teacher-student interaction in the speaking class is reflected by teacher initiation in which the teacher initiates the students by giving the questions, soliciting information and identifying the students who have the next turn to answer.

Based on the relevant studies above, it can be found some similarities to this study. And the five researchers have contributed useful information to support this research. The researcher will conduct *“Initiation Response Feedback (IRF) Technique in Classroom Interaction for Seventh Grade Students at SMP Swasta Al-Amjad Medan”*. As it aimed to be implemented in Junior High School, the IRF method is an attractive method to be applied for the seventh grade students at SMP Al-Amjad Medan. It will attract students to be more active and give more responses because there is an initiator. And if they give more response it will train students’ speaking automatically. It is a must, because nowadays speaking is an important aspect in teaching learning process.

**Research Methodology**

The data will be analyzed qualitatively by employing some steps as transcribing, coding and analyzing. Transcribing is one way of analyzing data through observation. According to Cresswell (2008, p. 239) transcribing is the process of convert audiotape recordings in to the data. In this step, the result of recorded classroom interaction will be transcribed as the main written source to be analyzed by the researcher.

Coding is the process of segmenting and labeling text to form descriptions and broad themes in the data. Besides, according to Nunan and Bailey (2009, p.260), interaction analysis system involves the identification of verbal and non- verbal interaction in terms of the coding and categorization of utterances. After completing the transcription, the researcher will code each number of utterances into the category based on Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) technique.

The last is analyzing, that is the next step of analyzing data through observation. In this step, the writer will be analyzed the encoded transcription of the result of recorded classroom interaction into IRF pattern. The result of this study will be revealed that the classroom interaction in speaking class reflected IRF pattern proposed by Sinclair and Coulthard(1975).

The qualitative research method will involve data collection of personal experiences, introspection, stories about life, interviews, observations, interactions and visual texts which are significant to people’s life.

**Research Finding And Discussion**

The IRF based on Sinclair and Coulthard model (1975) consists of the IRF (Initiation-Response-Feedback) and realizes in the data. It was found there were four types of IRF in free exchange part of Exchange initiated by teacher, meanwhile the two types of IRF initiated by students. The researcher had found which type was dominantly occurred in that classroom, those were IRF as teacher elicit and IR as student elicit.

From the interview result with the teacher, the researcher found that the reasons of the most dominant structure occurred in classroom interaction because the teacher always stimulated the students by questioning and ordering. It was why the teacher did not need response or giving feedback to the students, and for students it happened because the students need confirmation about the lesson to make the students be more understood.

The findings of this study found that there were four structures of IRF model in categories teacher those were; to inform (21.98%), to direct (9.92% ), to elicit (29.78%), to check (4.96%), and there were two structures of IRF model in categories student those were ; to inform (7.09%), to elicit (26.24%). The most dominant structure of IRF were teacher elicit ( IRF) (29.78%) and student elicit (IR) (26.24%).

The teacher elicit (IRF) as the most dominant structure of IRF produced by teacher due for expecting to create an active classroom interaction and guiding the student how to make a good thing based on that their lesson. The student elicits (IR) as the dominant one, because the students need confirmation about the lesson to make the students be more understood and the teacher teaching method inappropriate for them which is teacher is most dominant in the class.

**Conclusions And Suggestions**

*Conclusions*

Based on the analysis of the utterances in *classroom interaction* script in the previous chapter, it can be concluded as following:

1. There were four structures of IRF model in categories teacher sequentially; to elicit (29.78% ), to inform (21.98%), to direct (9.92%), to check(4.96%), and there were two structures of IRF model in categories student sequentially; to elicit (26.24%), to inform (7.09%).

2. The reasons of the teacher were the teacher expected to create an active classroom interaction. It means that the teacher want to engage the students get interacted with the teacher, not only the teacher is active but also the students. The teacher try to make the student be more active by guiding the student to create a new good thing based on that their lesson and stimulating them by giving some questions and information.

*Suggestions*

Based on the analysis of classroom interaction, it can be suggested as following :

1. The teacher was expected to improve the effectiveness in the classroom by providing some methods or technique while conducting the classroom activities.

2. The students can have a chance to talk and explore their ideas and cooperate in the learning process in the classroom discussion.

3. It is suggested to other researchers to conduct further studies in classroom discourse whether it is based on Sinclair and Coulthard model, which will be a very useful reference to the students’ needs in teaching learning process related to teachers’ performances.

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