

# CAKRAWALA PENDIDIKAN

**FORUM KOMUNIKASI ILMIAH  
DAN EKSPRESI KREATIF  
ILMU PENDIDIKAN**

**Mengembangkan Pola Pikir Berwirausaha**

**Membangun SMK Yang Unggul  
Dalam Rangka Meningkatkan Daya Saing Lulusan  
Untuk Menghadapi Persaingan Kerja  
Di Era Masyarakat Ekonomi Asean (MEA)**

**Makna Simbol Dalam Komunitas Public United Not Kingdom (PUNK)  
Nikita Jibril**

**Merajut Nasionalisme Ditengah Ancaman Disintegrasi Bangsa**

**The Strength Of Natural Reader In The Teaching Of English  
For Young Learners**

**Teachers' Speech Act And Politeness In EFL  
Classroom Interaction**

**The Power Of Classroom Interaction In EFL Classes**

**Code-Mixing And Code-Switching In Various Indonesian Texts**

**Analisis Kesalahan Mahasiswa STKIP PGRI Blitar  
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**Pemahaman Mahasiswa Berdasarkan Taksonomi Bloom**

ISSN 1410-9883

**CAKRAWALA PENDIDIKAN**  
**Forum Komunikasi Ilmiah dan Ekspresi Kreatif Ilmu Pendidikan**

Terbit dua kali setahun pada bulan April dan Oktober  
terbit pertama kali April 1999

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**Alamat Penerbit/ Redaksi :** STKIP PGRI Blitar, Jl. Kalimantan No. 111 Blitar, Telp. (0342) 801493. Langganan 2 nomor setahun Rp. 50.000,00 ditambah ongkos kirim Rp. 5.000,00. Uang langganan dapat dikirim dengan wesel ke alamat Tata Usaha.

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6. Naskah diketik dengan memperhatikan aturan tentang penggunaan tanda baca dan ejaan yang dimuat dalam *Pedoman Umum Ejaan Bahasa Indonesia yang Disempurnakan* (Depdikbud, 1987).

**CAKRAWALA PENDIDIKAN**  
**Forum Komunikasi Ilmiah dan Ekspresi Kreatif Ilmu Pendidikan**  
 Volume 20, Nomor 1, April 2017

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# THE POWER OF CLASSROOM INTERACTION IN EFL CLASSES

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**Abstrak :** Keberhasilan siswa yang belajar bahasa asing sangat bergantung pada seberapa banyak pajanan dan frekuensi latihan yang mereka peroleh. Mereka memerlukan kesempatan menggunakan bahasa yang dipelajari untuk berkomunikasi secara nyata. Guru Bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL) dapat memfasilitasi mereka dengan cara memberikan pajanan dan latihan melalui interaksi di kelas. Dengan demikian, para siswa memperoleh pengalaman berkomunikasi baik dengan guru maupun teman sejawat dalam konteks yang nyata. Menurut beberapa penelitian terdahulu, para siswa dapat mendapatkan manfaat dengan berlatih menggunakan bahasa yang dipelajari dalam beberapa aspek, seperti pelafalan, kosa kata, struktur kalimat, dan bagaimana menyampaikan ide kepada orang lain. Oleh karena itu guru Bahasa Inggris harus memahami mengapa dan bagaimana melakukan interaksi di dalam kelas. Artikel ini membahas pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris di Indonesia, khususnya aspek-aspek yang harus diterapkan oleh guru, interaksi di dalam kelas, dan strategi berinteraksi di dalam kelas.

**Kata Kunci :** Interaksi Kelas, Modifikasi bahasa, Strategi Berinteraksi

**Abstract :** The success of students who learn a foreign language depends on how much exposure and the frequency of practice they have. They need opportunity to use the language in real communication. English as Foreign Language (EFL) teacher can facilitate them to provide exposure and practice through interaction in the classroom. By having classroom interaction they get the experience to communicate in real context with their teacher as well as other students. Based on previous studies, EFL students can take advantages by practising they language they are learning in many aspects, such as pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and also how to deliver their ideas to other persons. Therefore, EFL teacher must understand why and how to have interaction in the classroom. This article discusses teaching EFL in Indonesia, the aspects that EFL teachers should employ, classroom interaction, and the strategies of classroom interaction.

**Key Words :** Classroom Interaction, Speech Modifications, Interaction Strategies

## INTRODUCTION

Interaction is a collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings or ideas between two or more people, resulting in a reciprocal effect on each other (Brown, 2001:165). Interaction reflects how human beings use language in various contexts to negotiate meaning. Classroom interaction, then, means a collaborative exchange thoughts, feelings or ideas between participants in the learning process that takes place in a classroom. In this article, therefore,

classroom interaction is communication in the learning language process between teacher and students in a English as Foreign Language (EFL) classroom.

Classroom interaction takes a very important role in the success of the students. They can increase their language they learn through interaction in the classroom. They can express themselves so that they become effective communicators in a foreign language. This idea is supported by Rivers in Brown(2001) who

stated that through interaction, students can increase their language store as they listen to or read authentic linguistic material, or even the output of their fellow students in discussion, skits, joint problem-solving tasks, or dialogue journals.

However, many English teachers ignore the importance of classroom interaction in EFL classes for some reasons. First, they sometimes use the first language or mother tongue when they interact with the students. Many of them do not care with the way how they communicate in such aspects: choice of words, intonation, speed of speaking, the sentence structure, etc. As the result, many students have very low capability in communication.

As a matter of fact, Alwright (1984) said in Ellis (2008:775) that interaction is 'the fundamental facts of classroom pedagogy'. Many researches have proved that classroom interaction provide rich information on how learning a language takes place. Chaudron (1988), identified the features of teacher talk in classroom interaction based on the previous researchers. The features are amount of talk, rate of speech, pauses, phonology, articulation, and stress, and modification in vocabulary, syntax and discourse. Van Lier (1988) found a number of turn-taking behaviours that were considered indicative of learner initiative. Long (1996) cites that interaction facilitates acquisition because of conversational and linguistic modifications that occur in such discourse and that provide students with input they need. Susanto (1994) states that adjustments in the way the language is used in a two-way communication are essential for further language acquisition and development. Meng and Wang (2011:98) found out that interaction between learners and teachers in the classroom is an important part in improving students' communicative competence. Finally, Nurhajati (2015) found out that a teacher

of elementary school employed various strategies to help his students understand the target language in the classroom interaction. In short there many important that EFL teacher should understand how importance classroom interaction is in the classroom.

Realizing that classroom interaction has a very important role in the success of EFL learners, this article is presented to share information about the power of classroom interaction. Classroom interaction can influence not only students' ability to communicate but also their character. The writer, therefore, will focus on teaching EFL in Indonesia, classroom interaction, and the strategies of classroom interaction.

#### **A. Teaching EFL in Indonesia**

Language has a central role in the intellectual, social and emotional development of students as well it supports the success of learning other subjects. It is hoped by learning the language they will know themselves, their own culture and the culture of other nation. Besides by learning a language they can express their ideas and feelings, participate in social life, and apply their analytical and critical thinking.

English is foreign language in Indonesia. It means that this language is used as a means of communication in very restricted occasion. Teaching English means helping, guiding and training students how to understand and use English for communication orally and in written. Therefore, EFL teacher should provide activities in which facilitate the students to use the language for communication.

Communication means to understand and to express information, ideas, and feelings which can be presented in four language skills, namely: listening, speaking, reading and writing. It means

that teaching to communicate means giving exercises to train the students to practice using the target language in real situation. The real situation that the teachers can provide interaction in the classroom, because students are exposed the real context of how the language is used.

EFL teacher has some important roles and tasks in the EFL class. According to Harmer (2007:108-110) he/she has some roles; some of which are as controller and resource person. As controller, a teacher is in charge of the class and of the activity taking place and is often 'leading from the front'. A controller takes the register, tells students things, organize drills, reads aloud and in various other ways exemplify the qualities of a teacher-fronted classroom. While as resource a teacher must be ready if students need somebody to help or to ask. For example, when they speak something and they have problems to express their ideas, a teacher must be ready to give solution. Those ideas are strengthened by Meng and Wang (2011) who state that the teacher plays multiple roles in communicative activities-as controller, as assessor, as organizer, as participant and resource. EFL classroom should be regarded as speech community.

Besides, Harmer (2007:112) reveals that a language teacher has important tasks in the language classroom, one of them is as performer. The tasks of the teacher are how to organize his/her students to do something and how to handle classroom activity. In this case, teacher's effort to create an environment which can influence classroom interaction and interaction strategies. He/she is the key person whether or not an activity can run well. At the same time he/she has a task to perform the language model so that students can use

the model as the reference.

Most of EFL students will take teacher's language as a model when they communicate. Teacher's language here means the way how a teacher communicate which covers the choice of words, the structures of sentences, the pronunciation, the intonation, including the gestures of the teacher when he/she is communicating. They should provide as many opportunities as possible so that the students can take the advantages from the experience of classroom interaction. As a result, EFL teacher should be careful to have interaction in the classroom.

## **B. Classroom Interaction**

Interaction is a part of communication. According to Rivers (1987) in Dagarin (2004), the term 'interaction is etymologically taken from Latin words "inter' and 'agere'. Interaction is a social process of meaning-making and interpreting and has an important place in education as it allows active engagement with ideas and interpretation. So, interaction must be purposeful and meaningful for participants.

Brown (2001:165) defines interaction as "the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings, or ideas between two or more people, resulting in a reciprocal effect on each" for social and mutual relationship to people who are interacting. From the quotation, it can be concluded that the process of interaction involves two or more persons, and the purpose is to exchange ideas or feelings. In the process of exchange ideas there are two activities: understanding the ideas and expressing ideas. Understanding ideas means when a listener receives messages from the speaker and tries to express his ideas to respond the speaker.

Interaction is viewed as significant because of some reasons as it is argued by Allwright (1984) and Breen (1985) in Choudron

(1988:10). First, only through interaction can the learner decompose the Target Language (TL) structures and derives meaning from classroom events. Secondly, interaction gives learners the opportunities to incorporate TL structures into their own speech. Finally, the meaningfulness for learners of classroom events of any kind, whether thought of as interactive or not, will depend on the extent to which communication has been jointly constructed between the teacher and learners.

It is important to understand the interaction during the process of teaching and learning in the classroom. A teacher delivers the messages (ideas, feeling, or information) to students, and he hopes that the students can receive or understand the messages he means. He also hopes the students give response what he says. The interaction will be effective if the participants understand to whom they talk, what they talk, and how to talk. By understanding the characteristics and the ability of the listeners he or she can adjust the strategies in order that the communication can run smoothly. As Yanfen and Yuqin (2010:76) suggest that teachers should pay attention to their language in the process of interaction with students, as as to provoke more interactions in class.

Classroom interaction, then, is exchange thoughts, feelings or ideas between teacher and students, students and teacher, and students and students in an English classroom using verbal and non-verbal language which involves understanding and interpreting meaning. In this article, classroom interaction is communication that happens in an English classroom of an elementary school which involves teacher and students.

There are some aspects to consider when EFL teacher conduct classroom interaction. They are classroom discourse, the patterns of classroom interaction, the purposes of interaction:

### **1. Classroom Discourse**

Understanding interaction strategies which happen in an EFL classroom can not be separated with the concept of classroom discourse analysis because the meaning of interaction will be influenced by the context of situation. Heidi (2002: 5) says: "To determine and to understand context in spoken discourse, information is needed about the speakers, their relationship to one another, the genre (Is it political speech, a church sermon, a conversation?), and the setting." Therefore it is necessary to understand classroom discourse.

Discourse is the organization of language beyond the level of sentence and the individual speaking turn, where by meaning is negotiated in the process of interaction (Nunan, 1993). Classroom discourse is a special type of discourse that occurs in classrooms. To have good understanding about the context of interaction in an English classroom, it is important to consider Halliday's theory (1985) in Systemic Functional Language:

"The Context of Situation is defined in terms of Register. Register has three variables: Field, Mode and Tenor. Field refers to the topic, or what the language is being used to talk about, Mode refers to the role that language is playing in the social interaction, and Tenor refers to the role relationships between interactants. See comment of the importance classroom as context above."



The quotation means that when someone has interaction he should pay attention to the topic being discussed, to whom he speaks, and the relationship between the speaker and the listener or the interlocutors. He should also understand the characteristics of the listener in order that he can select the strategy of interaction. It will influence the strategy of interaction.

In classroom interaction, meaning of messages from interlocutors is influenced by the context of the interaction. The context is built by the topic which is being talked, the relationship between or among the interlocutors, the purposes of the interaction, the language used by interlocutors (choice of words and the sentence structures), the place and time of the interaction, the ways to deliver the ideas (intonation, pause, volume using objects, etc.).

In the context of an English classroom, the addressor and addressee are the teacher and the students which can be identified as types of interaction. The topics of materials chosen by the teacher were something which the students were familiar. The purposes of interaction was decided by the teacher which were appropriate with the topics. For example, when the topic of materials was fruits, the purposes of interaction were asking and answering about the prices of the fruits. The persons who involved in the interaction, therefore, were between the fruit seller and the buyer. As the speakers involved in the interaction were students of elementary school who has very limited English knowledge, the sentence structure was simple and the choice of words was the familiar ones. In order to build the context the teacher provided pictures of fruits and their prices.

## 2. The Patterns of Classroom Interaction

The persons who involve the classroom interaction follow certain patterns. The patterns is influenced by the direction from one person to other persons which is called as 'move' of interaction. There are some moves that allow the teacher and the students to achieve the objectives of classroom interaction (Bellack in Baker, 1982; Coulthart, 1983: 97). The first is **structuring**. It refers to a pedagogical function of setting the context for succeeding the classroom interaction. For example, the teacher may frequently initiate a classroom period with structuring move to which the focus attention on the topic or the materials to be discussed during the classroom session. The second is **soliciting**. It searches to elicit a verbal response to encourage students to interact or to elicit a verbal response to encourage students to interact or to elicit a physical response. Questions are solicitations e.g.: commands, imperative, and requests. Third is **responding**. It aims to fulfill the expectation of soliciting types. And the fourth is **reacting**. It serves to modify (by clarifying, synthesizing, or explaining) and/or to review or evaluate (positively/negatively) what have been said previously.

The moves of classroom interaction creates certain patterns of interaction which involve some persons to exchange ideas in the English classroom of an elementary school. Basically there are only two main patterns of classroom interaction i.e. teacher-student interaction and student-student interaction. The first is the teacher and the student interaction. It is a face-to-face communication between a teacher and students in a classroom. Lindgreen (1981:

328) divides these types into two that are one-way traffic and two-way traffic. One-way traffic is dominated by the teacher, while students are passive and just listen to what the teacher says. Wong-Fillmore (1985:24) calls it as the teacher-centered types in which the teacher is as the controller in the classroom interaction. And in the two-way traffic, students are active to respond what the teacher says, meaning between the teacher and the students have equal interaction turns. Moreover, Thomas classifies the two-way traffic into to other forms i.e. the teacher-the whole class and the teacher-the individual student (1987:102). And the second pattern is student-student interaction. It is an interaction that occurs between the students themselves in a classroom. Structurally, student-student interaction involves two types: in group activity and in pairwork activity (Wajnryb, 1992; Lindgreen, 1981). And this second type impacts classroom learning and opportunities for foreign language learning.

A study by Susanto (1994) reported that there were four patterns of classroom interactions which occurred in the observed class: teacher-class, teacher-group, teacher-student, and student-student interactions. From all those patterns, interaction between students was found to offer the most facilitative condition for students' inter-language development and to give students much freedom to experiment with the target language. Furthermore, Dagarin (2004, 129) wrote that there are most frequent ways of organising classroom interaction, depending on who communicates with whom: a) teacher-learners, b) teacher-a group of learners,

3) learner-learner, and 4) learners-learners.

### 3. The Purposes of Interaction

Classroom interaction happens when a teacher teaches students in the classroom. A teacher interacts with his students with some purposes, so do the students. The purposes of interaction are the reasons or intentions for interaction during the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Flanders (1970:34) identified some categories of teacher talk and student talk, such as lecturing (explaining, informing), giving directions or commands, asking questions, and praising or encouraging students. As those categories are similar with the reasons of interaction in the classroom, therefore the researcher adopted them as the purposes of the interaction. Below are the detailed description of the categories of the purposes of interaction from teachers' point of view:

- a. Lecturing (explaining, informing)  
Teacher gives facts or opinions about the content or procedure expression of his own ideas and gives explanation about materials that students should understand. It also includes some activities such as when a teacher gives information, provides examples of the target language, and give models of procedures or strategies.
- b. Giving directions or commands.  
Teacher gives instruction, directions, commands or orders or initiation with which a student is expected to comply with. For examples: 'Open your book', 'Repeat after me', 'Stand up', etc.
- c. Asking question.  
Teacher asks questions about the content or procedures, based on the teacher ideas and expecting an answer

from the student. It covers asking for information, and checking or testing student' understanding.

d. Praising or encouraging a student.

Teacher gives feedback by praising or encouraging student's action or behaviour. When a student gives answer to the question asked by the teacher, the teacher gives feedback or positive reinforcement by saying words like 'good', 'very good', 'better', 'correct', 'excellent', 'carry on', etc.

From the explanation above EFL teacher should know when he/she has interaction, to whom he/she speaks, what the purposes of the interaction, and the strategies he/she takes to interact with the students.

### C. Interaction Strategies

In the process of interaction there are two activities involved, they are delivering and receiving messages. In delivering messages, a speaker expresses his or her ideas to a listener. In receiving messages, someone as a listener should understand the ideas delivered by a speaker. The interaction will be effective if the messages can be understood by both two parties (participants) exactly the same idea. In order to have the same ideas, the interlocutors apply some strategies which is called interaction strategies.

Interaction strategies, then, can be defined as tricks and ability to deliver and receive messages applied by teacher and students when they have interaction in an English classroom. The tricks are applied when teacher and students exchange their ideas so that both of the participants understand what they are talking about. Foreign language class is a place where the learners can practice the language they are learning through classroom interaction. To make the interaction run well, the teacher and the

students should use certain interaction strategies that help them understand and express their ideas.

English classroom is one of the places where the students apply to communicate using English. The teacher as the facilitator should provide chances for the students to practice communication using English. He/she may employ both verbal and non-verbal interaction strategies. Classroom interaction is constructed jointly by the teacher and is structured and modified through the employment of some interactional features. Such modified interaction enable a language learner to participate in an interactional conversation, for he receives input that is comprehensible. The strategies discussed here, therefore, input modification and caretaker talk.

#### 1. Input Modifications

A language teacher has a very important role that is as a language model. He/she has to provide model for his/her students on how the language is used for communication. One of the ways to give model on how the language used is through interaction in during the teaching and learning process in the classroom.

In the interactionist theories, input is viewed as 'the outcome of exchanges between learners and their interlocutors' (Pica, 1991:185). It means that from the interactionist perspective, the input to learners comes from the interaction between learners and their teachers/native speakers or between learners. Similar to the input hypothesis, the interaction hypothesis emphasizes the importance of comprehensible input but it also explains how language acquisition occurs and which kinds of interaction will best facilitate it (Ellis, 2008: 252-253).

Lynch (1996) in Walsh (2006: 12) proposed some reasons why teachers should modify her language. First, it relates with the progress of the students. If they donot understand the language they use, it is unlikely they will progress. Second, it gives model the target language` for the students. Third, it helps students to understand what is being said.

Apart from modifying the input, the modification of conversation can also be achieved through repetitions, confirmation and comprehension checks, and clarification requests, but these kinds of modification require a 'two-way exchange of information' (Long, 1987:344). The competent speaker (usually the teacher) cannot just talk without paying attention to his/her students' feedback. In fact, according to Long (1987:345), the opportunity to provide feedback allows the less competent speaker (the student) to 'negotiate the conversation' (negotiation of meaning). Through this process, the teacher will then adjust his/her utterances to make them comprehensible to the student. Negotiation of meaning facilitates a learner's language acquisition because through this process, the learner can get additional information about the target language from the other side and at the same time, he/she will focus more attention on his/her own language use and some new language information will then be integrated to his/her developing interlanguage system (Gass, 1997).

## 2. Teacher Talk

Teacher tends to use some types of talk a lot more frequently than others. The teacher language or "teacher talk" or the term is proposed by Moon (2000:61) as the function for talking

in the classroom which falls into these categories: asking information, checking the students' answer, controlling the class, praising, providing examples of target language, and checking the students' understanding. Those functions, of course, need certain strategy in order that the students understand what the teacher intends to communicate.

There are some characteristics of teacher talk which facilitate understanding of the students. Wong Fillmore (1985) in Ellis (2008:796) identified a number of features of teacher talk that she claimed facilitative of acquisition in kindergarten classrooms with both L1 and L2 speaking children: avoidance of translation, an emphasis on communication and comprehension by ensuring message redundancy, the avoidance of ungrammatical teacher talk, the frequent use of types and routines, repetitiveness, tailoring questions to suit the learners' level of proficiency, and general richness of language. It means that the teacher should adapt the language in such a way which make the students understand what he/she states.

Chaudron (1988:85) provided a comprehensive survey of the teacher talk studies. In a later study he found that language teachers typically modify four aspects of their speech. In the first instance, vocabulary is simplified and idiomatic phrases are avoided. Second, grammar is simplified through the use of shorter, simpler utterances and increased use of present tense. Third, pronunciation is modified by the use of slower, clearer speech and by more widespread use of standard forms. Finally, Choudron also found that teachers make increased use of gestures and facial expressions.

The first and the second modifications are classified as verbal strategies, the third and the fourth modifications are classified as non-verbal strategies.

EFL teacher can apply some modifications as the interaction strategies in order to facilitate interaction in the classroom in many ways. The first is the teacher should use language at the students' level. He/she should be able to select English words and expressions that the students will be able to follow. As Krashen (2002) says that input which can be understood by learners if it is comprehensible. In other words, the language must be understandable for them. He/she may simplify the structure of the sentences. The vocabularies which are used in the sentences should be the familiar ones.

Then, English teacher should avoid using complicated expressions. He/she can start introducing some English expressions in real situations. He/she can use daily instructions in English to make them familiar with the new language; for examples: *“Open your book”*, *“Clean the white/blackboard”*, *“Raise your hand”*, *“Stand up”*, *“Sit down”*, *“Do with your friend/partner”*, etc.

Sometimes the teacher is not aware that the students are not familiar with the target language they learn. However, he/she speaks in full speed unconsciously. The speed of his/her speaking is too fast for the students so that they do not understand what he/she says. Giving pause in certain parts and repeating the expressions twice or three times will also help them catch the message from the teacher. Therefore, he/she should reduce the speed of his/her speaking.

Furthermore, it is helpful if the teacher controls the volume of his/her voice so that every student in the class can hear the voice. Besides, he/she should make sure whether his/her pronunciation is clear. He/she should give good and clear pronunciation to give good model to the students.

Another way to help the students understand when the teacher speaks English during the teaching process is using gestures, actions, facial expressions, and making noises. He/she may nod his/her head to say *“yes”* or shake it to say *“no”*. If the students make noises in the class, he/she can clap the hands or click the fingers. This will make them pay attention to the teacher. Another example, the students are very happy and proud if they can answer the teacher's question correctly. As a good teacher, he/she can give them a reward by saying *“very good”* and showing a gesture using the hands.

The other strategy is using L1 when teacher and students interact in the classroom. Teacher usually uses L1 in the class for various purposes, such as to give instructions, to explain meanings of words, to explain complex ideas, and to explain complex grammar points. Research has shown that the occasional use of L1 by both students and teachers increases both comprehension and learning of L2 (Cook, 2001 and Tang, 2002). While students use L1 for the following purposes: to ask each other clarifying questions, to express frustrations concerning their lack of understanding, clarify meaning of words in L2, to find new words in L2 which correspond to already known words in L1, to use language to process complex concepts,

to build shared meaning while evaluating written tasks through shared discussion.

The other strategy which includes non-verbal is actions. Moon (2000:65) said that the actions link to the words, so that students can understand and interpret the situation from observing the action and knowing what the teacher is trying to do; e.g. *Now put the cards back in the same place*. As the teacher says this, she puts the cards back in the same place. She can also use objects, e.g. blackboard, chalk, or book to manipulate. It helps her to make the situation more concrete.

In short, there are plenty of non-verbal strategies that can be applied to help understand what the teacher wants to communicate with the students. Those strategies should be applied along with the verbal strategies. By doing so, the students of elementary school can understand the intended meaning that the teacher expresses.

## CONCLUSION

Classroom interaction is communication among the people in EFL classroom. The interaction sometimes is considered unimportant by EFL teachers. Many of them ignore the importance of classroom interaction in EFL classes because they do not realize that classroom interaction influences students' ability in communication. Besides, the teacher can also give good examples how to communicate and to build their characters. They must understand the theories of interaction and the strategies to interact with the students. They can employ modification through repetitions, confirmation and comprehension checks, and clari-

fication requests, but these kinds of modification require a 'two-way exchange of information'. They can also adjust their utterances to make them comprehensible to the students. Besides, they can pay attention to both verbal and non-verbal language. Finally, The writer recommends the EFL teachers in Indonesia to employ those strategies in order to have successful classroom interaction.

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