CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces background of the study, statement of the problem, purposes of the study, research questions, significance of the study, definitions of terms and thesis overview.

1.1 Background of the Study

In the last 35 years, there has been a numerous interest on the roles of interactions in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). The interest of such interactions was initially shown through the Interaction Hypothesis proposed by Long (1985, 1996). It is a theory in the world of language acquisition that states that language development comes from face-to-face interactions and communication. Furthermore, a study shows that through interactions, learners are more aware of their linguistic abilities and limitations (Swain 1985, 117). Aside from language improvement, several studies focusing on interactions also show that interactions bring about ways for Non-Native Speaker to have a better comprehension (Soler 1996, 14; Bowles 2011, 31).

There are two main reasons underlying this study. The first reason is related to the dynamic interactions occurring in the class where the writer is teaching and the importance of communication skills in English targeted by the school as a standard for an international school where the research took place. The second reason is specifically and clearly shown

through the Expected School Learning Results (ESLR) of School X on its Points 3 and 4, described as follows:

Point 3: Effective English Communicators

3.1 Confidently demonstrate accuracy and fluency in English in academic and social environments
3.2 Demonstrate the ability to listen and understand in English
3.3 Express ideas clearly to specific audience in English

Point 4: Prepared member of the global community who:

4.3 work cooperatively to appreciate cultural diversity within Indonesia and around the world

As shown from the ESLR of School X (See Appendix C), English has an important role as the medium for delivering all lessons, excluding Mandarin and Indonesian. The students of School X are expected to be effective English communicators. The indicators of being a good English communicators are shown by confidently speaking in English, have the ability to understand English, and able to express ideas for an English speaking audience. At least twice in one semester, each student is assigned to speak and present a project in front of the class. The students are also encouraged to actively take part in asking and answering questions given in a class. Moreover, Point 4 of School X' ESLR promotes teamwork. Teamwork itself is a quality that is certainly needed to be a part of the future global community. Working in a team requires good communication skills to help messages come across to the other person.

The total number of the Elementary students at School X in the academic year of 2016-2017 is 534, with 90% of the population come from the Chinese Indonesian background. With that in mind, these

processes of learning using a foreign language often times make the learners face their challenges in overcoming their language barriers, as English is a foreign language for Indonesian students (Tantra 2015, 1). In this case, then, the majority of the students at School X are Non-Native Speakers.

The common research setting for Negotiations of Meaning (NfM) particularly relies on classrooms as center points of investigations because it is an important place to Second Language Acquisition (SLA) (Foster & Ohta 2005, 402; Lyster 2002, 237). Obviously, it provides an environment suitable for creating instant interactions between Native Speakers (NS) and Non-Native Speakers (NNS). Likewise, classrooms also provide interactions among peers who are Non-Native Speakers. In this study, the focus was on the NNS.

In the classroom, the learners are exposed to familiar faces rather than those of strangers (Kobayashi 2004 ,93). While the other reason why classrooms are suitable for such research is because the learners are familiar with the environment and this helps the production of the targeted language learning. During these interactions, there are times when communication breakdowns happen. A Non-Native Speaker cannot understand what the other NNS is trying to convey in English so negotiations of meaning occur. These negotiations happen through three possible negotiation moves: clarification requests, comprehension checks, and confirmation checks.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Interactions tend to be generally viewed as a forum for the students to practice their English (Tantra 2015, 3). That is why teachers are likely to encourage the students to engage in the interactions for their production skills. In so doing, interactions seem to be perceived merely as opportunities for the students to speak English (Tantra 2015, 4). However, interaction through NfM moves, as argued by Fernandez-Garcia and Martinez-Arbelaiz (2002, 279), is the pathway for input to be more understandable which leads to language learning. In particular, interactions embrace negotiations among the students that are believed to potentially pave the way for acquisition.

1.3 Purposes of the Study

This study aims to analyze the occurrences of NfM between the students working in pairs using a two-way information gap task and to find out how NfM helps the subjects repair their communication breakdowns, particularly among the Fourth Graders at School X. In particular, in this thesis, the author tries to analyze qualitatively how each of the three NfM moves helps subjects on their communication breakdowns during a two-way information gap task.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions have been formulated as follows:

a) How did the students negotiate for meaning during their engagements in a two-way information gap tasked in pairs?

b) How did comprehension checks in NfM help the students during their communication breakdowns in a two-way information gap task?

c) How did confirmation checks in NfM help the students during their communication breakdowns in a two-way information gap task?

d) How did clarification requests in NfM help the students during their communication breakdowns in a two-way information gap task?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study on NfM in this thesis holds the importance to help the students, the teachers, as well as the school.

1.5.1 Students

First, the study provides one of the answers on how NfM help repair communication breakdowns during NNS-NNS interactions. Using NfM, the learners learn how to avoid communication breakdowns. When a communication breakdown does occur, NNS students know what actions and/or steps to be taken to overcome it. More importantly, students work

to become a more effective English communicator as part of the school goals for the students.

1.5.2 Teachers

Secondly, a deeper look on the interactions through this study could elevate educator's knowledge to better educate the students in order for them to understand better on what is being taught during the lessons with English as the medium of instruction. Part of these teaching strategies is learning activities in a class. The results and analyses of this study may help teachers raise their awareness on what types of learning activities should be included, revised, or excluded.

Likewise, the role of teachers needs to shift and become that of a resource person (Lee & VanPatten 2003, 68). The teacher as a resource person then in turn helps make students become more active and assumes more responsibility for their own learning. It has long been known that a teacher's past experience influences their teaching practice (Ivone 2005, 195). Teachers need to have a productive use of class time and it can be achieved by clearly identifies what is expected of the student; what is to be learned and what is to be assessed.

1.5.3 School

This study is beneficial to the school. Two of the school's main goals are to produce effective English communicators who are confident and ready to be a part of the global community. The success of the school is when students can prove this ability. Additionally, a well-thought

lesson plan leads to long-term educational outcomes for its future learners and instructors.

1.6 Definitions of Terms

Negotiation of Meaning

Negotiation of Meaning or NFM is the work in which speakers do to get a successful conversation. In order to achieve and progress into such level of communication, speakers might be required to indicate one or more of the following negotiation action. First, that they understand or do not understand what was being said by giving feedback. Other action could be by helping each other on expressing ideas and make the necessary correction to what is being said (Richards & Schmidt 2010, 392). On the first action, speakers could state their feedback by agreeing or disagreeing on the other's statement. They could also come out with a question to show that one does not understand what the other is saying. Aside from that, speakers could show feedback by showing their intent that they want the conversation to continue. The second action is to show how negotiation helps each other to express ideas. This commonly occurs between Non-Native Speakers and Native Speakers and especially among Non-Native Speakers, where vocabularies are limited and thus harder to express ideas. The last aspect of negotiation is to repair by making correction when necessary to what is being said or how a statement or word is said.

For NfM to occur, the speakers must go through at least one of the three negotiation moves. It then does not close the possibility for three negotiation moves occurring at the same time during one communication

breakdown. The three negotiation moves are clarification requests, comprehension checks, and confirmation checks.

Non-Native Speaker

A Non-Native Speaker or NNS is someone who speaks of other native languages. According to Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (2010, 397), Non-Native Speaker is defined as the following:

> a language user for whom a language is not their first language. The language use of non-native speakers has been a focus of attention to determine such things as the effects of non-native accents on intelligibility, attitudes towards NNS accents, and the role of NNS accents as a marker of the speaker's identity.

Based on this definition, Non-Native Speakers are those who use that of a different language than their mother tongue. In this case study, NNS is Indonesian whom the first language is Bahasa Indonesia rather than English (Tantra 2015, 1). On the other hand, Native Speaker refers to someone who learns a language as a child and continues to use it fluently as well as appropriately (Richards & Schmidt 2010, 386).

1.7 Thesis Overview

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter One deals with the introduction on the field of second language acquisition. Chapter Two explains in detail about language acquisition, NNS-NNS interactions, and negotiation of meaning moves. Chapter Three describes the research design, the setting, subjects, instruments, and the procedure of colleting the data as well as the research schedule. Chapter Four shows the results of

the data together with the discussions of the results. Chapter Five deals with the conclusions of the research, implications of this research, limitations of the study and recommendations for further studies.