

# **A Study of Student's Interruptions on EFL Classroom Interaction at a Senior High School**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper discusses the use of interruption by students on EFL classroom interaction. The main focus are; (1) the types of interruption used by the students in the teaching and learning process, (2) the functions of the interruption used by the students in the teaching and learning process, and (3) the students' and teachers' perception on the use of interruptions in the teaching and learning process.

This research applied a qualitative research. Four classes at tenth grade and four classes at eleventh grade, and two teachers were chosen as the participants through purposive sampling technique. The data were obtained through observation and interviewed and analyzed based on the procedures of data analysis that consist of data condensation, data display and data drawing/conclusion.

The result of findings indicates that; firstly, four types of interruption occur in classroom interaction. They are simple, overlap, butting-in and silent interruption. Secondly, two functions of interruption are found in classroom interaction. Cooperative and intrusive are the function. New function of intrusive interruption also found, namely self-existing. Thirdly, from the student's point of view, most of students interrupt because they want to ascertain what the teacher has explained. Whereas from the teacher's point of view, teachers actually respond well to students who often interrupt class interruption, provided that the interruption is still in accordance with the purpose of learning and does not interfere with class conditions.

*Keywords: Interruption, type, function and perception*

## **1. Introduction**

Interruption is a common phenomenon that usually goes on briefly. Yet, many people think it is disturbing and therefore should be avoided in order to establish a proper conversation. When the listener interrupts a conversation, the turn-taking system will be ruined and sometimes the current speaker feels bothered. Even Liddicoat (2007:93) in Giouzeli (2009) mentions that interruption is problematic, so the speaker needs to do some actions to respond it.

In classroom interaction, unexpected things can unconsciously happen such as interruptions by the students. It is never impossible that the teacher's talk is cut by student's question, comment or even argument. Ideally, if the students have to interrupt the teacher's speech, the interruption should be given in proper way in order to prevent both sides from talking at the same time, which might turn into a conversational chaos, and avoid misunderstanding between them. Students in classroom interruptions may take different forms from blurting out an answer without raising his hand, to responding when another student has been called on, to make an unsolicited comment in the middle of a lesson or discussion

Some research has been conducted on the use of interruption by the students, for example Heavers (2012), Larasati (2014) and Raponi (2016). The discussion of interruption in this paper is mainly based on Ferguson (1977) that explains about types of interruption such as: simple interruption, overlap interruption, butting-in interruption and silent interruption. Murata (1994) combined with Kennedy & Camden with Han Z. Li's theory about function of interruption, such as: cooperative and intrusive (Li, 2001). Cooperative interruption consists of agreement, assistance and clarification. Whereas intrusive interruption consists of disagreement, floor taking, topic change and tangentialization.

The results of the preliminary observation also reveal that interaction between the teacher and students in the classroom is often colored by interruption by student. In accordance with this, the researcher eagerly intends to conduct a research

under the title “A Study of Student’s Interruptions on EFL Classroom Interaction at a Senior High School”.

## **2. Research Method**

This research was conducted at X MIA 1,2,3,4 and XI MIA 1, 2, 3, and 4 at SMA *Negeri 3 Kendari* of academic year 2018/2019 and two teachers who taught at those classes. To determine the subject in this research, the researcher applied purposive sampling technique. In this research, the researcher collected the data totally in eight meetings through observation and interview then; the data was analyzed and interpreted through interactive model of Milles & Huberman (2014). Observation was aimed to provide careful description of teacher and students’ activities in the classroom interaction. Interview was used to get the data that supported the result of the observation. Therefore, it used to clarify and to emphasize the result of the observation. In this case, it was conducted to find out the data about the teachers’ and students’ perception on the use of interruption that happened in the classroom.

## **3. Findings and Discussion**

This part illustrated some extracts of conversation between teacher and students in classroom. To find out the types, function and teachers’ and students’ perception, the researcher did the observation and interview. Observation by utilizing video-audio recording and observation checklist to get broad descriptions of the types of interruption that happened in the classroom interaction that totally in eight meetings.

### **1) Types of interruptions used by the students in teaching and learning process.**

#### **a. Simple Interruption**

Simple interruption was the most common interruption that occurs in classroom interaction especially in teaching English. It has the simple pattern among all the types. Therefore, this type of interruption also appears mostly in classroom

interaction in two levels of the classes which are tenth and eleventh grade. Totally in eight meetings, it occurs 116 times in the conversation between teacher and students, students and students in the classroom interaction.

### **Extract 1**

The following extract occurred when the teacher was checking the student's work and gave a little explanation. In order to clarify what the teacher was saying, the students spontaneously interrupted the teacher's word.

Teacher : *Pertanyaannya yang sama dengan dibuku. Kemudian cari alasannya, bagaimna cara mendapatkannya. Kenapa dia begin. Nah untuk ....*  
(The same question with the book, then find a reason how to get it. Why is it like this? So..)

Student : *Oh bu penjelasannya? (44.27)*

**(Oh, is this about the explanation, Ma'am)**

Teacher : *Iyya. Kalian pelajari lagi. Baca!. Supaya kamu tahu. Supaya nanti kamu dapat soal kamu tahu, oh disini.*

(Yes. You learn it more. Read it so you know. So, if you get a problem like this later, you'll know where the answer is)

From extract 1 above, the interruption involved in dialogue is simple interruption. As stated by Ferguson (1977), the interruption is divided into four types in which simple interruption is one of the types that mostly occurs, especially in teaching and learning activity and it occurred in SMA Negeri 3 Kendari. Simple interruption occurs once an interrupter takes the floor when the current speaker still incompletes his/her sentences. The student succeeds to disrupt the teacher's talk, so the teacher stops his/her speak. Therefore, the teacher listens to the interrupter until the student finishes his/her talk, then the floor comes back to the interruptee. It, moreover, happened to this dialogue. Before the teacher said "*Are you guys able to do it now? Do you already understand what I mean? The same question with the book, then find a reason how to get it. Why is it like this? So...*", the students directly cut off what the teacher said by saying "***Oh, is this about the explanation, Ma'am?***" Based on what the student said, we could conclude that the student was directly cutting off

what the teacher wants to say because she was so excited about the material taught at that time.

b. Overlap Interruption

The second most frequently type was overlap interruption in eight meetings in classroom observation. Overlap interruption emerges 7 times. Even though the gap between the amounts of previous types was quite wide, overlap is still considered as a dominating type in the research. Overlap interruptions happened when the teacher can complete her utterance although the student interrupts her in the middle of her speech. This type presented simultaneous speech and turn exchange. Therefore, although the teacher was able to finish her words, the students can take floor.

Extract 2

The dialogue below tells about some students who want to express their opinions but at the same time.

- Teacher : *Siapa? Produser? Bagian E?*  
(Who? Producer? Part E?)
- Student : *Akila (menyebutkan nama teman)*  
(Akila (mentioning his/her friend's name))
- Students X** : *Farhat Abbas ini. Artis itu yang E*  
(**He's Farhat Abbas. An artist, E.**)
- Student Y** : *Daus Mini. Artis itu yang E.*  
(*Daus Mini. The artist is E.*)

Extract 2 above shows the uses one of the interrupt types proposed by Ferguson (1977). He said that, there four types of interruption, one of them is overlap interruption. After the first speaker finishes, the interrupter still grabs the floor, so there is no break the simultaneous speech. In this extract, overlap interruption happened when Students Y disturb Students X and it also happened to Student X who disturbs student Y when student X said "*He's Farhat Abbas. An artist, E*)" and student Y said "*Daus Mini. The artist is E*". and vice versa. The setting of conversation is in the classroom interaction when the teacher asks some questions.

### c. Silent Interruption

Unlike other types that involve simultaneous speech, silent interruption does not include simultaneous speech because the initial speaker pauses for a moment. An example of this interruption can be seen in the following extract:

#### Extract 3

The dialogue below occurs in the classroom when the teacher started the lesson and asked the student X to lead the other student praying to the God.

All Students : *Ya bu*

(Yes, Ma'am)

Teacher : *Ya, sebelum kita (hening sesaat)*

(*Ya, before we ...*)

**Student : 22 bu**

Teacher : *Okeh, sebelum kita mulai.*

(Okay, before we start, listen!)

Extract 3 above shows the use of silent interruption that occurs in the classroom. Silent interruption occurred when the teacher wanted to start the class by saying “*Yes, before ...*”, the students suddenly grabbed the floor by saying “**22**”. Essentially, what the interrupter said had nothing to do with what the teacher said previously, so the aim of the interruption done by the student was simply to express what he wanted to express regardless of what the teacher said previously.

### d. Butting-in Interruption

In the findings, the researcher found just one use of butting-in an interruption that occurs during the conversation between teacher and student in classroom interaction. The datum is presented and explained in the following extract below:

#### Extract 4

The following extract below tells about student who suddenly came to the front of the class to ask for permission, but as it was going on, the teacher firmly rejected the student's request.

- Teacher : ... Narrator. What is the woman going to do?
- Student : *(maju kedepan) Saya mau ambil HP ku di IPS 2 b..!*  
*((Walk into fron of the class) I want take my cell phone at IPS 2, Ma ..)*
- Teacher : *Kamu, gelisah sekali*  
*(You're so restless.)*
- Other Students : *Iyaa bu. Huuuu, alasannya ji itu*  
*(Yeah, Maa'm. Huuuu, that's just his/her alibi.)*
- Teacher : *Tadi ke WC, sekarang ambil hp*  
*(Previously, his/her alibi is to go to the toilet and now he/she wants to take a cell phone.)*

Extract 4 above shows one of the interruptions uses, butting-in interruption. According to Ferguson (1977) butting-in interruption is district from the other types because there is no turn exchange. The interrupter fails to take the floor because he/she cannot finish his/her utterance, even though he/she tries to disturb the interruptee. As happened in the dialogue above, when the teacher was reading the question, suddenly one of the students came to the front of the class to ask permission by saying ***"I want take my cell phone at IPS 2, Ma'am!"***. Furthermore, because that student often did it, the teacher firmly refused by saying *"Previously, his/her alibi is to go to the toilet and now he/she wants to take a cell phone"*. So, teacher can say her utterance completely without being bothered by the student's disruption. Therefore, butting-in interruption is classified into unsuccessful interruption. Simultaneous speech is usually presented and there is no break in continuity in the interrupter's speech.

## **2) Functions of interruptions used by the students in teaching and learning process.**

Cooperative interruption happened when the students wants to show that she/he enthuses and listens to the teacher. The students interrupt their teacher to show agreement or to revise the statement. In tenth grade, totally 40 cooperative interruption happened. In agreement, there were 10 extract, 5 extracts in assistance

and 25 extract in clarification. While in eleventh grade, totally 21 extracts found. 5 extract in agreement, 7 extracts in assistance, and 9 extracts in clarification.

While intrusive interruption is the opposite of cooperative interruption. The students tried to stop the ongoing speech and take the floor intentionally. In tenth grade, totally 31 intrusive, 10 extracts in disagreement, 13 extracts floor taking, 6 extracts in topic change and 1 extract in tangentialization. While in eleventh grade, totally 40 extracts happened. 9 extracts in disagreement, 21 extract in floor taking and 9 extracts in topic change and 1 extract in self-existing. But in eleventh grade, the researcher did not found tangentialization function.

### **a) Cooperative**

#### **1. Agreement**

Extract 5

Extract 5 focuses on how people respond to speech was said by the interlocutor to show the harmony of mind between speaker and listener.

Student : *Dia memakai seragam yang salah*  
(He was wearing the wrong uniform)

Teacher : *Iyya, jawaban anda benar.*  
(Yes, correct).

**Other students : *Iyaa tawwa***  
**(*Congratulation*)**

Teacher : You are right answer!  
*Sukmawati mendapat pion hari ini.*  
(Your answer is correct!  
Sukmawati will get point today)

**Other Student : *Yeay!***

Extract 5 shows some cooperative interruption, especially agreement that I found during the classroom interaction I observed. The interrupter enthuses with the topic of the conversation that the initial speaker brings. Occasionally, the interrupter extends the speaker's idea.

Expression presented in extract 5 shows the students' agreement about what the teacher said. For instance, students said "***Congratulation***" and "***Yeay***". These two

expressions are two of the most common expressions people use to express their love and support for something.

## 2. Assistance

### Extract 6

Extract below presents a dialogue between teacher and students when the teacher explained the material and in the middle of her explanation, the teacher was silent and the students completed what the teacher wanted to say.

- Teacher : ... *Dia disini pengenalan watak, tokoh, waktu*  
(It is here the introduction of character, character, time ...)
- Student : *Kejadian***  
**(Events)**
- Teacher : Next! What about event?

In extract 6 above, we can indicate that the student used assistance interruption during teaching and learning process in the classroom. The students used some utterances to help or to complete what the teachers wanted to say. For instance, “*Events*” and “*I-16*”. The researcher classified those utterances as assistance interruption because when the teacher explained the material and in the middle of her explanation, the teacher paused her speaking for some reasons and the students wanted to help the teacher to complete her sentence directly. The interruption done by student contains assistance because the student thinks that teacher needs him to complete the explanation.

## 3. Clarification

### Extract 7

The explanation from the teacher was not clear enough for other students so that they needed clarification.

- Teacher : Iya  
Sindy!
- Student : *Sindi siapa bu?***  
**(Which Sindy, Ma’am?)**

Teacher : *Oh, ada dua sindi kah? Sindi ada 2?*  
(Are there 2 Sindy here?)

Clarification request in the form of asking question is indicated in the extracts above. ***“Which Sindy, Ma’am?”***, is the utterances indicated as clarification request in which the students raised a question to emphasize that they did needed more explanation or clarification related to the instruction given or the material explained.

This interruption is classified as clarification request because student X wanted to ask a clarification from the teacher or other students. Therefore, student X interrupts the teacher by saying those utterances. To make sure what the student X should do next, previously, the teacher or other students quickly explained and student X did not keep up with them. He paused his utterance after giving some question because he thought that teacher or other students knew what he meant and they would answer it.

## **b) Intrusive**

### **1. Disagreement**

#### Extract 8

In following extract, after the students listened to the answer or opinion from teacher, the student expressed his/her disagreement to the teacher.

Teacher : *Apa jawabnmu no 5?*  
(What’s your answer for no 5?)

Student : *C bu*  
(C.Ma’am)

Teacher : *C. Kenapa C?*  
(C. Why C?)

**Other Students** : ***Ini ana sembarang da bilang! Apa artinya ya??? Saya saja yang tidak tahu, saya tidak ji ,,,,***  
**(Do not answer it carelessly! Do you know what it means? I do not know what that means).**

In extract 8, the disagreement interruption involved when the teacher or other students gave his/her statement and students X did not agree. The utterance ***“Do***

***not answer it carelessly!***” The use of exclamation mark here is to emphasize that the student really did not agree on what the other students said.

## 2. Floor Taking

### Extract 9

The dialogue presented below is the example of floor taking interruption. The students interrupted to complete teacher’s or other students’ utterance.

- Teacher : *Mana PR mu? Coba ibu lihat yang minggu! (mengecek PR siswa)*  
(Where's your homework? Let me check it. (Checking students' homework))
- Students 2 : *Ini bu*  
(Here is my homework, Ma'am).
- Student 3 : *Saya tidak ada, tidak datang minggu lalu*  
**(I did not do homework because I did not attend the class last week)**
- Teacher : *Yang tidak datang minggu lalu itu saya ingat, Ozi, kamu (menunjuk siswa)*  
**I remember that Ozi did not attend classes last week (appoint students).**

Extract 9 above describe that the student wanted to express their opinion about what the other students had said before. For example, in extract 9 the student also gave his additional opinion based on the teacher’s statement. Nevertheless, in extract 27, the student was in trouble when the teacher asked, “*Where's your homework? Let me check it.*” and since he had not done it yet, he became panic and said “***I did not do homework because I did not attend the class last week.***”. It implies from that utterance that the student wanted to emphasize that he did not come in the previous week, and he did not get any information about the task, so he did not do it. Dealing with this, it can be concluded that, in that extract, student X does not intend to change the topic that teacher brings on, but he only wants to develop it and say it immediately.

### 3. Topic Change

Extract 10

The following extracts show the interaction between teacher and students in which the teacher explained the material and directed the students, but the students interrupted due to some purpose.

- Teacher : ... *Ya. silahkan baca dulu. I give you time just three minutes from now.*  
(...Yes, please read first. I'll give you time just three minutes from now)
- Student : ***Bu, Saya mau pergi WC!***  
**(Ma'am, I want to go to toilet!)**

Extract above, topic change interruption takes an account in the middle of the interaction. The situation was that student wanted to end the teacher's explanation because he and she wanted to do another thing as illustrated in extract 10 "***Ma'am, can I go to toilet, please?***" The students changed the topic as he grabbed the floor. The interruptions were done by the students because they really wanted to stop the teacher speak.

The conversation above illustrates the intrusive function of interaction called topic change interruption. It is described when the teacher raised a question for student and instructed what the students should do next. It is fortunate that, due to long explanation and instruction for students to understand clearly, the students felt bored as they had something to rather than listened to the long talk.

### 4. Tangentialization

Extract 11

In the following extract, the teacher explained the material, and the students already know about it.

- Teacher : *Iyaa. Jadi asal kata "re-"*  
(Yes. It's the origin word f "re-")
- Student : ***Rangkuman***  
**(Summary)**
- Teacher : *Ya. Berarti terjadi pengulangan.*  
(Yes. It means repetition.)

In extract 11 above, the student's utterance portrays the use of tangentialization interruption. This function of interruption occurs when the interrupter try to summarize what the speaker says. He may ever hear the topic before and does not want to hear about it again. The other situation that may happen is the interrupter does not like to hear the full message. Therefore, she skips what the speaker wants to say before their message is delivered completely and this is what happens in extract 30. When the teacher wanted to explain the definition of recount text, the student cut it by saying "**Summary**". The student said it because he/she already knew little about definition of recount text.

## 5. Self-existing

The following interruption occurs when the teacher asking question to the students.

- Teacher : Kalau yang begini rame.  
*(You are so excited if we talking about this)*
- Student X : Bu guru kalau yang E, Indah  
*(Mam, E is Indah)*
- Teacher : Kalau yang begini rame. No 11  
*(You are so excited if we talking about this, no 11)*
- All Students : Mangga, memetik mangga, memakan mangga. (gaduh)**  
*(Mango, picking mangos eating mangos)*

The research also found one function of interruption that aims to be negative. The interruption occurs when the teacher gives the question and then the student answer, but on the sidelines of the conversation between the teacher and the student who answer the question, there is a student who interrupts by saying "**mango, picking mango, eating mango**". Based on observation, the researcher assumes that the interruption done by the students aim only to show that they exist.

### 3) Teachers' and students' perception on the use of interruption in teaching and learning process

#### a) Teacher's Perception

Teacher of tenth grade points out that when teaching in tenth grade, especially in MIA 1-4, the majority of the students are very active and respond well to what the teacher says, although it is uncommon for students to do things that are beyond the control of teacher, for example doing something only to show that they are there and they can.

Teacher of eleventh grade said that she often tried various ways to bring the spirit of students back, but it is less effective due to the majority of English learning process in eleventh grade implemented at the end of school hours which affects only little to the spirit of student learning. Although the number of eleventh grade interruptions is not as many as tenth grade, but the researcher still found some interruptions done by the students and when the researcher asked the teacher's opinion about the interruptions done by the students, the teacher said that the teacher will respond well if the interruption that students is according to the learning material that day.

#### Extract 12

The following extract shows the situation when the teacher responded about the students who interrupted.

Interviewer: *Bu, misalnya interupsi. Kan biasanya ketika kita berbicara, tiba-tiba ada siswa yang potong atau bertanya. Bagaimana menurutnya tentang hal tersebut bu?*

(Ma'am, for example interruption, usually when we are talking, sometimes there is a student cut or ask, what do you think about that Mam?)

Teacher : *Kalau memang perlu untuk dijawab, saya langsung jawab. Kalau tidak, saya hentikan dulu, saya lanjutkan materi.*

(If it is necessary to answer, I will directly answer. If it is not, I will stop for a moment and then continue the material).

In extract 12 above, we can see how the teacher responded to the students who always interrupted the class. First, the teacher listened to whether the student's interruptions are in accordance with the material or not. If it is in accordance with the material and can be useful for the student, then the teacher will reply, but on the contrary, if the interruption is not appropriate, then the teachers stops the student interruption and proceed to the next material. Secondly, the teacher always reminds the learning objectives and learning materials on that day so that what is discussed is not widespread and the learning objectives can be achieved maximally.

#### **b) Students' Perception**

From some interviews that researchers did, most students consider the interaction depends on the intentions of students before interrupting. Interruptions can be said to be positive if the interruptions done by the students intend to ensure their understanding of the material given by the teacher or in convey his opinion. Secondly, the interruption can be negative if when interrupting, the students use the language that is less polite, causing misunderstandings between teacher and student.

#### **Extract 13**

The following extract show the situation when the students faced some problem in teaching and learning process.

Interviewer: Okay. Terus didalam proses belajar mengajar, apabila ada yang susah, apakah kita langsung tanya atau belajar sendiri dulu atau bagaimana de?  
(Ok, in the process of teaching and learning, if ypu find difficulty, will you ask the teacher or will you learn it by yourself or How?

Student : Kalau biasa ada materi atau soal yang susah, kita langsung bertanya ke bu guru, terus bu guru jelaskan cara mengerjakannya.  
(If there is difficulty, we immediately ask it to the teacher then the teacher will explain how to do it).

In extract 13, the students choose to ask directly to the teacher when facing with some difficulties to understand the learning materials, or just make sure whether the material that he already understood previously is in accordance with the material taught by the teacher.

To make sure whether students know what students are doing during material explanation and they suddenly cut off is something that is true. So the researcher asks some questions to the students.

#### 4. Conclusion

This paper has discussed types, function and teachers' and students' perception on the use of interruption by the students. Simple interruption becomes the most used interruption, because basically the students likely want to show what they feel or their opinion directly and as soon as possible. From the sub categories of interruption function, floor taking underlines the most choice of interruption presented in classroom interaction because majority the students at tenth and eleventh grade are active students who often say what they want to share. From the student's point of view, most students interrupt because they want to ascertain what the teacher has explained. Whereas from the teachers' point of view, teachers actually respond well to students who often interrupt class interruption, provided that the interruption is still in accordance with the purpose of learning and does not interfere with class conditions.

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