

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF QUESTIONING TECHNIQUE IN TEACHING CONVERSATION

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Abstract

In teaching English conversation, there are a number of techniques that can be used to enhance students' achievement. One of the techniques is Questioning Technique. Questioning Technique is a teaching technique in which teacher asks questions as many as possible to the students related to the topic that is being studied. It can be done before the teacher explains the lesson, while explaining, and after explaining it. It is intended to foster students' activeness and participation in English Teaching-Learning process.

Key words: *language teaching method, questioning technique, conversation*

Abstrak

Dalam mengajar percakapan Bahasa Inggris, ada beberapa teknik yang dapat digunakan untuk meningkatkan prestasi mahasiswa. Satu di antaranya adalah Teknik Bertanya. Teknik bertanya adalah teknik mengajar di mana guru bertanya sebanyak mungkin pertanyaan kepada mahasiswa sehubungan dengan topik yang sedang diajarkan. Hal ini bisa dilakukan pada saat guru membuka topik pembahasan, saat menjelaskan dan pada saat selesai menjelaskan. Teknik ini dimaksudkan untuk meningkatkan keaktifan dan partisipasi mahasiswa dalam proses belajar mengajar.

Kata kunci: metode pengajaran bahasa, teknik bertanya, percakapan.

A. INTRODUCTION

English has been considered to be the first foreign language taught in Indonesia. It functions to help the development of the state and nation, to build relations with other nations, and to run foreign policy including as a language used for wider communication in international forum.

English gets the first place for being the main language in many countries. As a result of that, English becomes the global language which is just necessary to learn, without any exception for Indonesians. Nowadays, Indonesia and many other countries in the world are dealing with a process when everything becomes global, called globalization. An impact of this phenomenon brings out a concept of communicating with other people in the same language in order to make the process go on easily. It turned out; English is the one used. In addition, the ability to master English is now urgently required as it has been the key to every aspect of people's life. We see, more and more Indonesian people are struggling hard to learn this language, because they realize the importance of it. Mastering English can truly give Indonesians some positive impacts in social, education, and career world.

Remembering the importance of mastering English, Indonesian government has obliged that all Indonesian students from Elementary School till University level to study English. By doing so, it is hoped that Indonesian students are able to function English a language for communication.

There are four skills in English; Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. All these skills are supposed to be taught in an integrated way; meaning that each skill should be related to the other skills. However,

speaking is the prominent skill that firstly judged by others, especially when making conversation with other.

The ability of speaking English can be represented by successfully communicate with other through conversation. No one will consider that a person is good at English if she cannot speak and use this language in conversation.

Conversation is taught from Elementary School to University level, of course it is adjusted with the need of the students themselves. In other words, it is taught not only in different manner regarding their ages but also in different level of difficulty . Furthermore, conversational instruction is purposed to enable students in using dan expressing language in daily life. Therefore, teachers or lecturers should proved them with a good way in teaching conversation, so that the students are able to use language accurately dan fruently.

Unfortunately, the teaching of conversation is not progress enough to achieve the goal. There are many reasons for advocating that. One of them is the lack of teaching technique knowledge of the teachers. As the result, they use inappropriate and monotonous lechniques. Consequently, the students easily get bored and not interested in learning it.

Therefore, in order to avoid making students bored, teacher should use various techniques in teaching conversation which emphasizes on the interaction. One of the techniques used is questioning technique. Many experts from educational field suggest this technique in language teaching. On of them is Aliponga. He said:

“the key to creating an interactive classroom leading to greater fluency is to develop a broad repertoire of questioning strategies which students can utilize in class. It offers some questioning techniques specifically developed for EFL students that provide stimuli to foster communication at all stages of a lesson” (Aliponga, 2003).

In this technique, teacher and his or her students are involved together actively. It provides students large extent of chance to use language as much as possible by answering teacher's or lecturer's questions and use the same spirit to ask the teacher or lecturer if he or she does not understand about the lesson.

B. THE REVIEW OF LITERATURES

1. Approach, Method, and Technique

Looking back at the result of teaching English lesson in the classroom, many teachers or lecturers have been wondering why it is so difficult to teach English conversation. It was a shock finding that some students were great in their English Grammar, but when there was a time for them to speak, they were so reluctant, becoming silent that made the teachers or lecturers confused with their attitude.

Actually, the teacher or lecturer cannot merely blamed his or her students for having such attitude. To a large extent, he or she should find the best way of teaching his or her students. So, it is absolutely right if material of the teaching must concern with the guidance from curriculum or module but in the real teaching situation, he or she also has to make

some modifications suited with the characteristics of the students.

Classroom is of course a convenient place for imparting information but the main concern of a language teacher or lecturer is to develop the ability of the students to use the language they are learning for the purpose of communication. In order to develop this skill, teachers or lecturers have many obstacles to contend with, namely: the size of the class, the number of hours available for teaching the language, the number of the members of the class, and perhaps, even the syllabus itself, which may discourage the teachers from giving adequate attention to the spoken language. It is not easy to give oral practice under conditions, especially in large classes, this is why it is important for teacher to try hard to create the conducive classroom in order to minimize the effect of obstacles faced (Byrne, 1976:1).

Accordingly, the understanding about approach, method, and technique is also crucial for the teachers or lecturers since the three of them cannot be separated one to another. The relation shows that an approach is axiomatic; it describes the nature of subject matter to be taught. It is a philosophy of something which one believes. Method is an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language materials which based upon the selected approach. It is a procedural. And a technique is an implementation of method which actually takes place in a classroom. It is a particular trick, strategy, or contrivance used to accomplish an immediate objectives. Technique must be consistent with the method, and therefore in harmony with an approach as well. It can be stated that technique depends on the teacher, his individual artistry and on the composition of the class (Anthony, 1965:3).

Unfortunately, teachers or lecturers sometimes hastily neglect a particular technique because they think it is not applicable. It is across the wise if the ignoring of implementing technique based on instant consideration, as Freeman said:

“Do not be quick to dismiss a technique because, at first glance, it appears to be at odds with your own beliefs or to be impossible to apply to your own situation. For instance, in one of the methods we will consider, teachers frequently make use of a tape recorder to record students speaking the language they are studying. If you reject this technique as impractical one because you do not have a tape recorder, you may be missing out on something valuable. You should first ask what the purpose of the tape recorder is: Is there a principle behind its use in which you believe and which you can provide in another way, say, by writing down the students’ sentences on the blackboard rather than recording them? So, try to imagine how to adapt these techniques creatively to your own situation. You are limited only by your imagination” (Freeman, 1986:2).

From above statement can be drawn that a teacher or lecturer should be creative in creating and exploring the applicable correct techniques from what are available in the place where he or she is teaching.

2. Language Teaching Method

Learning foreign language is not an easy task. To be successful in it you have struggle to reach beyond the confines of your first language into a new language, culture, a new way or thinking, feeling and acting. Total commitment, total involvement, a total physical, intellectual, and emotional response are necessary to the successfully send and receive

messages in a second language (Byrne, 1980:1)

As a facilitator to his or her students, the teacher or lecturer needs to vary his or her method; suited to his or her method with the typical characteristic of the students. Therefore, to do that, the teacher or lecturer should master a number of language teaching methods. This knowledge will help him or her to analyze the students’ behavior and to make up his or her mind which method he or she will use in order to empower his or her students ability in studying foreign language.

2.1 Grammar-Translation Method

In teaching English, Grammar-Translation Method is not a new one. It has had different names, but it has been used by language teachers and lecturers for many years. At last time it was called Classical Method since it was first used for the purpose of helping students to read and to appreciate foreign language literature. It was also hoped that, through the study of the grammar of their target language, students would become more and more familiar with the grammar of their native language and that this familiarity would help them to speak and to write their native language better. Finally, it was thought that foreign language learning would help students to grow intellectually. It was recognized that students would probably never use the target language, but the mental exercise of learning it would be beneficial anyway.

Students are taught to translate from one language (source language) to another language (target language). Often, what they translate are readings in the target language about some aspects of the culture of the foreign language community. The students

study grammar deductively, that is they are given the grammar rules accompanied with examples, then they are told to memorize them and finally they will be asked to apply the rules to make their own examples. They also learn grammatical paradigms such as verb conjugations. At the same time, they memorize native language equivalents for foreign language vocabulary words.

2.2 Direct Method

As with the Grammar-Translation Method, the Direct Method is not new either. Its principles have been applied by language teachers and lecturers for many years. Most recently, it was revived as a method whose the goal of its instructions became learning of how to use a foreign language to communicate. Since the Grammar-Translation Method is not very effective in preparing students to use the target language communicatively, the Direct Method becomes popular.

The Direct Method has one very best rule; no translation is allowed. In fact, the Direct Method receives its name from the fact that the meaning is to be connected directly with the target language without going through the process of translating into the students' native language.

Teachers or lecturers who use the Direct Method believe that the students need to associate meaning to the target language directly. In order to do this, when the teacher or lecturer introduces a new target language word or phrase, he, or pantomime; he or she never translates it into the students' native language. By this way, students get into their habit knowing the equivalent target words that can make them speak in the target

language a great deal and communicate by using it as if they were in a real situation.

2.3 Audio-Lingual Method

The Audio-Lingual Method has a very different goal from that of the Grammar-Translation Method. It was developed in United States during World War II. At that time, there was a need for people to learn foreign languages rapidly for military purposes. As we had seen, the Grammar-Translation Method did not prepare people to use the target language. While the communication in the target language was the goal of the Direct Method, there were at the time of exciting new ideas about language and learning derived from the disciplines of descriptive linguistics and behavioral psychology. These ideas led to the development of the Audio-Lingual Method, but many are different, having been based upon conception of language and learning from these two disciplines.

New vocabularies and structures are presented through dialogues. The dialogues are learned through imitation and repetition. Drills (repetition, backward build-up, chain, substitution, transformation, and question-and answer) are conducted based upon the patterns presented in the dialogues. Students' successful responses are positively reinforced. Grammar is induced from the examination given and the explicit grammar rules are not provided. Cultural information is conceptualized in the dialogues or presented by the teacher or lecturer. Students' reading and written works are based upon the oral work they did earlier.

2.4 Eclected Method

An Eclected Method is a method that accepts the best teaching techniques from other methods according to the actual situation in the classrooms. According to Girard (1986) that the eclectic teacher aims to achieve the maximum benefit from all the methods and techniques at his or her disposal, according to the special needs and resources of his or her pupils at any given time. An eclectic attitude towards methodology provides the flexibility and adaptability that will allow the teacher to select among a variety of approaches, methods and techniques those elements best fitted to the needs of a given class at a given time. Such a decision will not be taken on the spur of the moment in a haphazard way, but as the conclusion of a serious analysis of the situation and of the available techniques and devices. The eclectic teacher will make his personal choices on the basis of the questions he will have to ask himself, as he goes along, about the main issues of language teaching, and on the basis of the answers he will be able to give in connection with inescapable criteria.

Similar opinion, termed a "complete method" was proposed by Palmer (1922, in Girard, 1986) that The complete method is not a compromise between two antagonistic schools; it boldly incorporates what is valuable in any system or method of teaching and refuses to recognize any conflict, except the conflict between the inherently good and the inherently bad. The complete method will embody every type of teaching except bad teaching, and every process of learning except defective learning.

It is true that the attitudes described above have intuitive appeal. But, it seems reasonable to combine the most suitable

elements of different available methods, instead of applying a specific one. However, it will some benefits from some points: 1). Safety; the use of a variety of ideas and procedures from different existing approaches and methods will increase the chances of learning taking place. 2). Interest; teachers or lecturers need to use different techniques to hold the learners' attention. 3). Diversity; different learning or teaching contexts require different methodologies. 4). Flexibility; awareness of a range available techniques will help teacher exploit material better and manage unexpected situations. 5). Inevitability; informed teaching is bound to be eclectic (Gabrielatos, 2002).

It can be stated that in eclected method, a teacher or lecturer should do a mapping capability of his or her students first and then based on it he or she may know which methods that can be combined to each particular class.

3. Conversation

There are four skills to master English; listening, reading, speaking, and writing. All of these skills must be mastered to be fluent in English. These skills cannot be separated one another.

However, speaking or making conversation may be considered as the most important one. It requires our courage. Unfortunately, many students do not have this mentality. They are reluctant to commit their imperfect conversation under the shadow of anxiety of making mistakes.

Moreover, the conversation involves the speaker and listener both have to have self confidence to maintain the current of the conversation. As Byrne (1976:8) said: "Oral

communication is a two-way process between speaker and listener (or listeners), involving the productive skill of speaking and the receptive skill of understanding (or listening with understanding). Both speaker and listener have a positive function to perform; the speaker has to encode the message to be conveyed in appropriate language, while the listener (no less actively) has to decode (or interpret) the message”.

In addition to the interaction toward what is being talked, speaker is supposed to follow the rules of conversation; the first is getting listener’s attention. Unless speaker is ingenious to attract listener’s attention, his or her listener will be reluctant to participate in conversation because his or her own inhibitions, or he or she may turn off his attention to the topic he or she wishes to discuss.

The second is topic nomination; there are few explicit rules for accomplishing topic nomination in a language. Usually a person will simply embark on an issue by making a statement or a question which leads to a particular topic. Grice (1971) reported by Byrne (1976:196) noted that certain conversational maxims enable a speaker to nominate and maintain a topic of conversation: 1). Quantity: say only as much as is necessary for understanding the communication; 2). Quality: say only what is true; 3). Relevance: say only what is relevant, and 4). Manner: be clear.

The third is topic development; using conventions of turn-taking to accomplish various functions of language. Within topic development, one encounters instances of topic clarification, shifting, avoidance, and interruption.

The fourth is topic termination; it is an art which even native speakers of a language have difficulty in mastering at times. We commonly experience situations in which a conversation has ended for sometime and neither participant seems to know how to terminate it. Usually, in American English, conversations are terminated by various interactional functions; a glance of watch, a nicety, or a ‘well, I have to be going now’. Each language has verbal and nonverbal signals for such termination. It is important for teachers or lecturers to be acutely aware of the rules of conversation in the second language and to aid learners both to perceive those rules and follow them in their own conversation.

4. Questioning Technique in Teaching Conversation

One of challenges of teaching conversation techniques is to present the learners with the authentic need to use them in the classroom. Another is to monitor and to provide feedback to the learners in large classes. Moore in Aliponga (2003) said that there are only four basic things that must be present if students are going to learn: First, the teacher or lecturer must be competent in both the art and the science of teaching and to be able to deliver the instructions in the confident manner using a wide variety of tools to promote the students’ learning. Second, the curriculum that the teacher or lecturer teaches must be accurate, current, and aligned to standards. Third, the teacher or lecturer must have time to deliver the instructions. Fourth, the students must be ready and motivated.

Based on explanation above, the interaction between teacher or lecturer and his or her students in a harmony way is something crucial to make the success in teaching-learning process. One of the ways to

maintain the harmony interaction between them is by using questioning technique. Jarolimek (1976:219) said that the questioning technique was a teaching technique used in order to draw from the learners specific relevant details, to help them to feel sense of relationship, to facilitate their reasoning process, to test their knowledge, to challenge their thinking, and many other purposes.

Result of many classroom-based studies show that in order to develop foreign language speaking skill, focus should be placed on fluency without neglecting the elements of phonology, grammar, and discourse in the spoken output. Brown (2001) reported by Aliponga (2003) said that fluency is often understood as the ability to carry on a conversation and produce long utterances. The flow of language in reasonable short segments is important to establish from the very beginning. To achieve this, there is a need to provide students with stimuli for producing short utterances which can be expressed in the form of questioning technique.

Questioning technique is recommended from the initial stage of a classroom lesson as well as throughout the entire stages of teaching-learning process. Students at middle level have little or no prior knowledge of the target language. Furthermore, the students' capacity for taking in and retaining new words, structures, and concepts is limited, thus, the materials should be presented in simple segments that do not overwhelm them. This is precisely the purpose of utilizing this technique. The use of question-answer exchanges between teacher and students. This technique can be applied to large classes. The more students involved the

better impacts will be got for the performing students and even for the inactive students.

3.1 Practical Application

It has been stated that questioning technique should be used by the teacher or lecturer at a very beginning of the process of teaching conversation. At the beginning of his or her teaching, first he or she has to interact students' attention; by asking questions such as:

Teacher : Good morning, students?

Students : Good morning Miss.

Teacher : How is your feeling this morning?

Students : Good!

Teacher : Are you ready to begin our lesson today?

Students : Ready!

Teacher : By the way, have you read the lesson for today?

Students : Yes Miss...

Teacher : If yes, What is it about?

teaching-learning process. It can be done of course if the teacher or lecturer has given the lesson materials to the students in advance.

1. Conduct training sessions

Given the reading text, learners should be taught how to come up with various questions types. The training sessions should include: (a) Modeling the questioning techniques one at a time. This can be done by asking the best student to model it with you in class. Then pair off the students and let them practice the questioning technique that is the focus of the lesson. These steps should be repeated until all questioning strategies are done. (b) Introducing students to the different visual materials that could aid their understanding while in the process of

employing the questioning strategy. To maximize students participation as far as visual aids are concerned, they could bring their own materials in class which they could use during the practice. Also it should be made clear to the student that other questioning strategies can be utilized if the one being used does not work.

2. Employ cooperative learning

The process of cooperation is applied in editing each other's work and sharing one's output through asking questions. This not only maximizes participation, especially in a classroom with more than thirty learners, but also offers an embracing affective climate that increases motivation.

3. Explain clearly the purpose of the task

Learners should be clearly aware why they are the ones formulating and asking the questions instead of the teacher. They should also informed why they are required to give full response as well as reduced form. Knowing clearly what they are doing, learners appreciate the task and the processes involved. Thus, meaningful learning is achieved. Various studies have shown that meaningful learning results in long-term retention.

4. Process the task

After group work, classroom sharing of what transpired in the group activity should be held to give learners feedback on their performance. It is here, in addition to group work, where learning happens because correct and wrong answers are discussed with the guidance of the teacher.

5. Monitor performance

As much as possible, the teacher should check each learner during group work. This will enable the teacher to gather

information that can be used in the feedback session.

Foreign language learners do not have a great number of tools for initiating and maintaining the flow of the conversation. Encouraging them to formulate and ask questions in pairs or in groups can provide stepping stones for continued interaction. It also fosters cooperation, promotes critical thinking, allows them to become creative and innovative, and enhances their sense of competence and self worth. Thus, teacher or lecturer should develop a broad repertoire of questioning technique among students.

It also should be pointed out that employing these questioning techniques in the classroom without taking into consideration other factors will not by any means guarantee that interaction will be stimulated. Ur (2002) mentions factors such as clarity, learning value, and interest while Brown (ibid) enumerates variables, namely, rate of delivery, stress, rhythm, and intonation, interaction, and colloquial language, among others. To address all these a number of suggestions are made such as conducting training sessions, employing cooperative learning, explaining clearly the purpose of the task, processing the task, and monitoring progress.

CONCLUSION

There are a wide well known methods, approaches, and techniques that can be applied in teaching conversation. The application of these ones initiated by the good understanding of the teacher or lecturer his or herself about them all.

Questioning technique is one the technique that can be applied to actively

promote students participation in conversation teaching-learning proses. It gives the students opportunity to experience of being involved in a conversation through the process of explaining lesson given by lecturer. It also creates the active atmosphere both for the teacher or lecturer and the students.

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