

UTILIZING QUESTIONING TECHNIQUE TO IMPROVE THE STUDENTS' COMPREHENSION SKILLS ON EXPOSITORY TEXTS

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ABSTRACT

This collaborative classroom action research (CAR) which was assembled in two cycles aimed at describing the implementation of questioning technique in improving the students' comprehension skills on expository text. The procedures of instruction involve four steps namely (1) explaining and brainstorming; (2) grouping and discussing; (3) leading; and (4) concluding and presenting. The finding which supported by data on the teaching-learning process shows that the percentage of the students who get greater than or equal to 20 point at the first test is 59.5 % and 80 % in the second test. Accordingly, with 70 % of the participants get 20 point in the set-up criteria of success, it concluded that such technique is still outstanding in improving the students' comprehension skills on expository texts type.

Keywords: *Comprehension Skills, Expository Texts, Questioning Technique*

INTRODUCTION

Comprehension skills are absolutely needed by people particularly those who intensively interact with reading in order not to be trapped onto a wrong concept because information they receive in their daily encounter contains propaganda. People who have such skills on their mental storage firstly evaluate what they read before they celebrate or undo it (McNeil, 1992:51). In other words, such skills encourage readers not to deliberately accept one's written ideas without conducting deeply investigation at first.

The term 'comprehension' is actually a broader perspective which contains

amount of competences. They have been categorized based on the students' intellectual skill level that mostly covers literal, inferential, and critical comprehension level (Cahyono&Widiati, 2011: 59). They further said that as a consequence of the classification, the comprehension skills are nowadays offered in a series of reading comprehension (RC) for instance at the English department of State University of Malang, a series of RC course are Literal, Interpretive, Affective, and Critical Reading. But at the English department of IKIP Mataram, this series of it are RC 1, RC 2, RC 3, and RC 4.

Pursuant to the classification of competences and the students' intellectual

level, it is argued that the students whose cognitive level at affective reading or RC 3 should be trained to evaluate author's arguments on a passage through identifying his/her conclusion, distinguishing facts from opinion, determining reliability, and identifying faulty arguments (Carnine et al, 1990; Pedoman Akademik IKIP Mataram, 2008).

A preliminary study has been conducted at the third semester students of class E in English department of IKIP Mataram, in which they have not fulfilled the expectation of curriculum in that institution along with what has been proposed by Carnine and his colleagues. Due to a question is mainly addressed to the teaching technique since their English proficiency which is measured based on their summative score for four language skills in the previous semester is categorized at the intermediate level. In addition, the reading materials were carefully selected in accordance with their cognitive level which is reflected on the readability of texts. By contrast, the procedures of teaching that cover four steps (explaining, discussing, concluding, and exercising) seemed not giving a valuable contribution to achieve the required competences. It is indicated that the maximizing of questions became the main issue, in which it influence on the interaction and role play of all parties.

This paper was carried out to describe the implementation of questioning technique with some modification in its procedures. The modification was on the basis of the weaknesses found during the preliminary done which is also supported

by some theories. Frazee & Rose (1995) uttered that an interactive teaching can be found throughout the current technique among teacher-students, students-students, and students-reading passage.

During the implementation of such technique, it is identified that the role of practitioner is what we call as a frontal teaching or teacher-centered instruction, in which the information senders stand in front of the class for telling, explaining, and asking (Ruddel, 2005:121). However, questions that are utilized here focus on guiding, facilitating, and monitoring students in achieving the required competences as well as encouraging the passive participants to become more active. Moreover, it is assumed that one can not apply a particular type of questions since we can not predict whether the students can answer it or not. Due to the questions in this study focus on what has been proposed by Morino Institute (2001), in which the questions have a room for exploring answer, evidence on the basis of interpretation, and no wrong answer. In term of sequential order of questions, Callahan (1992) proposed questions from lower to higher that might help improve the required skills.

In the process of applying questions, metacognition and prior knowledge play important role. The former deals with understanding texts beyond the author's perception or determining the author's weaknesses (Vacca et al, 1999:46), but the latter comes as a basis to identify the weaknesses and to make a sense on a new experience (Nunan, 1999:201).

METHOD

A collaborative classroom action research was employed, which took 40 students of class E Regular at the English department of IKIP Mataram as subjects. This design comprises four steps namely planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting. In the planning stage, questioning technique model like explaining and brainstorming (step 1), grouping and discussing (step 2), leading (step 3), and concluding and presenting (step 4) is prepared. A criterion for measuring the succeeding of technique implemented is viewed if 70 % of the students gained 20 point from the result of the preliminary reading test, in which it considered some aspects such as the students' initial skills, the complexity of the materials, and the instructional facilities.

RESEARCH FINDING

Cycle 1

In accordance with the teaching-learning process, some challenges could

be noticed as teacher's obstacles that need to be revised are dealing with the classroom management, the leading activity, and the students' difficulty in mastering some of the six required competences. However, the required steps in lesson plan could be followed well, the sequence of the six competences was well-ordered from the easiest to the hardest competences, and the variety of questions is applied.

The result of the reading test shows that the number of the students who gained less than 20 point was 15 out of 37 since from 40, 3 were absent without any reason when the test was administered. Due to they who gained less than the minimum point was 40.5 %, by which 8 students (21.6 %) improved between 1 – 9 point and 7 of them (18.9 %) improved between 10 – 19 points. The students who gained point equal to 20 were 7 (18.9 %) out of 37 and 15 (40.6 %) gained point greater than 20 point or there was 59.5 % gained equal to or greater than 20 point.

No	Interval	Preliminary test	Percentage	Cycle 1 test	Percentage
1	41 – 60	31	77.5 %	2	5.4 %
2	61 – 80	9	22.5 %	30	81.0 %
3	81 – 100	-	-	5	13.6 %
Total		40	100 %	37	100 %

From the above table, it could be clearly seen that from 77.5 % of the students who got score on the interval of 41 – 60 in the preliminary test was drastically decreased into 5.4 % in cycle 1 test. Next, there were 22.5 % of them who got score on the interval of 61 – 80 in the preliminary test improved into 81.0

% in cycle 1 test. At last, there were not any of them who got score on the interval of 81 – 100 in the preliminary test but it was 13.6 % of them got it in cycle 1 test. Due to the students who gained low score were drastically decreased and they who gained high score was improved, it meant that there was an improvement of the

students' comprehension skills in this cycle.

Reflection

Comparing the students' result on first cycle, in which the percentage fell into 59.5 %, to the set up criteria of success that required 70 % of them gained equal to or greater than 20 point, it indicated that questioning technique had not met the expectation of this action research and it is necessary for the researcher to assemble cycle 2. In addition, the 59.5 % was in accordance to what work well during the implementation of the technique need to be maintained. By contrast, the classroom management, the leading activity, and the students' difficulty in mastering some of the six required competences as obstacles

to reach purposes are the main issues to be revised in the following cycle.

Cycle 2

This cycle found that the number of the students who gained less than 20 point was 7 out of 35 since from 40, 2 were absent without any reasons, 2 were sick, and 1 asked permission for visiting his parents in Holland. In one hand, only 20 % students gained less than the minimum point or there were 4 (11.4 %) who improved between 1 – 9 point and 3 (8.6 %) of them improved between 10 – 19 points. On the other hand, there were 8 out of 35 students gained point equal to 20 (22.9 %), 20 out of 35 (57.1 %) gained point greater than 20. All in all, there was 80 % gained equal to or greater than 20 point.

No	Interval	Prelim test	%	Cycle 1 test	%	Cycle 2 test	%
1	41 – 60	31	77.5 %	2	5.4 %	2	5.7 %
2	61 – 80	9	22.5 %	30	81.0 %	22	62.9 %
3	81 – 100	-	-	5	13.6 %	11	31.4 %
Total		40	100 %	37	100 %	35	100 %

It could be clearly seen now that the students' score on preliminary test in the interval of 41 – 60 decreased from 77.5 % to 5.7 % in cycle 2 test. Next, there were 22.5 % of them who got score on the interval of 61 – 80 in preliminary improved into 62.9 % in cycle 2. At last, there were not any of them who got score on the interval of 81 – 100 in the preliminary test but it was 31.4 % of them got it in the cycle 2 test.

It was also noticed that the students' score on cycle 1 test in the interval of 41

– 60 improved from 5.4 % to 5.7 % in cycle 2. Next, there were 81.0 % of them who got score on the interval of 61 – 80 in preliminary decreased into 62.9 % in cycle 2. At last, there were 13.6 % of them who got score on the interval of 81 – 100 in preliminary improved into 31.4 % in cycle 2. Thus, because the students who gained low score were improved and the students who gained high score were decreased, it meant there was an improvement of the students' comprehension skills in cycle 2.

Reflection

The weaknesses made in the previous cycle become priority of discussion in this part. The issue on classroom management was maximally solved resulting a well-organized teaching although there were a few students still did irrelevant things during the activities. The next issue was on the leading

DISCUSSION

The arranging competences from the very simple to the complex one needed to be designed. This point of view had been manifested in many disciplines including RC for instance literal, inferential, and critical level (Carroll, 1977; Davis, 1972 in Carnine, et al, 1990:40; Cahyono, et al, 2011:59). Due to a good arrangement eased learners acquire instructional objectives despite the teaching procedures. Dealing with this current study, the researcher kept doing such strengths for both cycles.

A modification was necessary to conduct on the weaknesses of instruction. However, from the three, there were two urgently modified namely the students'

CONCLUSION

Conducting two cycles in this collaborative classroom action research, it sums up that although questioning technique seems more traditional than any other teaching techniques but it still contributes to improve the students' comprehension skills. The improvement could be seen from the set up criteria of success that had been achieved (the percentage of the students who gain

activity, it was all members alternately got their chance to be led with questions. The last issue remained problem, in which there was not any good solution offered particularly on mastering two out of six competences (determining the reliability and identifying the author's faulty argument). However, the achievements made were well-maintained.

involvement and the classroom management while the familiarity of the required competences eventually repeated which in turn familiar to the learners. The former played important role in putting mutual helpfulness in groups and active participation of all members in discussion therefore questioning can benefit the teachers who want to provide a chance for the students to interact in English in meaningful ways (Richards & Renandya, 2002:52; Gebhard, 1999). The latter should be done maximally as stated by Regina, et al (2007) that organizing classrooms and managing the behavior of students is critical to improve outcomes for students in general and special education or skills.

greater than or equal to 20 point at the first test is 59.5 %, 80 % in the second cycle). Such gain is also supported by the findings on the teaching-learning process, in which the weaknesses made in cycle 1 has been completed in cycle 2 except two out of six required competences and what works well on the current technique is maintained.

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