**TECHNIQUE OF QUESTIONING**

**CARRIED OUT BY NOVICE TEACHERS**

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**Abstract:** *When teachers conduct a lesson, the activity of posing questions always appears in it. The activity of posing questions includes the skills of basic questioning and advanced questioning in which a teacher must acquire. The focus of the study is on the basic questioning techniques only. The purposes of this study are aimed at finding: 1) the basic questioning component skill used by the novice teachers in the classroom, 2) the types of question used by the novice teachers in the classroom, and 3) the levels of questioning category used by the novice teachers in the classroom. This discourse study was based on the analysis of the teacher talk in class. The analysis was based on the recorded data of the five novices when they conducted lessons in class. The recorded data were transcribed. From the transcriptions, teachers’ talk were identified and classified into types of questions, levels of questions, and basic questioning components. The findings of the study are: 1) novices used higher number of closed questions; 2) there were more low level questions conducted by novices; 3) the large number of the skill components in their teaching activities were the distributing, pausing and reacting.*

***Key Words:*** *Novice Teachers,* *Technique of* *Questioning,*

**INTRODUCTION**

Teaching is a complex process. It is a complex process because when teachers conduct teaching activities they have to consider many components. The components such as students, environments, teaching materials, and teaching techniques must be in teachers’ minds when they prepare the classroom activities. To become professional teachers, novice teachers need to develop their teaching skills through training, and of course, more experience in a classroom practice. The skills that novice teachers must possess are the skills of stimulus variation, set induction, closure, silence and non-verbal cues, reinforcement skills, and questioning (Allen and Ryan, 1969 in Stones, 1972). The last skill, novice teachers should be able to conduct techniques of questioning in the classroom activities using basic and advanced questioning.

Basic questioning, as the main discussion in this study, encourages the class interaction and students participation. Interaction is an important word for language teachers. It is the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings, or ideas between two or more people, resulting in a reciprocal effect on each other. (Brown, 2001:165).

The most important key to creating an interactive language classroom is the initiation of the interaction by the teacher. In the second language classroom where students often do not have a great number of tools for initiating and maintaining language, questioning strategies provided necessary stepping stones to communication.

Questioning is an important element of teacher talk. It is important because on the average, teacher asks about two questions a minute … (Rosenshine, 1971, cited in Turney 1983). The same opinion is stated by Stevens (1972) that approximately eighty percent of a teacher’s school day was spent asking questions to students. More contemporary research on teacher questioning behaviors and patterns, indicate that this has not changed. Teachers today ask between 300-400 questions each day (Leven and Long, 1981 cited in Brualdi, 1998:1).

When teachers pose question, their questions can relate to a teaching plan or teacher’s lesson material. Questioning which is related to teaching plan has several reasons (Morgan and Saxton, 1991):

1. the act of asking questions helps teachers keep students actively involved in lessons;
2. while answering questions, students have the opportunity to openly express their ideas and thoughts;
3. questioning students enables other students to hear different explanations of the material by their peers;
4. asking questions helps teachers to pace their lessons and moderate student behavior;
5. questioning helps teachers to evaluate student learning and revise their lesson as necessary.

Considering the above fact, I conducted a study which investigates the novice teachers’ skill in conducting basic questioning in the classroom. Basic questioning which is related to teaching plan and encourages students’ participation and interaction in the classroom will be discussed. The discussion of the novice teachers’ skill was based on Turney’s micro skills in conducting basic questioning. The skill of basic questioning can be observed by using a checklist of the skill components on basic questioning.

**PROBLEM STATEMENTS**

By discussing the components of questioning especially the basic questioning skill made by novices, I tried to answer the following questions:

* + 1. Which types of basic questioning components do the novice teachers use in the classroom?
    2. What types of question do the novice teachers use in the classroom?
    3. What levels of questioning category do the novice teachers use in the classroom?

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purposes of this study are as the following:

1. to explain which types of basic questioning components used by the novice teachers in the classroom;

2. to explain what types of question used by the novice teachers in the classroom;

3. to explain what levels of questioning category used by the novice teachers in the classroom.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

I investigated the facts of the level of questioning category and type of questions used by novices of IKIP PGRI Semarang in the classroom situation. This research investigated the novices’ skill in using the questioning based on the basic questioning components used by the novice teachers in the classroom.

The result of the research will be implemented in the institution where I work. It will be the teacher trainers’ consideration in conducting the microteaching class for the novices in their training program. It is expected that the novices will get the advantages from the result of this research to improve their ability in conducting questioning in their practice teaching. It is also expected that this ability will improve teaching learning activity. Hopefully, the teaching objectives will be achieved.

**DISCUSSION**

**The Role of a Teacher**

In the discussion of teaching and learning, teachers have many roles in the classroom. According to Freire (1983) cited in Gibbons (2002), teachers are seen to “deposit “skills or knowledge in the memory of the students. Teaching learning relationship is the transmission and reception. Teachers transmit the knowledge and the students receive the knowledge, while Piaget (cited in Gibbons 2002) stated that education is not as a matter of receiving information but of intelligent inquiry and thought. Learners are placed at the center of educational process.

Vygotsky’s theory cited in Richards (2007) stated that learning was through interaction. Interaction and negotiation of meaning were seen as central to learning through tasks that require attention to the meaning, transfer of information, and that require pushed output. Learning occurs through negotiation the learner and more advanced language users- in this case is the teachers. This process is known as scaffolding. The term scaffolding talk was also used by Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976). Scaffolding here is the teachers’ assistance to help the students how to do something so that the students will be able to move towards new skills, concepts, or levels of understanding. Teacher is the model for the students.

In short as stated by Richard (2007) Learning was through scaffolding. This implies that for language learning to take place there must be certain elements provided in the classroom. Shrum and Glisan (2000, 14-15) cited in Richard (2007) stated the element of opportunities for learners to negotiate meaning in the target language, with assistance from the teacher and from one another. I can see here how important the scaffolding talk in the classroom is.Teachers’ role in this scaffolding is very important, since teachers’ talk will be the initiation for the students’ talk in the classroom.

**Teacher’s Talk**

In the discussion of classroom talk, there are two kinds of talk. The first talk is the students’ talk and the second is the teacher’s talk. In this study, the the teacher’s talk refers to the novice talk.

The role of teacher’s talk in language learning is very important as it is stated by Vygotsky that teachers need to stimulate students to talk in class or what Wegerif and Mercer (1996) cited in Gibbons (2002) refers to as “exploratory talk”. This is the kind of talk that allows learners to explore and clarify concepts or try out a line of thought, through questioning, hypothesizing, making logical deductions, and responding to others’ ideas.

In this study, the novice teachers’ questionings were discussed. In class there are two kinds of teachers ‘questioning. The first is the teachers’ questioning in which the main function is to control the class during the lesson, for example, reminding the students to be quiet, checking the students’ attendance, and setting the seating arrangement. The second is the teachers’ talk which is the main function is to conduct the lesson. In the second terms, it included some discussion such as the types of questions, the level of questions, and how the teachers pose the questions to the students.

The teachers’ questioning whose function is for conducting a lesson is investigated. Students’ talk was not investigated but in prompting and re-directing, in the part of how teachers pose questions, their talk is also considered in the analysis.

**Types** **of questions**

In the previous research which was done by Ann Dashwood about the alternatives to questioning, it showed that teachers posed open questions more than closed questions in the classroom. In my research I investigated which types of questions used by novices in the classroom.

This part discusses whether teachers ask closed or open questions. The explanation of the two basic types of questions is based on the types of questions written by instructional department (2006: 3). The types are as follows:

* 1. Closed questions

A closed question is one in which there are a limited number of acceptable answers. This type of question is calling for one word or one input answer.

2. Open questions

An open question is one in which there are many acceptable answers. This type of question is calling for opinions, views, feelings, or experience. Since open questions are designed to give information.

Teaching learning processes in the classroom include three categories. They are teacher behavior, student behavior, and other. In the category of teacher behavior, it consists of all actions a teacher would make in the classroom. The actions are planning, management and instruction. (Huitt, 2003)

Planning refers to all of activities a teacher might do to get ready to interact with students in the classroom. Management refers to controlling student behavior, while instruction refers to guiding student learning. There are varieties of specific teacher classroom variables that have been related to student learning. Walberg (1986) cited in Huitt (2003), in a meta-analysis of teacher effectiveness research found support for the following individual variables:

1. use of positive reinforcement
2. cues and corrective feedback
3. cooperative learning activities
4. higher order questioning
5. use of advance organizers

In this study, I have to try to find the relevant theories related to the skill of conducting basic questioning. The theories cover the basic questioning skill components, the levels of questioning category, and the types of questioning.

**Basic** **questioning skill components**

Basic questioning skills have nine components. Those components are covered in Turney (1983:97-98). According to Turney, basic questioning skill components are structuring, phrasing, focusing, re-directing, distributing, pausing, reacting, prompting, changing the level of cognitive demand

The detailed explanations of the above components are as follows:

1. Structuring

At the beginning of the lesson, students need to know a clear objective of the lesson. Teachers’ structuring will help the students to get the information on the objectives. According to Turney (1983: 64) structuring in the context of basic questioning skills refers to:

* 1. teacher statements which signal the purpose and direction of a questioning sequence;
  2. the teacher’s provision of relevant information before a question or series of questions to assist students formulate appropriate answers;
  3. teacher’s comments during a question-and-answer sequence which summarize or extend student answers, so providing information to facilitate student involvement in the next question or series of questions.

Teachers can do structuring by:

1. providing a frame of reference for student thinking,
2. giving specific information,
3. making the purpose of questions clear,
4. using the board to draw ideas together.

2. Phrasing

When a teacher poses a question for which there is a predetermined ‘known’ answer, the teacher occupies the role of ‘primary knower’ (Berry, 1981, cited in Dashwood, 2005). The teacher poses question and students are expected to provide specific answer. Students sometimes get the difficulty in responding to teachers’ questions. It is sometimes caused by teachers’ questions which are too complicated and no clues for the answer. Teachers can help them by phrasing the questions.

Phrasing is related to the way the questions are phrased to make sure that the wording is clear and the focus is unambiguous. In pointing out the need for questions to be carefully worded, Davis, 1981, cited in Turney (1983) suggested several important aspects to consider when preparing questions. They should be simple, well defined with a clear focus, be pitched at a reasonable level, be relevant to the matters being discussed, and they should be thought-provoking. Phrasing can be done by using language that is clear, and appropriate to the level of students, using short questions easy to follow and specifying clearly the task for students, and making judicious use of specific leading questions (Turney, 1983:97)

3. Focusing

The language of a teacher’s questions should not only be clear but the questions should have sharp focus. Hyman (1970) suggested that there are five main types of focus questions:

1. questions whose function is to provide the general topic area for discussion;
2. questions which serve to introduce a topic and indicate to the participants the intended direction of a discussion;
3. questions which serve to re-focus or sharpen a discussion that has wandered a little;
4. questions which serve to change the sub-topic of discussion;
5. questions which used to switch the discussion from its originally intended direction.

The activity of focusing as stated by Turney, can be done by carefully defining the scope of a question, asking questions which centre on a single task, and not asking double barreled questions (1983:97).

4. Re-directing

In a class discussion, teachers sometimes ask the same questions to some students. This activity is called as redirection. Redirection refers to the technique of asking the same question of several different students in sequence, with either minimal or no teacher comments intervening (Borg, 1970; Wright and Nuthall, 1970). The purpose of this strategy is to minimize teacher intrusion into the discussion and to heighten the possibility of students reacting to and building on one another’s responses. Selecting students in turn to answer questions and using verbal and non-verbal means are part of the re-directing.

1. Distributing

Distributing refers to the way in which teachers distribute questions to the students. In distributing questions, teachers should carefully select students to respond to questions. This will give the students the chance to contribute in the class activity. Distributing can be done by asking questions of students located in all parts of the room and posing questions to the whole class and then to the individuals.

1. Pausing

Pausing can occur both after a question has been asked and after a student has responded. It is important for teachers to pause long enough upon posing a question to allow student to comprehend the question, think about the possible answers to it and formulate a response to it. The importance of pausing is stated by Rochester, it is particularly necessary to pause after questions which require opinions, interpretations or more complex levels of thought from students (1973). Teachers can do pausing by giving students adequate time to think about a question before answering and by allowing students time to reflect on answers put forward.

1. Reacting

Reacting refers to the teachers’ reactions to students’ answers and provides clues for effective practice. Reacting can be done by accepting answers with warmth and enthusiasm, using students’ answers to build up the lesson, and incorporating students’ ideas into lesson summaries. In relation to the teachers’ reacting, Clark et al. (1979) have drawn attention to the praising correct answers, indicating when answers are incorrect and providing reasons for their incorrectness, prompting replies, writing correct answers on the board and re-directing a question when a prompt has been unsuccessful.

1. Prompting

Prompting refers to the way a teacher responds to a student who fails to articulate an answer or gives an inadequate answer. Prompting can be done by assisting the student who fails to give an adequate answer, rephrasing questions which have been difficult, offering simpler questions before returning to those that have caused difficulty, and backtracking to draw attention to relevant information.

1. Changing the level of cognitive demand

In this component of basic questioning, teachers change the level of cognitive demand by balancing questions requiring factual recall with more difficult questions, establishing a gradual progression from more simple questions related to concrete examples to questions requiring higher levels of thought, preparing questions carefully to assist progression in questioning, using graphs, diagrams, documents, apparatus to assist in varying the level of cognitive demand, and asking students questions about their feelings and emotional responses to situations.

Considering the last component of the skill in basic questioning, mastering the questioning strategies are important skills for the novice teachers to acquire.

**The levels of questioning category**

Questioning should be used purposefully to achieve the goals. Teachers should ask questions which will require students to use the thinking skill. One of the suggestions for teachers to improve their quality of the classroom questions is by determining the intellectual level of the teacher questions. Bloom’s taxonomy can be applied in this case. (Brown, 2001:172)

Based on Bloom’s taxonomy, there are six levels of questioning category. Bloom’s taxonomy is a hierarchical system of ordering thinking skills from lower to higher, with the higher levels including all the cognitive skills from the lower levels.

The six question categories and typical classroom question words which are adapted from Kinsela (1991) and Bloom (1956) cited in Brown (2001) are knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation. The following are the detailed description of the levels and examples of questions:

a) Level 1 – knowledge: exhibit previously learned material by recalling definitions, principles, formulas, facts, terms, basic concepts and answers.

b) Level 2 – comprehension: demonstrate understanding of facts and ideas or the meaning of remembered material by explaining in one’s own words or citing examples, comparing, translating, interpreting, giving descriptions, and stating main ideas..

c) Level 3 – application: using the new information in a new context to solve a problem, to answer a question, or to perform another task. The information used may be rules, principles, formulas, theories, concepts, or procedures.

d) Level 4 – analysis: examining and breaking information into parts by identifying motives or causes, making inferences and finding evidence to support generalizations.

e) Level 5 – synthesis: compiling information together in a different way by combining elements in a new pattern or structure or proposing alternative solutions.

f) Level 6 – evaluation: presenting and defending opinion by making judgments about information, validity of ideas or quality of work based on set of criteria.

The above levels of questioning category can be classified into two categories, “lower-level” and “higher-level” questions. Lower-level questions are those at the knowledge, comprehension, and simple application levels of the taxonomy. Higher-level questions are those requiring complex application. Analysis, synthesis, and evaluation are in the higher-level questions.

**METHOD OF THE STUDY**

In the discussion of qualitative research there are some types of study. One of them is the study on document analysis. The document analysis is a study which focuses on the analysis and interpretation of written, recording, and notes (Ali Saukah, 2007). Discourse analysis is one of the types of the study in the document analysis. In this study the discourse analysis focuses on the analysis and interpretation from recording data.

Nunan (1992, 160) stated that discourse analysts have studied textual factors as well as speech acts such as inviting, apologizing, and denying and interpreted within coherent discourse. In this study I investigated the basic questioning components in the teachers talk and interpreted within the classroom discourse.

**METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION**

The data of the study are spoken data in the form of the novice teachers’ talk on basic questioning so recording is a proper way of getting the data. Tape recorder was used to get the data. The reason of choosing tape recorder as the tool to get the data is because it is easier and simpler to apply. When the novice teacher was doing the teaching activity, the tape recorder can be put on the table or put in the pocket to the clearer voice.

The activities of five novice teachers during the classroom activity were recorded. Every novice activities were recorded twice, so there will be 10 recording of the novices’ activity. Their performance lasted for about 45 minutes for one session meeting.

**METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS**

There are four steps used in methods of data analysis as follows:

1. Transcribing

It was the process of transforming spoken data into written form. The aim of this process is to get the detail of the novices’ talk and non-verbal information accompanying the novices’ performances. What the entire novice teachers said in the classroom activities was transcribed and also the non verbal information was noted but it was left unanalyzed. Non verbal information was needed to give a clear clue of what the novices and the students did while they were talking.

The first and the second turns of the novices’ performances were transcribed. The final process of transcribing of the first participant’s first and second turn can be seen in the appendix. The non verbal information was also noted in these transcriptions. Non-verbal information was added here as the additional information of the activity in class which was not spoken. The non verbal information was taken from the researcher’s notes during the time of observation and recording activity in class.

1. Identifying

After the process of transcribing data, the next step was identifying the data. In the process of identification novices’ talk and the students’ talk were separated. All the novice teachers’ talks from the transcription were identified, and then they were used for the next process of classifying. The aim of this activity is to list the novices’ talk and the students’ talk. It is important to make this list so that it makes the process of classification easier. Since this study analyzed the novice teachers’ talk on basic questioning so in this process the novice teachers’ parts were identified.

1. Classifying

In this step the novice teachers’ talk on conducting the lesson were classified according to the use of the types of questions , level of questions, basic questioning. It is to find out how many times the novices make use the two types of questions, the two levels of questions, and the nine basic questioning components.

The novice teachers’ talks were classified according to the types of the questions. The classification of the types of questions was based on the types of questions written by instructional development department. Then the novices’ talks were classified according to the levels of question. The levels of questions classification was based on the categories of questions and typical classroom question words which is taken from Bloom’s taxonomy. And the last one, their talks were classified according to the components of basic questioning skills using Turney’s basic questioning components skill.

* + 1. Interpreting

The last activity is making interpretation on the novice teachers’ basic questioning skills. The interpretation here was made in the scope of classroom spoken discourse. The interpretation of the novice teachers’ utterances in classroom were based on the intention of the novices, for example whether they wanted to do the structuring, prompting, or any components in the basic questioning. It was also interpreted how they did the questioning, for example in focusing whether they asked questions which center on a single task or they defined the scope of the questions.

**RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The findings of the study are shown in the following tables of classification based on the types of questions, levels of questions, and basic questioning components skill.

***Table 1***

***Classification of the types of question of the five participants***

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **PARTICIPANT** | | **TYPES OF QUSTION** | |
| **CLOSED** | **OPEN** |
| 1st Participant | 1st turn | 18 | 8 |
| 2nd turn | 26 | 8 |
| 2nd Participant | 1st turn | 19 | 8 |
|  | 2nd turn | 29 | 18 |
| 3rd Participant | 1st turn | 24 | 4 |
|  | 2nd turn | 39 | 8 |
| 4th Participant | 1st turn | 65 | 28 |
|  | 2nd turn | 48 | 20 |
| 5th Participant | 1st turn | 56 | 1 |
|  | 2nd turn | 66 | 3 |

***Table 2***

***Classification of the levels of question of the five participants***

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **PARTICIPANT** | | **LEVEL OF QUSTION** | |
| **LOW** | **HIGH** |
| 1st Participant | 1st turn | 26 | 1 |
| 2nd turn | 35 | 12 |
| 2nd Participant | 1st turn | 26 | - |
| 2nd turn | 45 | - |
| 3rd Participant | 1st turn | 24 | 3 |
| 2nd turn | 40 | 5 |
| 4th Participant | 1st turn | 104 | 4 |
| 2nd turn | 57 | 12 |
| 5th Participant | 1st turn | 55 | 7 |
| 2nd turn | 71 | 2 |

***Table 3***

***Classification of basic questioning components of the five participants***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **PARTICIPANTS** | | **BASIC QUESTIONING COMPONENTS** | | | | | | | | |
| Structuring | Phrasing | Focusing | Redirecting | Distributing | Pausing | Reacting | Prompting | Changing level of cognitive demand |
| 1st Participant | 1st turn | 1 | - | 2 | - | 19 | 7 | 5 | - | - |
| 2nd turn | 1 | - | 1 | - | 4 | 7 | 1 | - | 1 |
| 2ndParticipant | 1st turn | 1 | **-** | 1 | - | 1 | 5 | 4 | - | - |
| 2nd turn | 1 | - | 7 | - | 1 | 3 | 13 | 1 | - |
| 3rdParticipant | 1st turn | 1 | - | - | **-** | 22 | 3 | 24 | - | 1 |
| 2nd turn | 1 | - | - | - | 4 | 5 | 23 | - | - |
| 4thParticipant | 1st turn | 1 | - | - | - | 18 | 5 | 9 | - | - |
| 2nd turn | 1 | - | 7 | - | 25 | 15 | - | - | - |
| 5thParticipant | 1st turn | 1 | - | 2 | 1 | 27 | 2 | 3 | 1 | - |
| 2nd turn | 1 | - | 5 | - | 23 | 7 | 3 | 1 | - |

**CONCLUSIONS**

The conclusions are as the following:

1. Generally the novices of the English classes observed in this study make use of more closed questions type than the open ones. It can be seen from the table of classification of the types of question.
2. For the analysis on the level of question, the highest numbers of questions used by the teacher are on the low level question. Although there are some high level questions used but it is not as many as the low level moreover it can be considered too low in number compared to the low level question.
3. In the classification of the basic questioning components, the large numbers of the skill components are the distributing, pausing and reacting. Since these three components seem easy for them to do.

**SUGGESTIONS**

1. The result of the study can be used as the feed back for the institution of teacher training to prepare the novices to master the skill components of basic questioning especially in the components of structuring, phrasing, prompting, redirecting, focusing, and changing the level of cognitive demand
2. It is also important to train them to make use more high level questions and open questions.
3. Novices must prepare everything before they come to the class. They have to prepare well the material, activities, and method to be used. They have to make sure that there are no grammatical mistakes and inappropriate expressions used in class.
4. Novices also need to learn to correct the students’ response.

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