

THE QUESTIONING TECHNIQUE AND ITS ROLE IN DEVELOPING THINKING SKILLS: ESPECIALLY PRODUCTIVE SKILLS (WRITING)¹

Hassan Malik Faraj, Prof. Dr. Bushra Saadoon Mohammed Al- Noori,

University of Baghdad, Iraq

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ABSTRACT

Promotion of the critical and creative thinking is a important competency from students learning a second language. it is proposed that second language barriers in writing skills may due to the lack of ideas rather than complex in lexical items and syntax. the current study attempts to check whether asking questions prior to writing will improve the secondary students studying in a school. The results that are adopted from another study, from T-test showed that sample who received two weeks treatment demonstrated 18% improvement in their writing skill. The findings suggested that questioning technique is an effective technique in promotion students to write.

1. INTRODUCTION

Critical thinking has been identified as a basic competency expected from students in second language learning process (Fishbein, Eckart, Lauver, Van Leeuwen, & Langmeyer, 1990; Janes & Hauer, 1988). questioning technique is considered as the main strategy to develop students to think critically. One major obstacle teachers usually face with in the classroom is that learners seem to be passive in interactive activities and once teacher asks a question, only one or two students raise their hands. This may be right in case of writing, as students are not eager to write an essay. Having lack of knowledge is believed as one reason that students are unwilling to participate

in productive skills such as writing. It is likely that students lack participation is because of a blank mind and not because of linguistics incompetency. This should be differentiated in research. Hence, this study intends to investigate the effect of questioning technique on developing critical thinking in second language learners. the present study goals at using questioning technique to encourage students to improve their critical thinking, which, in turn, leads to become more active in producing language, including speaking and mostly writing, since it is believed that good writing results from good thinking.

Teachers ask questions for several reasons (Morgan and Saxton, 1991 as cited from Brualdi, 1998):

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1. The act of asking questions assist teachers keep learners actively involved in lesson.
2. While answering questions, students have the chances to openly express their ideas.
3. Questioning students enables other learners to hear different explanations of the content via their peers
4. Asking questions helps teachers to follow their lesson.
5. Questioning students helps teachers to assess student learning and revise their lesson.

- To stimulate learners to ask questions for themselves and others
- To structure a mission in such a way that learning will be maximized
- To diagnose specific difficulties inhibiting students learning
- To develop reflective and comment by students on the responses of other members of the group.
- To afford an chance for pupils to learn vicariously through discussion

As one may deduce, questioning is one of the more popular mode of teaching. although the act of asking questions has the potential to greatly facilitates the learning process it also has the capacity to turn a child off if done incorrectly (Brualdi, 1998). Questioning is an integral part of scientific inquiry and the learning process. Students' questions can reveal much about the quality of their thinking and conceptual understanding (Watts and Alsop 1995, White and Gunstone 1992, Woodward 1992), their alternative frameworks and confusion about various concepts (MaskiH and Pedrosa de Jesus 1997), their reasoning (Donaldson 1978), and what they want to know (Elstgeest 1985).

1.1. WHY DO TEACHERS ASK QUESTIONS?

Reasons for teachers asking questions to their students in classrooms are often different from those in everyday conversation. Put another way the rules of speaking in the classroom are different from those in other contexts. We question students not to get new skills for ourselves but to find out what the student knows. This characteristic is stressed by Ausubel: "The most important factor effecting learning is what the learner knows. Ascertain this and teach him/her accordingly" (1978 as cited from Wragg 2001).

Other factors for asking questions are to stimulate recall, to deepen understanding, to develop imagination, and to encourage problem solving. There are also questions to do with classroom management such as, 'Have you got your books?' Turney et al/ (1973), in their first edition of the Sydney Micro Series, list twelve possible functions of questions (see below).

- To arouse interest.
- To focus attention on a particular concept.
- To develop an active method to learning

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies in teaching a second language suggest that asking questions is a important factor in the processes of teaching and learning (Gall, 1970; Sanders, 1966; Wilen, 1991). Students learning, thinking, participation, and their level of engagement based on the types of questions teachers formulate and use in the classroom (Wilen, 1991). However, to checking the role of questions in learner`s creative thinking, first, it is vital to clarify what does it means by a "question". The most understanding definition for question is suggested by Cotton (2001). He believe that : A question is any sentence which has interrogative function or form". Moreover, he asserts that in classroom setting, teacher questions are defined as instructional cues or stimuli that convey to students the content elements to be learned and directions for what they are to do and how they are to do it. Cotton , 2001: 1). It is also approved that there is a significant relationship between teachers' classroom questioning and student outcomes i.e. achievement, retention, thinking skills, and level of participation. Furthermore, some scholars believe that thinking is not driven by answers but mostly by questions. Elder and Paul (2003: 3), for example, indicate that questions define tasks and express problems and issues, answers, on the other hand, often signal a full stop in thought Thus, it is perceived that why students who usually ask questions in the classroom tend to learn and think better than those who are quiet during the most of class time. On the importance of questioning in the classroom, Elder and Paul (2003) assert that effective questioning leads to transformation of the students` thoughts and ideas, Strother (1989) also highlights the significant role of questioning, believing that "questioning is important because questions motivate students, focus their attention, elicit deeper processing of information, tell learners how well they are

mastering content, and give them an chance for practice and rehearsal". Furthermore, according to Cotton (2001) the purpose of teacher's classroom questions is to encourage students to become actively involved in lessons; to develop critical thinking skills; and to

Stimulate students to pursue knowledge on their own. Nasreen (2003) also adds some reasons for asking questions: to signal an interest in hearing what learners feel and think; to encourage a problem-solving approach to think and learning, and to deepen learner's thinking level. Since the majority of the questions asked in the classroom are at the lower cognitive level of students, hence, one strategy for teachers is to carefully plan questions that are at higher cognitive levels (Cotton, 1988). By incorporating higher-level questions into the classroom, students would be encouraged to effectively promote their critical thinking skills

2.1. Socratic Model of Questioning

most studies on the classroom questioning often have been started by invoking the Socratic method of using questions. Socrates' model of questioning is powerful teaching approach to pitons; to expose them to contradictions which finally lead to a new skills and wisdom. According to Paul and Elder (2006), teachers, learners, or indeed anyone in probing thinking at a deep level can and should construct Socratic questions. Socrates (399-470 B. C.), the well-known Athenian philosopher, believed that a disciplined content of thoughtful questioning enables learners to produce ideas logically. Socratic questions can be phrased in three general ways:

1. **To explain a general domains of course material:** "Describe different types of tectonic movement along plate boundaries."
2. **To encourage creativity:** "Think of as many causes as possible for the origin of a large boulder found perched upon a nearly flat plain that is underlain by a rock type different from that of the boulder."
3. **To focus attention on a particular problem:** "Compare the evidence used by scientists to support the idea of biological evolution (or modern global warming) with that used by others who reject the possibility of evolution (or global warming)."

2.3. Statement of the Problem

Although questioning technique has get more attention nowadays, few papers of this sort have been checked the role of questioning technique on writing skill particularly in the context. the question proposed in the this study is as follow:

Does questioning technique effect on promoting a critical thinking in the students?

Based on the pre mentioned question, the present study aims at using questioning technique to encourage learners to promote their creative thinking, which, in benefit, leads to their effective production of language knowledge, including speaking and mostly writing.

3. METHOD

3.1. Study Design

The design of the paper was based on experimental study, in which the participants have divided into two of experimental and control groups. Therefore, a pre-test was for checking the ability to write. The participants were divided into two groups; experimental and control for the experimental group, students were taught the lesson by utilizing the questioning technique while the control group were given a lesson without using the questioning technique. a post-test was given to both groups in to evaluate their improvement.

3.2. Participants

60 students from Form four classes of SMK Pekan Nanas, Pontian, and Johor were chosen as the sample of this research. The learners were picked- up from two classes of high and lower achievement learners. By choosing the lower achievers, it has expected that the technique of using questioning technique will facilitate their learning process. The students were put during the research as a group without discriminating the learners according to the race, gender or social culture.

3.3. Instruments

3.3.1. Pre-test

A pre-test was as the first tool in this paper. The goal of the pre- test was to identify learners 'ability to write an essay. In the pre-test, the two groups have given a photo where they had to write an essay based on the photo. Based on the pre-test outcomes, the experiments were managed where questioning

technique has been used in the teaching for experimental team while for the control team; traditional methods as note-expansion and picture stimulus have been used.

3.3.2. Treatment

For experimental group, participants get two treatment within two weeks. In the first treatment, different kinds of questions and how to use them at writing a descriptive composition have introduced to sample. The explanation was given so that students could get the clear pictures how questioning has been used. For the other treatment, a picture has been given to the sample together with the note expansion where they have to construct the questions that related to the picture and the given note. teacher discussed the suitability of the question with the picture and how to answer it. However, for the control group, a directed writing was given to participants where they had to write an essay based on the content. They have to write everything on their own. for the other activities, the same photo with the note expansion was given to them; they were asked to expand the notes given to describe the picture .

3.3.3. Post-test

After finishing the lesson, a post-test was given to the groups to evaluate their progress. In order to know the validity and the reliability of the pre-test and post-test as well as the treatments lesson, the content as pictures and worksheet that have been used by one teacher from in SMK Pekan Nanas were selected as the instruments for this research.

4. PROCEDURE OF THE STUDY

During the application of questioning technique in teaching, two lesson have been conduct in SMK

Pekan Nanas School in Johore Bahru. All the group members have created the lessons, were emphasis on questioning,. At first, the lesson plans were meant for students in Form five. However, due to some problems, the lessons have to be carry out to From four students. the students` levels of competence in form four classes were not so different from Form five students. Before the startnbing of the lesson, the teacher explained the students that they will be videotaped and observed through the lesson. Questioning can be given not only after they have studied the theme, but also from the starting until the end of each lesson. the first lesson, a set of questions were coined for the set induction, where students were shown on a few pictures regarding places to visit in country that have been pasted in front of the class. questions have been given in order to arouse students` thinking skills. They might have gone to the place shown and teachers may ask them to elaborate more if they have been to that specific place. All students were actively involved even though they were shy in the first place.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The major question addressed in this paper was whether the use of questioning technique would promote students` writing. the outcomes of the post-test show clear that the participants in the experimental team who were exposed to writing by using questioning technique showed a improvement in post-test compared to control team who used the traditional method of writing. Therefore, the result analysis have answered the paper question that questioning technique can be used to help students develop their thinking skills in writing compared to old method. The differences of the pre-test and post-test were listed in the following table:

Table 1 PRE-TEST and POST-TEST

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<i>No</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Pre-test</i>	<i>Action taken</i>	<i>Action Taken</i>	<i>Post-test</i>	<i>Differences</i>
1	Control	63%	Guided writing	Picture description	63%	---
2	Experimental	63%	Questioning technique (Picture description)	Picture description Questioning technique (Organizing idea)	80%	17%

In terms of technique, the learners were able to use the technique taught in the discussion. Even though just three quarters of the class were able to understand the technique, they pass their knowledge with the rest of their partner, and tried to find out the answers to the questions. It was found that the students were engaged and held responsible for participating in the argument.

6. CONCLUSION

Most of the students find writing as the most difficult skill compared to other skills i.e. listening, speaking and reading skills. Regardless of primary or secondary learners, writing is the proficient that most of the students are lacking of it. The more common reason given by the teachers based on observation of their students are passive learners during interactive activities and lack of ideas. Questioning technique was

used to faster the students to think critically and actively participate in writing activity conducted in the classroom. Questioning plays a vital role in teaching which may arouse students' thinking skills.

As conclusion, the use of questioning technique in teaching writing had suitable impact on writing, as it could change the students' perspective toward writing from passive learners to active ones that participate in the questions and answers' discussion session. Moreover, questioning technique helped them to promote their critical thinking during stages as they learnt how to organize and developed their ideas in writing through their teacher and peers' backup. It was also proven that using questioning technique to teach writing to students is more effective compared to old methods of writing, which are unable to promote students' interest in writing and create critical thinking environment among the students.

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