



SHAPING YOUNG LEARNERS' CHARACTER THROUGH TEACHER QUESTIONING IN ENGLISH CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

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ABSTRAK

Abstrak: Artikel ini memberikan gagasan tentang pentingnya pembentukan karakter bagi siswa, terutama bagi pelajar muda. Orang menyadari bahwa pembentukan karakter baik seseorang dimulai sejak usia dini. Banyak cara yang harus dilakukan untuk membentuk karakter khususnya bagi anak didik, salah satunya melalui tanya jawab guru dalam kegiatan kelas bahasa Inggris. Kegiatan tersebut dapat diterapkan pada siswa sekolah dasar, dan hasilnya diharapkan karakter siswa menjadi lebih baik dengan menunjukkan kemampuannya dalam menjawab pertanyaan dengan lebih sopan, bertanya kepada guru secara bergiliran, dan menghargai pendapat orang lain.

Abstract: *This article provides ideas on the importance of character building for students, especially for the young learners. People realize that shaping good character of somebody is started at the early stage of the age. Many ways shall be done to shape character especially for young learners, one of them is through teacher questioning in English classroom activities. The activities can be applied to the elementary school students, and the result is expected the students' characters become better by showing their ability in answering questions more polite, asking the teachers in turns, and respect opinions of other people.*

A. LATAR BELAKANG

Characters of the people reflect the nation. This proverb has a very deep meaning as characters hold a crucial role in determining what a nation is. Character means universal values toward humans' behaviours that involve all aspects of life, connected to God, their own selves, and other people and the environment, in term of thoughts, attitudes, behaviours, feelings, and actions based on the norms of religion, law, culture, custom and tradition (Suryadi, 2017). Moreover, character is commonly identical to the personality that signs a certain characteristic of a person (Albertus, 2011). This explains that each person in this world differs to others by the characteristics they bring. The situation implies that a better the characters of the people in, the better others will value the country.

Shaping a good character of people starts from the beginning stage of the age. A child tends to copy what he/she sees, hears, and asks. It is known that children acquire life lesson, as well as value and norm about what is good and bad, much more easily since they are at their infant age. When the children moreover have good examples, they become people with good attitudes and behaviours later when they grow. There are many ways of forming and shaping young learners' character. Starting from home where parents hold a crucial role in educating the child how to behave and act good and acceptable, then the environment influences as well

where they interact in the neighbourhood. Thus, as the young are ready to enter the school, teachers and schoolmates as well other components in school give contribution to their life lesson of how they are going to be as human.

In formal education, young learners are considered as those who go to pre-elementary schools and elementary stage (age 4-11 year). Therefore, education is defined as process to prepare young learners for their social inheritance and involves three major matters; development of knowledge, training of mental abilities, and building character (Walsh, 1990). These explanations clearly state that how crucial and important shaping students' character, starting from a very beginning age. That is a strong reason why it is important to take full attention, in early age of children, to educate them properly.

Moreover, giving questions seem to be common activities in conversations done by people, especially teachers or educators in the classroom interactions. From the major aims of asking questions that is done by teacher in the classroom, it can be drawn a number of purposes of teacher questioning in the classroom as follow: (1) to develop interest and motivate students to become actively involved in lessons, (2) to evaluate students' preparation and check on homework or seatwork completion, (3) to develop critical thinking skills and inquiring attitudes, (4) to review and

summarize previous lessons, (5) to nurture insights by exposing new relationships, (6) to assess achievement of instructional goals and objectives, and (7) to stimulate students to pursue knowledge on their own (Brualdi Timmins, 2011).

Furthermore, it is viewed that teachers' questioning is one of effective technique in shaping young learners' character, especially in English classroom activities. By proposing questions in the classroom activities, the young learners are guided to discuss, to comment, or even to criticize what is being questioned. Since teacher questions give the children the opportunity to connect what they already know with what they need to examine and reflect on their own experience, the questions are able to give contribution to moral value about what is being taught to the young learners.

Some researches that have been conducted in this discussion vary one to another. The concerns are around moral and character development (Huitt, 2004), Teacher's questioning in elementary EFL classrooms (楊志芳, 2010), impact of teacher questions (Hamiloglu, 2012), using games activities in teaching activities for young learners (Kalendova, 2008), effects of teachers' questions on students' achievement (Adedoyin, 2010), and many others that similar to the topics. However, none of them are doing such research in the form of shaping young learners' character through teacher questioning in English Class activities, and that is why it is discussed here since building character is important, especially in early stage of learners' age.

Based on my knowledge, there is limited research or article discussing about shaping character of young learner through teacher questioning in English classroom activities. As a matter of fact, of course many researchers take attention to the character building of learners since this is viewed as crucial topic to be discussed, but there is no specific discussion on building the character for young learners in term of teacher questioning. Therefore, this article will explain how young learners' characters can be built by teacher questioning in English classroom activities.

B. METODE PENELITIAN

This is a qualitative study by using content analysis method. To provide the characters on questions given by the teacher, the teacher must choose several dictions on the questions that represent changing habits or strengten good manners and attitudes of the students.

The source of the data was the fifth grade students on SD Islam Mutiara Al Madani, which is located in Jl. Yos Sudarso no 28, Desa Gedang, Sungai Penuh, Jambi Province.

In order to shape the characters of young learners, the theory used to shape characters was by using the approach of the importance of character building that

involves three major aspects: knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good (Lickona, 2009). The instruments of the research were classroom discourse and field notes which all spoken sentences in the classroom was written down and transcribed, and later the data was analyzed based on the teory used to shape the charaters of the young learners.

The proccedure of data collection was done through recording the teaching and learning process in English classroom activities. The verbal interation of teacher and the young learners later was written down, and the nonverbal interation was noted down to see the changing of behavior of the students after given questions by the teacher.

Finally, the procedure of data analysis was done through analyzing each verbal interaction from both teacher and the students in the teaching and learning process in English classroom activities, as well as looking the nonverbal behavior of he students. The responses of the students were analyzed and categorized whether the questions given by the teacher gave any changes to their attitudes and manner or not (knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good).

C. HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

1. The importance of Character Building

Numerous opinions toward character building are arising among people who concern with education. Fatimah and Hayati (2014) believe that building good characters to the students must be integrated in the school life. This will increase students' comprehension on lesson given in the classroom and decrease problems among them as they have good behavior. Rahmi & Erlinda (2014) say that character as a means of individual's inner make-up, as a well-established structural behavior showed by the person through habit and mode of thought. Furthermore, they define character education as engrafting the moral virtues into students' personal life, including their knowledge, individual awareness about their self-potential, willpower and actions that they show in real life situation.

Adnan (2014) also gives explanation toward character. She argues that character can be built since this deals with an attempt to establish a personality of a person through education. Later, the result can be seen by the good behavior, honesty, responsibility, respective, hard-working, and many other positive attitudes. Additional to this idea, Hasanah & Syafri (2014) give more points toward positive characters that can be gained by the students in school activities, since positive characters are important to gain successful of the students in their future life.

The importance of character building involves three major aspects: knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good (Lickona, 2009). As a result, the character building is addressed as conscious and planned movement in order to figure out and to apply the goodness and kindness in all real life situations and activities. It is crucial to point out that a good character can create a good life since the people are tending to do good and right things in their life, much better to be done since the early stage of age of the learners.

2. Young Learners' characters in English classroom activities

Young learners who gain formal education are considered as those who are in a range of age of 5-12 years old, start from kindergarten to elementary level (Kalendova, 2008). Ytreberg in Kalendova (2008) is also sure that there are some basic characteristics of the young language learners: (1) Children sometimes have difficulties in distinguishing the real world and imaginary world; (2) Most of the children like to do something with someone else as the accompanier; (3) The children have already use the language skills long before they are aware of them; (4) They love to play, even when they are studying; (5) They learn best by body languages, gestures, and mimics; (6) They have a short attention and concentration spam; and (7) They do not always understand adult world.

The characteristics above create uniqueness of teaching the young learners. Smart and creative questions proposed by the teacher are seen as innovative way to understand the young learners' world, and also help the teacher to teach and educate them, as well as forming a good character of the individuals through learning English language in the classroom.

Teaching young learners differ to the way of teaching older students. The concept of learning for the students should be engaged with fun and attractive activities, such as games. Kalendova (2008) says that games-like activities to teach the students in English language will stimulate learners' concentration and involve them since games provide fun and interactive activities. Therefore, by engaging the young learners with the games as the technique of teaching the English language, teacher can address meaningful questions to build good characters for the students.

Cameron (2001) thus explains that method of teaching young learners that fits to their needs, therefore, is inevitably affected by their uniqueness. For teaching English, whether for second or foreign language, Communicative approaches are seen as the best ones. Cameron (2001) believes that one method

of this kind of approach is known as Total Physical Response (TPR) method. This method is applied well for young learners since the instructions demand the students to listen to teacher's commands and respond through movement and action. It is quite difficult to teach them with traditional method since they are still children whose the world is still about having fun.

a) Teacher questioning

Giving questions to the students is a common action done by teacher in giving the material of the teaching. Teacher asks questions to the students in all situation of the classroom, for all subjects, and of course, for all level of students and proficiency. Eshach et al. (2014) states that many research have shown questioning is second only to lecturing in popularity as a teaching method and that classroom teachers spend anywhere from thirty-five to fifty percent of their instructional time conducting questioning sessions. This means teacher dominates his teaching and learning process by conducting questions, with numerous purposes upon the questions given to the students during the lesson. Therefore, the types of questions that are used by the teacher should be meaningful, in order to achieve the purpose of questioning.

Teacher's questions control which it gives the teacher over the discourse. Thus, a question is likely to occupy the first part of the ubiquitous three-phase of IRF exchange (Ellis, 1994). Questions typically serve as devices for initiating discourse centered on medium oriented goals, although they can also serve variety of other functions. Several crucial points explained by Ellis (1994) toward the importance of questioning can be figured out as follow: (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; and (5) Questioning students helps teachers to evaluate student learning and revise their lessons as necessary.

Generally, questions used by teachers in the classroom, especially for language teaching, there are two major types of questions, they are: high level questions and low level questions. The typical question words used in low level questions commonly are: *what, when, who, where, which, modal auxiliary (are, is, can, will, could, might, shall,*

should, and many other). Whereas, for the high level questions, the typical questions are using the words such as: *why* and *how*. In other words, the high level questions are demanding to be explained and needs deep opinion, exploration, and knowledge.

Moreover, there are two main types of questions (Sato in David, 2007) display questions (questions that the answers are known by teacher) and display questions (teacher ask information that he/she does not know the answer). Based on this classification, it is known that mostly the teachers nowadays use display questions by asking questions repeatedly in order to check students' comprehension, clarification request, and confirmation. These two types of questions are explored recurring patterns of questioning behavior and their interactive effects toward the classroom interaction (Shomoossi, 1997).

b) Building Young Learners' Character through Teacher questioning in English classroom activities

The process of building students' characters likely appears during the teaching and learning process in the classroom. There are two aspects can be involved on it. The first one is the teaching materials and media used by the teacher. The materials should be conducted around real-world life. This will help the students to comprehend the materials very well as the materials are close to their daily life. Therefore, the media to deliver the teaching materials should be creatively and innovatively created, so that it will make easier for the teacher to deliver the materials. Also by using a suitable media in delivering the materials, the students can also gain the lesson as well as the moral value implied in the learning given. They will think in term of "this is bad, that is good".

To show how teacher questioning is able to develop character for the young learners, it can be implied in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. For young learners who are considered as the beginners in learning, especially English, the type of questions used by the teacher in the classroom is expected to be the low level questions that will help them understand teacher's instructions during the interaction. The questions can be in forms of yes/no questions, short-answer questions, and referential questions which are considered to be the best types of questions to be addressed in the teaching and learning process.

The following illustration will take place for the third grade elementary students who learn English subject with the topic "*activities with the family*". The teacher uses several pictures to be

displayed to the learners and some real and authentic media, such as picture of the entire family members are watching television, mother is washing the dishes, and father are cleaning the garden. Teacher also provides some exercises in form of a big picture of inside look of a house and some separated cards filled with pictures and words. Here are the steps of the activities:

1. Pre-teaching
 - a. At the beginning when the study is started, the teacher will build students' knowledge of the learning materials by showing cartoon video to the students which is about the Mickey Mouse and friends at home. Teacher interacts with the students by watching together on the video, and after the video is finish, the teacher can ask the students about the story that they just watched. Examples of the questions:
 - i. What is the movie about?
 - ii. Who are they?
 - iii. Where are they?
 - iv. Are they having dinner together? What they eat?
 - v. Where do they sit? On the floor or on the chair at living room?
 - vi. Do you do the same thing when you eat?
 - b. The questions given by the teacher help the students to know what they are going to study and what moral value they should get based on the model from the video they watch. Teacher can also give relation from the video to the real life. So the students are ready to learn the main materials of the lesson.
2. Whilst-teaching
 - a. The teacher begins the teaching by showing pictures and asking some questions toward the pictures. First picture, the entire family members are watching television, teacher will ask who are in the picture. There are mother, father, sister and brother. Then, the teacher asks what they are doing. Since the students will answer they are watching television, the teacher will ask the position of the seat for each family members. Mother and father are sitting on the sofa, and the children are sitting on the carpet together in a polite manner. The situation shows the students that in reality, they should do such thing, too.
 - b. Teacher therefore can ask the questions for the students how they sit when they watch television with the family. Some questions that can be asked in this stage that can build

students characters can be conducted as follow:

- i. How do you sit when you watch television with your parents? Why?
- ii. If your mother sits on the floor and you sit on the sofa, is that good? Why?
- iii. Have you ever sat on your mother when you watch television? Is it good or not? Why?
- iv. The same types of questions can be addressed by using another kind of picture to move to another material.

Such those questions are demanding students' critical thinking because the teacher takes the lesson in real life situation that often faced by the students. The teacher asks the question and then the teacher wonders how and why the students do so. By guiding them to the logic situation and condition from the questions proposed by the teacher, the students will know what is good to be done and what should be avoided.

After asking those kinds of questions, the teacher will explain the importance of being a polite person. Teacher will describe as clearly as possible how benefit being someone who knows manner and honors other people, especially those who are older than him/her. The discussion among both teacher and students in this situation will shape students' character on a good value; the importance of being a polite person.

- c. Post-Teaching (by using TPR method)
 - i. Teacher sticks the picture of inside look of house on the board and provides some cards with pictures of face and words. Teacher will divide the students into groups and ask one or two members for each group to put appropriate pictures or words to the tree. The group will come to the front by turn. Each person of a group will get a piece of card; it can be picture (The questions therefore used by the teacher can be in form of following:
 1. For the first student who gets picture of father: Father wants to read the newspaper. Where should he sit? Therefore, the student will put the card in the living room.
 2. The second student gets card fill with word "taking bath", and then he/she should put the card in the 'toilet'.

- ii. For the members of the group who are able to put the card in the appropriate place of the house will gain point. At the end of the game, the teacher will count the points and the highest score will get small reward from the teacher.
- iii. At the very end of the section, the teacher again will ask some questions that will show the students how importance being a good human. For example:
 1. Where do we sleep; at the kitchen or bedroom?
 2. How do we eat; sit down nicely or while walking?
 3. Should we talk during breakfast?

The questions proposed by the teacher are expected to able to develop interest and motivate students to become actively involved in lessons. Since the materials are close to the real situation the students experience in daily life, they are enthusiasm and know much, so the situation gives them opportunity to talk and share their own experiences.

The second aspect is teaching method. This plays an important role in building students' characters. Method of teaching used by the teacher shows what the lesson is really about and what moral values are available. As the result, students can place their position and they can learn the wisdom implicitly hiding in the lesson. Especially for young learners, teaching them should be engaged with playing. They should have a joyful way of teaching and learning given by the teacher. Finally, they can wisely understand why they need to learn the materials; it will help them to know something they did not know before, to comprehend better, and to get close to the values that are available among the society, and enjoy every single activity during the lesson. So while they are 'playing' during the lesson, they also study on the materials, and learn to be a good human in their life.

Based on the research, it is found that the students' characters become better by showing their ability in answering questions more polite, asking the teachers in turns, and respect opinions of other people.

D. SIMPULAN DAN SARAN

Teaching English has crucial effects in students as it builds their character. As the English teaching's aims are accomplished, the linguistics matters and moral values

as well as wisdom in the society, the building of a good character of the students can finally also be achieved. They eventually will notice that the English teaching they get is meaningful and useful for their life. A good English teaching will create a good English user. Therefore a good English user will create a good character indeed. One of the ways to do this is to have the teacher to have questioning skills. Teachers model these skills in class with the questions they ask. Moreover, asking good questions will help generate interesting discussions. Also, the result of the research showed that the students' characters become better by showing their ability in answering questions more polite, asking the teachers in turns, and respect opinions of other people.

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