Teacher’s Questioning to Promote High Order Thinking Skills in EFL Learning (A Case Study at Christian High School YSKI Semarang)

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Abstract

In the learning process, teachers should pose some questions in order to check what has been learnt and understood, to help them review previous learning, and assess whether students are ready or not to move forward and learn new information. Regarding that statement, questioning section in the learning process is important. The aim of this research was to find out how the teachers use the questioning section in the learning process to promote the students’ high order thinking skills which are divided into three skills that are analysing, evaluating and creating skill. This study implied case study research. The instruments used in this research were observation checklist, recording, interview and questionnaire. The main data was the teachers' recording in the learning process. The subjects of this study were three teachers of a religion-based high school in Semarang, Central Java. and the students of that school. The findings of the study showed that the teachers used questioning section in their learning process. The kinds of questions used were mostly open questions and close question or yes/no questions. Those questions were used in order to make the students think more critically. The teachers think that high order thinking skill is so important for the students so they applied those skills maximally in the learning process and by questioning, the teacher could get some advantages such as they could assess the students and also know the students understanding toward the material given. It can be concluded that the use of teacher’s questioning could be a tool to promote students’ high order thinking skills in EFL learning. It is also suggested for the teachers to use more questioning section in the learning process.
INTRODUCTION

The curriculum that is applied in this era in the learning process is Kurikulum 2013 (K13) or we often say Kurtilas. In the Kurtilas, the assessment system based on 2013 curriculum and school-based curriculum is different from several points of view yet the same on some activities, such as speaking test (Jannah and Hartono, 2018). Sugiyanto (2018) said that the newest revision of K13, it is implied High Order Thinking Skill (HOTS). Higher order thinking skills include critical thinking, problem solving, decision making, and creative thinking (Lewis and Smith, 1993 as cities in Singh, 2018). The purpose is to make students think creatively, logically and systematically. In the learning process, teachers should ask questions to check what has been learnt and understood, to help them to review previous learning, and assess whether students are ready or not to move forward and learn new information. That is the reason why questioning is important. Questioning is very important in the language classroom as it is the tool to interactive learning. According to Ur (1996), questioning in the context of teaching can be defined as what the teachers actually say to learners to elicit oral responses. So, by questioning, the teacher could attract the students' attention and response. By using questions, a teacher can identify what knowledge the students already possess and their understanding of specific issues (Walsh, 2011 and Xuerong, 2012 in Rido, 2017).

The way teacher promotes the High Order Thinking Skill (HOTS) is important since this skill is required in the 2013 curriculum. There are many ways how to promote this skill in the learning process. One of them is by using questioning. Some studies have been conducted to know the advantages of using this strategy. The result was by using this strategy, it made the students think more creatively and they could think more deeply especially if the teacher used an open-ended question (Hargie, 2006; Almeida, 2011; Naz et al, 2013; Tofade et al, 2013; and Boyd, 2015).

When using questioning sections, the teacher could use some techniques or strategies. Prabowo and Alfiyanti (2013), Sardareh et al (2014), Dos (2016), Sujariati et al. (2016), and the last is Yang (2017) did the research in the techniques or strategies used by the teacher in the questioning sections. The results of the studies showed that teachers asked divergent questions to draw attention and interest, teachers mostly ask questions to entire class than individual, teachers asked most frequently questions in order to uncover knowledge. Fitriati et al (2017) in their research also found that the teacher applied decomposition strategy where the initial question was elaborated into some questions and another teacher tended to use repetition strategy. Yang (2017) gave four suggestions to English teachers for the effective classroom questioning: firstly, teachers should ask more diverse and referential questions. Secondly, teachers should control waiting time of their questioning according to specific circumstances. Thirdly, teachers should encourage all students to answer the questions actively in the learning process. Fourthly, teachers should give feedbacks after students’ answering. Regarding the topic of High Order Thinking Skill, there are some studies that focus on the implementation of it in the classroom. Chnedu (2015), Abosalem (2016), Aziz, et al (2017), and Safeei et al (2017) studied about the implementation of HOTS in the classroom. Their studies showed that suggest that using HOT skills in ESL writing lessons in order to facilitate students' writing ability and interest and it is recommended that HOT skills were used in writing activities in ESL classrooms.

Regarding those statements, this study focuses on the teachers' question to promote students’ high order thinking skill. There are four main problems in this study. Those are “How does the teacher use questioning in EFL learning?” , “How does teacher questioning promote creating skill in the learning activities?”, “How does teacher questioning promote evaluating skill in the learning activities?” and “How does teacher questioning promote analyzing skill in the learning
activities?”. Those main problems were carried out to find the answers in the research.

**METHOD**

This research implemented the case study characteristic. Case study is defined by Cohen (2007) as “they can be defined with reference to characteristics defined by individuals and groups involved; and they can be defined by participants’ roles and functions in the case” (p.253). In the case study, it studies a social unit deeply and thoroughly and also the number of units to be studied is small. Yusmalinda and Astuti (2020) also stated that qualitative case study research was more appropriate when the study focused in answering “what” questions and it also based on the objectives of the research which focused on teachers’ strategies in teaching in the classroom.

The subject of this study were the teachers a religion-based high school in Semarang, Central Java. The unit of analysis in this study was the classroom activities that related to the questioning section in the classroom learning. Those activities were teachers used questioning in the learning process and how they delivered those questions to their students. There are some instruments that were used in this research. To answer the research question, I used observation checklist, field note, recording, questionnaire, and interview guideline. The interview was about the teacher’s and the students’ perception toward the questioning section in the classroom. The researcher also gave some questionnaire to the students. The questions were in form of closed answer and open answer to know the students’ opinion about the lesson.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

**Open Question in Teacher’s Questioning**

In the research, it was found that Three teachers who were observed used questions in their learning process. Those questions were given in order to make the students think more critically and also to make the learning process went well. Those questions were being asked to make the classroom more live and also it made the students were being active during the classroom since they had to pay attention to their teacher and also to make the teachers could assess the students’ understanding toward the material given.

In giving the learning process, it was found that Teacher A implied questioning sections. The example of the question could be seen in the extract below.

**Extract 1**

T1 : okay based on that sentence, *what do you think the use of “on the other hand”?*

S1 : To state something contrary Mam.

T1 : Good, let see the sentence. The first phrase stated that the writer like a job that pays more, but she/he also want to have a job that she/he enjoys, so to connect those phrases, the writer use “on the other hand” and “on one hand”. Get the point

S1 : okay mam, but do “on the other hand” and “on one hand” connector goes together

T1 : sometimes, they have to together, or you can use only “on the other hand”

S1 : okay, thank you Mam.

By giving the questions in italic above, the teacher asks the student to analyze the use of connector and also how their opinion about those connectors. It means in this question, analyzing and creating skill is needed. In giving the question section, teacher A did not always put it in the beginning of the lesson but sometimes she put it in the end and also during the learning process.

Another teacher that was Teacher B, it was found that teacher B also applied some questioning sections in her learning and teaching activity. Like teacher A, teacher B also applied more open questions than yes/no questions. In applying the question sections, teacher B gave the questions in the beginning, during and also in the end of the class. The example of the question could be seen in the extract below.

**Extract 2**

T2 : and then? If I were you, I would buy luxurious car (laughing) but reality
is I am not you, so based on that example, what is the function of conditional type 2?
S2 : something that can’t happen. It is impossible thing
T2 : good, something that may be not happened. Another example, if I have a lot
S2 : I do not have a lot of money so I can’t buy Indonesia
T2 : okay good, move to type 3, so the formula of type 3 will be?
S2 : “If+S+V3 and then S + would
T2 : a little bit incorrect, add “have” after would (Writing the formula) so, the example will be?
Let’s make a situation, Jordan has an appointment with his girlfriend, the appointment should be on 7 PM but Jordan came at 7.15 PM so the sentence will be “If I came earlier, I would have met her”, so based on that example, what is the fact or the reality of type 3?
S2 : something regrettable, something that we can do

The questions in italic were given by the teacher to make the students use their analyzing skill to analyze the intention of the sentence given and also ask the students to use their creating skill to make a sentence based on the formula given. Using those questions, the teacher asked the students to use their critical thinking. This finding was in line with the study by Zao et al. (2016) who found that in promoting critical thinking, the teacher could use questioning in her learning activity.

In giving questions, teacher B made the questions related to their daily life for example for the chapter of conditional sentence, they have to know what are the differences of type 1, type 2 or type 3 related to their daily life. It would make them more understand the question than giving questions that are not related to theirs. There were some strategies used by the teacher B in giving the questions. First, the questions should be related to their daily life. Second, giving them a time to answer the questions and the last was giving them clues if they could not get the correct answer. Those strategies were included in some strategies found by Wragg and Brown (2001). The strategies mentions were included in directing and distributing, pausing and pacing and also prompting and probing. In the pausing strategy, the teacher should give the students a time for about three seconds or more before the students answer the questions. This makes the students produce more vocabularies because they used their critical thinking. This finding was in lined with the study by Aniza (2018), Zaenuddin (2016) and also Lee and Kinzie (2011) who studied the students’ response when they were getting questions by their teachers.

The last teacher C also gave some questions in her teaching. She usually posed some questions in the beginning of the lesson and during the learning activity. The example of question given by teacher C could be seen in the extract below.

Extract 3
S3 : The actress wore a beautiful gown. It is an active sentence Miss
T3 : why it is an active sentence?
S3 : the subject is active
T3 : okay, the subject is active, what is the function of subject in active sentence
S3 : active
S3 : verb
S3 : object
T3 : no, I mean the function of subject is as? In the active sentence what is the subject do?
S3 : doing something
The questions in italic were given during the class in order to know whether the students have understood the material or not. By giving those questions, the teacher asked the students to use their critical to answer the questions. The skill needed was analyzing skill since the students need to analyze the sentence first to answer the questions. Creating skill was also needed since they had to create their own reason to answer the questions.

In giving questions, teacher C tried to posed open questions than yes/no question. This strategy was to train the students to use their critical thinking. This purpose is in lined with Azizia (2018) and Lee and Kinzie (2011) study who found that when giving open questions, students will produce more vocabularies and responses since they used their critical thinking. In posing the questions, first the teacher used English first and when the
students did not understand the meaning of the words, she would help them by giving them clue in form of the synonym word. This strategy was called prompting by Wragg and Brown (2001). Another strategy that she used was listening and responding that could make the students and teacher interaction in the learning activity did well. She also used sequencing strategy where she posed sequenced questions to make the students knew the correct answer. Those strategies were included in Wragg and Brown (2001). Those strategies found also in lined with the study by Yang (2017) who found that teachers should give feedbacks after the students got their answer. The finding also in lined with Nisa (2014) study who found that in making teacher and students interaction more communicative in the learning process, the teacher could pose some questions and also gave the students praise and encourages when they got the correct answer to make them confidence in speaking English.

To know the students' opinion, I also gave a questionnaire to the students. The questionnaire was about the students' opinion toward questions given by their teacher and also the students' opinion toward high order thinking skill. Based on the questionnaire result, it was found that first, all of the students thought that high order thinking skill was so important. There were many reasons behind that. The students felt that it was important since by using this skill, the students were able to think critically by evaluating and analyzing something. High order thinking skills also useful for the students to solve the difficult problems since they had to think critically and logically to solve that. Regarding the questioning sections, not all of the students thought that their teacher already gave that section in the learning process but all of the students agreed that this section was so important and useful. Based on the questionnaire result, the students said that questioning section was so important because of some reasons. First, the students could get more understanding toward the material if they do not really understand the material. Second, questioning made the students more active in the class. Third, this section made the class more life since there were many interactions between the students and the teacher. This finding was in lined with Rido, Ibrahim, and Nambiar (2014) who found that by questioning could be one of four strategies in making interaction between students and teachers. Nisa (2014) also found that teachers should apply this questioning strategy to promote the students’ communicative skill especially in speaking English.

Open Question for Promoting Students’ Analyzing Skill

In the research, it was found that mostly the teacher used open questions to promote student’s analyzing skill. The teacher used open questions in order to make the student analyze the question and also the context of those questions before answer the question.

The example of teacher B’s question in promoting students analyzing skill could be seen in the example below.

**Extract 4**

S2: “If you stand in the rain, you will get wet

T2: of course, what is the meaning of that sentence?

S2: Jika kamu berdiri saat hujan, kamu akan basah

T2: of course ya, so in the conditional sentence type 0, the reality or the intention is to?

S2: something that maybe happen in the future

T2: good, it is something that maybe you know will happen in the future, of course when you stand in the rain, you will get wet. Okay then move to conditional type 1, in the conditional type 1 is the assumption like if you do this you will get this yeah, for example all of you will have an examination right?

Based on that extract, the question belongs to analyzing question because by stating this question, the students are asked to use their analyzing skill to analyze the intention of the sentence given. By giving the question, the teacher asked the students to analyze the situation first based on that example, so that they could answer the question.
Teacher B knows that giving questions in the learning process is important. She said that by giving a question, she could know how far the students have understood the material if the questions are given in the end of the class and if the teacher gives the question in the beginning of the class, she hopes that by giving a question, that question could attract the students’ attention toward the learning process. This statement is in line with Ellis (1994) who stated that questioning plays an important role in language acquisition since by giving questions, learners have an opportunity to participate in learning activity if they are given questions.

**Open and Closed Question for Promoting Students’ Evaluating Skill**

Based on the research, it was found that teachers used fewer questions in promoting this skill than analyzing skill. As it is stated above that in evaluating skill, this skill covers two elements which are checking and criticizing. The checking category could be seen in the example below.

**Extract 5**

T1: okay, see the sentence? What kind of sentence it is? What is the intention of writer in writing the sentence? Is it the same as the sentence before (in type 1)?

S1: It is different Mam.

T1: okay it is different, so what is the purpose of this sentence?

S1: Unreal present Mam

The question above belongs to analyzing and evaluating question. In this question, first the teacher asks the student to analyze the kind of sentence given by the teacher and then the students have to evaluate whether the type of sentence is same as the previous one or not. Teacher A’s goal in giving this question is to promote students’ evaluating skill that is the ability of students to assess the statements or other representations that is the description of someone’s opinion or judgement. This skill is important because by using this skill, the students should be able to judge whether the answer or the statement is right or wrong. Based on the categories, extract 5 was included in checking category.

Another category in the evaluating skill is criticizing. In this category, it related to the product or process evaluation based on the external criteria or standard. This category could be seen in the example below.

**Extract 6**

S: In spite of not able afford the Christmas they have; we bought a few presents to the children.

T1: a little bit incorrect, *what is the mistake?*

S: hmm not able

T1: good, it should be “not being able” because able should be followed by “being” (Writing the correct answer in the whiteboard) why we should change the verb into noun phrase

S: to make easier to understood Mam

T1: it could be. Okay let continue number 2, we will live out the season with happiness bla bla bla it doesn’t matter what will be going under the tree. Using despite, oh in this task, you have to connect two sentences with the connectors given. So for number 2, *how is the sentence? Which sentence we should change?*

S: the second sentence Mam

T1: okay so, *how is the sentence?*

S: despite it doesn’t matter what will be going under the tree, we will live out the season with happiness

The question in italic belongs to analyzing and evaluating question. First, the teacher asks the student to evaluate the answer whether it is right or not then they have to analyze which sentence should be changed in order to make a good sentence. Krathwohl (2002) stated that in criticizing category, it involves the ability to evaluate the product or the process in making the product is correct or not.

Teacher A also stated that evaluating skill is important because the process of evaluation itself could be the tool to evaluate the students understanding toward the material given. This skill also useful in developing their critical thinking since critical thinking is one of important skill nowadays. This statement was in line with the study by Masduqi (2011) who stated that in developing student’s critical
thinking, the teacher could use some collaborative learning and also some questioning sections in the learning process.

**WH Question for Promoting Students’ Creating Skill**

The last skill that involves in high order thinking skill (HOTS) is creating skill. According to Marzano (2001), creating is a process of working with elements and combining them to form a newly-generated pattern. In the research, it was found that teacher A, B and C promotes this skill in their learning process. The way they promoted the skill was by using questioning and also doing some collaborative learning. The questions that they used also varied. Most of the questions were in form of open question. It is more appropriate in the learning process when the teacher used more kind of referential and open-ended question (Omari, 2018).

In the research it was found that teacher A used some questions to promote this skill. The example of teacher A’s question in promoting this skill could be seen in the extract below.

**Extract 7**

T1: okay, so next. Despite the snow, he went down town. Anyone answer using in spite of?

S: No Mam

T1: *What if we use in spite of? So the sentence will be?*

S: In spite of the fact that the snow, he went down town. Is it correct Mam?

T1: hampir tepat, *In spite of the fact that it is snowing, he went down town. Okay next, number 3, the homework was very difficult bla bla bla She made it great.*

In giving the question, the teacher asked the students to produce a new sentence based on the formula given before by the teacher. By giving the question, the teacher asked the students to execute the plan that they learn before, in this case the formula given, into the new sentence. This statement is in line with the definition by Mayer (2002) who stated that in the producing categories, the learner should produce or execute plan which fulfill the certain specifications to solve the problems that occurs.

Another category in the creating skill is generating categories. In this category, the creating skill is used to describing problem and making choice or hypothesis which fulfill particular criteria or standard. The example of this category could be seen in the extract below.

**Extract 8**

T1: good, for the next exercise, you have to rearrange the jumble words into a good sentence, okay start from number 1, *what is the correct sentence?*

S: Tony will not clean his room unless his mother tells him to

T1: *good, what is the meaning of this sentence in Indonesia?*

S: Tony tidak akan membersihkan kamarnya jika ibunya tidak meminta.

The question in italic above belongs to creating question because by giving this question, the students are asked to make a good arrangement in a sentence. In the exercise, there were some words arranged in the jumble and then the students are asked to arrange those words into good arrangement. This means, first, they have to generating and describing the problems first and also, they have to analyze the part of word of each word. This purpose is in line with the Mayer (2002) definition about generating sub-categories. It is stated that in the generating categories, learners are asked to describing the problems and making choice or hypothesis which fulfill particular criteria or standard.

**CONCLUSIONS**

This study was aimed to answer the four research problems. Based on the results, there were some conclusions that was made by the researcher. First regarding the teachers’ questions, based on the research, it was found that all of the teachers have implemented the
questioning section by giving the students question in the beginning of the lesson, during and also in the end of the lesson. Second, in promoting analyzing skill, the teachers mostly used open questions in form of WH questions such as using what and why questions. Third in promoting evaluating skill, the teachers not only used open questions but also used some closed questions like yes/no question. Last, in promoting creating skill, the teachers mostly used open questions especially using how to make the students create something.

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