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BETTER CLASSROOM TECHNIQUE IN A CONTENT-BASED INSTRUCTION FOR EFL LEARNERS OF MULTILINGUAL SOCIETY[4]

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Abstract

The EFL learners in a multilingual society face learning problems both on skill-based and content-based instructions. The problems are caused by linguistic and non-linguistic factors. In accordance with this, better classroom techniques in skill-based and content-based instructions should be developed in such a way that the EFL instructions run well. This paper, which is derived from the result of a research conducted in 2015, particularly discusses an appropriate model of classroom technique which is better used in a content-based instruction for EFL learners at university level in a multilingual society. The analysis and pedagogical discussion are aimed at formulating and finding a better classroom technique in a content-based instruction, namely Research on English Language Teaching (RELT) subject. The data and relevant information presented and analyzed are those of a quasi-experimental research in the design of non-equivalent control group conducted at the English Department of FKIP Universitas Bung Hatta, Padang. The population of this research was students who took RELT subject in 2015/2016 academic year. The sample of this study was 44 students; there were 23 students in class A (experimental group) and 21 students in class C (control group). The treatment given to the experimental group was student-initiated question as the classroom technique, while lecturer-provided question was the classroom technique (the treatment) used in the control group. The data were statistically analyzed by using t-test; the result of data analysis tells that the classroom technique used in the experimental class, the student-initiated question, was significantly more effective than teacher-provided question. It may be argued that student-initiated question is a better classroom technique used in a content-based instruction, RELT subject, for EFL learners in multilingual societies as it ran well at the English Department of FKIP Universitas Bung Hatta, Padang
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*Keywords: classroom technique, content-based instruction, student-initiated question,
lecturer-provided question*

1. INTRODUCTION

It is believed that all God's creatures have the basic and natural forms of learning in life, but human beings have more creative and intellectual ways of learning for better life. The creative and intellectual ways of learning for better life are supported by humanistic and natural factors possessed by humans in various forms and strategies. Language learning strategies, among other learning strategies, have been becoming topics of discussion and studies in language teaching-learning theories and processes. Learning strategies are the cognitive and communicated processes that learners use in order to know and acquire information and facts, including to acquire a language. The common strategies that can be scientifically observed include memorizing, repeating, inferencing, and predicting. In this sense, the learning strategies are close to the learning styles; a learning style is the natural, habitual way that humans go about learning.

The needs for having appropriate strategies in all aspects of learning and for the success of language learning have been argued by experts and researchers based on research results and

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philosophical-pedagogical analyses on relevant theories. Researches consistently show that less successful language learners often use the same strategies over and over again and do not make significant progress in their task. They do not recognize that the strategies they are using are not helping them to accomplish their goal. Based on experts' ideas and research results, one thing that teachers and learners must keep in mind is that there are no good or bad strategies, but there is good or bad application of strategies.

In relation to the need of learning strategies for successful language learning, it is necessary to know and to use appropriate learning strategies in learning a language, and to learn EFL is not the exception. In the teaching-learning processes of language education, especially the English Education Department, the subjects offered in the curriculum can be academically classified based on learning materials into skill-based subjects and content-based subjects. In order to be successful in both types of learning materials, the learners need to know, in addition to other requirements of successful learning, how to apply (to use) the appropriate learning strategies. Based on the practical-direct observation, as the pre-observation, towards the processes of a content-based subject, in this case *Research on English Language Teaching (RELT)*, in even semester 2014, it seems that most learners were not successful.

As a matter of fact, the students who took the content-based subjects, let's say RELT, had already taken the pre-requisite subjects including language skills which led them to learn the materials well. They had learned and passed *Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, (English) Grammar, Introduction to Linguistics, Phonology, Morphology, Syntax*, and *Semantics-Pragmatics*, at least in intermediate levels. It is theoretically supposed that the learners are not in serious problems anymore to learn other content-based subjects. The learners would have had enough vocabulary, reading comprehension skill, and critical thinking to read learning materials of the content-based subjects. In reality, however, the assumption and expectation could not be mostly gained; most students were not optimally successful. Of course, there must be "problems" or at least "questions" which need problems solving and reasonable answers.

This paper, which is furtherly derived and developed from the result of a research conducted in 2015/2016, particularly discusses *an appropriate model of classroom technique which is better used in a content-based instruction (RELT) for EFL learners at university level in a multilingual society*. The analysis and pedagogical discussion are aimed at formulating and finding a better classroom technique in a content-based instruction, RELT subject. The data and relevant information presented and analyzed are those gotten from a quasi-experimental research in the design of non-equivalent control group conducted at the English Department of FKIP Universitas Bung Hatta, Padang. The population of this research was students who took RELT subject in 2015/2016 academic year. The sample of this study was 44 students; there were 23 students in class A (experimental group) and 21 students were in class C (control group). The treatment given to the experimental group was *student-initiated question* as the classroom technique, while *lecturer-provided question* was the classroom technique (the treatment) used in the control group. The data were statistically analyzed by using t-test and the conclusion is drawn quantitatively.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED THEORIES
1. Questioning as Classroom Technique in Content-Based Subjects of EFL

Theoretically, powerful learners are those who are going to be successful. Powerful learners have expanded repertoires of strategies for acquiring education. They know how to profit from a wide range of learning opportunities, from lectures and readings, from collecting and analyzing information and building concepts and theories, and from working together cooperatively (see Joice et.al., 1992:v). Powerful learners are able to acquire and place the information and concepts into their long term memory so that they are all becoming knowledge of the subjects learnt as the result of the learning processes of content-based subject, as the RELT has.

In the sense of class organization, Crookes and Chaudron (in Celce-Murcia (ed.), 2001:38) say that the key participants in classroom organization are the teacher, the teacher aide or trainee, the individual student and groupings of students, the class as a whole, the language presentation, materials used (e.g., textbook, AV media), and any visitors or outsiders. Combinations of these result in particular structures in class organization and effects on language learning processes. It also

implies that classroom techniques are essential, as well. Classroom techniques can be seen as the specific activities manifested in the classroom that were consistent with a method and therefore were in harmony with an approach as well (see Brown, 2001:14). Thus, teachers of skill-based and content-based subjects have to think, create, and use appropriate techniques in order that the teaching-learning processes run well. The ways of having and using classroom techniques can be derived from theoretical ideas proposed by experts or based on field studies and practical researches. In this paper, the classroom technique refers to those based on an experimental research conducted in classroom activities of a content-based subject, RELT.

Questioning is traditionally one of effective classroom techniques used by most teachers. In many cases, questioning strategies are effectively used in interactive learning. In relation to this, Brown (2001:169 – 170) argues that the most important key to creating an interactive language classroom is the initiation of interaction by the teacher. However, non-directive teaching style is the stimuli for continued interaction. These stimuli are important in the initial stage of a classroom lesson as well as throughout the lesson. One of the best ways to develop role as an initiator and sustainer of interaction is to develop a repertoire of questioning strategies. Appropriate questioning in an interactive classroom can fulfill a number of different functions, including in building and developing understanding on content-based subjects. In relation to this, *students initiated questions* and *lecturer guided questions* are possibly used in classroom interaction of content-based subjects of EFL at university level.

2. Content-Based Instruction at University

The term instruction has been used by language teaching methodologists and teachers in the same sense with learning. In many current references, the term instruction is frequently used instead of learning. Although they are similar in general point of view, the term learning is more on the students' side, but instruction can be generally seen as the matters of instructors' side. Theoretically, instruction is used by teachers and experts in order to focus on the learning's and instructional teachers' sides of learning programs. However, the discussion on the content-based instruction at university level in this part can be formally begun with the ideas and concepts of learning, as well.

The materials of teaching-learning at university level, let's say at the English Department of FKIP Bung Hatta University, can be categorized as content-based materials and skill-based ones. Snow (in Celce-Murcia (ed.), 2001:303) says that the word content has had many different interpretations throughout the history of second/foreign language teaching, but she herself defines the content as the use of subject matter for second/foreign language teaching purposes. Subject matter may consist of topics or theories based on student interest or need in an adult, EFL setting or the subjects that students are studying in their elementary school classes. In this paper, the meaning of content stated by Snow is adopted because the main instructional goal of RELT subject – the subject learnt by the research sample – is to prepare the students for the types of academic tasks they encounter in their university.

Content-based (also known as "content-centered") language teaching, particularly at university, integrates the learning of some specific subject-matter content with the learning of a second (foreign) language. The overall structure of a content-based curriculum is dictated more by the nature of the subject matter than by language forms and sequences. The second (foreign) language, then, is simply the medium to convey informational content of interest and relevant to the learner (Brown, 2001:234). In relation to this, the content-based subjects offered to learners at university level, as for the English Department students of Bung Hatta University, may be the subjects having close relation to the language learning materials or the subjects which support the materials.

In relation to content-based instruction, Nunan (in Celce-Murcia (ed.), 2001:61) says that content-based instruction comes in many different guises. However, all variations share one characteristic – language is not presented directly, but is introduced via the content of other subjects. In school settings, this content is typically the regular subjects in the curriculum such as science, geography, and mathematics. Learners acquire the target language in the course of doing other things. Then, models for content-based instructions are also variously proposed by experts and researchers. Snow (in Celce-Murcia (ed.), 2001:303) informs that content-based models can be found

in both the foreign and second language settings. Models of content-based instruction differ in implementation due to such factors as educational setting, program objectives, and target population. All share, however, a common point of departure – the integration of language teaching aims with subject matter instruction.

It can be stated, based on the ideas above that the content-based instructions are the learning materials and/or subjects offered to students in different levels containing subject matters dealing with knowledge instead of skills. In some materials of content-based instructions, language skills are still partially involved, but most of the contents are knowledge and ideas. Therefore, Snow (as in Celce-Murcia (ed.), 2001:305) states that models of content-based instruction can be distinguished from each other by several different means. One is by setting; some models are typically implemented in the foreign language setting while others are common in second language context. Another way to distinguish content-based models is by instructional level; elementary school level and secondary or post-secondary levels with adolescents or adults. A third way is to look at the degree of emphasis on language and content which underlies a particular program.

3. EFL Learners in a Multilingual Society

Indonesia is well known as a country with multilingual societies. There are more than 700 local languages natively spoken by Indonesian people beside they speak bahasa Indonesia as the national language. Language policy in Indonesia places English as a foreign language. The status, among the others, can be assumed as one factor which makes the English instruction has not run well; most parents and students think that learning English is not important. Such reason and attitude are not completely wrong because the attitudes towards a language depend also on the status of the language. Many research results and conclusions drawn by sociolinguists and psycholinguists tell that the motivation and progress of language learning are partially influenced by the attitudes towards the learnt language and its status, as well (see Holmes, 2013; Wardhaugh and Fuller, 2015). The ideas dealing with the relationship between both language learning and the attitudes towards the language and the success of learning the language are reasonably believed and can be practically proved in the field.

In multilingual countries, such as Indonesia, India, Philippines, etc., the significance of political power in the choice of national language is particularly clear. For instance, there are over one hundred vernacular languages spoken in the Philippines and in Indonesia. In Indonesia, in particular, the government did not select the language of the political and social elite, for example Javanese, as the national language. Instead, they develop and standardize a variety of Malay which was widely used in Indonesia as a trade language. Indeed, the successful spread of Indonesian owes a great deal to the fact that it is a very useful neutral linguistic choice in many situations (see Holmes, 2013:107). The status of Indonesian as a national language is relatively 'powerful' and it has been becoming the tendency that people in Indonesia have positive attitudes towards bahasa Indonesia.

Learners of English as L2 and FL are in different situation compared with the speakers of English as L1. Their level of comprehension of the standard or any dialect is influenced by amount of exposure to the language. As learners increase in second language proficiency, typically but not always after ever-longer periods of residence in an environment in which the second/foreign language is widely used, they become more knowledgeable about and sensitive to dialectal and contextual variation in language. It is also important to know that the attitudes of parents reflect personal histories, including their responses to the wider cultural themes framing their own experiences (see McGroarty in McKay and Hornberger (eds.), 1996). It seems that the scales of language attitudes of learners, parents, and teachers tell us how the attitudes towards language influence the programs and progress of EFL teaching. High and positive attitudes towards English possessed by learners, parents, and teachers become a part of foundation for the success of EFL teaching.

Based on the ideas described above, the English instruction in multilingual society, such as in Indonesia, is of course based on the status and the attitudes towards the English language, and formal-educational policies in the countries. The teaching learning processes of English at university levels, in particular, need to consider and to follow the philosophical and theoretical foundations of EFL teaching as a foreign language. Therefore, it is obvious that the English instruction in Indonesia academically and practically runs differently compared with the teaching-learning of English in

countries where English is L1 and/or L2. It is on the right idea to say that the teaching-learning processes of EFL need specific considerations and ideas to put the learners in a suitable position in academic-educational activities of the foreign language.

3. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The data and relevant information presented and analyzed in this paper are gained through the execution of a quasi-experimental research in the design of non-equivalent control group conducted at the English Department of FKIP Universitas Bung Hatta, Padang. The population of this research was students who took RELT subject in 2015/2016 academic year. The sample of this study was 44 students; there were 23 students in class A (experimental group) and 21 students were in class C (control group). The treatment given to the experimental group was student-initiated question as the classroom technique, while lecturer-provided question was the classroom technique (the treatment) used in the control group. The data were statistically analyzed by using t-test. Both control and experimental groups were administered the pre-test in order to know whether they were equal or not. The result of pre-test to the control and experimental group indicated that they were not significantly different; the two classes began the classroom activities at the same starting point.

In the control class, the treatment used was labeled as *lecturer guided questions* and the instructional procedures (steps of classroom activities) in the control class were:

(i) The lecturer informed the teaching-learning materials based on the syllabus at the first meeting, as the introduction to the course;
(ii) The lecturer prepared weekly recalling and analytic-argumentative questions (15 – 20 questions in each meeting) which are relevant to the materials learnt in the meeting;
(iii) The questions were uploaded to the university portal every week;
(iv) The learners downloaded the questions and found the answers, and then wrote the answers on pieces of paper as the weekly tasks;
(v) The tasks were submitted at the beginning of the following class;
(vi) During the lesson, the lecturer checked students' comprehension by asking the same questions;
(vii) The lecturer provided the students with additional examples and relevant explanation to strengthen students' comprehension.
(viii) At the end of semester, the posttest was administered

In the experimental class, the treatment given was labeled as *student initiated questions*. The followings were the instructional procedures (steps of classroom activities) in the experimental class.

(i) The lecturer informed the teaching-learning materials based on the syllabus at the first meeting, as the introduction to the course;
(ii) Every week, the students read the learning materials and created (made) their own questions (as many as possible) related to the content of materials learnt;
(iii) The students wrote the questions and the answers on pieces of paper as their weekly tasks;
(iv) The students submitted the task at the beginning of the following class;
(v) The lecturer read the students tasks in a glance and gave general comments;
(vi) The lecturer carried out the classroom instruction (classroom activities) in the form of question-answer and lectures;
(vii) The lecturer provided the students with additional examples and relevant explanation to strengthen students' comprehension.
(viii) At the end of semester, the posttest was administered

The experiment was held in the form of non-equivalent control group design, one type of research design in quasi-experimental research. In practical application, the two existing groups were pretested, administered the treatment (*lecturer guided questions* in control group; *student initiated questions* in experimental group), and post-tested. The population of the study was the seventh semester students of English Department of FKIP Universitas Bung Hatta registered in academic

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year 2015/2016. The samples were 44 students (class A 23 students in the experimental class; class B 21 students in the control class). The study was conducted in 7 meetings (around 2 months) and each meeting was in 3 credits hour. The researcher managed the classroom activities and did experiment based on the instructional procedures previously planned. The instrument used in the study was an achievement test in the form of matching items. Therefore, the data were the students' scores of both pretest and posttest.

The followings are the data (students' scores) based on pretest administered.

Table 1: Data of Pretest

Statistics	Group A	Group B
The mean of the scores	9.6086957	8.9047619
The sum of all the scores	221	187
The square of the sum	48,841	34,969
The sum of all the squares	2,881	2,021
Total number of students	23	21
Sum of squares	757.4782609	355.8095238

In order to know the statistical difference between control class (group) and experimental class (group), the t-test formula for independent sample was used. The result said that t-calculated was 0.136492171, meanwhile the value of t-table with degree of freedom (n1 + n2 – 1) is 2.0168. The statistical calculation implies that there was no significant difference statistically between control class and experimental class before the treatment given; the two groups were statistically equal.

The data (the students' scores of posttest) which were collected after giving treatment can be seen in the following table.

Table 2: Data of Posttest

Statistics	Group A	Group B
The mean of the scores	76.782609	52.47619
The sum of all the scores	1766	1102
The square of the sum	3,118,756	1,214,404
The sum of all the squares	139,500	68,724
Total number of students	23	21
Sum of squares	3,901.913043	10,895.23809

Based on the data analysis by using t-test formula, it was found that the t-calculated for the independent sample was 4.290459445, meanwhile the value of t-table at degree of freedom (n1 + n2 – 2) (42) in the level of significance .05 is 2.0168. Statistically, the value of t-calculated is higher than that of t-table. It means that there is a significant difference of posttest' scores performed by control and experimental groups; the students in experimental class taught by using instructional procedures with the label *student initiated question* got higher scores than those in control group which were taught by using instructional procedures with the label *lecturer guided questions*. In other words, the instructional procedure (classroom technique) used in the experimental class was more effective than that in the control class.

The result of this study is academically and socio-culturally interesting. Why is it so? As it has been previously mentioned, this study was conducted in a content-based subject, namely RELT, at the English Department of FKIP Universitas Bung Hatta, Padang. The subjects involved in both different groups (control and experimental ones) were the students at the seventh semester. It was assumed that they have had enough vocabulary and language skill to read and learn content-based subjects, such as RELT. Academically, they were not in serious problems in having instructional procedures by means of various ways. The lecturer guided questions and students initiated questions are the appropriate ways of questioning delivered in the classroom activities of content-based subjects. They are both essential to build and develop the higher level of comprehension on the materials learnt in nature.

Successful and motivated students of EFL may "place themselves" in the position to have better comprehension on content-based subjects. Theoretically, lecturer guided questions may have various and higher levels of questions; lecturer of the subjects, of course, has prepared qualified questions in order that the contents of learning materials are successfully comprehended. The instructional procedures used in control group should have been more effective than those used in experimental group. The instructional procedures in control group may lead learners to study seriously and deeply dealing with the topics of discussion because the questions delivered to the students have academically and scientifically been prepared and considered well by the lecturer.

The instructional procedures used in experimental group were more on students' initiation in reading materials, constructing questions, and having answers. They read the materials, formulated the questions, wrote them up, had the answers, and then listened to lecturing and additional information given by lecturer. Psychologically, most students would formulate and write easier and simpler questions; they of course did not want to be in difficulties in answering the questions later on. By having such ways, academically they did not have essential and sufficient levels of understanding on the materials learnt. This is not academically better one compared with *lecturer guided questions* as in control group. It may be argued here then that the instructional procedures in the form of questioning for the content-based subjects, such as RELT, do not work well for EFL learners in multilingual societies, let's say in Padang. It seems that they are waiting for lecturing and additional explanation given by the lecturer during the classroom activities. Therefore, better classroom techniques used in a content-based instruction (subject) for EFL learners of multilingual society, such as at the English Department of FKIP Universitas Bung Hatta, are pre-reading activities, delivering recalling questions, lecturing and having additional explanation by the lecturer.

The findings and recommendation for better classroom techniques in content-based instructions (subjects) argued in this paper are also related to the socio-cultural behaviors possessed by most Indonesian learners who do not habitually read a lot of content materials moreover in EFL. It is believed that most students of EFL in multilingual societies, such in Indonesia, are hopefully waiting for lecturer's explanation and confirmation. They do not have good self-confidence to have self ideas and different argumentation concerning with the contents of materials they learn. Therefore, it is still in strong argumentation to state that for the time being lecturer-provided questions, classroom lecturing, and additional confirmation given by lecturers of content-based subjects are the instructional procedures (classroom technique) better used in multilingual societies, such as in Indonesia, in which English is learnt as a foreign language.

4. CONCLUSION

Previous researches and theories proposed by methodologists of learning, including in language teaching, recommend that questioning is a better way to have classroom interaction and to build qualified comprehension on content-based instructions (subjects). Related to the questioning, the result of study presented in this paper may give at least three additional things to be considered to have better classroom techniques in a content-based subject for EFL learners of multilingual societies, such as in Indonesia, particularly in Padang. Firstly, even though lecturer guided questions may have better levels of questions for the instructional procedure in the classroom, but it did not work well for EFL learners in multilingual societies; let's say at the English Department of FKIP Universitas Bung Hatta, Padang. It can be caused by students' lack of reading and comprehension on the materials learnt. Secondly, most students are waiting for lecturer's explanation and confirmation during the classroom activities rather than having "new" ideas or argumentation dealing with contents of learning materials. Thirdly, questioning technique becomes more effective in nature for EFL learners in multilingual societies, such as in Indonesia, if it is appropriately followed by classical lecturing and academic confirmation on certain-particular parts of learning materials. These considerations are relevant with the psychological and socio-cultural behaviors of most EFL learners in Indonesia. Considering the limitation of this study in terms of time, sample selection, and statistical analysis, further studies and discussion related to the ideas delivered in this paper are welcome.

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