

A Study On TESL Trainees' Perceptions Towards Classroom Delivery Skills

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Abstract : This study examines the perceptions of TESL trainees in Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) towards classroom delivery skills. The focuses of this study include techniques of questioning and techniques of giving explanation and demonstration being employed during teaching practicum as well as the effects of these techniques towards students' understanding. Data were collected from 50 TESL trainees from Faculty of Education, UTM. A set of questionnaire which consists of four parts was used as the instrument in this research. Besides questionnaires, seven trainees were interviewed to identify their perceptions of questioning, explanation and demonstration techniques. The result of this study shows that trainees are aware of the importance of these techniques and they had employed various strategies during their teaching practice. However, there are several aspects of questioning which trainees are still weak in. These aspects are sequence of questioning; habitual repetition of questions and students' responses; asking too many questions at a time and the difficulty level of questions asked. On the other hand, trainees also show high level of awareness in terms of techniques of giving explanation and demonstration. 50 respondents had provided interesting introduction; used appropriate examples; showed positive teacher attitude as well as making sure presentations were visible and audible by students. Trainees' perceptions on several aspects of explanation and demonstration are still in moderate level. These areas are informing learning goals to students; providing model and topic framework; encouraging peer learning in explanation as well as using concrete examples during explanation and demonstration. As a conclusion, trainees' skills and techniques in questioning, explanation and demonstration can be improved in order to maximize the environment for effective learning and also to enhance students' level of understanding.

Keywords : TESL trainee's perception, classroom delivery skills

Introduction

The task of teaching is a complex process whereby it involves a wide range of personal characteristics, professional skills and specialised based of knowledge (Cole and Chan, 1994). Cole and Chan (1994) also mentioned that teaching requires the learning of a great number of skills. Thus, in order to achieve the instructional goals of classroom teaching, teachers need to integrate different teaching skills such as explaining, classroom management, questioning and other related skills which should be integrated and not learned in isolation.

The integration of various teaching skills is crucial as it can help teachers to meet different challenges in the classroom (Price and Nelson, 2007). Among the challenges that teachers face in today's diverse classroom includes students not paying attention in class and students are not participating actively. Besides, teachers also face difficulties in presenting information effectively as well as having problems in planning lessons. Hence, in this context, teaching skills refer to the skills that teachers use to enhance students' learning through the teaching and learning activities in a classroom (Kyriacou, 2001). A few examples of teaching skills are skill of questioning, skill of explaining and illustrating with examples, skill of reinforcement, skill of lecturing and skill of closure (Paintal, 1980).

In addition, Morgan and Saxton (2006) mentioned that effective teaching happens when effective learning takes place as students are participating actively in the classroom teaching and learning process. Thus, these teaching skills are essential as it constitutes the essence of being an effective teacher and when these skills are being integrated in classroom teaching, it will foster pupil

learning (Kyriacou, 2001). It also entails teachers being responsive and sensitive to students' needs (Price and Nelson, 2007). When teachers are aware of the needs of students, teachers will be able to apply a variety of teaching skills to accommodate the needs of different types of students.

Therefore, it is important for future teacher trainees to master these essential teaching skills in order to become an effective teacher. Teacher trainees who will become teachers should also know the importance of these teaching skills and how to employ these skills effectively in their classrooms.

Statement of Problem

Good (1990, as cited in Dill, 1990) mentioned that well-developed teaching skills are crucial for successful teaching and thus teacher trainees should be trained in acquiring these skills which are essential in the teaching and learning process. He also states that beginning teachers are often assigned to teach the most difficult or challenging classes.

Therefore, in order to meet the challenges in today's classrooms, it is crucial that trainees are prepared with the knowledge of the essential teaching skills. As mentioned earlier, the integration of multiple teaching skills is important to enhance the teaching and learning process. In order to promote students' understanding and learning in the classroom, the implementation of different teaching skills can increase the effectiveness of teaching. Hence, TESL trainees should be aware of the importance of using various teaching skills as well as how to implement these teaching skills effectively during their teaching practice.

With regards to the above point, this study is conducted to investigate TESL trainees' perceptions of certain teaching skills which are commonly used in the classroom delivery process. This study will be carried out to identify the techniques employed by TESL trainees, specifically in terms of questioning and providing explanation and demonstration.

In addition, this study also looks at their perceptions regarding the effectiveness of these two skills. Therefore, this study focuses only on two specific teaching skills which are the techniques of questioning and techniques of explaining and demonstration.

Objectives of Study

It is hoped that through this study, the researcher will be able to:

1. Identify the questioning techniques which are employed by TESL trainees throughout their practical teaching
2. Identify the techniques of giving explanation and demonstrations which are employed by TESL trainees throughout their practical teaching
3. Investigate TESL trainees' perceptions on whether these teaching skills affect students' level of understanding.

Significance of Study

The significance of this study is to highlight the usage of specific teaching skills in a language classroom which are the questioning techniques and also techniques of giving explanation and demonstrations. Besides, this study will be conducted to find out the perceptions of TESL trainees regarding the importance or effects of these teaching skills.

From this study, it is hoped to identify the weaknesses of teacher trainees in terms of implementing specific questioning and explanation techniques. Besides, this research is also done to provide some insights into trainees' perceptions and to suggest recommendations to improve trainees' teaching skills.

Therefore, the findings of this study could also provide useful information to the faculty and lecturers. This will enable the authorities and parties involved to improve teacher trainees' skills before they undergo their teaching practice. Consequently, this will also help teacher trainees to do better in their teaching when they are sent to schools.

Respondents

The respondents of the study are the fourth and third year TESL students from Faculty of Education who have done their teaching practice or Latihan Mengajar (LM). A total of 60 questionnaires were distributed to all the respondents but only 50 questionnaires were returned.

Data Collecting Instruments

In this research, only two research instruments were being used. The instruments used for data collection were questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire was the primary source of data collection as the questions asked are based on the research questions of this study. Interviews were conducted as the secondary source of data in order to provide higher reliability for the questionnaires.

Data Analysis

Table 1 : Techniques of Questioning Employed by Respondents Based on Frequency, Percentage and Mean Level.

No.	Item Statement	Response		Mean	Level
		A	D		
1.	I generated a variety of questions that involved different levels of processing subject matter.	46 (92%)	4 (8%)	3.04	High
2.	I ensured that questions were relevant to instructional objectives.	48 (96%)	2 (4%)	3.30	High
3.	I asked questions that students can answer correctly most of the time.	25 (50%)	25 (50%)	2.48	Moderate
4.	I ensured that the wording of questions was direct and clear and I had used vocabulary and language forms that were well known to students.	48 (96%)	2 (4%)	3.28	High
5.	I asked questions that were appropriate to students' knowledge, experience and abilities.	49 (98%)	1 (2%)	3.38	High
6.	I asked brief questions that focus on one key point at a time.	45 (90%)	5 (10%)	3.12	High
7.	I asked questions of varying levels of difficulty that match the range of student abilities.	45 (90%)	5 (10%)	3.10	High
8.	I avoided asking more than one question at a time.	37 (74%)	13 (26%)	2.96	Moderate
9.	The order in which I asked questions was from easy to difficult.	40 (80%)	10 (20%)	3.06	High

10.	I asked questions in proper sequence to accomplish particular objectives.	40 (80%)	10 (20%)	3.02	High
11.	I asked questions in logical sequence.	41 (82%)	9 (18%)	2.96	Moderate
12.	I provided adequate time after asking questions for students to formulate appropriate answers.	50 (100%)	0 (0%)	3.18	High
13.	I adjusted the pace of question-asking and wait-time to suit the questions being asked, the purposes of the learning activity and the difficulty of subject matter.	44 (88%)	6 (12%)	3.04	High
14.	I paused after asking a question and before calling on a particular student to respond.	46 (92%)	4 (8%)	3.22	High
15.	I distributed questions to all members of the class and have not favoured some students at the expense of others.	40 (80%)	10 (20%)	3.12	High
16.	I avoided habitually repeating questions or students' responses to questions.	27 (54%)	23 (46%)	2.56	Moderate
17.	I adopted a relaxed and non-threatening role when questioning.	48 (96%)	2 (4%)	3.30	High
18.	I was positive during question time.	46 (92%)	4 (8%)	3.26	High
19.	I gave encouragement to students who find difficulty in expressing themselves adequately during question-and-answer sessions.	48 (96%)	2 (4%)	3.42	High
20.	I encouraged students to make intelligent guesses if they are not sure of the answers to questions.	48 (96%)	2 (4%)	3.30	High
21.	I was willing to accept alternatives to routine answers.	49 (98%)	1 (2%)	3.32	High

22.	I rephrased questions if students' answers indicate misunderstandings.	49 (98%)	1 (2%)	3.48	High
23.	I provided supportive information if students' answers were inadequate or incomplete.	50 (100%)	0 (0%)	3.46	High
Total/Average				3.15	High

Table 4.1.2 shows the responses given by respondents with regards to the questioning techniques employed during their teaching practice. The average mean value of all the items in the questioning techniques is slightly high (mean = 3.15). This suggests that more than 85% of respondents have agreed with most of the items in Section B: Techniques of Questioning.

There are eight items (item 2, 5, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23) which are in the range of having high value of mean. The mean value of these items is between 3.30 and 3.48. Item 22 has the highest mean value of 3.48 whereby 46 respondents or 98% had agreed to the statement that they would rephrase the questions if students' answers showed misunderstandings. One respondent says:

[S1] *'One way, I would rephrase question, make it into a simpler sentence and to some extent translate it. If they still couldn't understand it, I would restate the question.'*

The findings for items two (mean = 3.30) and five (mean = 3.38) shows that most of the TESL trainees had asked relevant questions in class which are related to the instructional objectives and also appropriate to students' background knowledge. This is supported by one respondent who says:

[S3] *'I put the questions in context and make sure it is relevant to them'*

Items 17, 19, 20, 21 and 23 also show high mean level whereby trainees had shown positive teacher attitude during the questioning time and also the willingness to accept alternatives answers given by students.

Meanwhile, items one, four, six, seven, nine, 10, 12, 13, 14 and 15 have mean value in the range of 3.00 to 3.29. Items 12, 13 and 14 are related to the time allocation in questioning such as giving adequate wait-time, pausing after a question and before calling a student for answers and giving adequate wait-time for students to formulate their answers. The mean level for these three items is high and thus it shows that TESL trainees are aware of the importance of wait-time and letting students think before calling their names.

There are four items that have the moderate mean value which are items three, eight, 11 and 16. Both items eight and 11 have the same mean value of 2.96. For item eight, 13 respondents or 26% had disagreed with the statement of avoiding asking more than one question at a time. Whereas for item 11, nine respondents or 18% had disagreed that they asked questions in logical sequence.

To conclude, trainees had employed most of the techniques mentioned but there are several items whereby respondents have shown disagreement especially in types of questions being asked, number of questions being asked, asking questions in logical manner as well as repeating questions and students' responses.

Summary of Findings

As a conclusion, the main purpose of this study is to identify the classroom delivery skills being employed by TESL trainees of Faculty of Education in Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). The objectives and the scope of this study have been narrowed down to identifying the techniques of questioning and techniques of giving explanation and demonstration among TESL trainees during

their teaching practice or Latihan Mengajar (LM). Besides that, trainees' perceptions towards the effectiveness of these teaching techniques are also another focus of this research.

From the findings and discussions discussed in the previous chapter, this study has proven that TESL trainees of UTM had demonstrated the use of different techniques of questioning, explanation and demonstration during their practicum. However, the average mean values for these two variables are comparatively just above the moderate level. This might be because of the fact that TESL trainees did not have sufficient or specific trainings in the field of questioning and explanation.

The findings of this research also coincide with the similar research done by Sajehan (2007) whereby she found out that trainees' level of readiness in terms of teaching skills is at a moderate level. Based on her findings, the mean value for questioning techniques was 2.90 whereas the mean for delivery and explanation skill was 2.93. This has proven another point whereby the trainees are not ready in terms of making full use of different teaching skills during their teaching practice.

Based on the findings of this research, trainees are well equipped in terms of rephrasing questions, asking relevant questions and having the right attitude during questioning time. Besides that, trainees are also well aware of the importance of wait-time, asking questions in a proper sequence and fairness in distributing questions. However, there are still room for improvement in term of trainees' techniques of asking too many questions at a time and habitually repeating questions and responses.

According to Morgan and Saxton (2006), becoming an "effective questioner" is hard even though teachers have been asking questions frequently in the classroom. They further explain that the mastery of questioning techniques requires time and it takes diligence in order to ask better questions that could create a powerful learning environment for students.

From the findings for techniques of giving explanation and demonstration, it is found out that trainees are experienced in areas of making sure explanation and demonstration are interesting and that it can be heard and seen by all their students. Trainees have also varied the techniques in giving explanation and demonstration such as providing graphic organisers, giving concise explanation, providing relevant examples and showing positive and responsive attitude during explanation and demonstration. According to Cole and Chan (1994), these are the effective use of explanation and demonstration techniques whereby students would be able to understand complex concepts with the right explanation and modelling techniques.

Among the weaknesses of explanation and demonstration techniques employed by trainees are in terms of setting learning goals and informing students, the usage of model and topic framework as well as encouraging students to take the role of tutor and provide explanation to their own peers. This shows that trainees are still lack of training in term of writing learning objectives of the lesson and how to engage students in peer learning. Besides that, the findings also show that trainees might have neglected the importance of providing topic framework. According to Cole and Chan (1994), it is useful for students to make connections between their existing knowledge and the new information obtained in class.

To sum up, trainees recognised the importance and the varied ways in questioning and explanation but there are certain areas or techniques which trainees need to improve on. By improving their techniques in questioning and giving explanation and demonstration, it will further enhance the learning process.

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