

A Two Way Question-Answer Method In Teaching A Foreign Language At Tertiary Level

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To date student enrolment into higher education institutions within and outside South East Asian countries has increased remarkably; Malaysia is of no exception. In some Malaysian universities, the learning of Malay as a foreign language is made compulsory for international students. This does pose some challenges in the teaching and learning at tertiary level particularly for the international students who are not familiar with the language. This study explored the use of a Two Way Question-Answer method as an alternative approach in acquiring more effective questioning and answering skills to verbal questions. This action research involves 30 international postgraduate students at one public universities in Malaysia. Data were obtained through observations during the intervention method, comparison between conventional method and intervention post-test data as well as correlation methods in the questionnaire. Data were analysed using Wilcoxon Sign Rank test for score comparison and Simple Linear Regression test for a correlation analysis between variables. The results showed that the respondents were able to develop the skills of questioning and answering independently through verbal practices during the intervention session. The analysis of the score comparison between conventional cycle and intervention cycle recorded a significant difference, with a value of $P = 0.000$.

Keywords: *Foreign Language; Malay Language; Action Research; International Students; Question-Answer skills*



Introduction

A total of about 170,000 international students have been accepted to pursue their studies in various fields at various Malaysian universities based on the record by the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education (2018). The government hopes to reach 250,000 international students by 2025. This scenario has triggered the recommendation to learn Malay Language in all public and private universities (Awang Sariyan, 2011). As a support to the recommendation, the Malaysian Government, through the Private Higher Education Act 1996, has set out that all international students in public and private institutions of higher learning are required to learn the Malay as a foreign language course; as part of the requirement to graduate.

The learning of Malay language courses among international students in local higher learning institutions emphasises on the four main skills, namely listening, speaking, writing and reading skills (National Language Syllabus, MQA 2005:11). Among these four skills, speaking is the most important skills in the language (Rao, 2019) because speaking is the skill that the students will be judged most in real life situations (Brown & Yule, 1983). In terms of speech and communication, the language mastery at the highest level is the mastery of the communication language as it is also a foothold in the formation of sentences (Asmah Haji Omar, 2009). Nik Safiah Karim (2010) supports Asmah in the same case that the language ability of one is at the highest level when they are able to form superior and grammatically correct sentences that are in line with the grammar system.

Most of the international students who learn Malay language exhibit weaknesses in the Malay language (Faizah et al 2010), which involved the mastery of four basic skills, speaking, reading, writing and listening. According to Yong Chyn Chye et al (2010) these skills are the backbone to students language ability. In most scenarios, the international students in Malaysia mainly use the language in classroom tasks and for academic learning purposes (Mazlina Baharudin, 2014).

In general, students are found to have less interest in using Malay in conversations with local residents or for daily dealings because they are influenced by the availability to use other languages, such as English language (Mazlina Baharudin 2014, Khuzaiton & Thana 2014) as well as the students' native languages (Fathiyah Chapakia, 2008; Abdul Razak & Saiful, 2011) This situation is aggravated by the students' convenience to communicate using their own mother tongue language in daily conversations with classmates of the same native language or with their colleagues (Khuzaiton dan Thana, 2014; Siti Hamin et al, 2013).

Based on the problems identified, an action research was undertaken to build students' skills in specifically the questioning and answering in Malay. A Two Way Question-Answer teaching method intervention was conducted in the teaching and learning of Malay as a foreign language at one public universities. The objectives of the research was to explore the effectiveness of the

Two Way Question-Answer methods in developing verbal questioning and answering skill among students. The study had posed these following hypothesis:

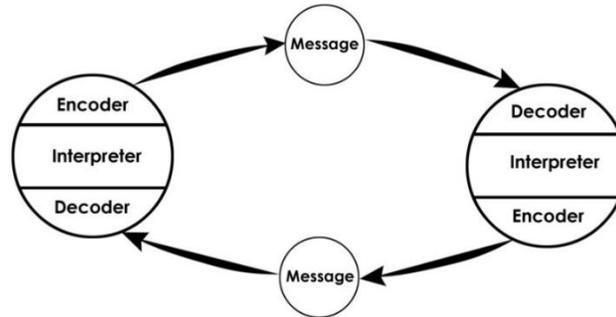
- Ho1 : There was no significant association between the implementation of the Two Way Question-Answer method and the verbal questioning skills among students.
- Ho2 : There was no significant difference between score for Cycle 1 Post Test and Cycle 2 Post Test
- Ho3 : There was no significant relationship between the implementation of the Two Way Question-Answer method and the verbal answering skills among students.
- Ho4: There was no significant difference between Cycle 1 Post Test and Cycle 2 Post Test

Literature Review

Answering skills have been identified as an important role in the teaching and learning process (Long et. Al., 2015). In this regard, verbal questions by students and feedback by teachers are two things that are interconnected and intertwined. This means that the process of communication and interaction between teachers and students is influenced by the form of questions lodged by students, the feedback given by teachers as well as the form of answers given by students from teachers' questions (Tofade et. Al, 2013). Questions from students are the key to any conversations or communication that may occur in the classroom (Long et. Al, 2015). This is because students' questions usually refer to the content, thus leading to the student-teacher communication situation as well as the students' deeper exploration of knowledge (Lewis, 2015) through Q&A sessions in the classroom. In the classroom setting, this activity aims to encourage students to better understand the content and communication skills development (Nappi, 2017). Asking appropriate and correct questions requires cognitive demands; it requires knowledge of pedagogical content and lessons for questions to be well structured (Boaler & Brodie, 2004).

The action research adopts Schramm Communication Model (1954) that offers a classic approach to determine how communication between two people operates when they exchange information, ideas, or attitude.

Figure 1: Schramm Model (Wilbur Schramm, 1954)

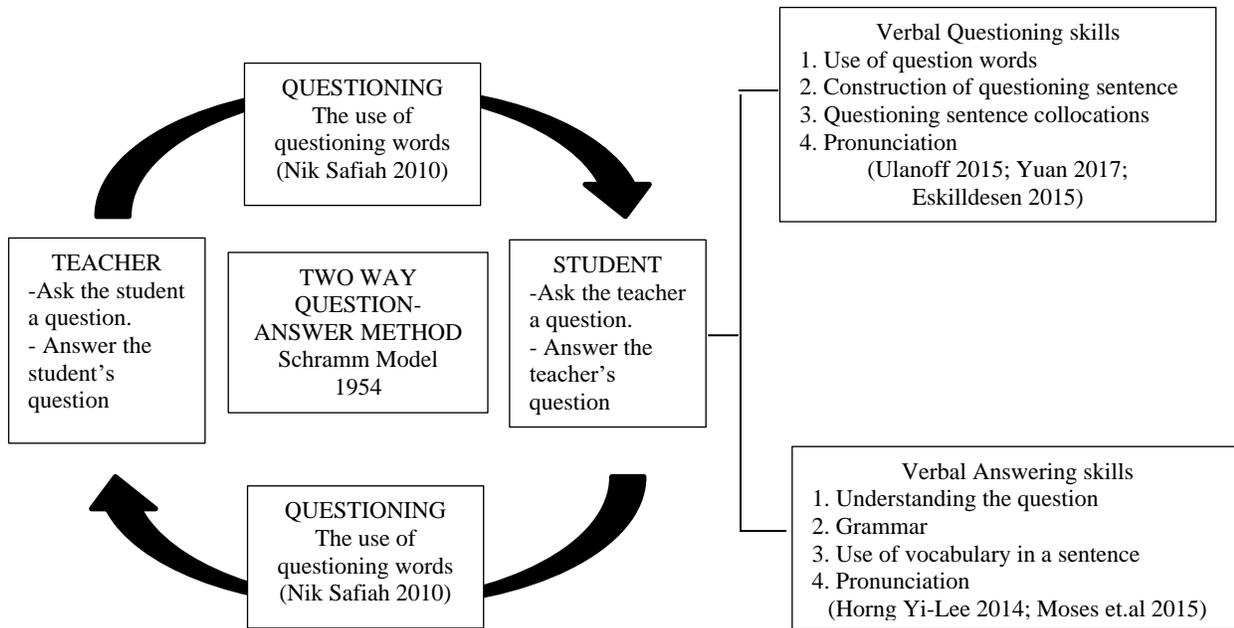


Schramm imposes that experience, surroundings and situations play a role to stimulate effective communication. According to Schramm;

“ Encoding plays a very important role because it initiates the process of communication by converting the thought into content. When the information reaches the recipient his prime responsibility is to understand what the speaker intends to convey. Unless and until the second party is able to understand or decode the information what the sender wants to communicate, the message is actually of no use”. (Schramm, 1954)

Schramm’s model places emphasis on two significant processes; encoding and decoding. Without these two most important elements, information can never flow between two individuals. The model accentuates that communication is interactive and interpretative. The model frames the teacher-student verbal communication where questioning and answering take place in the classrooms teaching. In this research context, the adoption of this model is relevant to this two way question-answer method that promotes not only the teacher to student verbal questioning but also question and answer from the students to the teachers. Both students and teachers play their role to encode, decode and interpret information in this two way verbal question-answer method. Figure 2 below describes the conceptual framework adopted to address the objectives of the action research. It subsequently embeds the focus on its linguistic aspects.

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework (Adapted from Schramm oleh Wilbur Schramm, 1954)



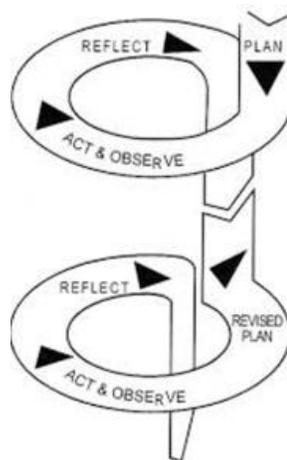
Questioning skills can provide opportunities for the development of language proficiency such as sentence formation and questioning skills among students. (Ulanoff et. Al, 2015). questioning techniques among Japanese learners who learn Chinese can improve the skills of sentence (syntax), vocabulary (morphology) and mastery of questioning (Boping Yuan, 2007). In addition to the language and grammar aspects, questioning skills are also found to benefit language level mastery, unit mastery in the construction of strong sentences and aspects of pronunciation. (Eskildsen, 2015). Interactions in the form of questions initiated by students, whether with teachers or students, constitute important learning opportunities (Johnson, 2013). This can be seen in two situations, the general learning situation, and the learning situation involving L2 (define) or L3 students L2 or second language refer to any student whose primary or first language is not the target language and L3 or third language refer to non-native language that the learners are currently learning, after L1 and one or several L2(s) (Ferris, 2009) In general learning situations, answering teacher questions opens the opportunity for students to respond to the questions being asked and to express their understanding from their own perspectives (Adedoyin, 2010). The ability to respond to these verbal questions comes from the students' desire to explore new topics that prepare them for the appropriate answers. (Tze-Peng Wong et. Al, 2012).

Looking at the L2/L3 acquisition aspect, answering questions is directly related to the questions being asked as the questions usually contain information such as keywords, question word and structures that help third Language students (L3) to easily convey answers (Lemons & Lemons,

2013). In this case, identifying the information in the question is an easy task if L2 / L3 students can combine the information in the question to formulate answers in the target language (Donesch-Jezo, 2011) other than identifying information about the language structure. In an overview, this situation benefits from the construction of language-reinforcing aspects of formal and informal grammar and structure of the target language, as well as enriching vocabulary (Tze-Peng Wong et. Al, 2012). In addition to the aspects of linguistic skills such as phonology of sound and words, the collocation of words and tones in pronunciation (Horng-Yi Lee, 2014). It incorporates too the enriching of vocabulary, to sharpening their thinking and expanding their knowledge (Moses, Busetti-Prevert & Pritchard, 2015).

The Schramm model had primarily formed the basis of the conceptual framework in exploring a two way verbal interaction between a teacher and a student with both participants engaging themselves as the decoder, encorder and interpreter. The communication model is then adapted to configure the conceptual framework of this study that focuses on Nik Safiah karim et.al (2010) use of eight questioning words. These question words then focus on the skills of i) verbal questioning and ii) verbal answering. This verbal questioning and answer framework is then embeded in the Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988) for the purpose of this intended action research. The rationale for utilising this model is based on its procedures that could clearly relate to the objectives of the study. It was also feasible to implement in the classroom other than it stimulates the researcher's curiosity in seeking answers to resolve the students' problems in learning Malay.

Figure 3: Kemmis & McTaggart Model (Stephen Kemmis & Robin McTaggart 1988)



The implementation of each cycle as a means of teaching intervention method in this model comprises of 4 elements of i) to plan, ii) to act iii) to observe and iv) to reflect. The number of cycles depended on the problems that needed to be resolved. In this intervention method, a new action cycle followed after each reflection in one cycle. It is through this action research design

that the researcher utilises the conventional teaching in the first cycle loop and the intervention method in the second cycle loop. At the end of the second cycle loop that students were given the questionnaire form that was divided into 3 sections; i) the effectiveness of the intervention method and ii) the verbal questioning skills and iii) the verbal answering skills. A simple linear regression analysis was then conducted to observe the significant relations. Students were asked to sit for a post test at the end of each cycle loop to measure the students' ability in the verbal question and answer skills.

Methodology

In this action research design for this study, both the quantitative and qualitative data were obtained. As for the quantitative data, the instruments used were questionnaire, two sets of pre and post test questions, which was verbal questions and interview test, as well as observation record form. The questionnaire for this study comprises four sections. Verbal questioning test and interview test is a real course evaluation for Malay language courses at the university, which serve as the pre and post test for this study. The pre and post test will be used as the parameter of achievement to compare students' performance after completion of certain cycle and compare it with the previous rolling.

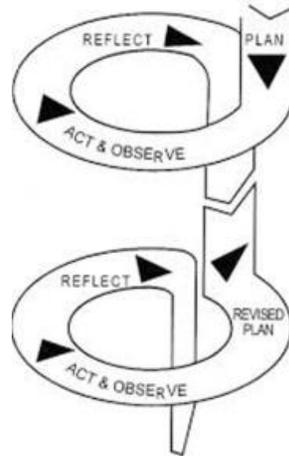
For the qualitative data, the researcher made observation notes during the experiment sessions, which involved three cycles; i) Conventional Teaching as Cycle 1, ii) Intervention Methods as Cycle 2, iii) Improvement Methods for Cycle 3. In each cycle, researcher records the attitude and response of the respondents to the method applied. In addition, researcher also recorded the students' development in terms of sentence construction, language and pronunciation aspects, with two targeted skills. The quantitative data were analysed by SPSS, while qualitative data analysed through thematic analysis.

The respondents

The respondents were 30 international students who took Malay language course at one of the public universities in Malaysia; Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM).

The Procedure

The three cycles; i) Conventional Teaching as Cycle 1, ii) Intervention Methods as Cycle 2, iii) Improvement Methods for Cycle 3 were conducted in this study. Each cycle was conducted according to the stages of the action research, and for this study, the Kemmis Action Research Model as a guiding principle



Cycle 1: the conventional

In this cycle, teacher uses the conventional teaching method using module on the question-answer topic such as question words and form, question construction and answer format. Practices for the topic mostly in writing form, with question paper and exercises in the module. Verbal practice occur in one way; teacher asking questions, and students giving the answer. Upon completion of this cycle, respondents sit for the cycle 1 post-test. Results from the observation notes made during this cycle were evaluated and reflected.

Cycle 2: The intervention

A 'Two Way Question-Answer' method was innovated as a solution to international students' Malay communication problems. This method required two ways of interactions, teacher-student and student-teacher or student-student. In conventional way, teacher is the one who always threw questions, but with this method, students have to ask questions in Malay too, either to teacher or to their classmates. Students were free to ask any kind of questions in Malay. Verbal questioning and verbal answering skills are the main focus throughout the intervention session. Upon completion of this cycle, respondents sit for the cycle 2 post-test.

Cycle 3 (Improvement for students who fail to improve at cycle 2)

Based on the reflection results of cycle 2, several improvements were implemented, namely:

- Teacher emphasises the use of vocabulary by ...
- Teacher asked students to memorize common vocabulary
- The scope of the verbal topic is simplified. For instance ..
- Teacher brought two locals (LC1 and LC2) as class chat partners

Upon completion of this cycle, post test and questionnaire session were conducted with the students. The other students filled the questionnaire form after completing cycle 2.

Findings

The discussion of this section will focus on the outcome of of the study; the effectiveness of Two Way Question-Answer method to develop students skills namely verbal questioning skills and verbal answering skills.

The Effectiveness of Two Way Question-Answer Method in Developing Verbal Questioning Skills among Students

i. The Qualitative Results

During the intervention session in cycle 2, students demonstrated the development of verbal questioning skills through several evidences. The first proof is that students demonstrates the potential for developing self-esteem. At first, students prefer paper as an aid in which they will write the questions asked on the paper before asking questions. However, the researchers' encouraged them to question without the help of a paper which led them to begin training themselves to do so. Practices during the intervention session has been successful in developing verbal questioning skills among students.

The observation showed, most significant change in the development of self-questioning skills among students. It exhibited the transition from paper-based questions to spontaneous questioning ability. The spontaneous questioning ability motivated students to be more active in their questions, especially in engaging themselves to become classmates' language partner. some students were brave to ask their classmates and taking on the role of the teacher during the verbal answer session. This has attracted more students to participate to question their classmates and researchers.

Students also showcased their creativity and thinking outside the box in this verbal questioning. After studying the basic concepts in verbal questioning, the structure of sentences and question words in Malay, some students showed better understanding by providing more than one possible question to the answer given.

ii. The Quantitative Results

The simple linear regression analysis that was performed to see the relationship between the intervention method and the construction of verbal questioning skills are based on the following hypothesis:

Ho1: There was no significant association between the implementation of the Two Way Question-Answer method and the verbal questioning skills among students.

The findings of the SPSS for simple linear regression tests revealed a significant correlation between the Two Way Question-Answer method and the ability to ask questions verbally among students, with $F(1, 20) = 21.2$, $p < 0.05$, with a $R^2 = .541$. The percentage expectation in students' verbal questioning skills is $Y = 1.130 + 0.729 X$ when X is measured in percentages. In this regard, verbal questioning skills increased by 0.729 per cent using the Two Way Question--Answer method.

Table 1(a): Model Summary: The Effect of Two Way Question-Answer on Verbal Questioning Skills

Model	R	R Square	Modified Square	R Expected Error	Standard
1	.735 ^a	.541	.515	.29761	

a. Predictor: Two-Way Method

Table 1(b): Simple Linear Regression Analysis – The Effect of the Two-Way Question-Answer on Verbal Questioning Skills

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Min Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.878	1	1.878	21.200	.000 ^b
	Residual	1.594	28	.089		
	Total	3.472	29			

Table 1(c): Model Summary: The Effect of Two Way Question-Answer on Verbal Questioning Skills

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig
(constant)	1.130	.696		1.623	.122
Two-Way Method	.729	.158	.735	4.604	.000

Dependent Variable: Questioning Skills

A comparison of scores for the questioning test of cycle 1 and intervention cycle was performed based on the following hypothesis:

Ho2 : There was no significant difference between score for Cycle 1 Post Test and Cycle 2 Post Test

Based on the results of the analysis conducted using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test, the Z value was -3.772 with a p value (Asymp. Sig 2 tailed) of 0.000. This value is less than the critical value of the 0.05 test which indicates that the null hypothesis is rejected at once and shows that there is a significant difference between Cycle 1 test and 2 in verbal questioning skills, with $W(19) = 4.0$, $p = 0.00$, thus proving the effectiveness of intervention methods in developing students' verbal questioning skills based on differences.

The Effectiveness of the Two Way Question-Answer Method in Developing Verbal Answering Skills among Students.

i. *Qualitative Results:*

Student's development of verbal answering skills and the effectiveness of intervention methods in developing such skills are evidenced by the observation notes throughout the intervention session by the researcher. This is supported by the results of simple regression analysis of questionnaire data and comparison of achievement test scores 1 and cycle 2. At the early stages, the respondents often made mistakes especially in terms of grammar and sentence structure. However, they were still determined to answer. It is observed that if the answer is incorrect, or they realised what went wrong in the answer, they immediately corrected it without asking the researcher.

The number of practices during the intervention session resulted in students gaining the ability to answer questions verbally better than when they were in conventional cycle. They also showed the progress in using full sentences when answering verbal questions, like;

Example 1 Q – Apa warna kegemaran awak? (*what is your favourite colour*)

A – Warna kegemaran saya biru (*my favourite*)

Example A is compared to the the short answers usually given in the the conventional cycle,

Example 2 Q – Apa warna kegemaran awak?

A – Biru. *translate*

In the early stages, students are used to answering questions by simply giving short answers. During the final session of the 3rd and 4th weeks of intervention, the students began to show improvement in terms of how to respond, by using full sentences.

ii. *Quantitative Results*

As for the findings of the third hypothesis, there was no significant relationship between the implementation of the Two Way Question-Answer method and the verbal answering skills among students. Tables 2(a) to 2(c) show a simple linear regression test that demonstrates significant correlations between the Two Way Question-Answer method and the ability to answer questions verbally among students, with $F(1, 20) = 97.731$, $p = 0.00$, with a value of $R^2 = .541$. The percentage expectation in students' verbal questioning skills is $Y = -.620 + 1.129 X$ when X is measured in percentages. In this regard, verbal answering skills increased by 1,129 per cent using the Two-Way Answer skills.

Table 2(a): Model Summary The Effect of Two Way Question-Answer on Verbal Answering Skills

Model	R	R Square	Modified Square	R Expected Error	Standard
1	.919 ^a	.844	.836	.21464	

a. Predictor: Two-Way Method

Table 2(b): Simple Linear Regression Analysis – The Effect of Two Way Question-Answer on Verbal Answering Skills

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Min Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4.503	1	4.503	97.731	.000 ^b
	Residual	.829	28	.046		
	Total	5.332	29			

Table 2(c): Model Summary The Effect of Two Way Question-Answer on Verbal Answering Skills

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	
(constant)	-.620	.502		-1.236	.233
Kaedah Tanya Jawab	1.129	.114	.919	9.886	.000

Dependent Variable: Answering Skill

A comparison of scores for Cycle 1 test and intervention cycle was based on the following hypothesis:

Ho4: There was no significant difference between Cycle 1 Post Test and Cycle 2 Post Test

Based on the results of the analysis conducted using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test, then the Z value found to be -3.684 with a p value (Asymp. Sig 2 tailed) of 0.000. This value was less than the critical value of the study of 0.05 indicating that the null hypothesis was rejected and that there was a significant difference between achievement test scores 1 and achievement 2 in verbal questioning skills., With $W(19) = 6.5$, $p = 0.00$, at the same time. prove the effectiveness of the intervention method in developing students' verbal questioning skills based on their differences.

Discussion

Verbal Questioning Skills

Nappi (2017) emphasised that bilateral situations in learning activities led to students' self-exploration of knowledge. In this study, the students showed improvement in self-development skills through teacher' encouragement and a lot of practices. This self-development initiative among students enables them to obtain new information indirectly (Boping Yuan, 2007) such as the construction of question structures and proper use of question words, as well as to enable the transition from paper use to verbal ability. These skills are in line with the cognitive demands of asking questions, which require the support of a pedagogical framework for questions to be well structured (Boaler & Brodie, 2004). On the linguistic aspect, students' ability to generate more than one possible question for the same statement indicates that students have mastered the language and unit proficiency in developing good questions (Eskildsen, 2015) because good questioning skills can open up opportunities for language mastery, such as sentences formation as well as developing questioning skills among students (Ulanoff et al., 2015).

Verbal Answering Skills

Forms of sentence structure and word choice are among the most frequent mistakes done by students. The process of answering skills development potentially enriching vocabulary, as well as sharpening thinking and expanding knowledge (Moses, Buseti-Prevert & Pritchard, 2015). This led the students to build on basic knowledge that allowed them to recognize the wrong language and correct it without being asked, as well as developing the ability to answer the questions independently through the intervention method. This is because, the method and the process lead them away to learn the key points in building a good answer independently, as well as support their motivation and desire to help them further (Tze-Peng Wong et al. 2012). in comparison to verbal questioning skills, the students were exposed to the answering skills and answer form

beforehand. This is why R² value in the regression analysis for verbal questioning skills (0.541) lower than the R² value of answering questions (0.844). The early exposure to the form of the answer sentence enables them to identify the information in the question and to link the information in the question to form the answer (Ulanoff et. al., 2015).

Implications and Recommendations

This study holds significant pedagogical and methodological implications for improving students' verbal questioning skills; teacher encouragement had proved to be a powerful way of creating a productive learning environment. Therefore, it is vital for the teachers to facilitate students' learning by creating a learning environment that would encourage active interactions between the students and the teachers as well as fellow classmates. Vygotsky (1978) advocates that learning constructively requires an environment in which collaboration is situated in authentic activities that take place.

This study also denotes the authenticity of the two-way questions-answer method to develop students' knowledge of the Malay language and boost their motivation to learn the language. This brings to the need to incorporate this method into the instructional strategies to teach Malay for students at the university level. It should be implemented to various levels of international students, from adolescence (13-18) up to early 50s. This method is particularly relevant to the goal-oriented and practical international students (Knowles, 1980) who are mostly adult learners.

As studies on international students learning Malay as a foreign language are still scarce, this study provides entryways into future research to take effect to enrich the current area of study within the context of internationalisation of higher education in Malaysia. This study employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques of data collection to explore the execution of Two Way Question-Answer method amongst 30 international postgraduate students who enrolled in a Malay language course. Future research could employ different methods to study the students' perspectives, their experiences and practices of Malay beyond classroom context. Future research may also consider adult learning or adult development theoretical perspectives as its research foundation that could provide the understanding of and would broaden the perspectives on the international students learning Malay as a foreign language at tertiary level.

In practical, this intervention method should contribute to the language teaching in higher education in general and to the teaching of Malay language proficiency to international students specifically. It provides as an alternative form of student-centered method, the Two Way Question-Answer method is a question-and-answer method that can be used as a classroom activities between teacher and students, as well as a method that helps international students to communicate in a simple conversation. The empirical evidence found in the quantitative and qualitative data supports the effectiveness of the two way question-answer method that is effective for Malay



language teachers to implement in their respective classrooms when teaching Malay language to international students. This method also holds the potential to be implemented by Malay language teachers in schools to those international students whose age ranged from thirteen to eighteen years old. Other than that, the method should be implemented by foreign language proficiency teachers or instructors in language centers in the teaching of any foreign languages ; either as a second or third language learning. This intervention method should also provide input to the syllabus course design of Malay language proficiency teaching specifically and to other foreign language teaching. It should lead to the contribution of the relevant components in student proficiency assessments at the end of the course.

Conclusion

The findings had unravelled a positive change in students' skills in answering questions that was evident in their confidence and openness in the process of the cycles. The incorporation of the need to focus on both the communication and linguistics skills had managed to address the problems faced by international students in engaging in their conversation using Malay. Most importantly, is the evidence shown in the improvements of adult learners

As students do not get ample practices using Malay language outside the classroom versus the use of English and native language to communicate with peers, teachers and their contacts (Maimunah & Norizah Ardi, 2003; Fathiyah Chapakia, 2008; Abdul Razak & Saiful, 2011). On the whole, the intervention of Two Way Question-Answer method managed to offer an alternative teaching method in building questioning and answering skills in students, as well as contribute to the benefits of language, cognitive and communication so that the students can acquire the proficiency in Malay language speaking skills.



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