

TEACHING TECHNIQUE OF ISLAMIC STUDIES IN HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTIONS FOR NON-ARABIC SPEAKERS: EXPERIENCE OF FACULTY OF QURANIC AND SUNNAH STUDIES AND TAMHIDI CENTRE, UNIVERSITI SAINS ISLAM MALAYSIA

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Abstract

Globalization causes educational institutions to encounter various challenges and demand, where they need to play their roles in improving competitiveness and world-class quality education. Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) as a university that integrates *Naqli* and *Aqli* knowledge has taken the globalization challenge by requiring the adoption of English and Arabic language as a teaching and learning medium with adaptability of knowledge discipline even though majority of the lecturer and students are non-speakers of those languages. For Islamic Studies field, the required medium is Arabic language since it is a discipline of al-Naqli knowledge which is based on knowledge in Arabic language where all the basic sources of Islamic studies namely al-Quran, Hadis and *Thurath* books are in Arabic language. The objective of this article is to study the teaching techniques applied by the non-Arabic speaking lecturers when they carry out teaching and learning process of Islamic studies to non-Arabic speaking students. This research was conducted based on experiences of the lecturers of Islamic studies at Faculty of Quranic & Sunnah Studies and Tamhidi Centre, USIM. From the research, it was found that each teaching method such as lecture session, tutorial and e-learning is conducted with different teaching techniques. Various techniques have been applied accordingly such as brainstorming, discussion, presentation, story-telling, role play, Q&A, quiz, forum, and exercises. Result shows that the teaching techniques applied in teaching Islamic studies for non-Arabic speakers are suitable with the ability and basic knowledge of students. Result also found that the techniques used are significance in teaching process for non-Arabic speaking students in higher education level. Since the students of Faculty of Quranic & Sunnah Studies and Tamhidi Centre have basic knowledge in Arabic language and Islamic studies while they were in high school, research suggests on pursuing these teaching techniques and enhancing them from time to time.

Keywords: Teaching method, Islamic studies, non-Arabic speaker, higher education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Delivery of quality teaching emphasizes on coherent presentation, sequential materials, adequate opportunities for student involvement in integrated training, the use of regular and periodic measurements and constructive feedback to students (Muhamad Suhaimi Taat et al., 2012, p. B4). The use of effective methods and techniques should be used during the process of teaching and learning. Both must be consistent with the strategy and approach adopted. Although there are differences of purpose and function among strategy, approach, method and technique, there is an interrelated relationship among them, as described in the following figure (Teacher Education Institute, 2011, p.11):

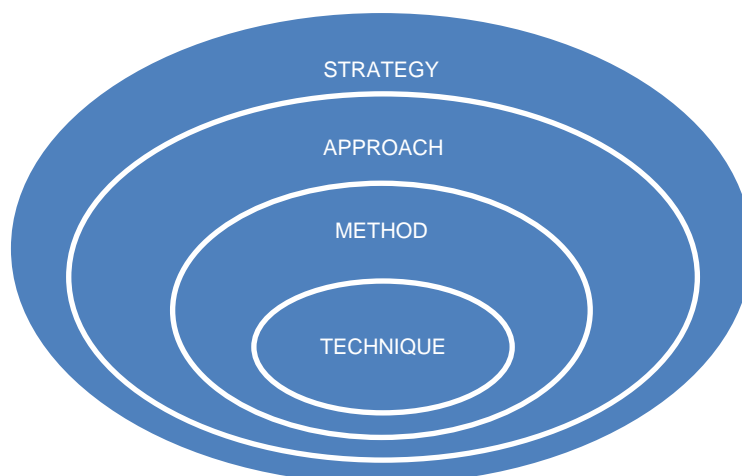


Fig.1. Relationship among strategy, approach, method and technique.

1.1. Strategy

Strategy is a concept that involves process of planning so as to determine actions that should be taken in achieving the intended goals. In teaching and learning context, strategy means ways or steps or actions that must be implemented in order to achieve the objectives of teaching and learning. Strategy therefore, focuses on achievement or learning outcomes (Teacher Education Institute, 2011, p. 11).

1.2. Approach

There are various types of approaches which are Inductive Approach, Deductive Approach, Eclectic Approach, Communicative Approach, Interactional Approach and Integrated Approach (Teacher Education Institute, 2011, p. 13). According to Parera (1986), approach is the background of philosophy or opinion about main idea to be debated and is an axiom that is generally accepted statement and form the basis of a description (Chang Lee Hoon, p. 17). Approach is also a way to deal with a subject, namely how a subject can be taught based on its objectives, and hence, it becomes a systematic set of theory (Mok Soon Sang, 1992).

1.3. Method

Method is a systematic series of actions to achieve the objectives of the learning outcomes in short term. Teaching method is a way to accomplish a learning objective through organized presentation delivery (Mok Soon Sang, 1992). It also means moving towards a learning objective which has been planned and organized (Sharifah Alwiah, 1986). Method is also a means to achieve a goal; therefore, whatever ways that teachers do to make the students understand so as to achieve the teaching objectives, then it is a method (Hasan Langgulung, 1981). Definition of method is also described as a teaching activity that consists of organized steps, and in each step, there is a planned skills and practices. Teaching method is not the main purpose of teaching, but it is a *wasilah*, that is a way to achieve teaching objective (Abu Saleh, 1988).

This therefore means that teaching method is a plan or procedure adopted to implement teaching in an orderly, organized and systematic manner. Method is an organized, continuous teaching steps that are structured and should be implemented in order to accomplish a teaching objective. Among the methods proposed for use in teaching and learning are natural method, grammar translation method, direct method, Hafaz method, linguistic method, code - cognitive method, oral - aural method, natural method, soldier method, psychological method and specific method (Teacher Education Institute, 2011, p. 12).

1.4. Technique

According to Edward M. Anthony, technique is a trick or strategy or tactics used by teachers to achieve maximum results immediately in teaching a specific part of a language. In general, technique is what is seen in the classroom (Azman Wan Chik, 1987), that is teacher's skills in the management and implementation of teaching methods in teaching and learning activities. If a teacher teaches language using advanced communication tools in a language laboratory, then it's a technique (Muhammad Azhar et al., 2012, p.

894). If an Islamic Education teacher teaches a student to memorize al-Quran by listening to the recitation in cassette, then it is a technique. In conclusion, technique is a control of an organization that really happens in classrooms where it is used to achieve an objective. There are various types of technique namely role-play, games, drill, storytelling, discussion, debate, quizzes, brainstorming, question and answer, simulation, drama and inquiry techniques (Abdul Rasid et al., 2013, pp. 47-49).

Based on the definitions described above, it can be generally understood that strategy is the planning of teaching such as teacher-centered, student-centered, and material-centered. Approach is a way to deal with a subject that is how a subject is taught according to its objectives. In addition, method is a systematic series of actions to achieve the learning objectives in a short term. Teaching method is a way to approach a learning objective through structured delivery. Technique, on the other hand, is a teacher's skill in managing and implementing a teaching and learning activity (Muhamad Suhaimi Taat et al., 2012, p. B4).

2. BACKGROUND OF STUDIES IN THE FACULTY OF QURANIC AND SUNNAH STUDIES (FPQS) AND IN TAMHIDI CENTRE, ISLAMIC SCIENCE UNIVERSITY OF MALAYSIA (USIM).

2.1. Faculty of Quranic and Sunnah Studies (FPQS).

The objective of the establishment of FPQS is to uphold the Quran and Sunnah studies in mainstream education by emphasizing the use of information technology in its teaching and research. In addition, it also seeks to expand Islamic beliefs by providing more opportunities for researchers and educators to study, research and disseminate knowledge and wisdom contained in the holy book of Quran and Sunnah to the society and country (Academic Division, 2005, p.18).

In order to ensure that these goals are accomplished, FPQS has established three programmes, namely Bachelor of Quranic and Sunnah Studies with Honours, Bachelor of Quranic Studies with Multimedia with Honors and Bachelor of Sunnah Studies with Information Management with Honours (Kandil et. al., 2007, p. 78).

2.2. Tamhidi Centre, Islamic Science University of Malaysia (USIM).

USIM Tamhidi Programme is a programme for SPM leavers that prepares them for their First Degree. Tamhidi is an Arabic word which means 'Setup' which is similar to the terms 'Matriculation' in the Ministry of Education and the International Islamic University Malaysia, 'Foundation' at the University of Malaya, 'Foundation Year' at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia or similar to the pre-university programme (STPM, HSC or A 'Level). Therefore Tamhidi Programme is equivalent to 'foundation' or fundamental programs conducted by the above-said universities. There are 5 Tamhidi programmes offered, namely Tamhidi of Medicine, Tamhidi of Science and Technology, Tamhidi of Syariah and Law, Tamhidi of Accounting and Muamalat and Tamhidi of Dentistry (<http://tamhidi.usim.edu.my/>)

An essential prerequisite for entrance into any academic center or faculty in USIM is passed Arabic subjects in SPM (Tamhidi Centre, 2005, p. 9). Students who do not have any basics in Arabic language are not eligible to apply since the teaching and learning system in USIM is using English and Arabic only as a medium of instruction. Arabic language courses are compulsory university courses that must be learned by all students from all fields of specialization.

2.3. Position of Islamic Studies at the Faculty of Quran and Sunnah (FPQS) and in Tamhidi Centre

The vision of FPQS is to uphold al-Quran and Sunnah in producing man that is based on Islamic education and recent technology that is able to contribute to the society, nation and the whole world (Academic Division, 2005, p.19). Therefore, the courses of Islamic studies are the basic or main courses for all programmes offered.

Unlike FPQS, only one of the five programmes offered by Tamhidi Centre requires Islamic studies course as the main course namely Tamhidi of Syariah and Law programme. However, to realize the objectives of the university that is committed to producing Muslim professional graduates who not only have expertise in the field of Medical Sciences, Science, Technology, Engineering, Economics, Accounting, and Muamalat Syariah and Law, but also possess good ethics and proper understanding about Islam without neglecting other programmes (Academic Division, 2005, p.13). Tamhidi Centre has provided Islamic studies courses as compulsory courses that are relevant and significant to the five programs offered. Similar to the

practice in FPQS, the teaching and learning, learning modules and reference books for all courses of Islamic studies courses are in Arabic.

Since the establishment of USIM until now, all the lecturers and students of Islamic studies courses in Tamhidi Centre are non-Arabic speakers. However, just like the scenario in FPQS, the lecturers are able to speak in Arabic as they used to further their education in countries like Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco. On the other hand, the students have the basic skills to understand and speak in Arabic as they learnt Arabic in secondary school that makes it as a compulsory subject.

3. ISLAMIC STUDIES TEACHING TECHNIQUE FOR NON-ARABIC SPEAKERS : AN EXPERIENCE

Generally, the course delivery methods in higher education are in the forms of lectures, tutorials, e-learning and individual or group assignments, discussions and presentations. The challenge for Islamic studies courses in USIM is when the lecturers need to deal with students who are not native speakers of Arabic who in general do not have the experience of studying with full Arabic language medium in teaching and learning in schools. Students' ability to understand the content of lessons in Arabic during lecture is the main objective of each lesson, but the lecturer cannot take simple steps to translate the content into Bahasa Malaysia or English. This violates teaching ethics in USIM. Therefore, various techniques have been used by the lecturer during lecture in the lecture hall or tutorial in classroom to ensure that the objectives are achieved.

3.1. Question-Answer Technique

This technique is implemented by the lecturer asking questions relating to the subject matter and students need to respond accordingly. Questions are raised after the completion of briefing sessions for each sub-topic. This technique is intended to detect the level of understanding of students, encourage students to explain information clearly as well as to assess the ability to speak in Arabic. This technique will be more effective when planned and quality questions are asked as it can help sharpen students' thinking skills while creating a more dynamic and efficient learning environment.

3.2. Role-Play Technique

This technique is usually used spontaneously by the lecturers. When majority of students cannot understand the situation explained, the lecturer will ask some of the students who are able to understand it well to dramatize it. This technique is a form of drama that does not require memorizing scripts and the lecturer will only act as a facilitator before the play starts. Students who act in this technique will try to explain a situation to other students through acting and language styles that is easy to be understood among them. This technique does not only able to turn a very positive learning environment, but also can build positive qualities in students. Habit of helping others to understand the lesson content can be fostered indirectly by using this technique.

3.3. Story-Telling Technique

Most lecturers use this technique spontaneously. The aim is to provide examples that are related to the lesson which can be easily understood and remembered by the students. Most lecturers recount their personal experiences and present them in simple, easy and effortless language style. Good intonation and body language help students to better understand the story and its relationship with the teaching content. A story that is told in an interesting style makes it a technique that can attract students' attention and concentration in teaching and learning process.

3.4. Drilling Technique

The lecturers apply the drilling technique when they have to repeat the facts learned repetitively. It aims to achieve a skill such as pronunciation skills, or to make the students remember and memorize important facts. Through this technique, students need to be alert as they need to listen, see and think about the meaning of the words according to context. It is very important because most of the words in Arabic have more than one meaning.

3.5. Discussion Technique

This technique is usually made in tutorial classes. The purpose is to train students to express themselves excellently. The lecturer divides the students into groups; assign each group to discuss among themselves while being monitored so that the discussion is focused. After the discussion period ends, the lecturer will

ask for a report from each group. The lecturer will encourage the students to present in a form of speech, not through reading out loud. Indirectly, this can enhance the students' ability to speak in Arabic with the correct use of language. Some lecturers use e-learning to create forums with topics relating to their subject matter. Lecturers will participate in a forum online to monitor any negative element in the discussion. Lecturers can also monitor the progress of students in writing Arabic language.

This is a technique that is very significant because it involves all students in the class and they play an active role in the discussion sessions. It aims to train students to express their thoughtful, logical and mature thoughts within a defined time period, encourage students to collaborate and share ideas, create an interest to read as it is necessary for them to make references (Mak Soon Sang, 1993).

3.6. Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a technique used prior to a lecture in order to explore students' existing knowledge. Lecturer can identify students' perceptions and preparation for the lesson. Indirectly, lecturer gets an idea to choose next appropriate technique to be applied so as to achieve the learning outcomes in accordance with the level of acceptance of students from time to time until the end of the teaching period. Students are in a comfortable situation when asked to respond to the topic because they are not under pressure. They can give their views freely because the question is not asked to test their knowledge and understanding.

3.7. Presentation

Presentation technique is a technique that will definitely be used by lecturers as natural duty of a lecturer is a facilitator. Lecturers will provide assignment title earlier so that thorough preparation can be done by students. Students are asked to use formal language but with a style that is easily understood by their friends. Lecturers will encourage them to conduct question and answer session occurs during the presentation. Lecturers will also provide guidance and make comments for each presentation. This technique provides a very positive impact on students because it does not only train students in their speaking skills, but also encourage independent skills as they have to find, assess, understand and prepare the content to be delivered themselves.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study found that teaching techniques practiced in the teaching of Islamic education for non- Arabic speakers are appropriate based on the students' existing skills and knowledge. It also appears to be significant in the learning process for non-Arabic speaking students at tertiary level. As students of Faculty of Qur'an and Sunnah Studies and Tamhidi Centres have some basics in Arabic and Islamic Studies, the study suggests that the teaching techniques should be continued and improved from time to time.

5. CLOSING

No one strategy, approach, method or technique that works best for all courses for all students in all circumstances. It should be changed according to circumstances of time, place and students. According to Al-Kailany and Iyad, among the important guidelines before applying any method or technique of teaching in general is first; it must be commensurate with the goals and objectives of the lesson, second; it must be in line with the objectives intended to be achieved, third; it must be in accordance with the nature of the subjects taught, fourth; it must be suitable with the age of students, fifth; it can be applied by instructors, have enough time to implement it and finally, it is in accordance with the existing facility (Muhamad Suhaimi Taat et al., 2012, p.B4).).

In addition, the teaching session will be successful with the selection of teaching methods and techniques that can have a profound impact not only on the understanding of students, but also affecting and touching their heart. In this way students will stay focus and able to remember the lessons faster and better.

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