



Designing Effective Practice Questions to Enhance Students' Problem-Solving Skills: A Tutor's Perspective in Banda Aceh English Courses

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Abstract

Non-formal education is a learning process that occurs outside the formal system or school that is carried out in an orderly manner. The purpose of this study was to be able to design English practice questions in tutoring and also to distinguish the characteristics of questions that are suitable for assessing students' abilities based on the tutor's perspective. The research method is qualitative and quantitative followed by descriptive explanations based on data analysis. The data acquisition for this study used a questionnaire with 14 open-ended questions and 2 close-ended questions with a population of 20 English tutoring teachers in Banda Aceh. The results showed that the majority of respondents gave positive responses to the three indicators. As many as 85% of respondents agreed that the question construction had met good quality, 62% supported the development of varied questions, and 71% considered the delivery of materials and learning media effective.

1. INTRODUCTION

English is one of the Language international in a way No direct own strong position in the world of education in Indonesia (Alfarisy , 2021). From elementary school to postgraduate school, students are taught a variety of subjects, including English (Indriyani & Usriyah, 2022). English learning is not only obtained through

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formal education, but in non-formal education English learning can be taught and learned.

In Banda Aceh, English tutoring continues to grow along with increasing public awareness of the importance of mastering a foreign language. Tutoring is a non-formal education path that is often followed by students as a complement to formal education in schools (Romadhon, 2018). Tutoring institutions play a role in providing additional facilities that help students improve their academic abilities, especially in preparing for school exams and international tests.

In this context, tutors not only act as teachers, but also as facilitators who help students understand English concepts more deeply. Tutors at tutoring institutions have an important responsibility in designing practice questions that are appropriate to the level of understanding and needs of students. They are tasked with compiling exercises that not only test students' understanding. According to Balau, Pesik, and Damai (2021), practice questions function as a tool to measure students' ability to understand the subject matter, as well as provide opportunities for students to test their understanding, practice skills, and prepare for exams. Thus, tutors have an important role in creating questions that are relevant and effective in measuring students' ability to understand the subject matter.

This study aims to explore how tutors in English tutoring in Banda Aceh design effective and relevant practice questions. By understanding the tutor's perspective, this study is expected to provide new insights into developing more effective learning strategies and offer recommendations for tutoring institutions in compiling more structured practice materials that are oriented towards improving students' skills.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Exercise

Practice questions are an important component in the learning process, because through planned repetition, practice questions can help students deepen their understanding of the material they have learned. Oemar Hamalik (2005) explains that practice is a repetitive action that aims to strengthen student learning outcomes. In line with that, Barla, Hayim, and Adha (2013) added that practice questions aim to motivate students to better understand the learning material and achieve better results. Thus, practice questions function as a tool to measure and improve students' understanding of the learning material. As an evaluation instrument, practice questions are not only used to test understanding but also to train students' critical thinking skills, which are important aspects in problem solving.

According to Balau, Pesik, and Damai (2021), practice questions function as a tool to measure students' ability to understand the subject matter, as well as provide opportunities for students to test their understanding, practice skills, and prepare for exams. Well-designed practice questions will encourage students to develop more effective problem-solving skills.



To ensure effective practice questions, there are several criteria that need to be considered in designing them. First, question validity is very important to ensure that the questions given can measure competencies that are in accordance with learning objectives. Question validity can be tested by comparing the contents of the questions with the established curriculum (Dwipayani, 2020). Second, practice questions must have good reliability, namely producing consistent results when used in the same situation. The reliability coefficient can be calculated to measure the extent to which test results can be trusted and used for further evaluation (Nurul Muchlizani, Sitti Mania, & Muhammad Nur Akbar Rasyid, 2023).

In addition, practice questions must also consider the appropriate level of difficulty, not too easy or too difficult, so that students can feel challenged but still be able to complete them (Nurul Muchlizani, Sitti Mania, & Muhammad Nur Akbar Rasyid, 2023). A high level of question differentiation is also an indicator of effective questions, because questions that have a good level of differentiation can identify differences in ability between students (Dwipayani, 2020). In addition, effectively designed practice questions can help identify students who have not mastered the material, without causing confusion for students who have understood the concept well. (Mutiah, 2023).

By considering these aspects, teachers can design practice questions that are not only effective in testing understanding, but also serve as a means to train students in developing needed skills.

2.2 Tutoring institution (*bimbel*)

Tutoring Institutions (*Bimbel*) are one form of non-formal education regulated in the National Education System Law Number 20 of 2003, where non-formal education is an educational path outside of formal education that is structured and tiered. This institution plays a role in helping students improve the quality of their learning and supporting the achievement of better academic results, so that it can strengthen formal education in schools.

Tutoring is usually attended by students in addition to attending formal education at school (Romadhon, 2018). According to Amrizal and Lestari (2020), this institution aims to provide students with deeper learning opportunities to deepen their understanding of certain subject matter. Thus, tutoring institutions function as a complement to formal education, helping students to better master the lessons taught at school.

Non-formal education, which focuses on the needs of the community, has a very important role in the national education system. As part of lifelong education efforts, tutoring institutions help students by offering programs that supplement, replace, or complement their formal education (Amrizal & Lestari, 2020). Djuju Sudjana (2004) stated that the purpose of this non-formal education is to provide opportunities for students to deepen their understanding of the subject matter they study in school.

Stephan P. Heyneman (2011) also explains that private tutoring has three main objectives: (a) enrichment, (b) remediation, and (c) exam preparation. Thus, tutoring institutions provide benefits that are in accordance with the needs of each student. This makes tutoring institutions the main choice for parents who want to provide additional education for their children. They realize that education is their responsibility and is an important investment for their children's future.

In Indonesia, including in the city of Banda Aceh, there are many tutoring institutions available, providing various programs for various levels of education from kindergarten to high school. These institutions have succeeded in helping students to continue their education at the schools and universities of their dreams, as well as offering excellent programs that encourage parents to provide the best education for their children by joining a tutoring institution.

2.3 Tutor

In the context of non-formal education, educators are often referred to as tutors. Tutors have a very important role in managing the learning process in study groups, so that teaching and learning activities can take place more effectively. Through their role, tutors enable transformation in a better learning process. The role of tutors includes various functions, such as guides, coaches, motivators, and dynamicators in study groups, all of which contribute greatly to the success of non-formal education programs. Therefore, the quality of tutors is a crucial factor in achieving the goals of non-formal education. Quality tutors can be produced through various efforts, such as structured training, methodology studies, and analysis of existing learning components (Samosir, 2008).

The importance of the tutor's role underlines that the success of non-formal education is highly dependent on the quality of the human resources involved in it. The tutor's skills and abilities in delivering material in an interesting and effective way will affect the level of understanding of students, as well as motivate them to continue learning and developing. Thus, non-formal education such as tutoring can run optimally and provide a positive impact on the academic development of students

3. METHODS

This study uses mixed method research . According to cresswell (2015), mixed methods research is a type of research that collects, analyzes, and combines quantitative and qualitative research methods in a series of studies to understand research problems. In this study, the quantitative method uses a *Likert scale questionnaire* with SPSS as *an analysis tool* while the qualitative method uses open-ended questions with thematic analysis.

This study was conducted in November 2024 using a mixed methods method through an online form, so that it can be filled in according to the teacher's schedule. This study was conducted in Banda Aceh City, Aceh Province. The population in this study were English teachers who teach at various tutoring centers (bimbel) in Banda Aceh. According to Grieffe (2012), a population is a group of individuals who have



certain characteristics according to the objectives of the study. The study consisted of 20 English teachers selected from 5 (five) tutoring centers in the city. Kenneth and Bruce (2011) stated that the sample is a small part of a larger population. The sampling technique in this study used the purposive sampling technique. Sugiyono (2010) explained that purposive sampling is a method of selecting samples in research based on certain criteria, so that the data obtained can better represent the population, so that the sample was taken with 2 characteristics, namely English teachers who teach at tutoring centers and who live in Banda Aceh.

The data collection technique in this study used a questionnaire using 16 questions, including 14 closed-ended and 2 open-ended questions. Quoting from Züll (2016) survey questions that require respondents to provide their own answers without choosing from the options given are called open-ended questions. This is because the nature of this open-ended question expects more detail or explanation. While close-ended is a type of question designed to obtain predetermined answers, where there is only one or several answer choices that are considered acceptable. (Çakır & Cengiz, 2016)

To evaluate the questionnaire questions, this study used a Likert scale using SPSS. According to Sugiyono (2013), the Likert scale is used to measure attitudes, opinions and perceptions of a person or group of people about a phenomenon. The analysis technique in this study uses 2 methods, namely descriptive analysis using SPSS, which is done by calculating the percentage to obtain an overview of the effectiveness of practice questions in improving students' problem-solving abilities from the tutor's perspective. While analysis thematic used in questions that are of an interrogative nature open-ended question. Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas (2013) revealed thematic analysis, as approach descriptive qualitative standing alone, especially defined as "method for identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) in the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 79). This approach involves systematic coding and categorizing to examine large amounts of textual information.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

The quality of question construction indicators is assessed based on respondents' responses to statements presented using a Likert scale. The data obtained shows the distribution of respondents' level of agreement on the quality of question construction given in tutoring, using SPSS. The following table summarizes the results of the analysis:

Table 1. Indicator 1: Quality Question Construction

No	Responses	Frequency	Percent
1	5 (Strongly agree)	56	47%
2	4 (agree)	45	38%
3	3 (Neutral)	17	14%
4	2 (Disagree)	2	2%
5	1 (Strongly Disagree)	0	0%
	Total	120	100%

Note:

Most respondents gave positive responses to the Quality Question Construction, with 47% stating strongly agree and 38% stating agree. This shows that the majority of respondents (85%) feel that the questions designed in the tutoring have met the criteria for good quality. As many as 14% of respondents chose the neutral option, indicating that there is a small number of respondents who do not have a strong opinion regarding the quality of the questions. Respondents who disagreed only amounted to 2%, while none stated strongly disagree (0%). This shows that dissatisfaction with the question construction is very minimal.

The ability indicator in developing varied questions is assessed based on respondents' responses to statements compiled using a Likert scale. The survey results data are presented in the following table:

Table 2. Indicator 2: Ability to Develop Varied Questions

No	Responses	Frequency	Percent
1	5 (Strongly agree)	31	39%
2	4 (agree)	18	23%
3	3 (Neutral)	15	19%
4	2 (Disagree)	12	15%
5	1 (Strongly Disagree)	4	5%
	Total	80	100%

Note:

As many as 39% of respondents express strong agreement that the tutor has good ability in develop varied questions , and 23 % stated agree . In total, 62% of respondents give evaluation positive to indicator This . However , there were 19% of respondents who gave answer neutral , indicating existence doubt or uncertainty related tutor's ability in aspect This . As many as 15% of respondents choose No agree , and 5% stated they strongly disagree agree , show that Still There is group respondents who feel that development various questions not optimal. Indicators of effective media delivery and use are evaluated based on respondents' responses to statements designed using a Likert scale.



Table 3. Indicator 3: Effective Delivery and Use of Media

No	Responses	Frequency	Percent
1	5 (Strongly agree)	28	35%
2	4 (agree)	29	36%
3	3 (Neutral)	17	21%
4	2 (Disagree)	4	5%
5	1 (Strongly Disagree)	2	3%
	Total	80	100%

As many as 35% of respondents stated that they strongly agreed that the delivery and use of media in learning were effective, while 36% of respondents stated that they agreed. Overall, 71% of respondents gave a positive response to this indicator. As many as 21% of respondents gave a neutral answer, indicating that some respondents felt that the effect of the delivery and media used was not yet optimal. Only 8% of respondents gave a negative response (5% disagreed and 3% strongly disagreed), indicating that obstacles in the delivery of material and the use of learning media need further attention.

Based on the results of the questionnaire analysis using *open-ended questions*, it shows that there are several things that need to be considered to improve the quality of the questions. **First**, the importance of analyzing student needs. This can be done by understanding and evaluating the abilities of each student periodically to adjust the level of difficulty. **Second**, the preparation of questions in stages. This can be done by compiling questions from the easiest to the more complex. **Third**, the variation of questions and the quantity of questions. This can be done by increasing the number of question references, making diverse and interesting questions can prevent students from getting bored, while an adequate number of questions in each meeting can help them be more trained and familiar with the types of questions. **Fourth**, technology integration. By utilizing digital applications or platforms, questions can be made more interesting and interactive. Such as the use of videos, images, and educational games can help increase student motivation in learning. **Fifth**, the process of evaluating and updating questions periodically every year to keep up with the latest curriculum developments is also important to ensure quality and suitability to student needs. **Sixth**, the application of HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills) questions. This can help train students to think critically, analyze questions and develop solutions. **Seventh**, learning from professional tutoring is also a suggestion from several tutors because professional tutoring usually creates standards for making questions and learning modules that are designed and developed by involving a special team. And **finally**, it is important for tutors to maintain consistency and quantity of questions. The importance of consistency of questions or assignments given routinely and on time and disciplined so that students are more focused and can review the extent of students' abilities in understanding the material..

4.1 Discussion

Based on the obstacles faced by tutors and their role in designing English Practice questions in tutoring, several obstacles were found faced by tutors. By using *open-ended questionnaire analysis*, it was found that one of the main obstacles was the lack of understanding of tutors towards students' needs. This then had an impact on the preparation of questions that were not very appropriate to the students' ability levels.

Some things to consider in making Practice questions for students are: the need to compile questions in stages, meaning questions from easy to complex levels. Questions should also be more varied and interesting, this will help students not get bored. Then tutors also need to look for relevant references, either by using technology or other learning platforms.

Regular evaluation and updating of questions is also the responsibility of the tutor to ensure that the questions remain in accordance with the latest adapted curriculum. In making questions, tutors also need to apply HOTS (*Higher Order Thinking Skills*) based questions that train students to think critically and analytically. Overall, the main obstacles faced by tutors include the lack of student needs analysis, limited references and minimal use of technology. However, the role of the tutor is very important in compiling quality questions. With consistent and targeted steps, the role of the tutor can greatly help improve the quality of student learning in tutoring.

Based on the role of tutors in determining the characteristics of effective questions and being able to improve students' problem-solving skills, there are three indicators that influence. The results of the survey on the three indicators, namely quality question construction, the ability to develop varied questions, and effective delivery and use of media, showed that the majority of respondents gave positive responses. As many as 85% of respondents agreed that the questions designed met good quality criteria, although 14% were neutral and 2% disagreed, indicating the need for improvement in the relevance of the questions. On the variable question development indicator, 62% of respondents gave a positive assessment, but 19% were neutral and 20% were negative indicating the need for tutor training to develop HOTS-based questions and various types of questions. Meanwhile, 71% of respondents considered the delivery of materials and the use of learning media effective, but 21% were neutral and 8% were negative indicating the need for increased access to quality media and technology training for tutors. Overall, improving the quality of questions, developing varied questions, and using effective media can support learning that is more optimal and relevant to students' needs.

5. CONCLUSION

This study aims to evaluate the quality of questions in English tutoring in Banda Aceh through three main indicators, namely Quality Question Construction, Ability to Develop Varied Questions, and Effective Delivery and Use of Media. The



research method used is mixed methods with data collection techniques in the form of Likert scale questionnaires and open questions filled out online. Participants consisted of tutoring tutors, with a total of 20 respondents to obtain data from the two indicators to be measured.

The results of the study using a questionnaire showed that the majority of respondents gave positive responses to the three indicators. As many as 85% of respondents agreed that the question construction had met good quality, 62% supported the development of varied questions, and 71% considered the delivery of materials and learning media effective. However, there were several challenges identified, such as the need to improve tutor competence in creating HOTS-based questions, periodic question evaluation, and more optimal use of technology.

The data analysis method uses a descriptive quantitative approach to process data from the questionnaire using SPSS, while qualitative data from open-ended questions are analyzed thematically to dig deeper into the respondents' views and suggestions. This combination of methods provides a comprehensive picture of the problems and solutions that can be applied to improve the quality of questions in tutoring.

Overall, this study concludes that the questions used in tutoring are sufficient to meet the quality criteria. However, ongoing efforts through tutor training, utilization of more relevant learning media, and development of questions based on student needs analysis are still needed to achieve more optimal learning outcomes and in accordance with current developments.

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