Improving Students' Higher Order Thinking Skills Through a Question and Answer Method

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Abstract - This study explores the transformative impact of a dynamic Question and Answer (Q&A) method on students' higher-order thinking skills. In an era where rote memorization dominates traditional classrooms, this research investigates an innovative pedagogical approach designed to foster critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical abilities among students. The study employs a mixed-methods research design, integrating qualitative and quantitative analyses to measure the effectiveness of the Q&A method. This research dissects the impact of the Q&A method on cognitive development. It delves into the theoretical foundations of higher-order thinking skills and examines how the interactive nature of the Q&A process stimulates intellectual curiosity. By intertwining challenging questions with collaborative problem-solving activities, educators are empowered to foster an environment where students not only learn but also think critically and creatively. The research results indicate that there are four questioning methods, namely narrative questioning, guessing objects answering method, questioning through body movements, and argumentative questioning. Preliminary findings hint at a positive correlation between the implementation of the Q&A method and significant strides in students' critical thinking abilities. This research goes beyond the conventional boundaries of academia, offering a transformative pedagogical approach that equips students with skills crucial for navigating the complexities of the modern world. By cultivating higher-order thinking skills, this study strives to empower students not only as

knowledgeable individuals but as adaptable and innovative thinkers prepared to meet the challenges of the future head-on.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is not merely the transfer of information; beyond that, education is a process of shaping critical thinking and problem-solving skills in students. This article examines the effectiveness of the Question-and-Answer (Q&A) method as a pedagogical tool to enhance high-level thinking abilities in students. High-level thinking, encompassing critical, analytical, synthetic, and evaluative thinking, goes beyond the mere acquisition of basic knowledge. The article highlights the crucial role of questions as powerful tools in the learning process, stimulating curiosity, encouraging exploration, and prompting students to think deeply.

The Question-and-Answer method transforms the traditional flow of information into interactive dialogue. When students actively participate in answering questions, they become not just recipients of information but active participants in their learning journey. This participation not only enhances understanding of the material but also develops analytical skills and the critical thinking abilities of students. The question-and-answer process creates an environment that supports intellectual growth, involving students in reflecting on their learning and expressing their thoughts clearly. The effectiveness of the Question-and-Answer method is also evident in the development of students' communication skills. Through question-and-answer practices, students learn to convey their ideas coherently and explain their thoughts clearly, not only improving communication skills but also preparing them for success in the professional world.

The strength of the Question-and-Answer method lies in its adaptability across various subjects, making it a versatile tool for educators in different disciplines. However, it should be noted that educators must understand the diversity of students' learning styles and create an inclusive environment that supports various learning approaches. Thinking skills involve not only information management in memory but also mental processes that engage the entire personal dimension of humans. Thinking skills, as expressed by Nurdiansyah (2017), are an active brain activity involving feelings and will. It involves integrating new and stored information in memory, as well as developing ideas to achieve goals or find solutions.

In the context of learning at Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Tarbiyah Togo Ambarsari (STITTA), the question-and-answer approach is used as a strategy to sharpen the minds and encourage critical thinking of students. Modern education increasingly emphasizes the importance of developing high-level thinking skills, which are key to facing the demands of the ever-evolving job market. By emphasizing the development of high-level thinking skills through the question-and-answer method, it is hoped that education can more effectively prepare students to face complex challenges in society and the constantly changing world of work.

So far, no similar research findings have been identified, although there are some studies aligned with the focus of this research. Noma, Prayitno, & Suwarno (2016); Hidayati (2017); Nurdisnsyah (2017); Saraswati (2019); Wibawa (2019); Arnidah & Anwar (tt); Sumiati, Ridwan, & Abidin, (2023) have conducted research on training high-order thinking skills in learning. While there is similarity in the research subjects, differences arise in terms of focus, objects, and methods used. On the other hand, Ependi (2018); Manik (2020); Prijanto & Kock (2021); Rahma, Hadiyanti, & Kriswanto (2023) conducted research on the implementation of question-and-answer methods to improve student learning achievements. Although having similar research subjects to the previous studies, differences arise in the methods and subjects applied.

Meanwhile, research on language was carried out by Muta'allim, Sofyan, & Haryono (2020); Salikin, Muta'alim, Nawawi, Alfani, Ghaffar, & Wafi (2021); Muta'allim, Alfani, Hosaini, & Sayfullah (2021); Muta'allim, Alfani, Mahidin, Agustin & Wicaksi (2021); Sofyan, Yudistira, Muta'allim, Alfani & Ghaffar (2022); Yudistira, Muta'allim, Nurcaya, Julhadi, & Pattiasina (2022); Sofyan, Badrudin, Fitriani, & Muta'allim (2022); Irsyadi, Fitriyah, Hanifiyah, & Muta'allim (2022); Sofyan, Firmansyah, Muta'allim, Solissa, & Rosikh (2022); Yudistira & Muta'allim (2023); Mahardhani, Nawiruddin, Jalaluddin, Julhadi, & Muta'allim (2023); and Julhadi, Muta'allim, Fitri, Efendi, & Yahya (2023).

Based on previous research, several conclusions can be drawn, namely, this study is a novel research that has not been conducted before; the implementation of specific strategies has the potential to improve the quality of student learning; students tend to comprehend English more quickly through question-and-answer activities; the question-and-answer strategy has a positive impact on understanding English and in building communication between educators and students; and the use of the question-and-answer strategy can also train the creativity of learners in writing. Based on the above background, the researcher formulates two research questions, How is the implementation of the question-and-answer method in improving high-level thinking skills of students? By formulating these questions, the research is expected to provide further insights into effective learning strategies to enhance high-level thinking skills of students, particularly through the implementation of the question-and-answer strategy in the context of English language learning.

The Importance of Studentss Critical Thinking Skills

Suparni (2017), critical thinking skills are essential competencies that students must possess. As a crucial aspect in character formation, critical thinking is a primary focus in the world of education. This research aims to examine efforts to enhance students' critical thinking skills through the question-and-answer approach in English language teaching. Although students may have developed critical thinking skills, the role of the lecturer remains crucial. As stated by Locke in Hamalik (2013), a child's soul is likened to a blank slate that can be written according to the guidance of educators. Lecturers are not only conveyors of material but also guides and good role models. The teacher's role is not limited to providing lessons but also guiding, setting an example, and assisting in the effective growth and development of students.

In-depth understanding of students allows teachers to carefully compile teaching materials, adopt appropriate teaching methods, and diagnose difficulties that students may face. Schools are expected to play an active role in developing students' thinking abilities to achieve the desired quality. The learning environment also plays a significant role in supporting the student learning process. As students' cognitive development progresses, their understanding of real-life becomes more complex. By understanding students' characteristics, educators can more effectively guide their critical thinking, encourage the development of their potential, and create a learning environment that supports holistic student development.

Understanding High-Level Thinking Skills

Lewis & Smith (1993), high-level thinking skills occur when an individual combines new information with stored information in memory, interconnects, rearranges, and expands this information to achieve goals or find answers in confusing situations. Brookhart (2010: 3) divides high-level thinking skills into three categories: (1) as a result of learning transfer, (2) as a form of critical thinking, and (3) as a problem-solving process. Conklin (2012) also states that the characteristics of high-level thinking skills include critical and creative thinking. Therefore, high-level thinking skills involve deep and extensive information processing, including analytical, evaluative, and creative skills, especially in dealing with complex problems. Implementing high-level thinking skills in the classroom is a challenging task that requires maximum effort to achieve.

Educators play a key role in organizing and motivating students to think at a high level. Conklin & Manfro (2010: 18) propose some motivation strategies, including: a. Starting lessons with questions that encourage high-level thinking to initiate discussions and debates. b. Ending lessons with high-level thinking questions as an assessment tool. c. Inserting brainstorming activities in the middle of the lesson to encourage students to find ideas and think creatively. d. Assigning open-ended tasks as homework to test students' creativity and understanding of the material they have learned.

Training High-Level Thinking Skills in English Language Learning

Byslina Maduwu (2016) says that English is considered a universal language used by most countries in the world. Furthermore, English has become an essential international language to master. Some countries, especially former English colonies, make English a mandatory second language after their native language. Although in Indonesia, English is a foreign language, it plays a crucial role in daily life, especially in education. In the context of

education in Indonesia, English becomes a subject taught from the elementary to the tertiary level. One of the goals of learning English in higher education is to develop communication skills in English, both orally and in writing. This communication skill involves listening, reading, and writing aspects, using various text genres such as transactional, interpersonal, narrative, descriptive, recount, discussion, and others.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a mixed-methods research design, integrating qualitative and quantitative analyses to measure the effectiveness of the Question-and-Answer (Q&A) method. The subjects of this study are MPI students at the Togo Ambarsari Islamic Education College (STITTA) in Bondowoso. The research analyzes the impact of the Q&A method on cognitive development. It investigates the theoretical basis of high-level thinking skills and examines how the interactive nature of the Q&A process stimulates intellectual curiosity. By combining challenging questions with collaborative problem-solving activities, educators can empower an environment where students not only learn but also think critically and creatively. Additionally, the study explores the role of technology as an enabler in the Q&A method, investigating its potential to bridge accessibility gaps and enhance student engagement.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
RESULTS
RESULTS

The Question-and-Answer (Q&A) method has proven to enhance the activity and involvement of students in the learning process at STTITA. This approach, involving questions from the lecturer and active student participation, creates a dynamic classroom atmosphere. Furthermore, the method involves two-way communication between the lecturer and students, promoting direct dialogue. The use of variations such as narrative questioning, guessing objects answering method, questioning through body movements, and argumentative questioning not only improves students' thinking abilities but also creates an interactive and enjoyable learning environment. Preliminary findings suggest a positive correlation between the implementation of the

Q&A method and significant advancements in students' critical thinking abilities.

DISCUSSION
Question and Answer Method: Enhancing Student Activity and Engagement

The question and answer (Q&A) method is an approach commonly used in the classroom learning process. Essentially, this method is employed during lectures, where the lecturer actively poses questions to students to capture their attention. This process typically begins by asking a student to answer a question or riddle, and if the answer is incorrect, the student may call on a classmate for assistance. In some cases, lecturers may apply light penalties such as singing or rhyming for students unable to answer questions. Conversely, if a student answers correctly, they receive appreciation in the form of applause from the lecturer and classmates.

The Q&A method at STTITA has proven effective in supporting lectures efficiently. This approach encourages students to actively ask and answer questions, creating a dynamic classroom atmosphere. Moreover, the method also trains students to speak systematically and express opinions without fear or trembling. According to Fatony (2019), the Q&A method involves direct and two-way communication between teachers and students, creating a dialogue that demonstrates direct reciprocal relationships. This method is not just a way of delivering lessons with questions from the teacher to the students but also enables students to pose questions to the teacher. Sudirman (1988) asserts that the Q&A method can be a catalyst for students to further explore various learning sources such as books, magazines, newspapers, dictionaries, encyclopedias, laboratories, videos, communities, nature, and more.

Implementation of the Question and Answer Method with Puzzle Variations

In implementing the question and answer method, several ways can be used to engage students and stimulate creative thinking. Here are the question and answer methods employed by the lecturer.

Question and Answer in Narrative Form

In this narrative form of question and answer, the lecturer describes an object, item, animal, or human using a simple narrative structure. The lecturer depicts the characteristics

of the object, starting from its traits, character, and physical form. Below is the narrative form of the question and answer method.

> **Lecturer:** It has a small body and possesses 4 legs. It has thick and soft fur. It is very cute and has whiskers. It has a natural enemy called a mouse. Who is it?
>
> **Student:** It is a cat.
>
> **Lecturer:** That's correct.

In the narrative question and answer method, the lecturer not only tests the students' knowledge but also encourages active participation and engagement in the learning process. Additionally, students feel happy, entertained, motivated, enthusiastic, and inspired to be involved in the learning experience. The narrative question and answer method present a communication approach involving the interaction of questions and answers in a narrative form. The advantages of this method encompass several significant aspects that enhance communication effectiveness and understanding. The implementation of this method can strengthen students' interest and involvement because narratives have emotional appeal, making them easier to digest than dry information delivery.

Narratives also assist in conveying complex concepts in a more understandable manner for students. Information presented in a narrative context is not only easier to remember but also more capable of being absorbed by students. Furthermore, the emotional appeal and narrative context can reinforce students' memory, as narratives provide vivid visual descriptions. The presence of emotion and motivation in narratives plays a crucial role. If a message is conveyed through characters or situations in a narrative, it can significantly impact changes in students' attitudes or actions. Narratives also have the capacity to form a deep emotional connection with students through the characters, traits, and forms of objects presented in a more personal manner. By leveraging these advantages, the narrative question and answer method become a highly effective communication tool for conveying ideas, concepts, and messages in an engaging and easily understandable manner for various types of audiences.

Question and Answer through Object Guessing

In this method, the lecturer creates a narrative about a desired object. In the narrative, the lecturer briefly describes its characteristics and attributes, such as its physical appearance, shape, size, and more. Afterward, the lecturer selects a student to guess the object. The following is an example of a question and answer session in the form of object guessing.

> **Lecturer:** There is an object, it is round and small. There is only one of it, but many people chase after it. Interestingly, this object is pursued, but once caught, it is kicked. What is it?
>
> **Student:** It's a ball. Lecturer: That's correct.

Upon hearing the student's answer, the lecturer applauds, and all students join in the applause. With a variety of riddles and object guessing, the question and answer method not only sharpens students' thinking skills but also creates an interactive and enjoyable learning atmosphere. The Question and Answer method through object guessing is a creative communication approach involving a series of questions and answers. The strengths of this method not only lie in creating a fun interactive atmosphere but also bring several positive aspects that enhance communication effectiveness. By fostering an interactive and entertaining atmosphere, this method encourages participants to actively and enthusiastically engage in the communication process. The curiosity in guessing specific objects becomes a catalyst for participants, making the communication experience more interesting. Through the object guessing game, participants are not just providing answers but are indirectly involved in learning specific concepts. Its creative approach facilitates understanding and helps participants associate concepts with real objects.

The process of guessing specific objects stimulates participants' critical thinking, requiring them to use knowledge and observation to arrive at the correct answers. Thus, this method not only provides answers but also involves participants in analysis and deep

thinking. The emotional and cognitive engagement through the object guessing game has the potential to enhance participants' memory retention of the conveyed information. Objects involved in the game become an integral part of the interactive experience, strengthening information retention. Furthermore, the flexibility of this method allows its application in various contexts, from formal learning sessions to informal events. The nature of the object guessing game also creates a positive and enjoyable atmosphere, reducing awkwardness and increasing participant engagement. The inclusive nature of this game allows participation from various levels of knowledge and skills, creating an inclusive environment among participants. By leveraging these advantages, the Question and Answer method through object guessing is not just an effective communication tool but also an approach that can enhance the learning experience in a fun and interactive manner.

Question and Answer through Body Movement

In this method, the lecturer divides students into several groups. Subsequently, the lecturer asks a representative from each group in turn. Then, the lecturer provides an image or text to the representative, asking them to enact it. In this case, the lecturer typically requests students to portray the characteristics, traits, or physical features of humans or animals. The following is a description of the question and answer method through body movement.

Lecturer: (shows a picture of a monkey to the student who will act it out)

Group A: portrays the physical features, traits, character, and behavior of a monkey in its daily life, such as its way of eating, vocalizations, and how it moves its hands and head.

All students: (laughter and excitement as they observe one student acting it out) Lecturer: Alright, guess who it is?

Group B: That's a monkey. (The student responds while laughing)

Lecturer: Yes, exactly. (The lecturer gives a thumbs up)

Critical thinking skills are crucial in honing students' analytical and creative thinking. One effective approach to stimulate and enhance critical thinking skills is through question and answer sessions that utilize body movement. This approach has several advantages in developing students' critical thinking skills. Active participation of students in question and answer sessions involving body movement enhances their physical and mental engagement in learning. Body movement can eliminate stiffness, create positive energy, and enrich the learning experience. Providing space for expressing ideas through body movement stimulates students' creativity. Hand gestures, facial expressions, and other body movements add an additional dimension to how students convey ideas or ask questions.

Involving body movement in question and answer sessions helps students understand the importance of nonverbal communication. Appropriate gestures and facial expressions can enhance the clarity of messages conveyed by students. Body movement can be a tool to stimulate deep thinking and reflection. Students can use body movements to illustrate their understanding of a concept or convey profound perspectives. Through body movement, students have the opportunity to develop confidence in communication, helping them overcome the fear of speaking in public. Integrating body movement into question and answer sessions adds a multisensory dimension to learning, allowing students to understand and remember information holistically. Therefore, the question and answer method through body movement not only enriches the learning experience but also shapes individuals who can think critically and communicate effectively in various contexts, engaging the entire body to stimulate creativity, build communication skills, and support deep thinking.

Question and Answer in Argumentative Form

This method, employing an argumentative approach, is typically applied by lecturers towards the end of a lecture, precisely 30 minutes before it concludes. Before

implementing it, the lecturer informs students that those who can answer the questions can leave early. As a result, students' enthusiasm increases as they eagerly compete to provide answers to the questions and tasks posed by the lecturer.

> **Lecturer:** The quicker, the better! Whoever can answer can leave early. How do you say, "aku sangat haus, dan aku butuh minum" in English?
>
> **Student:** (raises hand enthusiastically) "I'm very thirsty, and I need a drink".

Moreover, the lecturer often presents questions and instructions that require lengthy argumentative responses. This approach is chosen with the intention of fostering close interaction and stimulating student participation, as in the following example.

> **Lecturer:** Do you recall the previous topic we covered last week? What was it about?
>
> **Student:** Yes, we do. It was about the cycle of rain.

After that, the lecturer can proceed with challenging questions that encourage students to engage in higher-order thinking. For instance, students may be asked to explain a concept previously outlined by the lecturer or pose questions about aspects they did not fully understand during the explanation.

> **Lecturer:** Can you elaborate on how water transforms into clouds and reverts to water again?
>
> **Student:** When the water heats up, it transforms into a gas called water vapor. It ascends into the atmosphere and condenses to form clouds. As it ascends to higher altitudes, the water vapor cools down, and sunlight aids in its conversion back into droplets of water known as rain.

The question and answer method in argumentative form serves as a cornerstone in enhancing active student engagement in the learning process. By formulating questions that demand argument-based answers, students are not only invited to provide responses but also to structure their thoughts more coherently. The implementation of this method creates an interactive atmosphere in the classroom, where the role of the lecturer goes beyond being an information provider to becoming a discussion facilitator encouraging the exchange of ideas and perspectives among students. This not only fosters collaboration but also invigorates communication among learners.

The question and answer method in argumentative form effectively advances students' argumentative skills. In providing adequate answers, they are required to detail, provide reasons, and defend their viewpoints, honing critical and analytical thinking abilities. By formulating challenging questions, lecturers can directly gauge students' understanding of concepts. This process ensures that a deep understanding of the learning material is not confined to memorizing answers but reaches a level of more complex comprehension. Through the question and answer method in argumentative form, students are given space to develop high-order thinking skills. Lecturers can trigger questions that stimulate critical, creative, and evaluative thinking, making a meaningful contribution to students' intellectual growth. Active participation in the argumentative question and answer process has been proven to enhance information retention. Students actively engaged in answering questions with arguments tend to have a more solid understanding and can more easily remember the learning material. Thus, the question and answer method in argumentative form not only creates dynamic learning but also makes a significant contribution to the development of students' intellectual and cognitive skills.

The Influence of Question and Answer Method on Students' HOTS

The Question and Answer (Q&A) method is not merely a learning tool; it has proven to be an effective strategy in fostering student participation and enriching the learning process. In this exposition, we will explore the positive impact of the Q&A method on enhancing students' higher-order thinking skills.

1. Encouraging Critical Thinking: The Q&A method goes beyond inviting students to passively respond to

information; it also encourages them to apply critical thinking in formulating answers. By dissecting arguments in detail, students are prompted to develop the ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information more profoundly.

2. Stimulating Creativity: The process of questioning with arguments sparks students' creativity, challenging them to formulate answers that are not only conceptual but also creative in presenting their ideas. This provides space for students to hone their creative thinking skills comprehensively.

3. Developing Analytical Skills: This method consistently emphasizes students' ability to analyze information carefully. By constructing substantial arguments, students are guided to sift through information, identify patterns, and present thoughts logically, contributing to the development of their analytical skills.

4. Deepening Conceptual Understanding: Question and answer sessions with a focus on arguments encourage students to not only memorize facts but also understand concepts deeply. In formulating argument-based answers, they are required to integrate information, connect concepts, and demonstrate comprehensive understanding.

5. Enhancing Reflective Thinking Skills: The Q&A process triggers reflection on the learning material. Students are not only expected to provide answers to meet demands but also to consider the implications, connections, and relevance of their answers. This encourages essential reflective thinking skills for intellectual development.

The Question and Answer method with argumentative focus is not just an assessment tool for understanding but a key to unlocking higher-order thinking skills. By stimulating critical thinking, creativity, analytical abilities, conceptual understanding, and reflection, this method forms a solid foundation for the development of students' intellectual skills.

IV. CONCLUSION

Thinking skills can be defined as a mental process that involves brain activity and engages the entire human being to acquire new information, rearrange, and expand information to achieve goals or discover possibilities. The question and answer method is a teaching approach that involves direct two-way communication, where there is a direct reciprocal dialogue between the teacher and students. In this communication, a direct mutual relationship is evident. Overall, the question and answer method can be concluded as a highly effective educational strategy in shaping higher-order thinking skills in students. By encouraging active participation, stimulating critical thinking, and building effective communication skills, this method goes beyond mere memorization of facts. Educators adopting the question and answer approach contribute to the development of individuals with the intelligence needed for success, both in academic contexts and the real world. Various applications in the question and answer method include narrative questioning, guessing objects answering method, questioning through body movements, and argumentative questioning. Preliminary findings suggest a positive correlation between the implementation of the Q&A method and significant advancements in students' critical thinking abilities. The influence of these implementations includes the ability to arouse students' interest and curiosity in the subject matter, focus students' attention on the material, and develop students' learning activeness and thinking skills. This approach adds value to the learning process, helps create a dynamic environment, and prepares students to be competitive individuals in various life contexts.

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