

# Probing Questions in English Classroom: A Study of Teaching Practice (*Praktik Keterampilan Mengajar*) English Department Students Year 2016

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Probing question as part of basic teaching skills becomes a substantial aspect in teaching learning activities to dig up students' higher order thinking. This study aimed to investigate the types of probing questions used by English Department practice teachers year 2016 of State University of Jakarta. This study implemented qualitative research which focused on classroom observation. Data of this study were probing question utterances asked by practiced teacher during teaching learning process. The instrument of this study was classroom observational sheet. The data source of this study were 3 English Department PKM students and students of 3 class in SMP Negeri 97 and SMP Negeri 139. The result of the study is in average all types of probing questions found in three English Department PKM students, however only 1 student employed all types of probing question and prompting probing question is the most frequent used by the practice teachers. The study also showed that probing question used in delivering material section in English teaching-learning process. The study also showed that the students were able to respond probing questions used by practice teacher by think correctly and critically while the teacher probed them with probing questions.

**Keywords:** Probing Question, Students' higher order thinking, English classroom, Teaching practice.

*Pertanyaan menggali sebagai bagian dari kemampuan dasar mengajar menjadi aspek yang penting dalam aktivitas pembelajaran untuk menggali pemikiran yang lebih tinggi dari peserta didik. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menginvestigasi tipe tipe pertanyaan menggali yang digunakan oleh guru praktik Jurusan Bahasa Inggris tahun 2016 Universitas Negeri Jakarta. Penelitian ini mengimplementasikan metodologi kualitatif dimana pengamatan kelas menjadi fokus penelitiannya. Data dari penelitian ini adalah ungkapan pertanyaan menggali yang ditanyakan oleh guru praktik selama proses belajar pembelajaran berlangsung. Instrumen penelitian ini adalah lembar observasi kelas. Sumber data penelitian ini adalah 3 mahasiswa PKM Bahasa Inggris dan peserta didik dari 3 kelas di SMP Negeri 97 dan SMP Negeri 139. Hasil dari penelitian ini adalah rata-rata semua tipe pertanyaan menggali ditemukan pada mahasiswa PKM Bahasa Inggris, namun hanya 1 mahasiswa yang menggunakan semua tipe pertanyaan menggali dan pertanyaan menggali tipe prompting adalah tipe yang paling sering digunakan oleh guru praktik. Penelitian ini juga menunjukkan bahwa pertanyaan menggali digunakan pada saat sesi menerangkan materi dalam proses*

*belajarpembelajaran dalam kelas Bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini juga menunjukkan bahwa peserta didik bisa merespon pertanyaan menggali yang digunakan oleh guru praktik dengan berfikir secara benar dan lebih kritis ketika guru menggali pengetahuan mereka dengan pertanyaan menggali.*

## INTRODUCTION

A teacher has role in classroom as a guide, facilitator and a manager of the students (Educasia Teacher's Book, Thaybay Education Foundation, August 2013, p.9). Teachers as an effective facilitator means they are able to interest students and motivate them to take part actively in class and understand the lesson. To do this, there are several skills that must belong to an educator.

As stated by Gilcman (1991) that basic teaching skill is the most specific instructional behaviours or skills that must belong to a teacher, lecture, instructor in order to teach effectively, efficient and professional. Stated also in Peraturan Pemerintah Republik Indonesia nomor 74 tahun 2008, teachers are required to have academic qualifications, competencies, certification, healthy physic and mental, and an ability to achieve national education goals. Competencies refers to a set of knowledge, skills, and behaviors that should be owned, mastered, and actualized by teachers.

As the experiences of the the researcher in PKM course, it could be observed that the practice teacher were not aware of using probing questions as the skills needed to dig up students' understanding. Moreover, the variety of questions used were not focused on by them. Whereas, kinds of questions can lead the teacher to attract students' activeness and understanding the lessons effectively.

Guiding students to be active in class and understand the lessons can be held by using a question. A question as part of basic teaching skills is any sentences which has an interrogative form or function (Oxford Dictionary). In classroom settings, teacher questions are defined as instructional cues or stimuli that convey to students the content elements to be learned and directions for what they are to do and how they are to do it (Cotton, 2009).

Related to the importance of using question in class, teacher uses question for several aims; to help students review, to check on comprehension, to stimulate critical thinking, to encourage creativity, to emphasize a point, to control classroom activities and cut down on disruptive behavior, to help determine grades, to encourage discussion, to discourage inattentiveness, and for other reasons and purposes (Blosser, 2000).

Blosser (2000) claimed that there are variety of questioning strategy that lead students to think. They are probing question, factual question, divergent question, higher order question, affective question, and structuring question. This study will concentrate on the use of probing question in English classroom. Rabadi (2007) defined probing question as the sequential questions provided by the teacher after a student answers a question, and they might include a

new formulation or hints intended to guide the student to obtain the correct answers or improve the quality of the answers.

Probing question strategy has significant role in digging up students' higher order thinking. It is demonstrated as each probing question proposed by a teacher has function to deepen and expand students' answers and understandings. Moreover, 21st century era nowadays demands the students to have the skills that are needed to cope with the challenge in this era. Wagner (2008) stated that there are seven survival skills that should be owned by students in order to be prepared for 21st century life, work, and citizenship. The main skills are critical thinking and problem solving. Schwart and Ficher (2006) proposed that to deepen understanding of a lesson, a teacher might ask students probing question that required higherorder thinking. In this case, probing question can be a key to practice the skills.

Universitas Negeri Jakarta as the educational institution, that produces the regeneration of credible educators, provides several courses to create knowledge and skills of teaching which aimed to produce professional teacher. As an example, English Educational Study Program provides Language Learning Teaching Theories, English Language Teaching Methodoloy I and Peer Teaching which become the pre-requisite subject for Teaching Practice or Praktik Keterampilan Mengajar course.

According to Academic Handbook of Language and Art Faculty (2012), Praktik Keterampilan Mengajar or in short PKM is one of core subjects that must be taken by students who majoring in education, particularly in English education PKM. In this course, educational student must practice all of competencies which is obtained in class. The competencies are social, personal, compentencies and pedagogical.

A number of researchers have conducted to study about teachers' questions and the purposes of them. Ewing and Whittington (2007) studied about types of questions did professors ask during class sessions as measured using Blosser's (2000) classification system. They found that professors who used multiple types of questions during class sessions were allowing students to become engaged in the content. Their researches focused on types of questions used by a professor who can not be doubted as a professional one. Meanwhile, this study focuses on PKM students who are practicing and applying all theories and all teachers' competencies that they have obtained from pedagogical subjects.

Nurfitriany (2016) also studied about types of teachers's question for improving student's participation in class. She found that the teacher most often uses question at low cognitive level in improving student's participation. She observed an English teacher who has been certified to be a professional one in SMP Negeri 91 Jakarta. She also only observed how teacher uses a question to improve student's participation, without any classifying of types of questions. If we concern on her topic, it can be concluded that she focuses on probing questions. Expactantly, this study can complete the classification of the questions which belongs to probing question. Besides that, this study observes types of question used by English

Department PKM students. Thus, we can see the differences between types of question used by a professional and practice teachers.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Design**

This research conducted qualitative reaserch which defines that the procedures findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) . The qualitative research that used in this study is descriptive qualitative “Descriptive method is used to describe systematically a situation or area of interest factually and accurately” (Issaac & Michael, 1982). It is used to find out the result of study by observing and describing a video. It is applied by trancribing the video and find out the teacher-students utterences in terms of the use of questioning and the response.

### **Setting and Participants**

The study was conducted in SMP Negeri 139 which is located in Pondok Kopi East Jakarta and SMP Negeri 97 which is located in Utan Kayu East Jakarta, The research was conducted from August-November 2016. The data of the study were probing question utterances of three English Department PKM students which were taken in SMP Negeri 139 and SMP Negeri 97. The data source were 3 English Department PKM students year 2013.

### **Data Collection Method and Analysis**

This study used classroom observational sheet as the instrument to crosscheck for data validation of class activities which is recorded by the reasearcer. This sheet is designed based on the theory for types probing questions as stated by Saada (2006), Nabhan and Yahia (2008), and Younis (2007) who divided probing question into five types; clarifying, prompting, refocusing, switching, and criticizing. The data was classified and analyzed based on the researcher’s video trannscription.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

What are types of probing question used by English Department PKM students in English classroom of Junior High School?

Jawdat (2006), Nabhan and Yahia (2008), and Younis (2007) divided probing question into five types, they are; clarification, prompting, refocusing, switch, and vritical probing question Clarification probing question deals with the use of teacher’s question in order to deepen and expand students’ answers (Blosser, 2000).

### **1. Clarification Probing Question**

Clarification probing question also deals with the intention to convince students' understanding. The answers of the students can be a sign whether they master the knowledge completely or not. Ordinarily, clarification probing question used by a teacher while explaining and evaluating students answers and understanding. In this section, the questions will make sure and expand students' understandings.

*Extract 1*

***T : Okay, once again, try to answer my questions, I'll give you a point. Okay, are you experiencing adolescence now?***

*S : Yes.*

***T : Raise your hand, if you don't raise your hand I'll not note you. Coba!***

*S : (one of student raise his hand)*

***T : are you experiencing adolescence now?***

*S : Yes.*

Extract 1 presented that clarification probing questions again were used by practice teacher. It belonged to this type as the practice teacher asked about the confidence of their understandings. The practice teacher convince students' answers by asking their certainty for their answers. This kind of question was intended to make sure students' beliefness of the answers. Again, this kind of question was used by a practice teacher as she observed that the student was not confidence enough with his answer.

Clarification probing question deals with the use of teacher's question in order to deepen and expand students' answers (Blosser, 2000). Clarification probing question also deals with the intention to convince students' understanding. The answers of the students can be a sign whether they master the knowledge completely or not. Ordinarily, clarification probing question used by a teacher while explaining and evaluating students answers and understanding. In this section, the questions will make sure and expand students' understandings.

*Extract 2*

***T : okay you, you said that you experienced phsical growth and emotional growth, yes? Are you sure?***

*S : Yes.*

***T : Okay, apa saja yang kamu rasakan about your emotional growth? Yes, when you are..***

*S : ( some of students talked )*

***T : yes? Emosional growth? What is it?***

*S : pusing.*

***T : Pusing?***

*S : yes miss.*

As observed in Extract 2, clarification probing question was used by applicated the question word what. This question belonged to clarification probing question as the practice teacher made sure students' understandings by asking what have been known by the students about the topic discussed. The question word what is used commonly to know and deepen about something or some cases. It was similar with the purpose intended by practice teacher which is she wanted to deepen students' answers. The practice teacher had the intention to dig up what actually student understood his answer itself.

#### b. Prompting Probing Question

Saada (2006) defined prompting probing question as a kind of question that is used as follow-up to the unanswered question. It is used to correct students' misunderstanding, wrong answers, and unanswered question. It rewords the original question with clues added. It is able to be used practically based on students' wrong answers. The intention is to correct students' misunderstanding with the topic discussed. In this reasearch, practice teacher mostly used prompting probing question to correct students' misunderstandings in order to make sure students in the true track while she was explaining in the class.

#### *Extract 3*

***T : Dimas said I took piano lessons on Monday. So, let's recall what is my question. What activities that the witer did? I asked the writer, so your answer should be?***

*S : (no answers)*

***T : Miss tanya tentang the writer, what did the writer do? Is that right? Coba ulang baca kalimatnya. What did the writer do? So?***

*S : I took piano lessons*

***T : okay, I took piano lessons, so are you the one who take piano lessons? Or the writer?***

*S : the writer*

***T : So, change your answers again, the subject.***

*S : the writer took piano lessons*

***T : Good job dimas. Class..... Dimas please repeat once again.***

*S : the writer took piano lesson on Monday*

Extract 3 showed that the practice teacher used prompting probing questions. The practice teacher used prompting probing question by emphasizing the questions in order to correct student's answer which was understood wrongly as the student did not understand the aim of the questions. By emphasizing the question, the student will answer correctly. The intention again was to correct student's answer and understanding by clarifying and emphasizing the answers. This section is compliance with the concept of prompting question stated by Jawdat (2006) that prompting probing question is kind of question that is used as follow-up to the unanswered question misunderstanding and wrong answers.

It also could be observed that the practiced teacher employed prompting probing question while they would like to follow up students' wrong answers and unanswered question. The practiced teacher correct the students answers while they were explaining the materials in main activity of English classroom and they were asking some questions related to the topic discussed but the students answer the question incorrectly. It was intended to correct students' answers and understanding of the topic. As stated by Saada (2006) that prompting probing questions are formed after tudents' wrong answer in order to correct their understandings.

#### c. Refocusing Probing Question

Refocusing probing question is defined as kind of question that relates the topic discussed with the reality of life or the implication in another cases. Blosser (2000) stated that this kind of question deals with the purpose of probing question, expanding students' understanding. In this reasearch, refocusing probing questions were used by the practice teacher by relating the topic discussed with the fact faced by the students.

*Extract 4*

***T : Yes, let's see what does it mean by adolescence from the article?  
Raise your hand! What is the meaning?***

*S : ( one of student raised her hand)*

***T : What is your name?***

*S : Aisyah.*

***T : Okay Aisyah, what is the meaning of adolescence from the article?***

*S : the time of change between childhood and adulthood.*

***T : Okay, good job. Adolescence is the time of change between  
childhood and adulthood. Okay good. How about you class? How old  
are you now? Fourteenth? Thirteenth?***

*S : Twelveth. Eleventh.*

*T : Twelveth? Oh my God. Twelveth ? eleventh? Who said twelveth? Is there any who get older?*

*S : No.*

*T : Okay, so twelveth and eleventh. I have a question. Let's think about it together. Are you children, teenager, or adult?*

*S : Teeanager.*

*T : Are you sure?*

*S : Yes.*

*T : Yes, you are all teenagers, right? So, do you expereince this now? Are you experiencing adolescence now?*

*S : Yes.*

*T : Who said yes? Okay coba kalian remaja, are you experiencing the adolescence now? Apa kalian sedang pubertas?*

As observed in Extract 4, the practice teacher used refocusing probing questions. She used refocusing probing questions in order to deepen students' understanding. She also applicated the question to expand the students' understanding. She tried to relate the topic with the reality faced by the student by asking are you experiencing adolesence now, are you children, teenager, or adult. The intention was to dig up students' higher order thinking as the skills needed in 21st century era. This section is compliance with the concept of refocusing probing question stated by Blosser (2000) that refocusing probing question is defined as kind of question that relates the topic discussed with the reality of life or the implication in another cases.

It also could be observed that the practiced teacher employed refocusing probing question while they were asking about students' understandings and would like to expand their understanding by relating the topic discussed to the reality of life. They used the questions while they were explaining the materials in main activity, which explaining the materials, in English classroom and they would like to convince and expand students' understandings. As stated by Blosser (2000) that refocusing probing questions are formed after one students' answers the teacher question in order to check and expand their understandings.

#### d. Switch Probing Question

Blosser (2000) stated that switch probing question is a kind of sentence that is used to convince and expand students' understanding by switching or alternating the question into different students. In this case, the teacher tries to convince all students understanding the



subject discussed. Thus, the teacher asks to one student about one topic and then switch the same question into another student. It aims to convince all students in class cope with the explanation given. It belongs to probing question as it expand students' thinking.

*Extract 5*

**T : “Ade dengeriiiiin jawabannya B.”**

*“Ya rizal yang kenceng. Langsung aja no 9.”*

*S : (read)*

**T : “Jawabannya apa? B? C?”**

*S : “.....”*

**T : “Are you sure?”**

*“Do you think so, the answer is C?”*

*“Any other answer?”*

*“Ya, Fahri.”*

*S : “B”*

**T : “Yang bener jawabannya B”**

*S : “Yeah”*

**T : “Bukan. Bukan jawaban. Maksudnya saya nanya Yang bener jawabannya B? Are you sure the answer B?”**

*S : Sure*

**T : “Coba baca lagi? Apa coba?”**

**“Jadi jawabannyaaaaaaaa A.”**

*S : “YEYEYE. HORE”*

**T : “(nama siswa) emang jawaban kamu A?”**

*S : “Iya.”*

**T : “Coba apa alasannya?”**

*S : “.....”*

**T : “Yeeeeeeee. Gimana?”**

***“Fahri. Fahri. Apa jawabannya?”***

*S: “B kan.”*

***T : “Apa alasannya?”***

*S : “ (nama siswa) yang kasih tau.”*

***T : “Coba (nama siswa) apa jawaban kamu? alasannya apa?”***

*S : .....*

As observed in Extract 5, the practice teacher used switch probing question. The practice teacher used the switch probing question by asking understanding to one student firstly and switch to another student. It can be observed in the highlighted utterances in Extract 9. The intention was to make sure that all students understand well the lessons. Besides that, this type of question used by practice teacher to evaluate the topic discussed. This section is compliance with the concept of switch probing question stated by Blosser (2000) that switch probing question as a kind of sentence that is used to convince and expand students' understanding by switching or alternating the question into different students. In this case, the teacher tries to convince student understanding at all in class.

It also could be observed that the practiced teacher employed switch probing question while they were asking about all students' understandings in order to check their understandings. The practiced teacher probed the students with switch questions while they were explaining the materials in main activity of English classroom and they checked all students understandings as this questions were employed by moving one question to the another students. It was intended to expand students' answers of the topic. As stated by Blosser (2000) that switch probing questions are formed after students' answers and move the answers to the other students in order to check and expand all students' understandings.

#### e. Critical Probing Question

Blosser (2000) defined critical probing question as a kind of sentence that is used by criticizing students' answers to convince and expand their understandings. It is done not because the incorrect students answers, but to expand their understandings and to know how the students obtain their answers and understandings.

*Extract 6*

***T : “Ade dengeriiiiin jawabannya B.” “Ya rizal yang kenceng. Langsung aja no 9.”***

*S : (read)*

***T : “Jawabannya apa? B? C?”***

S : .....

**T : “ Are you sure?”**

*“Do you think so, the answer is C?”*

*“Any other answer?”*

*“Ya, Fahri.”*

S : “B”

**T : “Yang benar jawabannya B”**

S : “Yeah”

**T : “Bukan. Bukan jawaban. Maksudnya saya nanya Yang benar jawabannya B? Are you sure the answer B?”**

S : Sure

**T : “Coba baca lagi? Apa coba?.”**

*“Jadi jawabannyaaaaaaaaa A.”*

S : “YEYEYE. HORE”

**T : “(nama siswa) emang jawaban kamu A?”**

S : “Iya.”

**T : “Coba apa alasannya?”**

S : “.....”

**T : “Yeeeeeeee. Gimana?”**

**“Fahri. Fahri. Apa jawabannya?”**

S : “B kan.”

**T : “Apa alasannya?”**

S : ..... “ (nama siswa) yang kasih tau.”

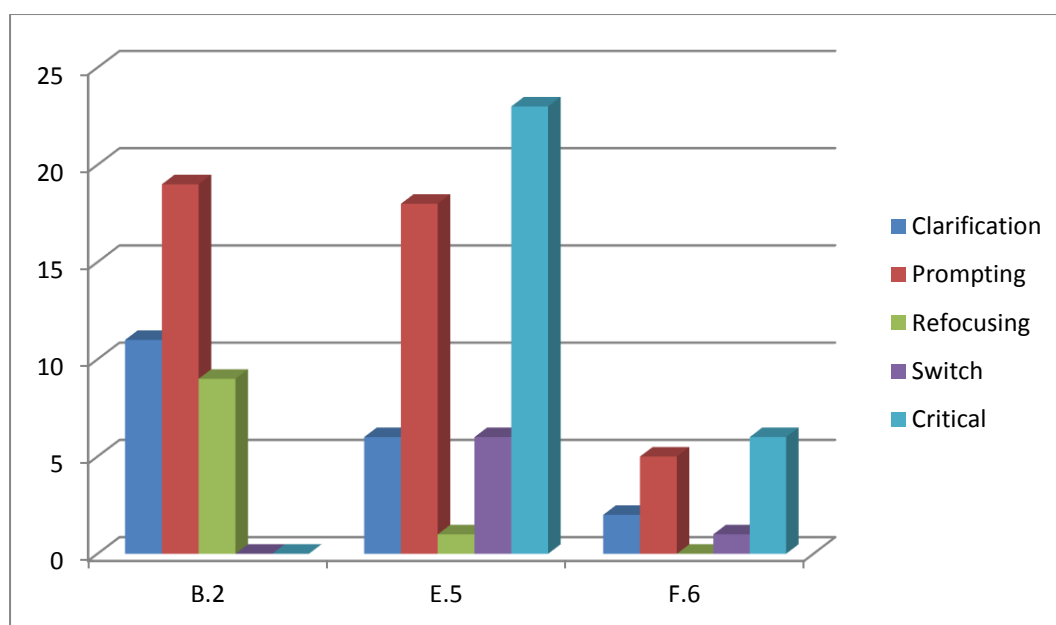
**T : “Coba apa jawaban kamu? Apa alasannya?”**

As observed in Extract 6, the practice teacher used critical probing questions. It is categorized into this probing question as the practice teacher used an utterance to dig up students' higher order thinking by criticizing the students' answers and asking the background reason of the answers. It was proven by highlighted utterances above. The intention was to

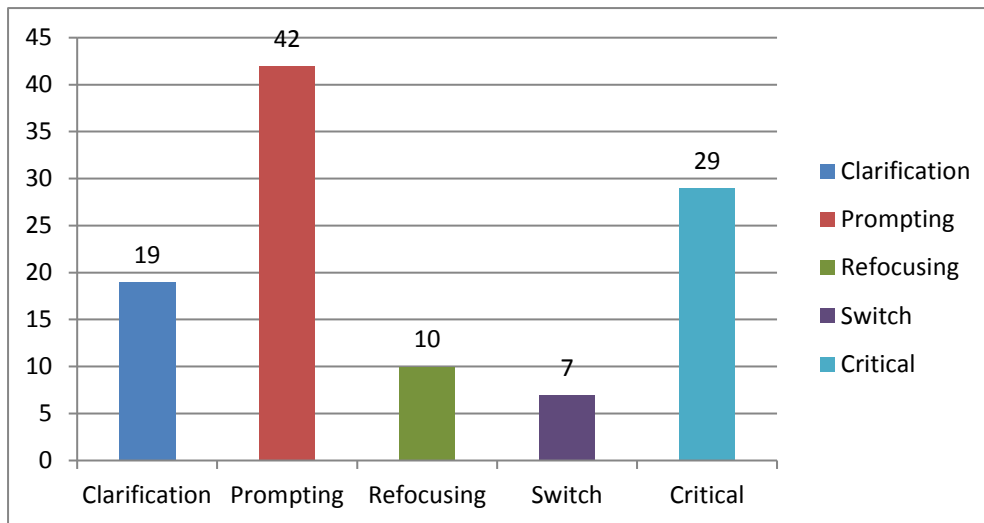
make student think critically and expand their answers. In this section, it is compliance with the concept of critical Probing Question proposed by Blosser (2000), is a kind of sentence that is used by criticizing students' answers to convince and expand their understandings.

It also could be observed that the practiced teacher employed critical probing question while they were asking about the students' conviction of their answers and understandings and expand their understandings . The practiced teacher asked the students critically while they were explaining the materials in main activity of English classroom. It was intended to expand students' understanding of the topic. As stated by Blosser (2000) tha critical probing questions are formed after students' answers and the teacher asked some questions critically which were intended to expand their understandings.

#### f. Frequency of Practice Teachers' Probing Question Implications



From the chart above, it can be seen that types of probing question employed by the three practice teachers only 2 types. These are types of probing question that teacher commonly used to clarify and correct students' answers and understandings in English classroom. Types of probing question lead the students to think critically in a correct understanding.



There are 19 utterances of clarification probing question employed by the practice teachers to clarify and convince students' understandings of the topic discussed. There are 42 utterances of prompting question employed by the practice teachers to correct students' misunderstanding, wrong and unanswered questions. There are 10 utterances of refocusing probing question employed by the practice teachers to expand students' understandings by relating the topic discussed to the students' reality of life. There are 7 utterances of switch probing question employed by the practice teachers to make sure all students in the class understand the topic discussed by switching the question directly from one student to another. There are 29 utterances of critical probing question employed by the practice teachers to expand students' understandings by asking the reason or relating the topic discussed to the other topic.

The result percentage shows that the three practice teachers mostly employed prompting probing question to correct students misunderstanding, wrong and unanswered question all the time. Employing types of probing question in English classroom give significant impact for the students. The probing questions used by the teacher are truly lead the students to think critically. As stated by Schwart and Ficher (2006) that to deepen understanding of a lesson, a teacher might ask students probing question that required higher-order thinking. The practice teachers used a question to clarify, correct, convince, and criticize the students' answers and understandings in order to expand their knowledge.

## Conclusion

Based on findings and discussions in chapter IV, it is found that in average all types of probing question found in three English Department PKM students, however only one student employed all types of probing question. The result of the study also showed that prompting probing question is the most frequently used by the practice teachers. The study also showed that probing question used in delivering material section in English teaching-learning process. The study also showed that the students were able to respond probing questions used by practice teacher by think correctly and critically while the teacher probed them with probing questions. The five types of probing questions are clarification, prompting, refocusing, switch, and cirtical probing questions.

Prompting probing question was mostly employed by three observed practice teacher, which is 42 utterances. This type of question was used to correct students' misunderstandings, wrong and unanswered questions. As observed in probing question utterances, each of students did not employed all types of probing question. Moreover, the utterances used were not variant. In average, they only used one or two utterances repeatedly. First, practice teacher 1 did not use switch probing question. Second, practice teacher 2 had already used all types of probing question. Last, practice teacher 3 did not use switch probing question.

The use of probing question has a significant role to dig up students' knowledge if it used properly. The teacher must have a big desire to expand students' thinking. It will be more poerful, if the teacher used variant of uttarances. As an example, the use of critical probing question can obtain students answer and the reason behind the answers and automatically it will lead the students to think in high level as demanded by 21st century era.

### **Recommendation**

As a recommendation for professional educators, they are vulnerably demanded to use probing questions. An educator ought to employ probing question while conducting English teaching and learning process in order to lead their students think critically and creatively. Moreover, we are in the 21st century era which demands the students to think critically. The use of probing questions can be an alternative to dig up students higher order thinking. However, the use of variant probing questions also must to be focused by an educator.

As a recommendation for practice teachers, this study can give a description of the utterances that must be used while implements types of probing question. Hence, they can perform well while practice in real English class. Moreover, the functions of using this skills can impact significantly to the students thinking.

As a recommendation for further research, it is suggested to conduct the research to find the purpose of using probing question in English classroom in relation with the success of understanding the lessons. It is also recommended for the next research to conduct the research about the functions of each types of probing questions related with the level of students' thinking.

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