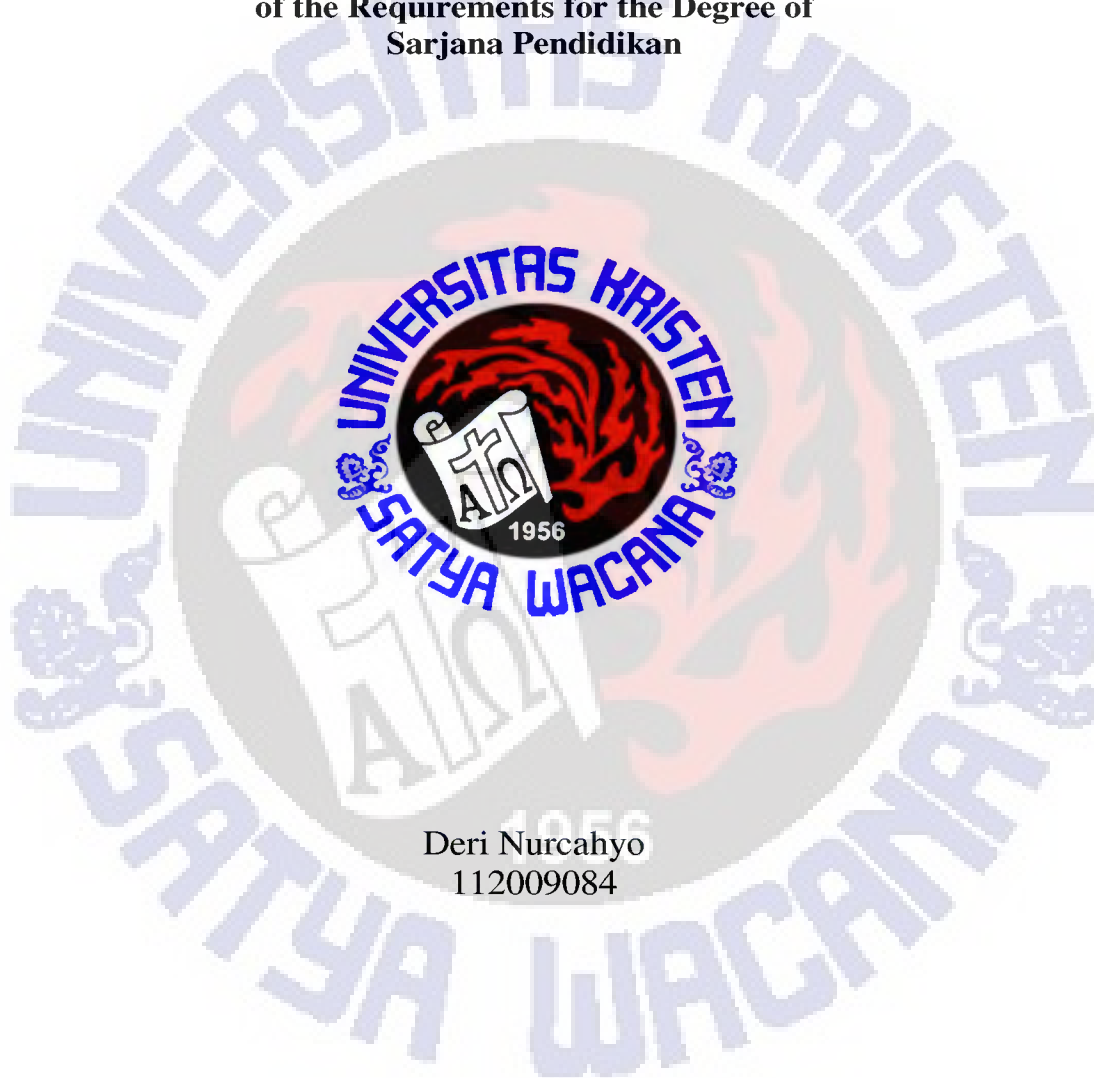


**STUDENTS' RESPONSES TO THE TYPES OF QUESTIONS USED IN  
TEACHING ENGLISH FOR MENTALLY RETARDED STUDENTS:  
A STUDY AT SLB BINA PUTRA**

**THESIS**  
**Partial in Submitted Fullfillment**  
**of the Requirements for the Degree of**  
**Sarjana Pendidikan**



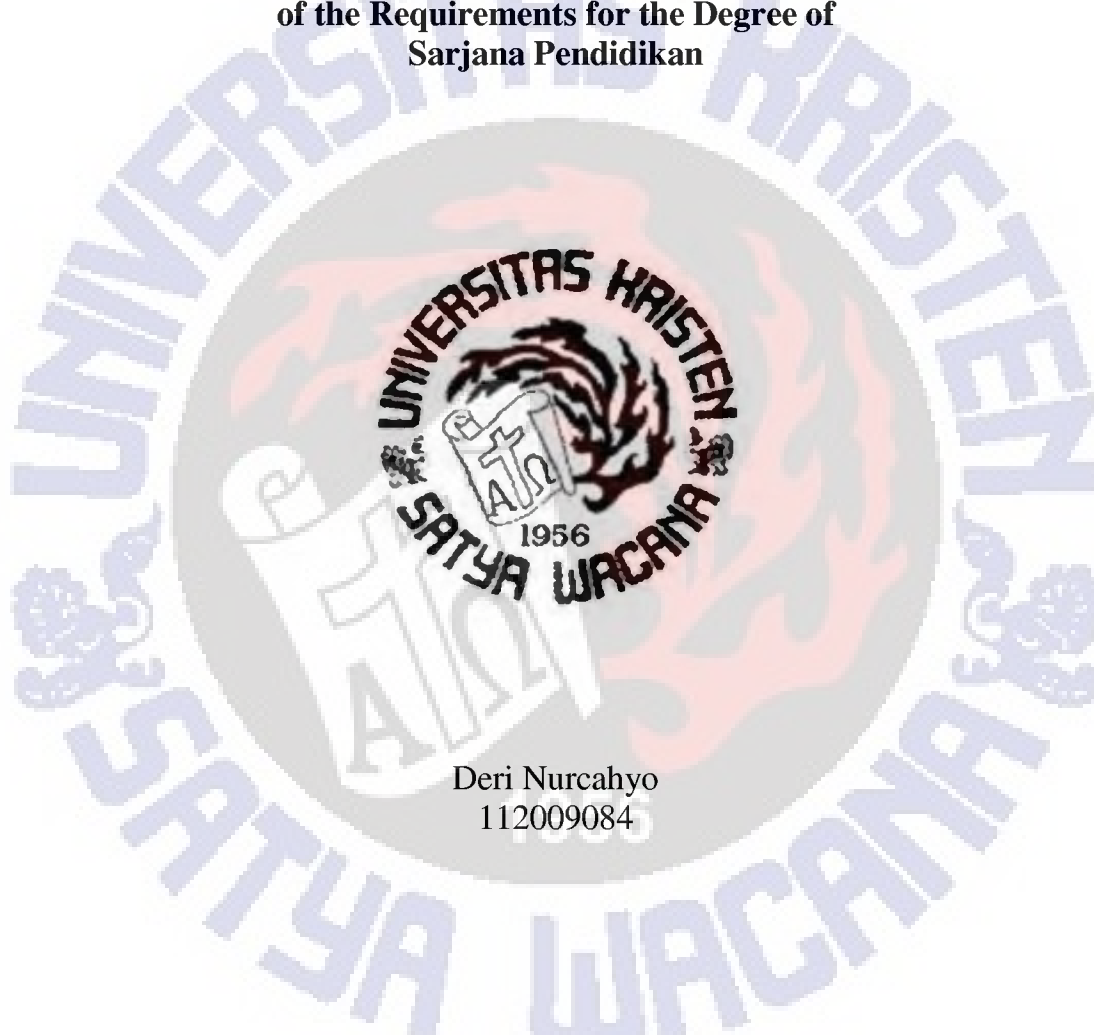
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**SALATIGA**  
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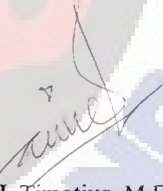
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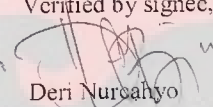
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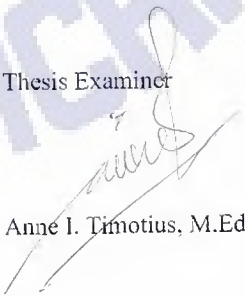
  
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# **STUDENTS' RESPONSES TO THE TYPES OF QUESTIONS USED IN TEACHING ENGLISH FOR MENTALLY RETARDED STUDENTS: A STUDY AT SLB BINA PUTRA**

**Deri Nurcahyo**

## **Abstract**

Parents who have a mentally retarded child hoped that they could give the best education to their children. In fact, mentally retarded students suffer from their deficiencies in learning which have a poor memory and short attention span. They prefer to imitate what people do or say as their ways in learning. Questioning appears as one of the ways of the teacher that can be used to guide mentally retarded students in learning especially English. This study aimed to find out the types of questions frequently used in teaching English for mentally retarded students at Bina Putra and also focused on the students' responses toward those types of questions. The research participant was an English teacher at SLB Bina Putra, Salatiga. The data were collected using a nonparticipant observation and an interview. The results of this study were five types of questions frequently used by the teacher such as recall questions, probing questions, closed questions, convergent questions, and display questions. The result showed that the purposes of using those types of questions were to test students' previous knowledge, recall and recognize something. Besides, the responses from students were also presented in this study which were positive responses such as they were able to answer quickly and they motivated to answer the questions, then no responses such as the students preferred to be silent and they preferred to repeat teacher's utterances.

**Keywords:** *Students' responses, types of questions, teaching English for mentally retarded students*

## **Introduction**

In Indonesia nowadays, mastering English becomes a necessity. Beside, English considers as a foreign language, children' mastering English is a requirement. Moreover, it is because of the importance for the students to face the global era and to pass the national examination held by the Indonesian government, almost all level of Indonesian educational institutions such as Junior High School, Senior High School, and Special Schools for children with disabilities for these



levels have English lesson in the school. This fact motivates parents to push their children to learn English in schools, even the parents of children with special needs.

Parents who have mentally retarded children have to be aware that giving an education to their children is absolutely important despite the fact that their children are mentally different from other children. Parents should give the best education even though their children are mentally retarded. It is stated in Indonesian Regulation number 23 year 2002 section 9:

- (1) Every child has right to get education and teaching in order to develop his or her level of intelligence appropriately in accordance with his or her propensity and proclivity.
- (2) Besides...disabled children also have the right to get special education, while children who have special qualities also have the right to get special education.

Knowing the importance of education for each human being especially children and the need of mastering English to face the global era, the government finds it necessary to teach English to mentally retarded children as well. The government regulation PP No. 19 Tahun 2005 about Standar Nasional Pendidikan pasal 6 ayat 1c, stated that English should become one of the subjects for mentally retarded students. Because of this reason, English course is included as one of the subjects that student in Special School should achieve.

Nevertheless, many people argue that teaching the mentally retarded children is very difficult because the differences of disability that each student has. So, the teacher should teach the mentally retarded student in appropriate ways, especially when teaching English. The teachers should understand the students' disabilities, give great attention toward the students' characteristic in the learning process, and be able to deal with the students' who are mentally and physically different.

In the teaching and learning process, giving chances for the students to talk actively in class is very significant. In order to achieve this goal, offering question to the students seems to be the most appropriate way that can be used by the teacher. Willen, Ishler, Hutchison, and Kindsvatter (2000) declared that questioning is a helpful tool to provoke student to communicate, share their ideas, and learn.

Many previous studies conducted about questioning skill such as Shtnawi (1998), Al-Subaie (2007), Tan (2007). An example from Al-Subaie (2007) who conducted a study aimed to investigate the questions asked by EFL teachers of 2nd grade of Secondary School through classroom interaction and classifying these questions. The sample of this study consisted of 19 teachers who taught English to the second secondary grade students in Tabouk during the first Semester in Academic Year 2006/2007. The results of this study showed that teachers raised four levels of questions where the memory questions were the highest whereas the evaluative level questions was the lowest.

Nonetheless, the problem precisely occurs when the teacher tried to apply questioning skill to the mentally retarded students. It is because the mentally retarded students tend to imitate questions from the teacher, easily forget the material being taught, and lose of concentration. This fact caught my interest and motivated me to create a research question, which is, "What is (are) students' response(s) to the types of questions frequently used in teaching English for mentally retarded students?" From this research question, I hope that I will be able to investigate the types of questions the teacher used in teaching English to mentally retarded students and to know the responses of the students toward the types of questions given by the teacher.

I wish that this study can be useful for anyone or teachers who are involved in English teaching. I also expect that the study will be helpful for new English teachers and the mentally

retarded children's teacher. The study can be used as a guide of information about mentally retarded children's background and the suitable types of questions through the responses that shown by mentally retarded student. I also hope that it can increase the motivation of the students to learn English.

## **Literature Review**

### **Mentally Retarded**

Mentally retarded children are children who have mental deficiencies especially in learning process. Harris (2004) argued that these children usually have an IQ score below 75. They can speak, read, write, and do other things. DSM-IV-TR (2000) stated, "Indeed, physically, mentally retarded people are like normal people because mental disorders are unrelated to physical or biological factors or processes" (p.181). They just cannot process information as fast as normal people do.

The American Association on Mental Retardation (AAMR), 2006, defines it as follows: "Mental Retardation: A disability characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior, as expressed in conceptual, social and practical adaptive skills. The disability originates before age 18". AAMR (2006) also stated that mentally retarded can be defined as a mental handicap that means developmental disability. Mental handicap divides are classified into different levels based on the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) scores. Such as visualized in the table 1.

Table 1. Classification system of mental handicaps (AAMR, 2006)

Intelligence Quotient (IQ) limits	Description
70-75 to 80 or 85	Slow learner (No mental retardation)
50-55 to 70-75	Mild Mental Retardation
35-40 to 50-55	Moderate Mental Retardation
20-25 to 35-40	Severe Mental Retardation
Below 20-25	Profound Mental Retardation

Teaching a mentally retarded student is harder than the normal one. Their cognitive processes are also different. It seems that mentally retarded children suffer from some deficiencies and slower than normal children in developing and learning. In order to make it clear, I will add an explanation about the possible learning process of mentally retarded student in a Special School located in Salatiga, Central Java, Indonesia, which is SLB (Sekolah Luar Biasa) Bina Putra.

Kisworo (2008) have already conducted a study focused on the problems that faced by mentally retarded students in learning English at this school, SLB Bina Putra, Salatiga. The target participants were two mentally retarded students (16 years old girl and 17 years old boy). The result showed that those students faced two major problems in learning, including English course, they were psychological problems and language problems. The following parts are brief discussions of Kisworo's study's findings.

Psychological problems

In his observation, Kisworo (2008) found that the students seemed to be inattentive and had short attention span which made them easily distracted and unfocused. The students were also impulsive. They suddenly did many things without thinking it first and clear reason. They also had problems in retrieving information from the long-term memory to the short-term memory and transferring what was in the short-term memory to the long-term memory which made them became difficult to remember what they had learned. It is similar to Bray, Fletcher, and Turner (1997), as declared in Heward (2006), whom had found that “the students with mental retardation had trouble in retaining information in short-term memory.” Moreover, the mentally retarded students are also like to call out suddenly. One of the students being observed by Kisworo was introverted, which hindered the student from interacting with the teacher and made him or her withdraw from the teacher, especially when the teacher was going to check his or her work. Besides, Kisworo (2008) also found that some students had problem in finishing a task. These problems prevented the student to be able to adapt to the class situation. Zeaman and House (1979), as cited in Heward (2006), said that individuals with mental retardation often had difficulty in sustaining attention to learning tasks.

#### Language Problems

Because of their mental problem, the students had problems in learning English. In the observation, Kisworo (2008) argued that mentally retarded students could not spell and pronounce English words correctly; even the students substituted the sounds or used the Indonesian pronunciation to pronounce English words. Kisworo (2008) also stated that having interaction with them in English was very hard and even impossible because they tended to imitate what was said or asked by the interlocutor to them. The main problem was that students

did not know what the right answers from the teacher's point of view' was. They just said what comes to their mind that they remembered as the right answer.

Briefly, I would like to conclude that mentally retarded students seemed to be slower than normal student in learning because they suffered from some factors such as poor memory, short attention span, and impulsive. Also, mentally retarded students often imitate the teacher's or others' utterances as their way in learning, and impulsive.

### **Questioning**

Question is a set of words from the speaker to expose the listener's response. It was supported by Burden and Byrd (1998), as cited in Al-Khataybeh and Al-Ja'freh (2012, p.21-27), stated that "Question is a set of words that a listener is to be exposed to and interpret them intentionally, then to respond according to the speakers discourse".

Kerry (2002) believed that "Questions play an important role in the processes of teaching and learning because children's achievements, and their level of engagement, depend on the types of questions teachers formulate and use in a classroom." What this really means is that the students's achievement in learning is also depended on the types of questions that the teacher uses in the classroom.

There are some purposes and reasons of a teacher to ask questions. It is supported by Raymond (2004) who argued that "A teacher usually asks questions for several purposes, such as to test their students' previous knowledge, recall and recognize something, to think and to give reason about something ... to keep children mentally alert." Moreover, Hargreaves (1994), as cited in Al-Aweiny (2002), also mentioned that questioning might be used to stimulate the curiosity of their students, to revise the lesson as well as to check whether their students are



following the lesson or not, to link new aspects of knowledge with the previous ones, to create a type of cooperation between the students, to discover the weak points of their students, and to formulate general rules as well as to develop the skills of synthesis. Besides that, Gabriellaros (2004) also added that EFL teachers asked questions for the following reasons: the need to minimize teachers' talking time so that teachers did not dominate the lesson ... the need for time-effectiveness which is the complaint of teachers that there never seems to be enough time to deal with the set syllabus.

There are many types of questions that can be used in teaching. Veenman, Vetten, and Lem (1987), as cited in Al-Khataybeh and Al-Ja'freh (2012, p.21-27), said that the level of the questions is divided into two levels: Low level questions (recalling, comprehension and application) and High level questions (Analysis, synthesis and evaluative). In addition, Gabriellaros (2004) also mentioned that there are four types of questions according to the response required: yes/no, open-ended, convergent, and divergent questions.

Below are some other types of questions:

1. Recall Questions

Lowe (n.d.) believed that recall questions allowed the questioner to check their understanding usually by going back to something mentioned earlier. The purpose of recall questions is to test students' previous knowledge about a particular material.

2. Probing Questions

Probing questions allow the questioner to go into greater detail and encourage the respondent to expand on a previous statement (Lowe, n.d.).

3. Closed Questions

Amy Tsui (1995) said that closed question is a question which does not give any choices to the student or only one correct answer.

#### 4. Convergent Questions

Richard and Lockhart (1994) stated that convergent question is a question from teacher, which demands only a short answer without considering any deep thinking from the student about the subject discussed in class. "Without considering any deep thinking" means that the students just answer the questions without any consideration. The purpose of convergent questions is to check students' knowledge about a particular subject in form of a short answer.

#### 5. Display Questions

Tsui (1995) defined display questions as the questions use by teachers when they know the answer in advance and want learners to display their knowledge. A teacher utters display question in order to check students' understanding toward the material that is discussed at the day. This purpose has a similar aim to recall questions that is to check students' understanding, whereas the difference is that in recall questions the teachers have to go back to the previous material that has been discussed in order to check if the students still remember what they have learned and if the students have already mastered the materiald or not. It means that recall questions prefer to the material that has been discussed.

## **The Study**

## **Context of the Study**

The setting of the study was at SLB Bina Putra, which was located on Hasanuddin Street, Banjarn, Salatiga, Central Java, Indonesia. In this school, mentally retarded students were categorized into two different groups which were C Group ('Tunagrahita ringan' with Intelligence Quotient between 50-70) and C1 Group ('Tunagrahita berat' with Intelligence Quotient below 30). The reason of choosing this school was because I could easily accessed this school since it was located in the area of Salatiga. The important reason was because the school offered English course as one of the subject that should be achieved by the students.

## **Participant**

The participant of the study was an English teacher at SLB Bina Putra, Salatiga. I selected this participant because there was only one English teacher at SLB Bina Putra. Moreover, the participant was the person who was convenient with and accessible for me. I chose him based on the "*A sample of convenience*" technique proposed by McKay, 2006, p.37, as cited in Zacharias, 2011. Mckay, 2006, said that A sample of convenience was "the selection of the participant based on the people who were accessible to you."

## **Instrument**

In attempting to answer the research question, the methodologies I used were classroom observation and interview. The observation focused on two purposes which were to observe the types of questions used by the English teacher and to know kinds of student's responses toward those types of questions offered by the teacher. It was based on Zacharias's study, 2011, which stated that the purpose of observation could be; first, 'Observation to describe' meant the

observation was to provide a rich and complete description of what happened in the classroom. Second, ‘Observation to evaluate’ meant that the observation was to assess something.

I did the in-class observation for 3 times. The type of observation used was evaluative or structured observation because I came to the classroom with a specific observation focus. In addition, I used a time-sampling protocol with specific in time. Dornyei (2007), as cited in Zacharias (2011), explained, “When observing using a time-sampling protocol, you note what is happening on the stroke of the interval or chart what was happened.” Table 2 was the example of time-sampling protocol.

Table 2. The example of a time-sampling protocol.

Name of teacher:		Date/time:	
Class:		Duration:	
Topic:			
Time	Type of question	Example	Notes

(Taken from: Zacharias, 2011)

In the observation section, I became a non-participant observer because it helped me to be more focus on what was happening in the class and students did not be disturbed with my existence in class. I video-taped and took notes during the teaching and learning process in order to record the activities done in the class. After completing the observation, I transcribed the

recordings. For interview, I did an interview in order to add some specific information that I could not find in the observation and to clarify some questions arose when I did the observation.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

In order to gather the data, I conducted a classroom observation for 3 times. Before I did the observation, I got a formal permission letter from the Faculty of Language and Literature to do the observation. After that, I went to SLB Bina Putra to get the permission from the principal of the school. The observation was meant to see what happened in the class in details based on the topic that I intended to study. I used a video recorder to gather the data in classroom learning process. Then, the Video recording was used when I transcribed the video after the observations finished. Take notes was also used during the observation. In order to reinforce the result of the observation, I conducted an interview with my participant to find out some details of the data I got.

### **Data Analysis**

After the data was collected through the classroom observations and interview, I would like to use a Qualitative research method to analyze the data gathered. The reason was because this study focused on what type of questions the teacher gave to the mentally retarded students and the students' response toward the teacher's questions, so it would be more appropriate if I described the data I have collected through words or explanation rather than numbers or statistics.

## **Finding and Discussion**

This study used classroom observation and interview as the instrument of collecting data. Three times classroom observations were conducted because the limitation of time so interview section was added in order to complete the data. After collecting data, I found that there were some types of questions used in teaching English for Mentally Retarded students in Bina Putra School. The study also found some responses that occurred when the teacher implied the question. In this research, the participant is an English teacher. He was a Bachelor of Education and had taught English for eight years. He taught English for Special Education (SDLB, SMPLB, and SMALB) in Bina Putra, Salatiga.

In this discussion, I would like to elaborate more on the division of types of questions that commonly used in class. I classified five types of questions which were recall questions, probing questions, closed questions, convergent questions, and display questions. Those five types of questions would be explained deeply in the following section:

#### **A. Types of Questions**

Based on the result of this study, the types of questions that frequently used were:

##### **1. Recall Questions**

Teacher used recall question by asking a question which was related to the previous discussion. Therefore, the student would review the material discussed. In the observation, recall question was usually used by teacher when he wanted to make sure whether the student had already known or mastered the previous material or to check whether the student follow the material discussed at that day or not. By recall questions, the teacher wanted to test students' previous knowledge about a particular material. In the other words, if the student did not understand or followed the material well even forget the material discussed, recall question



would be the key of teacher to help the student to remember the material and to prepare the student to the next material. The following conversation between the teacher and the student was the example of the use of recall question in class.

Observation 1 (March 4, 2013):

T: *Alfin, "straight" itu artinya apa kemarin? (Alfin, what is the meaning of the word "straight"?)*

S: *Mmm...*

T: *Coba dibuka buku catatannya. (Now, please, open your book!)*

S: *Lurus (Straight)*

T: *Iya betul. Kalau "belok" apa, Fin? (That's right. What about "belok", Fin?)*

S: *Turn.*

\*T: Teacher \*S: Student

In this case, the teacher tried to remind the student about the material that had already been discussed in the previous meeting. The teacher asked the student about the English term of word 'belok' and the Bahasa Indonesia term of word 'straight'. From the example above, we could notice that the teacher wanted to help the student to remember the previous material by going back to the material before through recall question and check the student whether they had already mastered the material and ready to continue the next material or not. The observation was also supported by the result of interview with the teacher. I found that he used recall questions in order to review the lesson as well as to check whether his students followed the lesson or not. The extract below showed the interview with the teacher.

Extract 1.1: Teacher's statement about recall question during interview on April 24, 2013.

**"It will be the same with recall question.** When I asked the student to follow me, to pronounce the name of picture in English, after finished I asked questions based on the *material again in order to check their understanding.*"

From Extract 1.1, we could notice that the teacher needed to check the student's understanding and readiness of the discussed material in order to continue the next level of the

material. Similar with Lowe's idea, the teacher would go back to the previous discussion to check his students' understanding. Those ideas were also relevant with the purpose of using question in teaching that was argued by Raymond (2004). He stated that teacher usually asks question for several purposes: to test their students' previous knowledge, recall and recognize something, to think and reason about something, elicit something from their students, to promote initiative and originality, stimulate the interest and effort on the part of their students to focus attention on a particular issue, to develop an active approach to learn, and to keep children mentally alert.

Other types of questions that were frequently used in class were Probing Questions. The discussion below would explain deeper about probing questions.

## 2. Probing Questions

Here, the teacher usually used probing questions in order to check students' understanding about the material but in detail information. The teacher seemed want to measure that his students able to give a detail information about a particular subject. So, when teacher expected his student to give detail information about a subject, he would use probing questions to achieve those purposes. The following conversations, was the example of probing questions used by the teacher in class:

Observation 1 (March 4, 2013):

T: Alfin, kalau mau tanya ke halte bus, bilangnya gimana?

(Alfin, if you want to go to the bus station, how will you ask it?)

S: mmm..

T: Coba lihat map sama catatannya, Fin!

(Look at the map and your note, Fin!)

S: mm.. How do I go to the bus station?

T: Nah..kalau jalannya diganti "*Blue Street*" jadinya?

(*If we change the street's name into Blue Street, how do we say it?*)

How do I go to the bus station..then?

S: You might go straight on Blue Street, then turn right in the crossroad after the zoo, then go straight.

Here, the teacher asked the student to give detail information about the direction how to go to the bus station. The teacher wanted to make sure that the student followed the material given by asking detail information. The result of interview section with the teacher would support the idea above. The extract 1.2 below was the result of the interview.

Extract 1.2: Teacher's statement about probing question during interview on April 24, 2013.

*"Then, there is probing question too. It is the same with before. The purpose is to check student's ability that has ready or not, yet, need repeated or not, need to practice in front of class or not."*

From Extract 1.2, we could sum up that the purpose was to check students' ability that was mean students' understanding in case of following the material, needed a repetition or not, needed to practice in front of the class or not. Those aims were purposed in order to achieve ability to give detail information about a particular subject.

Next type of questions used in English class by the teacher was Closed Questions. The application of closed questions would be discuss in the following section.

### 3. Closed Questions

Closed Questions was used which did not offer the answerer a choice of response. Like Tsui (1995) had said, we could notice that closed question was a question that gave a limitation to students or participant in answering the question. Based on the observation, the teacher would use closed questions if there was hesitancy from the student in answering a questions. For example, if the student doubted to answer between A or B, the teacher would stimulate the student through closed questions. Here, the teacher would give options to stimulate the student

in answering the question. The conversation below was the example of closed questions used in class.

Observation 1(March 4, 2013):

T: Alfin, kalau lihat gambar, Bina Putra ada disebelah kiri atau kanan?

(Alfin, if you take a look at the picture, Bina Putra is on the left or right side?)

S: ... kanan! (right!)

T: Really..kanan atau kiri?(Really, right or left?)

S: Eh,,kiri. (left)

T: Iya betul.(*that's correct*)

In the example above, the teacher used closed questions in order to give a correction by giving options to the student because there was a mistake. It seemed that closed question was used to make sure the students' answer and stimulate them to answer quickly by giving them options to choose. The result of interview section was also aided the idea above. In the interview, the teacher said that closed questions would help him to stimulate students' curiosity toward the material and also help the student to response the question quickly and correctly. The extract below was the teacher statement during the interview section.

Extract 1.3: Teacher's statement about closed question during interview on April 24, 2013.

**“Besides, closed question is also used to help the student ...**Because sometime students feel doubt with their answer, so in order to make sure and stimulate them to answer quickly, they just need to choose *options....*”

From the extract 1.3, I concluded that the teacher would use closed question in case if there was an uncertainty inside students' feeling toward the answer even the material. The use of closed question was suitable with Amy Tsui's statement (1995) who insisted that closed questions did not give any choices even only one correct answer. It was similar with the

teacher's statement that student just needed to choose the options in order to get one correct answer.

Furthermore, a type of questions used in class was Convergent Questions. The next discussion would explain how the teacher deals with this type of questions.

#### 4. Convergent Questions

Such as Richard and Lockhart (1994) had stated, it seemed that receiving a short answer from the student was the purpose of using convergent questions. In the observation section, the teacher would use convergent questions to check students' knowledge about a particular subject in form of a short answer or response as well. The following example was the example of convergent question used by the teacher in class.

Observation 3 (April 9, 2013):

T: Ada yang tahu, what is 'nasi goreng' in English? (Is there anyone know what is 'nasi goreng' in English?)

S: Fried rice!

T: What is 'ayam goreng' in English?

S: Mmm..fried chicken!

T: Good.

As shown in observation 3, the teacher expected his student to answer in a short answer. When the teacher asked the English term of 'nasi goreng' or 'ayam goreng', the student just needed to answer the English words of those Indonesian words. By interviewing the teacher, the teacher also added another information that the use of convergent question was also to hold students' memory if might be the same questions occur again. Extract 1.4 would show the result of interview section.

Extract 1.4: Teacher's statement about convergent question in interview on April 24, 2013.

**“Next, it is about convergent question.** The expectation after the student able to catch the material that has given and there is a similar question occurs again, we hoped that students were able to answer correctly.”

Extract 1.4 showed that the teacher argued if convergent questions could be used to maintain the mentally retarded students from the occurrence of similar question and helped them to answer it quickly and correctly. By using convergent questions, it seemed that the teacher expected the student to answer quickly and correctly without any deep thinking if there was a similar question. ‘Without any deep thinking’ here meant that the students did not need to think too much considerations such as they had to know the definition of a particular thing, how familiar the students with the subject discussed, and to be afraid if they made a mistake. And the idea that student needed to answer quickly without any deep thinking was supported by Richard and Lockhart (1994) idea which was about convergent questions.

For the last, I found that type of questions that frequently used by the teacher in class, was Display Questions. It would be discussed further in the discussion below.

## **5. Display Questions**

According to Tsui (1995), even though the teacher had known the exact answer beforehand, the teacher uttered display question in order to stimulate the students to display their knowledge toward a particular subject. I could sum up that this kind of questions referred to situation where the teacher had already known the answer of his or her questions and still used it in order to check students’ understanding and stimulate them toward a particular subject that discussed at the day. In other words, the teacher would use display questions when he wanted to make sure whether his student followed his explanation and understood the material or not beside of his awareness about the answer of the question. The teacher also wanted his students to



display their knowledge. In the observation 2, we could see the interaction and the use of display question between the teacher and the student.

Observation 2 (March 7, 2013):

T: Budi, what is this?

S: mm...this is a door.

T: What is that?

S: Window.

As the example of observation 2, the teacher had already known about what the names of the pictures. While pointing the picture, he asked his student the name of the picture although the teacher himself had known the name. Nevertheless, the teacher still used display questions to check his student whether the student followed and understood the explanation and the material of the day or not. In addition, the interview's result gave additional information about the use of display question. In interview, the teacher also mentioned that the use of display question was to stimulate the students to do the assignment by themselves because the student could not give guidance all the times. The following extract showed the reason about it.

Extract 1.5: Teacher's statement about display question during interview on April 24, 2013.

**“Display question is used because the student cannot be given guidance all the times.** When students do the question, they have to do it by themselves. So, it needs a time when students have to be independent, not only rely on the guidance from teacher although it just a sign through words or options such as symbols.”

Extract 1.5 showed that the teacher would use display question in order to check students' understanding about the following material by minimizing the guidance. The idea from Tsui mentioned that the teacher had already known the exact answer before, and because of the teacher's awareness toward the answer, if the teacher uttered display question, it would

stimulate the student to explore their understanding toward the material. As the result, the student will be independent, not only depend on their teacher, and it will minimize the domination of the teacher in class. It was as well as the idea proposed by Gabriellaros. Gabriellaros (2004) added that EFL teachers asked questions for the following reasons; the need to minimize teachers' talking time so that teachers did not dominate the lesson, the importance of involving learners and eliciting and generating as much learner thinking and talked as possible, and the need for time- effectiveness which is the complaint of teachers that there never seems to be enough time to deal with the set syllabus.

Finally, by classroom observation, I found five types of questions that were recall questions, probing questions, closed questions, convergent questions, and display questions used in teaching English at Bina Putra. However, this study not only to find out types of questions used in class, but also to know the students' responses toward those five types of questions.

## **B. Students' responses**

The result of observing students' responses toward types of questions used in class and also interviewing the teacher showed that students of Bina Putra displayed two responses toward those types of questions; positive response and no response.

### **1. POSITIVE RESPONSE**

A positive response meant that student showed a positive performance when the teacher applied some types of questions to them. Those positive performances were:

- a) Quick answer

From the classroom observation, I found that if the student were able to follow and understand the material well, they would be able to answer some teacher's questions quickly and correctly. The example below would show the positive response from the student.

Observation 1 (March 4, 2013):

T: What is this Alfin?

S: Rumah sakit. (Hospital)

T: Rumah sakit in English? (*What is "rumah sakit" in English?*)

S: Hospital.

T: Nah, kalau Alfin mau ke rumah sakit, Alfin must...? (*If Alfin wants to go to the hospital, Alfin must...?*)

S: Turn right.

T: Coba dilihat lagi map-nya fin? Turn right or turn left? (*Take a look at the map again! Turn right or turn left?*)

S: Ehh...turn left.

From the example, it explained that the students were able to answer and follow the instruction from the teacher quickly. Although there was a mistake, but the students were able to revise it directly when the teacher implied another types of question in order to give a correction.

Not only able to answer quickly, another positive response from students was motivation to answer every question from the teacher.

b) Motivation to answer

Another positive attitude that occurred was students were motivated to answer the questions from the teacher without any consideration of making a mistake. 'Motivated to answer' here meant that if the students forgot about the material that asked by the teacher or the students could not follow the material, the students wanted to re-open their books or notes consciously in order to answer the teacher's questions. This attitude showed that although they confused, but they wanted to answer the questions. The following observation 3 figured the conversation between student and teacher.

Observation 3 (April 9, 2013):

T: Tadi kalau mau tanya “*sedang makan apa*”, gimana? (How will you say if you want to ask “*sedang makan apa?*”)

S: ...

T: Ayo dibaca pattern-nya tadi (Read the pattern again!)

S: What are you eating?

T: Nah, sekarang coba Jessica practice sama Ryan!

(Now, please Jessica practices with Ryan!)

S: (Jessica) What are you eating, Yan?

S: (Ryan) I am eating noodles

*\*... means students just silent because they forgot the pattern*

From the example of observation 3, it showed that students easily forgot about what had discussed before, but the students were motivated to answer the question by opening his/her book or note again. The students also did not feel doubtful if they made a mistake.

On the other hand, students also showed other responses that categorized as No Response.

## **2. NO RESPONSE**

In contrast, no response occurred because students did not show any worth action toward the questions which were given to them. Those responses were:

a) Silent

The result of the observation also showed that most of the student prefer to silent although they finally answered the teacher’s questions. It seemed that they did not want to give any response because they had the difficulty to sustain information in long period. Nevertheless, in observation 2 showed that student preferred to be silent because they had the problem with their memorizing.

Example of the observation 2 (March 7, 2013):

T: Bud, eleven is?

S: .....

T: Eleven itu berapa? (What is eleven?)

S: .....

T: (repeat the instruction)

S: Sebelas. (Eleven)

T: Berarti, the picture number eleven is? (So, picture number eleven is...?)

S: Chair.

T: Number five?

S: ...

T: Apa itu "five"? (What is five?)

S: ...

T: (Accounting fingers)

S: Oh...lima. (Oh...five)

As shown in the example of observation 2, mentally retarded students seemed have a difficulty in remembering new information. In a research done by Bray, Fletcher, and Turner (1997) as argued in Heward (2006) had found that students with mental retardation had trouble in retaining information in short-term memory. In other words, it seemed that a mentally retarded student had a problem in case of using the ability of their short memory to recall the information and it would be difficult for them to re-use the information from the short-memory. It needed a time if they wanted to do it. Merrill (1990) as cited in Heward (2006) reported, "Students with mental retardation require more time than their nondisabled peers to automatically recall information..." Therefore, in their 'stoppage time' when they tried to recall the information, the students tended to be silent at a times.

In the interview section, the teacher found that the preference of the students to be silent was also depended on the students' emotion and environment. Extract 1.6 figured the reason of preference to be silent during the interview section with the teacher.

Extract 1.6: Teacher's statement about silent student during interview on April 24, 2013

"They come from different background of family. It is as I said before, students who are happy from home, they will happy at school but if they are a silent kid since at home, so they will be a silent at school."

In extract 1.6 showed that students' condition at home would influence the students' motivation in performing learning process at school. It seemed that "silent" was not only because the student did not understand the material or they had the problem with memorizing, but also the environment of the student. It was in line with Marcellino (2008) stated that the lack of motivation experienced by the student also could be caused by the environment where they live.

b) Repeating the utterance

Repeating the utterance even the question from teacher was also occurred when the teacher tried to imply questioning to the student. The following example was the conversation that showed whether the student repeated the utterance from teacher.

Example from observation 2 (March 7, 2013):

T: Is this a pencil?

S: Is this a pencil?

T: No. Is this a pencil?

S: No. Is this a pencil?

T: No? No, this is not a pencil

S: No, is this a pencil

As shown in the observation 2, I could notice that the student prefer to repeat the utterance that had said by the teacher. It might be because the student lack of concentration to the lesson. When the observation was done, the student was not focus on the lesson. His focus was on me or other friends. He looked at my writing, looked at the camera, and even talked to other friends from another class. It seemed that the student's attention span was distracted easily. So, when the teacher tried to guide him through particular types of questions, he just repeated the question or the instruction than answer the question. According to the result in this observation,



it was in line with what Zeaman and House (1979), cited in Heward (2006) said that individuals with mental retardation often had difficulty in sustaining attention to learning tasks. Therefore, it seemed that mentally retarded children suffered from short attention span problems and easily shifted their attention to others. It might be the reason of the student that preferred to repeat the utterance from teacher.

In interview section, the teacher told me that SLB students had a short attention span, especially if there was a stranger. The extract 1.7 figured the statement from the teacher.

Extract 1.7: Teacher's statement about students' short attention span during interview on April 24, 2013

*"If there is a stranger come in to the school like 'mbok sayur' who offers her merchandise to the teacher, those students' concentration will be distracted easily. They are not focusing on the material again but move to the 'mbok sayur.'"*

From the extract 1.7, I could notice that SLB students had the weaknesses that were they had a short attention span and their concentration would distract easily. It might be concluded that the preference of students to repeat the utterance from teacher was because they had already lost of their attention in the lesson.

### **Conclusion**

This study would like to find out students' responses to the types of questions used in teaching English for mentally retarded students. After collecting data through classroom observation and interview, I found five types of questions that teacher frequently used in teaching English at Bina Putra; recall questions, probing questions, closed questions, convergent questions, and display questions. Based on the analysis, I concluded that the teacher's purposes of using those types of questions were: (1) he wanted to measure whether the student had already

known about the previous material or to check whether the students followed the material discussed on that day or not, (2) to stimulate students' curiosity toward the material and also help the students to response the question quickly and correctly, (3) and to check students' knowledge about a particular subject in form of a short answer or response as well.

This study also focused on students' responses toward those types of questions. As the result of data analysis, students showed two responses; positive and no responses. Positive responses were shown by the student by performing a positive attitude like they were able to answer the question quickly and motivated to answer although they often forgot or got confuse with the answer. In contrast, No responses indicated that students preferred to be silent and preferred to repeat the utterance from the teacher. According to the teacher in interview, those performances were influenced by the characteristic of mentally retarded students in learning and the motivation of the students. Mentally retarded students had the deficiency in case of weak memory and short attention span. On the other hand, motivation of the students at home and school, would give a big contribution of the success learning of the students.

As the suggestions, teacher should keep giving questions to students in order to build a critical thinking students although it may take long time. Nevertheless, the fact as the result of this study showed that they need it. As pedagogical implementation from the findings, it would be better if the teacher also use AVA such as pictures, songs, videos, puzzle, games, etc. beside of questioning in teaching English. Perhaps, teachers can create a warm atmosphere in the classroom by considering mentally retarded students' feelings, needs, and emotion. Gardner et al. (2004) mentioned that language learning in the classroom and in language clubs and activities helped increase 'knowledge, fluency and familiarity...with the language' (p. 3) and shaped attitudes to language learning and future use. As Gardner said, activities in class could help

students to increase knowledge and familiarity toward the language and able to shape an attitude to language learning.

For the last, there are three limitations of this study. First, this study was conducted in limited time. Further research can extend the limitation of time so the result of the study will be more valid. Second, this study involved a small number of participants, further research can extend the number of the participants to cover more issues about students' responses to the types of questions in teaching English for mentally retarded students. Third, this study focused on teaching context in Salatiga. I would like to suggest that there needs to be further research that looks at not only one special education and one type of SLB students in a certain area. Finally, I hoped that this study can encourage more studies to be conducted at other teaching contexts in which the need towards English is higher.

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Deri Nurcahyo,

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## **Appendix 1**

Interviewer: Deri Nurcahyo

Interviewee: Dhina Heri Kisworo (English teacher of Bina Putra School)

Date, time, duration: April 24, 2013 (10:36) (20 minutes)

Interview questions:

1. What types of questions do you use frequently in your class?
2. In what cases do you use those types of questions?
3. How is/are students' response(s) toward those questions?
4. Do those responds are influenced by the character of mentally retarded? Explain, please!

Result (translated from Bahasa Indonesia into English):

1. **What types of questions do you use frequently in your class? In what cases do you use those types of questions?**

*"It's like what you've observed so far, so there are many different abilities of 'SLB student' which are able to catch the question easily, need repetition, need guidance, even guide to read and write as well. So the question which is given has to be related to the material. And what type's questions used, purposively to know the ability of the student. For example, if there were materials that given before, so I would ask again in order to check whether they knew the term in English and also in Bahasa or not. **It will be the same with 'recall question.'** when I asked the student to follow me, to pronounce the name of picture in English, after finished I asked questions based on the material again in order to check their understanding. For example, 'apa ini', 'this is vegetable', or 'this is a carrot', 'this is potato', 'these are vegetables' and soon. Then, it will be developed based on the performance of the student whether they understand and ready to continue or not.*

***Then, there is probing question too.** It is the same with before. The purpose is to check student's ability that has ready or not, yet, need repeated or not, need to practice in front of class or not.*

***Besides, closed question is also used to help the student.** For example, the material is about color. Because sometime students feel doubt with their answer, so in order to make sure and stimulate them to answer quickly, they just need to choose options such as 'red or white?', 'right or wrong?', 'right or left?' it makes the student feel more confident with their answer. This type of question is used to help the student because 'SLB student' is really need guidance from others.*

***Next, it is about convergent question.** The expectation after the student able to catch the material given and there is a similar question occurs again, we hoped that students were able to answer correctly. For example, the material is about direction. I drew a map on whiteboard, then I asked the student how to go to the Bina Putra School and then they were able to answer correctly. Then I changed the question into how to go to the bus station. If the student were able to answer correctly, it meant they understand the material and it is enough for that day.*

***Display question is used because the student cannot give guidance all the times.** When students do the question, they have to do it by themselves. So it needs time when students have to be independent, not only rely on the guidance from teacher although it just a sign through words or options such as symbols. For example, students have to know what should be answered like turn right or turn left without we have to say 'habis ini belok sini ya' or 'habis ini belok sana ya' but just through the symbol is enough. According to the experience, through symbols or signs will help the student to be more independent if they able to answer it correctly. If one day they have to answer so many questions individually and teacher cannot help them, students will adapt with it.*

*Again, all questions that are given must be agreed with the student's ability. So there is student who learns quickly, able to receive the material and question from easy to difficult or give question that may be they never known before. All questions and activities are also purposively to guide the student based on their type. For students who are consider as type 'C', they have to help with the type question of recall because we cannot force the student, they should be adapted a bit and perhaps they will learn English with less of guidance or able to study by themselves with friends or at home. So all types (recall, probing, closed, convergent, display) are used to help students. When is it? It is based on the condition whether the student need it or student need the improvisation of the material, we directly give those questions that can stimulate them to think independent."*

## **2. How is/are students' response(s) toward those questions?**

*"There are many students who only silent. For student 'C' here, they really need guidance, there are many students, for example, from home feel happy and when in school they are asked, they able to answer quickly. But overall, there are many students who only silent, directly answer if they know the answer, also there is students who repeat the question from teacher, there is a student who forget the material and want to open their book, there is student who forget but just silent. Nevertheless, many students prefer to be silent, but they finally able to answer the question correctly, although they answer it in Bahasa Indonesia."*

## **3. Do those responds are influenced by the character of mentally retarded itself? Explain, please!**

*“Yes, they do. According to my experience in teaching for those students, they have obstacles in learning. First, it is about memorizing. They are able to memorize actually, but just in a short period. So they are really need some activities, questions, notes, their own hand out, songs, games, or videos that can stimulate them and help them to memorize in long period.*

*For example, if they did their assignment, and I left them to write on whiteboard, then when I asked them again, they forgot it. It is for student who has a short period of memorizing. Second, it is about easy to distract. When they are asked and answered, then I left them to write on whiteboard, they also able to follow but if I wanted to review the material, there are many students who go out from the class. Then, if there is a stranger come in to the school like ‘mbok sayur’ who offers her merchandise to the teacher, those students’ concentration will be distracted easily. They are not focusing on the material again but move to the ‘mbok sayur.’ Then, if the class is consisting of one student, it is like a private. But if 1 class is consisting of 4 students like this, it has obstacles as well. They come from different background of family. It is as I said before, students who are happy from home, they will happy at school but if they are a silent kid since at home, so they will be a silent at school.*

**4. Is there anything else you would like to add Sir?**

*“Yes, special for teaching for ‘SLB’ has to be made different from others. From the case of time, case of how to make the material. It is like what you have seen, for the notes, for good activities, for the student, the same with what I said before that the purpose (English course) are firstly students know that there is another language, that is English. It is officially stamped in guidance book. Secondly, at least students are able to understand although just from vocabulary, symbols, or kind of signs that usually found in public place that used English such as symbol in the toilet, symbol or written sign in the airport, or other public place. At least students are able to respond whether in a short sentence or long sentence and able to respond when they are asked in a simple conversation. So all questions whether in teaching learning process in class or daily life that used English, they are able to understand a simple thing like short sentence, a simple vocabulary, stuff that usually meet, they are able to show it and speak in simple English.*

*All things that used, besides, the ability of each student that is different, if we see that there is student who is very slow even writing is also very slow, so the material must be mutual. And the duration of the course (academic course) in ‘SLB’ is just 10 hours from 30(30 sekian) hours and the rest is for skill course. If there are many obstacles in case of time, material, the material that maybe too easy, but back to the purpose that at least students are able to understand simple English. It can be started from four skills that have to be taught, but more in conversation. It will be the simplest way, because we know writing is needs long time, there is student who cannot read well even spelling in Bahasa Indonesia, so at least we hoped that English can be used in simple speaking of English repeatedly.”*


## Appendix 2

“What is (are) students’ response(s) to the types of questions frequently used in teaching English for mentally retarded students?”

### Observation’s Checklist 1

Name of teacher: Dhina Heri K Date/time: March 4, 2013				
Class: 12 C (2 students: Alfin/19, Galih/19) Duration: 2x 30 minutes				
Topic: Direction (2nd meeting) Observer: Deri				
Time	Types of questions	Example	Notes	Students’ responses
11.00- 11.20	-	-	-	-
11.21	Recall	Alfin, masih ingat kemarin belajar tentang apa? Coba buka catatannya!	Teacher showed symbols of direction. (as review)	mmmm...(forgot) Open his notes and answer.
11.23	Probing	Alfin, kalau mau tanya arah ke halte bus, bagaimana bilangannya?	Teacher checked student’s understanding about last material.	Student was able to answer in English although there was a mistake.
11.23	Probing	Kalau mau bilang, “terletak di Jalan Biru?”	Teacher tried to explore student’s understanding.	Student was able to answer in English.
11.24	Recall	“Straight” itu artinya apa kemarin?	Teacher recall last meeting’s material.	Student answered correctly. (lurus)
11.24	Recall	Kalau “belok”?	Teacher recall last meeting’s material.	Student answered correctly. (turn)
11.24	Recall	Turn right?	Teacher recall last meeting’s material.	Student answered correctly. (belok kanan)
11.25	Display	Fin, masih ingat simbol-simbol direction itu apa	Teacher pointed symbols that had drawn on the	Student mentioned the name of the directions.

		saja?	whiteboard.	
11.27	Recall	What is “Crossroad” Fin?	Asking to recall material	Student answered “perempatan”
11.28	Recall	Kalau “T-Junction”?	Asking to recall material	Student answered “pertigaan”
11.29	Recall	Kalau “After the zoo” , artinya apa Fin?	Teacher checked student’s understanding. (as review)	Student answered “setelah kebun binatang”
11.29	Display	Atau?	Checking	Aswered “sebelah kebun binatang”
11.30	Display	Alfin mau ke Bina Putra, berarti Alfin go to...?	Teacher drew a map and asked student to continue his statement.	Student answered Arjuna Street
11.30	Closed	And then... turn right? Or turn left? Or lurus?	Teacher checked student’s understanding	Student answered “go straight”
11.30	Closed	Lalu, ini “Crossroad” atau “T-Junction”	Teacher pointed at the map.	Student answered “T- Junction”
11.31	Recall	Really..apa tadi “Crossroad” artinya?	Teacher recalled material	Answered “perempatan” Then, he corrected his answer
11.31	Closed	Alfin, kalau lihat peta, Bina Putra ada disebelah kiri atau kanan	Teacher checked student’s understanding	Answered “kanan”
11.31	Display	Really?	There was a mistake	Answered “mmm... kiri!”
11.32	Display	“On the left side” Artinya sebelah..?	Teacher helped using his left hand.	Answered “kiri”
11.32	Display	“On the right side” Artinya sebelah..?	Teacher helped using his right hand.	Answered “kanan”

11.32	Recall	Go straight?	Teacher checked (as review)	Answered "lurus terus"
11.32	Display	Berjalanlah...?	Teacher corrected	Answered "berjalanlah lurus"
11.33	Display	What symbol is this, Alfin?	Teacher drew symbol of hospital	Answered "rumah sakit"
11.33- 11.34	Convergent	What is "rumah sakit" in English?	Teacher checked	Answerd "Hospital"
11.34	Display	Nah, kalau Alfin mau ke hospital, Alfin must....?	Teacher asked student to continue.	Answered "turn right"
11.35	Closed	Turn right or left?	Teacher corrected	Answered "eh..turn left"
11.35	Display	And, the hospital is on...?	Teacher checked	Answered "on the right side"
11.35	Closed	Nah, kalau ke sekolah, belok tidak Fin?	Teacher checked	Answered "iya"
11.35	Closed	Belok kanan atau kiri?	Teacher checked	Answered "kanan"
11.36	Display	Berarti, turn...?	Teacher checked	Answered "turn right"
11.37	Display	In the....?	Teacher pointed Crossroad symbol	Answered "in the crossroad"
11.48	Display	What symbol is this. Alfin?	Teacher drew symbol 	Student silent and then answered "turn around"
11.49	Recall	Along, then, tadi artinya apa Fin?	Teacher recalled/reviewed material	Answered " 'sepanjang' terus then itu apa ya? Oh..kemudian!"
11.50	Recall	Crossroad?	Teacher reviewed and checked	Answered "perempatan"
11.50	Recall	Jadi, perempatan in English	Teacher reviewed and	(silent)



		is...?	checked	Crossroad!
11.51	Recall	On the right side?	Teacher reviewed and checked	Answered “sebelah kanan”
11.59	Recall	What sign is this Alfin?	Teacher pointed symbol “turn right” (as review)	Answered “turn right”
12.00	Recall	What is this?	Teacher drew symbol T-Junction (as review)	Answered “mm...T-Junction”

