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Prophetic Communication Styles in Teaching

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Abstract

Islam sees the role of teachers not only to teach, yet they also act as change agents in society. They serve the society as educator, counsellor, trainer, guide and consultant. They are obliged to ensure the academic excellence as well as outstanding personal traits of a student. This job requires a teacher to apply the best communication styles in teaching and there is no doubt that the styles implemented by the Prophet PBUH is the best to be applied. This paper has conceptually discussed on the significance of prophetic communication styles in teaching as highlighted by Halim Tamuri (2007), al-Nahlawi (1979) & Razali Saaran (2010) which consist of seven prophetic communication styles in terms of citing, delivering, inserting advice, making analogy, inserting humor, using non-verbal communication and calling names.

Keywords: Prophetic, communication, teaching

1. INTRODUCTION

Ibn Khaldun (1993) stated that the greatness of Islamic civilization 1432 years ago in dealing with ignorance among the pagan Arabs, saw the greatness of the Prophet Muhammad formed Muslims from among the companions. At that time, the Prophet p.b.u.h. was able to lead human beings from darkness with Allah All the Mighty acquiescence, producing a generation that has knowledge, pious and righteous to the recognition of Allah All the Mighty as *Khair al-Ummah*. This coincides with what Allah All the Mighty states in the Chapter 3:110, which means “*You are the best nation raised up for mankind. Encourage good behaviour and prevent evil conduct and believes in Allah All the Mighty*”.

The Prophet p.b.u.h. not only acts as a messenger, but also an educator to his family members and his companions. It is as stated by the companions of the Messenger called al-Sulami in the hadith narrated by Muslim, hadith number 1277 has said which means “*And by my father and mother, I have not seen the best teacher, before and after him (the Prophet). And as Allah All the Mighty be my witness, the Prophet p.b.u.h. never scolded me, hit me and taunt me*”.

The Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h. is the greatest teacher in the history of Islam. The effect of his teaching and preaching prove to have develop a conscious generation. Thus, since the beginning of Islam until the Day of Resurrection, Rasulullah p.b.u.h. will be the main example in the world of education (Abd al-Fattah Abd Ghuddah, 2001; Razali Saaran, 2010; dan Said Hawa, 1990). In education, the Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h. not only act as a presenter of knowledge known as *mu'allim*, the Prophet p.b.u.h. even serves as a *role model* that educates (*tarbiyyah*) human soul in general and pagan Arabs in particular at that time (‘Abd al-Fattah Abu Ghuddah, 2001; Abdullah Nasih ‘Alwan, 1968; al-Hafiz al-Suwaid, 1988). This is consistent with what Allah All the Mighty stated in the chapter 33: 21, which means “*Indeed, there is for you in the Prophet p.b.u.h. is an excellent example, for anyone who looks forward to (the pleasure of) Allah All the Mighty and (reward) in the Hereafter, and puts the praises of Allah All the Mighty much (in good and bad times)*”.

At the same time the Prophet p.b.u.h. himself confessed that he was sent by Allah All the Mighty as an educator and mentor who facilitate others. It is as narrated by Muslim (1984, hadith number 1478) which means “*Indeed Allah All the Mighty has not sent thee (Muhammad) to trouble my people, nor to burden me, but I have been sent as an educator who facilitates*”.

2. THE ROLE OF TEACHER

Teachers are seen as the earliest agents of change in society that serves to teach, educate and guide students through curriculum based on Islamic Education that has been compiled with the concept of 5 *mim* (Abd Ghafar

Mahmud, 2011). This concept has been made popular by Ab. Halim Tamuri (2006), identifying five roles of teachers, namely *mudarris*, *mu'addib*, *murabbi*, *murshid* dan *mu'allim*. Ab. Halim Tamuri (2006) has explained the role of teachers as *murabbi*:

The role of the teacher in the classroom is to maintain, enlarge, love, educate, teach, nurture and preserve the nature of the students and to develop their talents and abilities that exist within them. Teachers serve in realizing students' formation and development from the JERI aspects in order to produce students with strong moral righteousness in the eyes of Islam.

However, Hasni Mohammed (2011) views teacher as a whole of *murabbi*. The role as a *murabbi* should act as teacher (*muallim*), guide (*mu'adib*), trainers (*mudarrif*), advisor or counselor (*muwajjih*) and consultant (*murshid*). Sidek Baba (2006) also details the role of the teacher as *murabbi* to seven roles namely arm themselves with knowledge, skills and specialization; be role models to others; deliver curriculum with appropriate methodology; instilling good values to students; creative and proactive in dealing with teaching and learning (T&L); understand the current challenges and bureaucratic environment; and creating a conducive atmosphere during the process of teaching and learning.

Thus, the task of of teacher as general is not simply to teach or educate but also to ensure students have the academic excellence and personal excellence (Abd Ghafar Mahmud, 2011). This is to ensure that when they act in the middle of a situation, changes in the surrounding should not affect negatively on the student's life. Education is also a missionary field, led the teacher to have quality teachers that have *murabbi* feel more responsibility to the students and have integrity in performing their duties.

3. PROPHETIC COMMUNICATION STYLES IN TEACHING

Prophet p.b.u.h. as an educator also needs to implement communication skills in preaching and teaching to his companions r.a. This communication styles of the Messenger p.b.u.h. should be appreciated by each individual who intent to guide others to become useful human in this world and the afterlife (Noornajihan Jaafar & Ab. Halim Tamuri, 2012). The Prophetic communication styles shown in Figure 1, namely to cite the general before the specific, deliver lessons clearly, smoothly and completely, insert a word of advice, make the analogy and comparison, inserting humour, use the non-verbal communication and call others with respectable calling (Abd al-Fattah Abu Ghuddah, 2001; Abdullah Nasih Alwan, 1968; al-Hammadi, 1987; al-Hafiz al-Suwaid, 1988; Kamarul Azmi Jasmi & Ab. Halim Tamuri, 2007; al-Nahlawi, 1979; Razali Saaran, 2010).

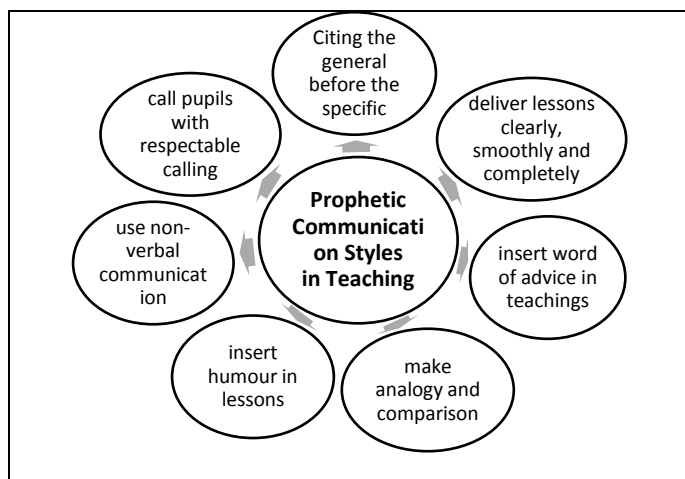


Figure 1 Prophetic Communication Styles in Teaching

3.1 CITING THE GENERAL BEFORE THE SPECIFIC

Citing the general before the specific is known as the deductive style. Abdul Rahman Abdullah (2005) explains that this method is more widely used in the classical or traditional knowledge compared with modern knowledge which use more inductive style. Apart from providing an initial overview of the content of the lesson, this style also helps the mind to process the data to be received so that student can understand and remember what is taught (Razali Saaran, 2010). Not only that, but this style is able to arouse the interest and curiosity of students to what will be taught (Abd al-Fattah Abu Ghuddah, 2001).

The Prophet p.b.u.h. also uses this method during his preachings and teachings to his companions. Hadith narrated by al-Hakim (*al-Mustadrak*, 1990, hadith number 7846) that the Prophet p.b.u.h. states which means *“Grab five things before five things to come: our youthful time before our old days, our healthy moment before our sick days, our rich time before our poor days, our leisure time before our busy schedules and our existence before our death”*. Thus, teacher should start teaching by relating the outline of what will be taught, and later to teach in sequence the content according to the outline given to students earlier in the session of T&L.

3.2 DELIVERING LESSONS CLEARLY, SMOOTHLY AND COMPLETELY

Teachers need to deliver instructional content clearly and smoothly so that students can easily accept and understand the lesson. It is as described by Oмарdin Ashaari (1999) that a clear, real, smooth, attractive and motivating speech can ensure successful teaching in schools. Saidatina Aisyah r.a. describes the style of the Prophet’s speech, as narrated by al-Bukhari (1987, hadith number 3374) which means *“Indeed when the Prophet utters his speech if anyone were to count his words certainly they would be able to do so”*.

In other hadith, as narrated by al-Bukhari (1987, number hadith 3375) Saidatina Aishah r.a. illustrates that the Prophet p.b.u.h. speaks clearly, visibly and slowly, *“Indeed the Prophet p.b.u.h. does not haste and rash in speech”*. Therefore, teachers must deliver lessons in a clear and smooth speech by ensuring that certain things such as maximizing voice to be heard, expressing words with an acceptable rate of speed that would enable students to understand better, use a simple yet compact word and easy to understand its meaning.

3.3 INSERTING ADVICE IN LESSONS

Teacher must wisely used the chance and opportunities. As a creative teacher, the teacher is not just using the examples found in textbooks (Razali Saaran, 2010). If students do things, whether good or bad, teacher can continue to associate it with the content of lessons (al-Hafiz al-Suwaid, 1988). However, al-Hammadi (1987) states that the association should not offend students. Therefore, teacher must be smart and wise in inserting a word of advice when teaching.

Prophet p.b.u.h. is a man who is not far from the words of advice. On many occasions he will use any opportunity to give advice to his companions r.a. (Abd al-Fattah Abu Ghuddah, 2001). For example hadith narrated by al-Bukhari (1987, hadith number 4570) that when any of his companions were sitting with the Prophet p.b.u.h. see the full moon, thus he would insert advice saying which means *“Indeed you shall see God soon as you see this moon. You’re not going to crowd to see the Almighty if you are able to perform the prayer before the rising of the sun and before it sets, then perform the prayers”*.

Hence, teacher as *murabbi* must often insert words of advice in speech and interaction with the students. This is so that students see the teacher as a person with positive characteristics and is always close to God. However, Jalal (1994) states that teacher needs not advise students too often because it would lead into boredom and the advice must use style that allows students not to feel trapped and hurt.

3.4 MAKING ANALOGY AND COMPARISONS IN LESSONS

To attract students to listen to the content of the lesson presented, teacher must be wise at using language. Attractive style can attract attention of students (Muhammad Uthman Najat, 2008). The use of simile and comparison of communication is one of the techniques to beautify the style of delivery the content of knowledge (Abdullah Nasih Alwan, 1968). Besides beautifying style, according to Rahman Saari (1993) use of parables and teaching comparative would be able to provide a better understanding than just using plain text. In addition, the use of comparison according to Saaran Razali (2010) provides an opportunity for students to make judgments

between good and bad motivating and creating positive competitiveness among students.

Prophet p.b.u.h. using comparisons in distinguishing between a charity and a beggar, as narrated by Ahmad (n.y., hadith number 4474) that the Messenger of Allah said which means *“The hand above is better than the one below”*. Thus, teacher as *murabbi* must be wise in using parables and comparisons, especially those described in the Quran and the Hadith of the Messenger p.b.u.h. This is to attract students and ease their understanding about the content of knowledge that is delivered.

3.5 INSERTING HUMOUR IN LESSONS

Sense of humor plays a role in the revival of fun learning situation. Apart from avoiding boredom, al-Hafiz al-Suwaid (1988) believes that this element is capable of attracting students to continually give attention to what is being taught.

Prophet p.b.u.h. sometimes joke around with his companions r.a.on only real thing. In one incident as narrated by al-Tarmizi (1999, hadith number 1991) that a man seeking from the prophet p.b.u.h. to ride a camel and the Prophet p.b.u.h. said which means *“I will take you up on the child camel, thus the man said: O Messenger of Allah what can I do with this child camel? Then He p.b.u.h. said: Is not that great camel also derived from the mother camel”*.

While humour helps to attract and direct the students, Saaran Razali (2010) pointed out that the teacher must recognize the character of the students first. This is because there are some who are not fond of teacher joking with them. The act might offend pupils. In addition, teacher should avoid joking about sensitive matters such as religion, ethnicity, race, physical traits, capability and other individuals who could conceivably cause uneasy feelings among students (al-Syas, 2006). This is made more clear by Basri bin Ibrahim (2009) that the teacher should avoid humour in the form of sarcasm, insults or anything that annoys students as this will leave revenge and hatred among students towards teachers. In order to ensure that the humour in teaching would guarantee to attract the interest and attention of students, teacher must be aware of the background of the targets, adapts to the situation and ensure that the humour is related to the fact that is taught.

3.6 USE NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

It is well known that the communication occurs in two forms, verbal communication and non-verbal communication. non-verbal communication refers to communication that is not of message communication. It could possibly be a communication to support, assert, deny and contradict communication messages (Abdullah Hassan & Ainon Mohd, 2006). Some examples of non-verbal communication is the intonation of voice, body

posture, head nod and shake of a head, hand gestures, eye contact, facial, touch and distance (Hidea, 1972).

In educating the companions r.a., the Prophet p.b.u.h. combine verbal and non-verbal communication that simultaneously provide information while using hand signals to reinforce the message. This is as reported by al-Bukhari (1987, hadith number 4498) that the Prophet said which means *“Me and those who defend the orphan are like this. While he is showing two fingers that is the index finger and middle finger, and distancing between them”*.

Body language is not only important to provide insight to students, but also demonstrates the seriousness of teacher in imparting knowledge to the students as well as providing suggestion that reminds students of what is taught (al-Nahlawi, 1979; Azizi Abdul Rahman, 2007). Thus, teacher will need to use non-verbal communication or body language to communication with students so it does not seem stiff and boring.

3.7 CALLING STUDENTS WITH RESPECTABLE NAMES

According to Piaget theory of development, during formal operational stage which is at around the age of 12 and over, individuals become quite sensitive to the emotional self (Schultz & Schultz, 2000). Therefore, teachers should be careful of their words so as not to offend students. Teachers should use favourable names when calling the students. It is unbecoming of a teacher calling a student with a bad nick name that is disliked or disapproved by them (Mohd Azam Mahat, 2009).

It is also mentioned in the Qur'an Chapter 17: 53 which means *“Say (O Muhammad) unto My slaves (who believe), so they utter proper words (to those who oppose the truth); the devil is always among them (the believers and those against); Indeed Satan is an open enemy to man”*.

Prophet p.b.u.h. when calling a child, will use a call like *ya ghulam*, *ya akhi*, *ya ibni* and other friendly call. In a hadith narrated by al-Bukhari (1987, hadith number 2291) Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h. called his companion who is a minor as Abu `Umayr during which he grieved for his dead birds. Meaning: *“O Abu `Umayr, what did the little bird do”*. The call *kunniyah (abu fulan)* in Arabic is used only for those who already have children. However, the Prophet p.b.u.h. calls a friend with a call *Aba `Umayr* showing fondness.

Sayyid Muhammad Nuh (1987) has outlined a number of things teacher need to do when calling the students, namely: call students by their preferred names, do not call them with embarrassing names, calling students with a soft voice and not yelling to the students. Therefore, teacher must be careful when calling students and using preferred title as it will bridge the gap between students and teachers.

4. CONCLUSION

Addressing the styles mentioned above, this paper also reveals that how the Prophet strives to provide a rather holistic and dynamic understanding when communicating with others; suggesting that he aims for communication competence. Communication competence, in this context, refers to the ways of interacting appropriately and effectively in a given situation. The Prophet has illustrated at least seven styles on how to achieve communication competence. Should these prophetic communication styles be applied comprehensively, they will ensure the students' excellence not only in academics, yet in various aspects of life.

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