TEACHER QUESTIONS IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM

Delvidus Nong Bapan [3]

Abstract

This study described the types of questions, examined the frequency of the questions types, found out the reasons teacher addresses the high frequency questions as well as what the learners responded to those questions in seventh graders of Cita Hati Junior High School. The results demonstrated that both display and referential questions were asked by the teacher in his teaching. The teacher's reasons of asking referential questions were to dig more information and build interaction with the students. Both referential and display questions could produce students' long verbal form responses. Furthermore, the students could also produce not only longer but also more complex responses toward referential questions. By asking referential questions, his teaching was more alive since his students were in high English proficiency. Above all, it shows that the teacher question types were not only used to acquire the form of students' responses but also to achieve the teacher's purposes of asking questions

Keywords: *teacher question, display questions, referential questions*

Introduction

Questioning is a major factor leading to teaching-learning in both content classes devoted to teaching science, math, and language classes (Gall, 1986; Nunan, 1991). In the latter one, especially in EFL environments, the classroom is generally the only setting in which learners have regular exposure to the target language (Brock, 1986); therefore, what is made available to the learners in terms of input and interaction is of crucial importance. It shows that questioning plays an important role in language acquisition, because, as Ellis (1994) claims, language learners mostly have the opportunity to participate when they are asked a question. Apart from its contribution to second language learning, questioning and questions that teachers ask in classroom settings also have pedagogical benefits, like stimulating and maintaining learners' interest, encouraging learners to think and focus on the content, enabling teachers to check understanding, elicit, and clarify (Richards & Lockhart, 1998).

However, some Indonesian learners are anxious about either asking questions or being asked. They attempt to avoid eye contact when teachers are either going to inquire them questions or provoke them to

---

[3] Delvidus Nong Bapan *adalah* Guru Bahasa Inggris di Sekolah Kristen Cita Hati Surabaya.

pose questions. Their anxieties may be caused by their lack of English speaking skill or the lack of understanding the questions. Young (1990:539) in Occhipinti (2009:6) demonstrates that speaking in the foreign language is often the most anxiety-producing experience for the learners. It demonstrates that learners are anxious to speak in a language classroom.

The present study investigated various types of questions were posed by teachers in the classroom activities with different purposes.

Method

Descriptive-case study was employed in this study to identify types of teacher questions raised by the teachers, to tally the frequency of different types of teacher questions asked, to find out the teacher's reasons of addressing the most frequently question in the EFL classroom, and to find out what the learners respond to the most frequently question addressed.

The present study was conducted in *Cita Hati Christian School-West Campus, Surabaya* by focusing on seventh grade teacher and students. The participants were the teacher of the seventh grade who taught English as foreign language and the twenty five students aged around 13-14 years old respectively. The teacher has been teaching English for more than five years.

The major instrument of the study was the researcher himself. The researcher was not the teacher; he was the observer of the study. The tools employed to help the researcher collecting the data were audio-recorder, and teacher observation sheet as well as the interview guideline.

The recorded data were transcribed to get analyzed by the researcher through some steps of analysis. The researcher, at first, read the transcripts to obtain overall picture of the teacher questions. The researcher, then, reread the transcripts by marking the questions contained in the teacher talk with different underlines to differ the questions addressed in some teaching stages. The researcher did the next reading to start categorizing different types of teacher questions. The researcher, then, did another reading to confirm that all questions existed in the record of teacher talk has been categorized all. After doing the analysis of the data, the researcher triangulated the result of each research questions to check and establish the validity of the present study.

Findings
The Types and the Frequency of the Teacher Questions

The following tables illustrate the finding results on the types and the frequency of the teacher questions. The findings are illustrated as follows:

Table 1
Teacher Questions in the First Meeting

No.	Types of Teacher's Questions	1st Meeting	
		Frequency	Percentage
1	Display questions	16	59.3%
2	Referential questions	11	40.7%
	Total	27	100%

The table above showed that display questions asked by the teacher in the first meeting was 59.3% (16 questions) which was more frequent than the referential questions 40.7% (11 questions). Display questions appeared more frequently in accordance with the teaching materials that presented by the teacher than referential question. The display questions occurred since the focus of the teacher was the form or meaning of language structures and items.

The following question and answer exchange is the display question illustration:

Question-answer exchange 1 (display question)
T   : Any one of you knows when you use *have* & *has*?
S#15 : We use *have* for *I, you, they, we, two people* or *several things*, *has* for *she, he, it, a person,* or *singular noun,* Mr.

In the question-answer exchanges above, the teacher asked the students to mention when to use *have* and *has* in the *present perfect tense* in which he has truly known the answer. Since the teacher knows the answer of the question, the question is categorized as display question.

On the other hand, referential questions are demonstrated in the following question-answer exchanges. Referential questions were asked by the teacher during the teaching and learning process. Those questions appeared 11 times out of 27 (44.7%).

The illustration of referential question is demonstrated in the following question-answer exchange.

Question-answer exchanges 7 (referential question)
T   : How about the others? Do you have any ideas?
S#13 : It tells about something that happened in the past until now

The question-answer exchanges above showed that the teacher asked question that require the students to give opinions or explanation. Thus, the question is categorized as referential question since it requires opinions from the students.

Table 2
The Types and the Frequency of the Teacher Questions
in the Second Meeting

No	Types of Teacher questions	2nd Meeting	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Display questions	10	41.7%
2.	Referential questions	14	58.3%
Total number		24	100%

Different from the first session, the table above showed that the distribution of display questions during the teaching and learning process in the second session were less asked 41.7% (10 questions out of 24) than referential questions 58.3% (14 questions out of 24). Regarding the analysis of the transcript and the observation found in collecting the data, the teacher employed more real life questions to drill the students about the materials that he has taught. The uses of display questions, therefore, were less addressed than referential question in the second session.

One of the display questions employed in the second session is illustrated in the following question-answer exchanges.

Question-answer exchanges 1 (display question)
T   : Ok. Today we will continue our last discussion, I hope all of you still remember and understand what we discussed last week. Who still remember our last discussion?
Ss#2   : Present perfect tense, Mr.

The illustration of the question spoken by the teacher in the question-answer exchanges above showed that the teacher asked the question to elicit students' prior knowledge. Since the question is employed to elicit students' prior knowledge, the question above, then, is categorized as display question.

As it is seen in table 2, referential questions were more employed by the teacher in the second session than the display questions. The following question-answer exchange is the one of the referential questions illustration asked by the teacher during his teaching and learning process.

Question-answer exchanges 5 (referential question)
T   : very good. How about others?
S#3   : My daddy has gone to Australia twice.

The question used by the teacher in his teaching in the second session as it is seen in the question-answer exchange above, the teacher attempted to elicit other students' opinion after giving feedback to previous student. Since this question is employed to elicit others' opinion, it is called referential question.

Table 3
The Types and the Frequency of the Teacher Questions
in the Third Meeting

No	Types of Teacher questions	3rd Meeting	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Display questions	4	19 %
2.	Referential questions	17	81 %
	Total number	21	100 %

Similar to the second session, the result of the study in the third session showed that display questions were less asked by the teacher 19 % (4 questions out of 21) than referential questions 81 % (17 questions out of 21). The result of the study can be seen in table 3 the third meeting. Through the observation, it seemed that display questions were less raised by the teacher than referential questions since the teacher asked more questions to elicit students' opinions than just to display knowledge.

One of display questions employed by the teacher in the third session of the teaching and learning process is illustrated in the following question-answer exchanges:

Question-answer exchanges 1 (display question)
T   : Ok. You are right. What is the different from using the to *a or an*?
S#19 : It is for specific things

The illustration demonstrated that the teacher first gave feedback to the previous student's response, then asked question to check the students' understanding of the materials. He actually knew the answer of the question. Therefore, this question is categorized as display question since the teacher's focus is on the language structure.

Referential questions that were more employed than display questions will be illustrated in the following question-answer exchanges. As it is stated that referential questions are the questions used to seek information, and elicit opinions from the students.

The following question-answer exchange is another illustration of referential question used by the teacher in the third session of his teaching and learning process.

Question-answer exchanges 8 (referential question)
T   : Good. any other ideas?
S#16 : Mr. A*n* is not for words start with vocal letters, but start with vocal sounds.

The teacher gave feedback to the student's previous answer, and then he asked others' opinions related to the explanation of previous question.

Since the teacher raised the question to elicit others' opinions and more explanation, the question, thus, is categorized as referential question.

The findings in three meetings demonstrate that the teacher addressed both display and referential questions in his teaching and learning. However, it shows that referential questions were more frequently asked by the teacher than display questions. In addition, it had the highest percentage in two sessions out of three.

The Teacher's Reasons for Asking High-Frequency Questions

The findings demonstrate that the reasons of the teacher asking different types of questions in his teaching and learning process are generally to help either teaching or learning more alive. It shows that the teacher' purposes of asking different types of questions were generally to check the students' prior knowledge, measure their understanding, and communicate with them. He, moreover, asked questions to elicit students' opinions, dig more information about something, and involve them to actively participate in the classroom interaction.

Since the students were in high level for English lesson, he used more referential questions than display questions to elicit their ideas of topics that he taught. The result of the interview was similar to the result of the observation. The teacher addressed more referential questions. When the teacher was further asked why he asked more referential questions, he raised more referential questions to dig more information and build interaction with the students. He stated that the students could also produce longer and more complex responses toward referential questions. However, the teacher did not only ask referential questions, he also asked display questions to make the interaction in the class more alive.

The Students' Verbal Form Responses

The following tables demonstrate the findings on the students' verbal form responses. The findings are illustrated as follows:

Table 4
The Students' Verbal Form Responses in the First Meeting

Question Types	1st Meeting			
	Word	Phrase	Sentence	Total (per form of responses)
DQs	2 (66.7%)	-	14 (58.3%)	16
RQs	1 (33.3%)	-	10 (41.7%)	11
Total	3 (11.11%)		24 (88.89%)	27

The table above demonstrates that the students' responses toward teacher questions in first session during his teaching and learning process were dominated by sentence responses. It was discovered that 88.89% of students' responses toward teacher questions were in the form of sentences. The sentences produced by the students came from 24 questions raised by the teacher in his teaching and learning process. Those questions comprised 14 display questions and 10 referential questions.

On the other hand, there were only three questions producing students' responses in the form of words. The three questions consisted of two display questions and one referential question. The students' responses toward teacher questions in the form of words were only 11.11%. There were not even any phrases discovered in the students' responses toward teacher questions during his first teaching and learning process.

Table 5
The Students' Verbal Form Responses in the Second Meeting

Question Types	2nd Meeting			
	Word	Phrase	Sentence	Total (per form of responses)
DQs	-	4 (50%)	6 (42.86%)	10
RQs	2 (100%)	4 (50%)	8 (57.14%)	14
Total	2 (8.33%)	8 (33.33%)	14 (58.34%)	24

The table above illustrates those students' responses toward the teacher questions were still dominated by sentences form. The students' responses in the form of sentences were 58.34% out of 24 responses. The second portion was the students' responses in the form of phrases 33.33%. The last was the students' responses in the form of words that was only 8.33%.

Different from the first session, the result of the transcript showed that the students' responses in the form of phrases were discovered in the second session. In the first session, the students' responses in the form of phrases were not discovered at all.

Table 6
The Students' Verbal Form Responses in the Third Meeting

Question Types	3rd Meeting			
	Word	Phrase	Sentence	Total (per form of responses)
DQs	1 (25%)	1 (25%)	2 (15.38%)	4
RQs	3 (75%)	3 (75%)	11 (84.62%)	17
Total	4 (19.05%)	4 (19.05%)	13 (61.90%)	21

As it is shown in the table above, the students' responses toward the teacher questions were dominated by sentences form. The table above demonstrates that students' responses in the form of sentences were 13 responses out of 21 responses. The percentage of the students' responses in the form of sentences was the highest (61.90%). Different from the first and second session findings, the result of the transcript demonstrated that the students' responses toward the teacher questions in the form of words and phrases were the same (19.05% of each).

From the three sessions' findings, the most responses discovered were in the form of sentences. It can be seen from the first up till the third session, the students' responses toward the teacher questions were led by the responses in the form of sentences.

Discussions

The Types and the Frequency of the Teacher Questions

The teacher addressed display questions more often in the first meeting since his purpose was to check students' comprehension, to elicit students' prior knowledge, or just to focus on the form or meaning of language structures and items. In addition, display questions were asked by the teacher more than referential questions since the topic was new for the students. The teacher, thus, raised display questions to introduce the new topic to the students.

The finding of the present study in the first session was similar to some previous studies by Shomoossi (2004), Farahian (2012), Temiz (2012), Qashon (2013), and Vebriyanto (2014) who concluded that display questions were mostly addressed to the students by the teachers in classroom interaction for some particular purposes.

Referential questions were more addressed by the teacher in the second and the third meetings. These questions were more asked by the teacher to encourage the students in his classroom to participate actively. Since the students' language proficiency is high, they are able to respond to the questions with high level of thinking. Referential questions, therefore, was appropriate to ask in the level of junior high students with English based learning.

The teacher was asking to dig more information by eliciting others' opinions. As the teacher is asking to dig information and elicit the students' opinions, the question is categorized as referential question. It seems that the teacher also raised referential questions to elicit the students' critical thinking.

The results demonstrated that both display and referential questions were addressed by the teacher during his teaching since he had particular reasons to achieve. However, referential questions were more asked than display questions during the three meetings of his teaching that were recorded and observed.

The Teacher's Reasons for Asking High-Frequency Questions

Questions were asked to checks the students' prior knowledge and measure their understanding. Moreover, it initiates genuine communication with the students. The other reasons of asking questions are to encourage students to provide opinions, dig more information about something, and involve them to actively participate in the classroom interaction.

The teacher posed more referential questions for some reasons: by asking referential questions, the teacher could dig more information and build interaction with the students. The students, moreover, could provide more information and participate actively in higher-level thinking. They, furthermore, could also respond to referential questions with longer and more complex responses.

In contrast, display questions were more frequently asked in the first meeting. The teacher addressed more display questions because he introduced a new topic to the students in the first meeting. He posed more display questions to check students' prior knowledge related to his new teaching topic. Asking display questions to introduce new topic is appropriate since the teacher is about to check the schemata of the students about the topic. The students were stimulated to get into the topic through display questions asked by the teacher.

Brown (2001) states that teacher questions can give learners opportunity to produce language pleasurably since EFL learners are commonly anxious of initiating classroom interaction without any stimulus from the teacher. Silent learners will get a great chance to produce their language if appropriate questions are addressed to them. It is in line with the previous study conducted by Farahian (2012) who states that display questions are better posed to the students with lower level of language proficiency to stimulate their participation in the classroom activities.

The teacher had been asking appropriate questions to the students during his teaching by considering the teaching materials and the students' language proficiency. He, thus, varied his question types to achieve different particular purposes.

The Students' Verbal Form Responses

The study showed that the students' verbal form responses toward display and referential questions were not significantly different. The two question types could produce long verbal form responses. It was seen from the findings that the teacher asked more display questions than referential questions. It is in line with the previous study discovered by Shomoossi (2004) that not all the referential questions produce long responses neither do the display questions.

The findings emphasizes that the students' verbal form responses could not be determined by the length of their responses. Yet, it can be signficantly determined by the complexity of the verbal form responses.

Deriving from the finding of the three meetings, it can be stated that different question types are not only limited to the length of language production but it also produces different complexity responses of the language. It is obviously shown that display question which is known as a question with short answer could produce long responses in the present study.

Conclusions

The study demonstrated that the teacher addressed both display and referential questions for some particular reasons. He raised referential questions more than display questions in the whole three meetings because of particular reasons. The teacher's reasons of asking the high frequency questions were for many reasons. The analysis of the present study showed that the teacher posed referential questions to dig more information and build interaction with the students. Related to the students' verbal form responses towards the teacher questions, the study found that display and referential question types produced students' long verbal responses. The responses, therefore, cannot be limited to the length. They appeared more significantly different in the language complexity.

Future researchers who are interested in conducting the study of teacher questions, they should examine the students' responses toward the teacher question types by focusing on the language complexity responses. The may conduct an experimental study to examine the students' complex responses toward particular types of teacher questions.

References

Bloom, B. (1956). *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals, Handbook I: Cognitive Domain.* New York: Longman Green.

Brock, C. (1986). The Effects of Referential Questions on ESL Classroom Discourse. *TESOL Quarterly*, 77-59.

Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy* (2nd ed.). New York: Longman.

Celce-Murcia, M., & Larsen-Freeman, D. (1999). *The Grammar Book.* Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Ellis, R. (1994). *The Study of Second Language Acquisition.* Oxford: OUP.

Farahian, M., & Rezae, M. (2012). *A Case Study of an EFL Teacher's Type of Questions: An Investigation into Classroom Interaction.* Elsevier. Ltd.

Gall, M. D. (1986). Synthesis of research on teachers' questioning. *Educational Leadership, 42*, 40-47.

Hitchcock, G., & Hughes, D. (1995). *Research and the Teacher: A Qualitative Introduction to School-Based Research.* New York: Routledge.

Long, M., & Sato, C. (1983). *Classroom Foreigner Talk Discourse: Forms and Functions of Teacher Questions.* Newbury House.

Nunan, D. (1991). *Language Teaching Methodology.* Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall.

Occhipinti, A. (2009). *Foreign Language Anxiety in in-Class Speaking Activities.* Oslo: University of Oslo.

Qashon, S. H. (2013). Effect of Teacher Question Types and Syntactic Structures on EFL Classroom Interaction. *The International Journal of Social Sciences*, 52-62.

Richards, J. C., & Lockhart, C. (1996). *Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms .* Cambridge: CUP.

Shomoossi, N. (2004). The Effect of Teacher's Questioning Behavior on EFL Classroom Interaction: A Classroom Research Study. *The Reading Matrix*, 96-104.

Temiz, G. (2012). The Impact of Teacher Questions on Students Learning in EFL. *Journal of Education and Instructional Studies in the World*, 1-9.

Thompson, G. (1997). Training Teachers to Ask Questions. *ELT Journal*, 99-104.

Vebriyanto, D. A. (2014). *Teacher's Questions in EFL Classroom Interaction.* Semarang: Walisongo Institutional Repository**.**