

Form and Function of Teacher's Questioning Technique in English Foreign Language Classroom Interactions

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Abstract: English Foreign Language (EFL) teachers most frequently deal with question types in their interactions with students. However, questioning is not only concerned with type but also with form and function. Therefore, this qualitative study aimed to examine the types, forms, and functions of the questions altogether raised by EFL teachers as they interacted with students. The researcher observed and recorded two college-level EFL teachers. Using the conversation analysis tenets, the data were transcribed and examined. The results have demonstrated that the teacher questions used were insufficient for the questioning activity. The form is related to the question type. Additionally, the teachers' questions had diagnostic, educational, and motivating purposes. Therefore, it is advantageous for teachers to ask questions during class discussions if they have a comprehensive understanding of type, shape, and function.

Keywords: Form and function, teachers' questioning technique, English foreign language, classroom interactions

1. Introduction

The classroom is one of the communities where people can learn and acquire knowledge through activities and interactions. Activities and classroom interactions involve the main agents, which are the teacher and students. The teacher, as the facilitator, leads the students to actively participate in such interactions, while students, as the sub-ordinate, follow or even participate in the discourse per the instructional design provided by the teacher. However, the interaction might not occur as both agents have insufficient strategies. Therefore, to have good classroom interactions, both teacher and students should have a good strategy. Thus, the classroom is a mini society where teachers and students can interact with each other.

Along with this point of view, teachers' questioning has been recognised as a powerful teaching strategy in classroom interactions. The most basic and versatile manoeuvre teachers can employ to facilitate student participation and learning in the classroom is questioning. Effective questioning assists students in developing their critical thinking (Boyd, 2015). Additionally, the questions asked during class interactions may deepen discussions, encourage students' participation, and assess the extent of learning (Darong & Niman, 2021; Hill, 2016; Hu & Duan, 2018; Tavakoli & Davoudi, 2016). The art of questioning involves knowing what questions to ask, how to ask them, and when to ask them.

Questions are divided into the display and referential questions (Wright, 2016). According to earlier research, the display question, which corresponds to the lower-cognitive inquiry, only calls for brief responses and minimal cognitive effort from the learner. The teacher already knows the answer to this query. The objective is to demonstrate the student's understanding of the subject under discussion. This kind is frequently utilised at a lower level of schooling and typically gets relatively constrained student responses. Differently, a referential question (opened question) that high-order inquiry enables a range of responses and encourages students to add something new to the discussions in class (Engin, 2013; Kao, Carkin & Hsu, 2011; Wright, 2016). Meanwhile, Boyd (2015) categorises several questions, such as clarification requests, procedural, contingent, convergent, and divergent questions. A clarification request is used to clarify a previous statement. The procedural question, however, is focused on instructions or conduct. The third type focuses

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on the contributions made by students during the three previous utterances. Its form could be authentic or opened and closed questions. As it provides a clear link between earlier contributions, the functions stimulate student thinking and probe. The final two categories discuss their coverage. A convergent question is one that focuses on a certain topic of the conversation or discussion. In the meantime, divergent question possibly extends the topic being discussed.

Given that the purpose of questioning in this study is to control interaction, the types of questions used will depend on the setting for managing classroom discourse. In this sense, questions may be used to manage turn-taking, arrange the structure, and control the discourse's moves. To do this, certain questions will be more helpful because they may be identified in the context and with the purposes or intents being pursued. In this sense, asking questions is not a spontaneous process. In order to gain a deeper knowledge of classroom discourse, the types are used as both a discourse management tool and interactive teaching tool. As a result, taking into account the functions is another crucial consideration. Due to their relationship to the discourse conditions and setting or context, the functions might have greater relevance. They must be context-based in order to increase interactional awareness and advance language teachers' pedagogical and practical expertise as they are inextricably linked and performed sequentially in the interactions process (Atwood, Turnbull, & Jeremy, 2010; Diem, Khong, Saito, & Gillies, 2018; Ghafarpour, 2016; Hepple, 2012; Lee, 2016; Solem & Skovholt, 2017).

However, if a question type meets specific requirements for the complexity of the grammatical structure and discourse difficulty, it may encourage higher-order thinking and learning (Durrleman & Franck, 2016; Walsh & Hodge, 2018). Recent research has confirmed this, showing that the level of thinking in students is cognitively determined by the complexity of the teacher's question. The more composite the question, even though this case is only for high learners' language skills, the more high-level thinking abilities learners have (Harvey & Light, 2015; Sarandi, 2016; Stivers, 2018; Tofade, Elsner, & Haines, 2013). In addition, the teacher's questions were not only about the types. Inviting student responses, form, and function are potential for teachers to consider in their interactions with students.

This study aims to extend the previous research studies in analysing teacher questions in classroom interactions. Despite the fruit-bearing findings of previous studies, this study specifically proposed to examine the questioning form along with the types and functions together. This study provides insight for teachers about the nature of questioning activity in teaching. In addition, mapping forms, types, and functions are beneficial for teachers to raise their questions in the classroom so that commodity exchanges might occur effectively during student interactions. Thus, what are the types, forms, and functions of EFL teachers' questions in their classroom interactions?

1.1 Conceptualising questioning

Interaction in the classroom must include both questions and answers. The availability of language inputs to, language outputs from, and teacher feedback for learners are all impacted by teacher questions. Meanwhile, a significant source of linguistic output is provided through learner answers. The output hypothesis points out that learners' output is necessary for language development and may even be advantageous for cognitive processes that subsequently aid the acquisition of second languages (Hu & Duan, 2018). Students' responses might show how they try to internalise new knowledge, solicit teacher comments, and demonstrate their involvement and grasp of the subject material (Wright, 2016).

The responses from the students may also be useful in illuminating the strategies used by the teachers when posing questions to the class. The range of question types and strategies, follow-up inquiries, and questioning patterns used by teachers in classroom interactions largely impact students' participation and their responses (Hieronimus Canggung Darong, Niman, Menggo, & Beda, 2021; Gilson, Little, Ruegg, & Bruce-Davis, 2014a; Hosoda, 2015). High-order questions or complex inquiries have an impact on how students engage with academic material and how complex their language solutions are (Hill, 2016). In the meantime, other studies that have claimed referential questions typically elicit more responses and invite students to contribute something

new to the class interactions. Unlikely, display questions that typically elicit fewer cognitive demands and short responses (Engin, 2013; Kao et al., 2011; Tavakoli & Davoudi, 2016).

The students' involvement and adaption to interpersonal interaction evolve significantly with the move from teacher-centred to student-centred. The class becomes more relevant as the students react to the teachers' inquiries or take charge of the discussion themselves (Darong et al., 2020; Darong, 2020; Darong, Niman, Su & Fatmawati, 2021; Phillips, 2013). In light of this, it is important to characterise the roles of teachers and students in the teaching-learning process as dynamic rather than static (Reinke, Herman, & Newcomer, 2016). In addition, Rolin-ianziti and Ord's (2016) analysis of the dynamic elements in the interactions found that as teachers pay more attention to their students' dynamic responses, learning outcomes improve dramatically. As a result, the power of mood in student-teacher dialogue is assessed based on students' responses to teachers' queries (Babaii, Parsazadeh & Moradi, 2018; Gallagher, Courtright & Robinson, 2015).

Other studies present the types of questions and the length of time students take to reply. In this regard, instructors should pay close attention to the quality of their questions, wait-time management, and response sensitivity (Tofade et al., 2013; Vaish, 2013; White, 2010). This makes sense because students' interpretations of the teacher's intentions behind the questions determine the impact of the questions (Chappell, 2014). Previous studies have demonstrated that because teachers tend to ask low-order questions, wait time is unnecessary because quick answers may be given (Maphosa & Wadesango, 2017; Robitaille & Lauderdale, 2015; Tofade et al., 2013). On the other hand, high-order inquiries necessitate adequate thought and response time. They enable students to research and broaden their thinking process to respond. Similar to this, convergent and divergent questions have no clear-cut answers since students are required to consider a number of potential answers and help them look at things from many angles, which necessitates additional time to reflect and elaborate on their answers.

Furthermore, Qashoa (2013) divides the types of wait time into two categories. First, there is a waiting period that begins when the teacher asks a question and ends when a student responds or when the teacher moves on to the next topic. The second wait-time begins as soon as the student completes the task and ends when the teacher starts to comment or make a statement by asking another student a question or by asking the same question again. Both, in this regard, depend unquestionably on the types of questions asked and the context in which they transpired. Then, it is crucial that teachers ask questions that give their pupils adequate time to reflect, express their opinions, and discuss with the teacher and their peers.

Regarding the functions, previous research studies have confirmed that the functions of teacher questioning allow the teacher to examine students' understanding (diagnostic), encourage students to have something new and link it to the previous one (instructional), and engage learners in the lesson and challenge their thinking (motivational). All the functions might reflect teacher's ways to utilise questions and put their students actively, through their responses, in meaning negotiation process or sequence of talk (Engin, 2013; Tofade et al., 2013; Eckerth, Ngoc, et al., 2013; Tavakoli & Davoudi, 2016; Wright, 2016; Palma, 2014; Phillips, 2013; Saito & Hanzawa, 2016; Roever & Al-gahtani, 2015).

2. Research Methods

This study belongs to qualitative design. Because of its ability to analyse the actual interactions without presuming the applicability of the sociocultural framework in which the interactions take place, conversation analysis (CA) was applied in this study. After speaking with the faculty board and reviewing their academic records, two college level EFL teachers were chosen as the subjects. The subjects assumed that they possessed a broad range of knowledge and proficiency in the English language because they had been exposed to it for more than ten years. Since the consideration was solely on the focus of the study examining the functions of teacher's questions, there was no particular consideration for content or skill courses, even gender.

Table 1: Subjects of the Study

No	Subjects	Teaching (years)	Experience	Sex	Academic Qualification	Expertise
1	GHS	34		M	Doctorate	Assessment, reading
2	AA	15		F	Master	Linguistics (syntax)

In collecting data, the researcher conducted observation. In this sense, the teachers, as the participants, served as the data source, offering clear and trustworthy information on the goal being studied. In addition, a recorder was employed to support the field note data obtained during observation. To prevent shocking students and causing them to feel alarmed and uncomfortable, permission was requested to observe the session without carrying a camera before beginning to record the classroom interactions. Therefore, the researcher's presence would undoubtedly change the classroom activities' natural setting.

The processes taken in this study's data analysis were in accordance with the conversation analysis (CA) tenets by considering the classroom's predominant IRE/F interaction pattern. All observed lessons were transcribed using the conversation analysis convention, which was mostly derived from Jefferson 1984 (Hosoda, 2015). Then, dwelling on Boyd's (2015) categorisation, data were coded into display, referential, clarification, and request. The researcher carefully examined the types and responses along with the syntactical form and functions. The results were triangulated to combat some potential preconceptions and attitudes incorporated into this research study. Data gathered through field notes and recordings were contrasted with data gathered from the reflective analysis of two different teachers' observations. After that, all of the evidence was thoroughly reviewed and cross-checked with one another in order to confirm the outcome of the data analysis.

3. Results and Discussion

The initial identification of the inquiry forms was made for constructive analysis. Table 2 demonstrates that teachers tended to ask more what and how (W-h) questions than other forms. In this sense, display questions for all teachers were mostly created by W-h questions.

Table 2: Forms of Questions

No	T	F	T1		T2	
			N	%	N	%
1	D	Y/N	68	24	3	4
		W-H	155	54	25	37
		D/FP	52	18	40	59
		H/W about	11	4	-	-
		TQ	-	-	-	-
		TN	286	100	68	100
2	R	Y/N	19	76	19	39
		W-H	6	24	20	41
		D/FP	-	-	9	18
		H/W about	-	-	1	2
		TQ	-	-	-	-
		TN	25	100	49	100
3	C	Y/N	-	-	2	20
		W-H	-	-	1	10
		D/FP	9	100	7	70
		H/W about	-	-	-	-
		TQ	-	-	-	-
		TN	9	100	10	100
4	Req	Y/N	2	40	3	60
		W-H	1	20	1	20
		D/FP	2	40	1	20
		H/W about	-	-	-	-
		TQ	-	-	-	-
		TN	5	100	5	100

Note: T: Type; D: Display; R: Referential; C: Clarification; R: Request F: Form; Y/N: Yes/No question, W-H: W-H Question; D/FP: Declarative with final raise phrase; H/W about: How/what about question; TQ: Tag question; T1: Teacher 1, T2: teacher 2.

According to an analysis of the two transcripts, students' long responses in this study occurred when W-h questions were posed rather than yes/no ones. The frequent use of this form may also

account for the degree of formality and familiarity of the discourse. They were used to learn about subjects the teachers were unfamiliar with, which was helpful in broadening or extending the classroom discourse exchanges. Additionally, they help students improve their language skills by giving them access to grammatical structures where new information can be learned. In the meantime, yes/no questions typically seek simple student agreement or even recognition, attach attention to a topic of conversation, or facilitate an interactive connection between teachers and students which may be used to justify the high use of yes/no questions. Yes/no questions are appropriate in this situation because they frequently elicited no responses from the asker and little in the way of additional information.

It is interesting to note how the distribution of the various syntactic categories among the two teachers varies, as seen in Table 2. In terms of display questions, W-h questions were the most common question type in the first teacher (of the 286 questions, 155 or 54%) and respectively followed by the yes-no questions (68 or 24 %), declarative with a rising in the final phrase (18 % (52 tokens) and "how about/what about" questions (4% (11). Four different forms were presented during the interactions, but the tag question did not. Similarly, the W-h question appeared most frequently for the second teacher (25/37%). The second position, meanwhile, was declarative and had a final raise question (40 / (59%) and followed by yes-no questions (3/4%). While four types of forms were posed during the interactions, how/what about questions, the tag question did not appear in Teacher 2's interactions.

Referential questions were relatively evenly distributed in their construction forms, unlike display questions, which primarily used the W-h question format. The results (Table 2) show that there were 19/76% for T1 and 19/ for yes/no questions for T2. In the meantime, there were only 6/24% W-h questions for T1 and 20/41% W-h questions for T2. While this was going on, other declarative forms with a final rise did not appear in T1 and were 9/18% in T2. According to the transcripts, display questions predominated the comprehension checks for the presented story and papers, which is why the T1 and T2 lacked declarative form and how/what about forms.

Most clarification-related questions were asked in the form of declarative statements with a final raise. It appeared at 9(100%) for T1 and 7/70% for T2. Due to the way the teachers' discourse moves during the discussions – responding to the students' previous statements – another form was not present.

Most requests were made in the form of yes-or-no questions. According to Table 1, there were 2 (40%) out of every five questions in T1, and 3 (60%) out of every five requests in T2. According to a transcript study, teachers frequently utilised yes-or-no questions to gauge students' comprehension of a single concept or the entire topic of discussion while requiring them to take a physical activity. In the meantime, W-h question formats were only used once (1/20%) for each teacher. Meanwhile, declaratory exchanges with a final raise took place at 2/40% in T1 and 1/20% in T2. Both teachers did not raise the what/how about question and tag question.

Regarding the data visualisation, it can be seen that there was a relative variation in the proportion of the various questioning syntactical forms among the two teachers. W-h questions and yes-no questions were the two types of display questions that were most frequently asked. Because they would elicit longer and more complicated syntactic utterances than yes/no inquiries, the W-h queries were effective. When teachers thought the pupils were struggling to respond to or comprehend the W-h and how/what about questions being asked, yes/no questions were instead put forth.

In addition, it helped to employ different formats for different question types to encourage and facilitate responses that were expected in W-h inquiries and encourage students to engage in more negotiation. It is important to remember the value and clarity of declarative and yes/no questions. Similar to the display question, it was seen that the two teachers employed these two forms to prompt students' comprehension and understanding when they were unable to respond to W-h and how/about inquiries, elicit short answers, confirm facts, and engage the slow learners. As a result, those forms are crucial for inviting student feedback, involving them actively in exchanges, and extending conversations.

Table 2 generally demonstrates a propensity for teachers to use their display questions by posing more W-h questions. This result was not unexpected, given that W-h questions are most effective in the classroom when teachers use them to deepen students' understanding and actively include them in class activities (Celce-Murcia, 1999). Other forms, like yes-no and declarative with final raise (not necessarily request type), were also used when it was thought that students were having trouble understanding or responding to W-h and how/what-about questions. This is consistent with the findings of Barnett and Francis (2012); Durrleman and Franck (2016); Qashoa (2013); Taboada, Bianco and Bowerman (2012), which suggested that questions would be more useful if they matched requirements for syntactical and linguistic complexity. Then, in contrast to other types, the usage of yes-or-no and declarative final is primarily used in request-type questions, which require the students to take action as their response.

Moving on, the different types of questions should be more purposeful in that they should serve to broaden the conversation in the classroom. To put it another way, unless teachers have performed specific roles during interactions with students, the form of their questions is of little value and significance. As a result, each question was categorised according to its form and function simultaneously, in addition to being individually identified for each.

Dwelling on transcript analysis and field note's observation, some significant points may be made for the form-function mappings. First, it is not surprising that teachers primarily use the four syntactic forms of questions to gather information from talk or conservation. Despite other elements like types, commodity exchange, and discourse moves, the form had a major influence on how these categories appeared. The transcript shows that this occurred as a result of the teachers' differing perspectives on the teaching-learning process, which were reflected in their questions.

Secondly, the majority of the teachers' inquiries sought to confirm (the most), clarify, and request repetition (Table 2). Therefore, they were asked to learn about and grasp the subjects being discussed. The teachers' questions frequently aim to obtain simple student acceptance or acknowledgement, fix attention on a point in the conversation, and elaborate on the topic being discussed. In this case, questions function as an instructional tool during the interactions.

Thirdly, w-h questions were the most evident form of questions. At most, all of the teachers used this format. Wh-questions can help children increase their vocabulary and verbal thinking abilities, which may encourage them to express themselves in more complicated ways (Durrleman & Franck, 2016). As a result, the questions usually reinforced and broadened students' understanding. The second most common form was yes-no and declarative questions with a final raise. As previously mentioned, these forms were utilised since the students had considerable difficulty responding to w-h questions. The teachers purposefully altered the syntactic pattern in order to invite students' responses. In this regard, teacher questions serve as a diagnostic tool to check students' understanding. The following extract highlight the proposition above.

Excerpt 1

T: What do you think of making narrative text?

S: Silent

T: Do you think you can make narrative text easily?

S: Yes.

T: Yes. Good. Do you know what I mean? So... you are supposed to be aware of its structure. The way and how to organise the ideas.

The excerpt demonstrates how the teacher used the question "you know what I mean?" to see if the pupils were paying attention to the dialogue or were aware of the relevant background knowledge. As a result, the questions were written such that the teacher could determine whether or not the pupils were listening to her explanation of the structure of the narrative text.

Fourthly, the teacher questions in this study serve as motivational tools. In this respect, the teacher challenges and pushes their thinking level, as shown in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 2

T: Can you help me to make a sentence, S-V-O+Adv?

S: She went to the market yesterday

T: Yes, please write it down!

S: (Writing the sentence)

T: Yes, good. One more sentence, please! What about you?

The question “Can you help me to make a sentence, S-V-O+Adv?” is a challenge wherein critical thinking is required. In this case, such function is often delineated as indirect speech acts and accepted as a thinking challenge by way of conventional implicature.

Thus, as claimed by previous studies, the findings of this study show that the functions of teacher questioning include examining students' understanding (diagnostic), motivating students to learn something new and connecting it to what they already know (instructional), involving students in the lesson and pushing their thinking (motivational). Each of the functions may serve as a reflection of the teacher's methods for using questions to engage students actively in the process of meaning negotiation or discourse order through their responses (Darong et al., 2021; Hepple, 2012; Lee, 2016; Palma, 2014; Stivers, 2018).

What is more important in this study is that teachers used specific syntactic forms while considering the pragmatic or social function of their questions and their eligibility in the structure of conversation. This is supported by Darong (2020), Gilson, Little, Ruegg and Bruce-Davis (2014b), Stivers (2018), and Waring, Reddington, Yu and Clemente (2018), who noted that the teachers embodied particular syntactic forms more frequently than others depending on the pragmatic and social function (discourse moves). This means that depending on how the interactions in the classroom evolve, the syntactical form of a question may be seen as the best way to carry out a specific function or illocutionary act of inquiring. Questioning forms should be designed to naturally fit with the structure of interactions since they may promote a variety of questioning functions.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation for Further Studies

It has been found that not only do different types characterise the various functions but also that the usage of various question forms may signal various functions in various ways. The syntactic structure in a specific discourse exchange and the forms might determine the functions. Then, type, form, and function are related. To put it another way, even though questions had to be distinguished by their types, their classification and regularisation are frequently linked to the syntactical structure and function in context. It could be quite challenging to examine questions' intended meaning in the absence of context. Since questioning activity is crucial in classroom interactions, further studies can involve more participants and view teacher questions from different perspectives.

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