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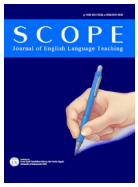

Research Article

Teacher Questioning Strategies Employed in Speaking Classes in EFL Setting: A Study of Classroom Interaction

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A B S T R A C T

This study investigates the employment of teachers questioning strategies in Speaking classes in an EFL setting. This study intends to find out how the teachers employ those questioning strategies as well as to investigate whether the type of questioning strategies and the way teachers apply those types of questioning strategies assist learners in engaging in classroom interaction. The participants were teachers teaching Speaking classes and learners attending the classes. This study employed descriptive qualitative research using videotaped class observations and transcription as the techniques of data collection. The teachers' questioning strategies and learners' responses are highlighted and analyzed. The referential and follow-up questions were applied in the while-speaking stage to gain information from the learners and the class. The questions were addressed to the class and individuals to assist learners getting involved in the interaction. The display and follow-up questions were addressed more in a post-speaking stage, used for an assessment for today's lesson. The results reveal that teachers mostly use display questions in the pre-speaking stage to introduce the new lesson, set the class mood, as the motivating strategies, and attract the class's attention to the new lesson. The type of questions employed by the teachers are effective to make the learners involved in classroom interaction must be based on the needs and time. The way teachers address questions should be started in the class, in small groups, and with individuals. Teacher wait-time is one of the facilities for teachers are expected to provide learners as a learning opportunity.

INTRODUCTION

The classroom interaction pattern portrays the asymmetrical role relationship between teachers and learners in which the teacher has responsibility for organizing the classroom interaction. The roles between teachers and learners are unequal (Walsh, 2011; Ellis, 2012). Teachers dominate the classrooms' talk in the process of teaching and learning (Walsh, 2011). One of the features of language use in the classroom is that language is the goal of the lesson. Language is how the classroom goal is achieved (Walsh, 2011; Ellis, 2012). There is a relationship between classroom interaction and teaching that include teachers. Teachers can do much to improve their practice and enhance learning by studying their

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interactions with students. Walsh (2011) offers the most important features of classroom discourse. The features offered are viewed from the perspective of the teacher who has the main responsibility for controlling the interaction. The features are control of the interaction, speech modification, elicitation, and repair.

The language used by the teacher is how teachers modify their language and how teachers employ questions and how teachers provide feedback to the learners (Walsh, 2011; Ellis, 2012). The learners' language use is how they respond to teachers' questions, and how they respond to teachers' corrective feedback. Therefore, the language used in the classroom is the language that the teacher uses and the students use to achieve the classroom pedagogical goals (Richards and Lockhart, 1994; Ellis, 2012).

Classroom talk involves how utterances are combined sequentially through the teachers and learners using their languages. Communicative Teacher Talk can provide learning opportunities for learners and promote good interaction between teachers and learners and learners to learners (Thornbury, 1996; Cullen, 1998; Ellis, 2012). Conducting studies on teachers' use of language is based on reasons. Ellis (2012) states the reasons why teacher language use is the subject of research. It is because teachers are the ones who contribute to classroom interaction, give input to learners, and reflect the key aspects of language use in the classroom. One of the key aspects of teacher language is teacher questions (Richards and Lockhart, 1994; Walsh, 2011; Ellis, 2012). Studies on teachers' questions in L2 classrooms focus on the frequency of the implementation of the type of questions, teacher wait time, the learners' responses to teachers' questions, the effect of teacher questions on learners' proficiency, communicative questions, and teacher questioning strategies (Ellis, 2012).

There are reasons why teachers use the question in the process of teaching and learning. Teachers' question is used to check the learners' comprehension, to give them opportunities to engage in classroom interaction, and elicit the students' schemata about today's lesson. Teachers allow sufficient time for students to respond result of the interactional conditions that foster L2 acquisition (Mackey, 2016). Questions posed by teachers are to energize the learners to answer and focus on the content of the lesson. Since they are curious about the correct answers, they try to interact in the classroom.

Moreover, by giving questions teachers can elicit not only the content of the lesson but also their linguistic knowledge. Elicitation is one of the techniques used by teachers to make learners respond. Typically, elicitation is to ask questions. Teachers mostly ask questions to control the classroom discourse. When asking questions, teachers already know the information or answers. This question is categorized into display questions. Learners need to display what they know. It is different from referential questions whose aim is to promote discussion or help learners improve their oral fluency. In the classroom, teachers can use both types of questions to help learners understand the lesson and develop their oral fluency. The teacher can measure students' background knowledge in the beginning stage of teaching. To check whether the learners understand the lesson learned, the teacher can ask questions. Additionally, teachers' questions have contributed to second language research since they can be used to allow students to participate in the classroom discourse and teachers' questions can be modified to make the learners understand the lesson learned.

The types of teachers' questions used in the classroom are procedural questions: convergent and divergent (Richards and Lockhart, 1994). Procedural questions are related to classroom procedures and routines and classroom management. Convergent questions need short answers that do not require students to engage in higher-level thinking but focus on recall of previous information presented. These questions are to develop aural skills and vocabulary and to encourage whole-class participation before moving on to some other teaching techniques. The second type is divergent questions that are to encourage students to provide their information rather than recall it. It can be applied after teachers ask using divergent questions.

Teachers should have knowledge and skills on how to ask students and when to ask students. The skills teachers use questions become issues in the field of teaching. Among the issues are related to the range of questions' types that teachers use. It is observed that teachers tend to use more convergent questions than divergent questions. These questions, divergent questions, facilitate the learners to recall information regarding the lesson learned. Learners are required to answer using Yes or No or short statements. It is believed that divergent questions give fewer opportunities for learners to produce and practice the language learned. These constructs, convergent and divergent questions are borrowed from Richards and Lockhart (1994). Other studies use display and referential questions as the type of questions. Display questions are divergent questions and referential questions are convergent ones. The studies reveal evidence that teachers mostly use display questions compared to referential questions.

Compared to convergent questions, divergent questions facilitate students to generate ideas and participate in classroom communication. Another issue related to students' participation, is it is found that students are more likely to be pointed out or called by teachers to ask questions. Some students depend on teachers to ask them

to participate in classroom interaction. This causes teachers to ask questions only to certain students. Consequently, there are only active students get their turn. The next issue raised is teacher wait time. Teachers often use short wait-time that is insufficient for students to respond. Teachers call other students to answer instead of giving enough time for them to think about the answers. It is believed when teachers' wait time is added to more seconds, the learners' participation increases as well as the quality of participation (Long, et. al., in Richards and Lockhart, 1994; Walsh, 2011).

Regarding the type of questions, display and referential questions are less important than the relationship between a teacher's pedagogic goal and a choice of question. If the objective is to check the learners' understanding or to establish what learners already know, the use of display questions is adequate. However, if the objective is to facilitate class discussion or to assist learners improving their oral fluency, then referential questions are recommended (Walsh, 2011; Liu and Xu, 2018). Learners respond longer and use more complex utterances in responding to teachers' referential questions.

To add the reference regarding the use of teacher questions in classroom interaction, Long and Sato propose the taxonomy of Teacher Questions (Ellis, 2012). The taxonomy proposes the type of questions, the definition of the type, and examples, namely: *echoic, epistemic, expressive* and *social control*. Echoic is the question that asks the students to repeat what they say. The aim is to confirm that the students interpret the ideas as it is intended. The examples of the utterance are *Will you say that again? Pardon me?.* Moreover, epistemic has two aspects, that is referential and evaluative. Referential is the question used by the teachers to gain information and is to provide contextual information about situations, events, actions, purposes, relationships, or properties. While evaluative is the question used to establish the learners' knowledge of the answers. Other type is expressive that refers to the question that conveys attitudinal information to the addressee. It is in *Are you there?* Lastly, social control which comprises of two elements, that is, attentional and verbosity. Attentional is the questions that are used to employ authority by maintaining control of the classroom talk and allowing the teachers to take learners' attention. Meanwhile, verbosity is the question that is asked to promote politeness or to sustain a conversation as in *How is your weekend?*

Teachers need to gain information from learners to check their understanding and to make the learners engage in classroom interaction. To achieve the goals, teachers are to employ strategies in asking questions. Walsh (2011) and Xuerong (2012) propose teacher question strategies. The strategies comprise question-planning and question-controlling strategies. The former aims at evaluating the learners' understanding of the lesson. Additionally, it is to recall the information about the flow of the lesson and assist learners to engage in classroom interaction. The latter is the way how teachers ask a question to learners.

The controlling strategies consist of teachers employing the various types of questions, selecting the learners randomly, nominating the learners on purpose, modifying the questions, use gestures and body language when asking the questions. The following table reveals the findings of the study conducted by Xuerong (2012). The findings of her study present the checklist of the participants' question strategies in asking the learners' questions.

Table 1. Teacher Question Strategies (Xuerong, 2012)

Questions Planning Strategies:
1. Asking relevant topics to the learners
2. Asking open-ended questions
3. Asking follow-up questions
4. Asking for supporting data
5. Asking a variety of questions to learners
Controlling Strategies:
1. Phasing the questions first and then calling the learner to answer the questions
2. Calling the learner's name to answer the question
3. Calling the learner's name when asking the learner to
4. Selecting the learners to answer randomly
5. Being aware of the dominant learners answering the questions
6. Giving learners time to the answers
7. Asking the questions to the class
8. Encouraging the learners to discuss their classmates before they answer the questions
9. Moving closer to learners when asking questions
10. Nominating non-volunteer
11. Repeating the questions
12. Modifying the questions when learners do not understand the teachers' question

Abundant studies are conducted to investigate teacher language use that involves the strategies used. In addition, the effectiveness of the strategies employed by the teachers to lead the communicative classroom interaction is the subject of the research. This current study (Liu and Xu, 2018) attempts to investigate teacher talk time, questioning patterns, and feedback patterns. The results show that

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teacher talk time is from 36% to 58%. The student talk is 31 to 56%. The evidence reveals that students talk less.

One of studies on teacher question strategies in an EFL setting is conducted by Rido (2017). The study aims at investigating the questioning strategies by master teachers teaching vocational schools. The model of questioning strategies is adopted from Xuerong (2012) and used as a reference to categorize the strategies. Additionally, the learners' opinion about the employment of teacher questioning strategies is included. It is found that master teachers apply a variety of types of questions: close-display questions, open-referential questions, and follow-up questions. Regarding the controlling strategies, teachers ask questions by nominating the learners and the entire class. Repeating questions when asking the learners is found when there is no response from the class. It explains further that asking questions by applying appropriate strategies can promote classroom engagement and facilitate learning opportunities.

This present study aims to investigate what questioning strategies are employed by teachers in teaching speaking classes in an EFL setting. Furthermore, this study intends to find out how the teachers employ those questioning strategies. Additionally, it is to investigate whether the type of questioning strategies and the way teachers apply those types of questioning strategies assist learners to engage in classroom interaction.

METHOD

The qualitative method was employed for this study which was to describe the strategies senior teachers employed in asking the learners. Additionally, this study aimed to describe whether the employed questioning strategies by the senior teachers are effective in promoting learners' engagement in classroom interaction. The three senior university teachers teaching speaking classes and the learners attending those classes became the participants of this study. To gather the data classroom observation was conducted. The Speaking classes were observed twice and each observation lasted 90 minutes. The learners attended the first semester and third semester. The classroom observation was videotaped by the assistant to capture clear pictures and good voices. The researcher is a non-participant using the field notes to write down the activities in the classroom. To analyze the data, the video recordings were transcribed. The teachers' questioning strategies were highlighted and categorized. The strategies applied by the teachers were analyzed to answer the research problems.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section describes the type of questioning strategies employed by senior teachers teaching Speaking and how the teachers ask the questions to the learners. Moreover, it describes whether the questioning strategies and how teachers employ those assist the learners to engage in classroom interaction. The description is to use the term fragment to present the episode of the interaction and it is not to adapt any coding. The coding is marked down by the type of the questions in brackets. The description is segmented into teaching stages: the pre-speaking stage, the while-teaching stage, and the post-teaching stage. It is divided into stages since the aims to ask questions are different from one stage to another.

Pre-Speaking Stage

The first part elaborates on the type of questioning strategies teachers employ and how teachers ask the questions in the pre-stage of teaching.

Display Questions

Fragment 1

1. T (Teacher): Okay. Now let's see. I would like you to have a look at page 27. What does it say? **(Display Question)**. What is the title? **(Display Question)**
2. Students (SS): I'm terrified of flying.
3. T: No. We don't smile at this.
4. Ss: I'm terrified of flying.
5. T: Okay let's see. I mean looking at your face. Let's look at your face.
6. SB: I'm terrified of flying.
7. T: Is that how you show your fear**?** **(Display Question)**
8. Ss: No.

Fragment 2

1. T: Okay, alright. Please open page 48. These are the type of places you can find food to eat. Look at the picture Where are you? In a? **(Display question)**
2. Ss: Restaurant.
3. T: What type of restaurant is it? **(Display Question)**
4. SC: Japanese.
5. T: Okay. And who is serving the couple? **(Display Question)**
6. SB: Waiter.

Fragment 3

1. T: Okay. I'm scared of flying cockroaches. It's not like any other cockroach. It's a special kind of.
2. Ss: I'm terrified of heights
3. T: Haits or heits (heights)? **(Display question)**
4. Ss: Haits.
5. T: Guys. Haits. Okay, everybody.
6. Ss: Haits.
7. T: One more time.

8. Ss: Haits.

In this stage, the teacher is to introduce today's topic. It is the stage in which the teacher measures the learners' schemata. To achieve the stage's goal, the teacher asks questions as the elicitation, display questions are all addressed to the whole class. The types of questions used by the teachers are display questions and the way they apply those strategies is by asking the whole class. It is to make the class feel at ease since the class has just started and the questions are used to attract the learners' attention since all the answers are easily found in the textbook found in (1) fragment (1) and in (1) fragment (2). Since it is easy to answer the questions, the learners feel at ease answering those questions that making them feel invited to engage in the interaction.

The teacher employs display questions as the strategy to begin the class and introduce the new topic of today's lesson. It is a simple question asked by the teacher to build the classroom atmosphere. Display questions are used to attract the learners' attention as in (1). The teacher asks about the title of the chapter and about the picture. Additionally, he/she reminds the class about the expression when they say they are afraid of as in (7) in fragment (1). It is introduced in the beginning stage before discussing the expressions. The teacher asks the whole class to maintain rapport. Additionally, it is a motivating strategy for the class to learn the new lesson. In this stage, the teachers train the learners to pronounce the words they are going to learn found in fragments (3). Display questions are used to give feedback on learners' errors by asking the entire class to choose which one is correct as in (3) fragment (3). The class makes corrections on the wrong pronunciation in the response to the teacher's questions. It assists them since the questions are easy to answer.

While-Speaking Stage

Referential Questions

Fragment 4

1. T: So how about legal marriage for similar genders? Any opinion? state your point. Well, all of you are smiling. Well, we know that in the United States, most people have agreed with the legal gay or LGBT. How about yours? **(Referential Question)** What happen with also being legalized in Indonesia? **(Referential Question)**
   Yuri, why are you shaking your head? **(Referential Question)** What's in your mind? **(Referential Question)**
2. SA: I don't think it's necessary because in my religion it's not common.
3. T: Yeah… We go back to their own religion, right? It is not right. But some cases occur that the LGBT grow up not they don't want to become this who likes the sameness against the same general likeness. They need to change their mind and they like the opposite sex, the opposite. However, they still grew up in that kind of tension, so whether they like it or they don't like it, that's their preference. Any other opinions? **(Referential Questions)** Jessica, you're breathing heavily.
4. SB: I think it's okay, but for the couple, they don't need to show off, and then if they like gay couple need my help, but I won't follow my religion because it is related to human rights and I'll just to help them.

In this stage, the teachers ask referential questions to acquire information and invite the learners to share their opinion about the topic discussed in the book with the class. In (1), the teacher uses the referential question to find out the learner's opinion about the topic discussed. He/she addresses the questions to the class, "How about yours? What happens if it is legalized in Indonesia?" Since there is no response and he/she does not want to wait, he/she calls the name of the learner that attracts his/her attention, "Yuri, Why are you shaking your head? What is in your mind?" The learner responds to the teacher's referential question. It is like the teacher's prediction that the learner disagrees with the teacher's statement. The learner's response by shaking her head means the answer to the teacher.

The referential question as the strategy is to ask questions leads the teacher to ask the class first and if there is no response the teacher calls the learner's name found in (1) and (3) fragment 4. He/she invites the learner by the learner's body language, "Jessica, you're breathing heavily". It is a strategy to invite the learners to share their opinion. He/she does not need to repeat the referential question since the learner understands the question posed before.

Fragment 5

1. T: How about those of you who disagree with this one? It should stay illegal. Anyone? **Does everybody agree? (Referential question) Does everybody agree? (Referential question) So what do you think Novianti? (Referential question) .** Just state. You're wondering.
2. SA: If Marijuana is legal, sometimes teenagers use this wrong.
3. T: That's right.

The teacher employs referential questions to acquire the information about the topic discussed. He/she asks the question to the whole class, "Anyone?" However, there is no response from the class. He/she asks the question again and repeats the same referential question twice as in (1). He/she does not want to wait for the answer since there is no response. He/she initiates by calling one of the learners to answer the question, So, what do you think *Novianti*? He/she gets the response. The learner answers the question and engages in the interaction. The learner has enough time to think about the answer and can share her opinion since the teacher asks the class first and repeats the question.

Follow up questions

Fragment 6

1. T: Okay. when would you choose to eat in each kind of place? For example, if you have a birthday party, where do you want to eat? **(Follow-up question)** If you want to celebrate your birthday, where do you want to eat?

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(Follow-up question) In a fast-food restaurant? **(Follow-up question)**

2. Ss: No.
3. T: This one is for you Michele.
4. SF: In restaurant, I eat in a restaurant for a celebration.
5. T: For a celebration, and then in the cafeteria.
6. SF: In the cafeteria when lunch. In a fast-food restaurant when I'm on my way maybe.
7. T: Okay right, and then dinner.
8. SF: And then dinner when I'm with my friend.

Follow-up questions are the questions asked by the teachers to gain information about the extension of the topic discussed. The fragment shows that the teacher asks about the restaurant chosen to celebrate the learner's birthday. The learner notices and understands what is asked. The learner relates her answer to her experiences. Follow-up questions are addressed to a learner by calling her name and making sure that the learner notices by saying, "This one is for you Michele." The question used is to acquire information about where the learner celebrated her birthday which is not under the topic of today's lesson. The learner can engage in the interaction since the topic is close to her everyday life.

Fragment 7

Display and Referential Questions

1. T: So, very good, let's move on to the next page how much does personal appearance affect the way we see ourselves and others. Do our clothes, jewelry, and hair truly express who we are**? (Display questions)** How about the pictures? **(Display questions)** In the picture, what kind of hairdos do they have? **(Display questions)** Picture A, the picture on the top. at the top. What kind of hairdos? **(Display questions)** Do you know hairdos? **(Display questions).** hairstyle. *Klimis* is Indonesian. Don't say that it is English. Sleek, what else? **(Display questions)**
2. S: Neat
3. T: neat. Ya and probably a little bit oily, isn't it? Probably rest about some wax and also the woman but in picture B? **(Display questions)** What kind of hairdos? **(Display questions)**
4. S: Polish
5. T: Do you think they put on some gel? **(Display questions)** yes in picture B? **(Display questions)**They still put on some gel? **(Display questions)**
6. S: No.
7. T: No. Yeah just like the hair of the boys. I don't think so.
8. Do you guys put on some gel? **(follow-up question)**
9. S: No. Sometimes.

Post-Speaking Stage

In post speaking stage, the class does the exercise. The teacher checks the learners' comprehension during the evaluation. Those questions are ever asked at the beginning of the lesson. To do the evaluation, display questions are used. However, the class is not given enough time to answer the question. Therefore, repeated questions occur. Some questions are modified into simple ones to promote learners' engagement. Since the teacher does not want to wait for the class to think, he/she has another similar question posed (fragment 7, in 1). The next questions are combined between the display and referential questions. In this part, it is found that the teacher sets the time to wait. The class can answer the question, for the wait-time is provided. It is a short answer since it is just to ask the vocabulary not to invite learners to share their opinion.

Most questions addressed by the teachers in speaking class depend on the stages of the teaching process. In the pre-speaking stage, display questions addressed to the class, not an individual are found in this research. The questions function as the teachers introduce the lesson and they need to know the learners' background knowledge about the new lesson. They also set the learners' mood as the motivating strategy. The display questions are attentional. As Richards and Lockhart (1994) state display questions are to arouse learners' attention. Other studies in EFL settings find the display questions are to encourage learners' participation in interaction and to attract their attention to the lesson (Rahmah, 2002; Shamossi, 2004; Astrid, et. al., 2019).

In the while-speaking stage, the referential and follow-up questions are posed to the class and continued to an individual. Teacher wait time given to learners facilitates the learners to engage more in the interaction. The questions addressed to the class are similar to the individual. Therefore, the learner has enough time to think. Follow-up questions are given to get to know the learner's experiences. Since the topic is familiar to them, they can involve in the interaction more. In the last stage, post speaking stage, there is a combination between the display and referential questions. The former functions as the evaluation since the activity given are as the assessment. The follow-up question addressed it to maintain social control.

CONCLUSION

The questions addressed by the teachers in the Speaking class vary from display, referential, and follow-up questions. The questions are addressed to individuals and class. The teachers ask the same questions first to the class and individual. Therefore, the learner has enough time to think about the answer. Teachers need to give time for the class to think about the answer to the type of question at the stages of the teaching process. Teacher wait-time is to facilitate the learners to engage in classroom interaction; therefore, it gives learning opportunities for learners to develop their speaking skills. The types of questions, display questions, are recommended to be addressed in a pre-speaking stage. Referential and follow-up questions are to be asked in a while-speaking stage. The objective is to promote the learners' engagement in communicative interaction. They need to be given learning opportunities to

develop the language. Teacher referential questions can assist them to talk more and share their opinion and follow-up questions can lead the learners to share their experiences regarding the topic. Display questions and follow-up are effective as the assessment in the post-speaking stage to evaluate the learners' comprehension of the lesson they have learned. Addressing questions to the class and learners are good when it is needed in line with the time. The way teachers addressed questions should be started in the class, in small groups, and individuals. The learners are not able to engage in interaction when they do not have the input yet. In the middle of the teaching, the learners are expected to be able to give responses to teachers' questions and teachers' corrective feedback. Teacher wait-time is one of the facilities teachers are expected to provide to learners as a learning opportunity. In Saswati (2018), it is found that teachers' questions assist learners to talk. They need teachers' initiation to start the talk since EFL classes have cultural constraints to initiate communication. Therefore, teachers' questions are still in need to assist the learners involved in classroom talk.

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