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The Effect of Questioning Techniques of Teachers on Students' Participation in the ESL Classrooms At UCP

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ABSTRACT

In ESL classrooms, the role of asking questions is indispensable. Different teachers ask questions in different ways. That is why, teachers' questioning techniques in the ESL classrooms play a significant impact in increasing or decreasing the participation of children in the classroom. Several numbers of research have been conducted to examine the different types of questions asked by the teachers, their frequency, and the questions' mental complexity. However, the effect of the questions asked by the teachers on the participation of the students in the language classrooms in the Pakistan has not been explored yet. The purpose of the proposed research is to explore the effect of teacher's questions on students' participation in the ESL classrooms at university of the central Punjab. A sample of five teachers and 80 students is selected using the purposive sampling technique through observation. The data is analyzed using the Wajnyb list of questions given in 1992. The results show that teachers ask convergent question in high frequency as compared to the divergent questions. The findings help the researcher in giving recommendations for the language classrooms and for the future researchers although the collected data is limited to only one institute.

Keywords: Divergent questions, educational strategy, Display questions, Referential questions

Background

The practice of classroom questioning is usually traced back to Socrates as an educational strategy (Black, 2001). Because of the wide usage of questions as an effective teaching technique, a number of research have been conducted in this area, Teachers must encourage and stimulate students' inquiry in the classroom, which might be achieved by asking the right questions (Ma, X. 2008). Moreover, Good and Brophy (2003) are of the belief that the finest diagnostic tools for assessing students' academic development are questions asked in class. It is crucial for the teachers to understand that it is through questioning, it may be able to transform factual knowledge into conceptual knowledge. The questions which are not properly constructed mostly get short answers and can only check student's existing knowledge (Henningsen and Stein, 1997). For Caram and Davis (2005) the questions asked in the classroom can influence the learning process. So, for effective teaching, it is important for the teacher to pose good questions that can develop teacher-student interaction. The importance of classroom questions can never be undervalued because it is the teacher's questions which encourage student interaction, thinking and learning. Due of its importance in promoting learning, asking the questions to have been a topic of discussion for many years.

Teacher's questioning technique and a number of student outcomes including performance, engagement, and involvement, have a strong correlation. In an ESL classroom, the approach taken to affect students' study skills, especially their use of questioning techniques, is important. Different research on questioning skills have been conducted to discuss the possible reasons why these skills are not being used in the classroom or how they should or could be used. Student's active role in the classroom is an important aim of any language classroom since students' participation is critical. There are different reasons for the importance of class participation, the primary reason is that instead of just passively receiving information, it gives students more chances to engage in active learning. Participation in the classroom usually involves asking and answering questions, making comments, and joining in discussions. One of the important needs of teaching is engaging students in class participation because class participation gives an opportunity to the students to receive input from the teacher and from the fellow students, to apply their knowledge and to enhance their public skills. Through students' participation the teachers can get a better idea of the understanding of the students about the concept being taught.

(Maznevski, 1996). When it comes to raising or reducing student involvement in class, teachers' questioning strategies are crucial. The learning environment in the classroom is created by both the teachers and the students. Since getting students to speak in class and use the language they are learning is an essential component of a teacher's job, the process of learning takes on a new role as a means of discussion. The success of this discussion largely affects the level and quantity of student involvement in information sharing. (Harmer, 2000: 4, cited in Yan, 2006)

As a result, asking questions is an effective method for encouraging student engagement in class. Without a teacher's effective questioning techniques, there would be no meaningful conversations or student participation. For learning to be successful, teacher and student contact in the classroom is crucial. To make a classroom dynamic, a variety of techniques and strategies may be used. One of them is asking good questions, which teachers should do in order to actively engage students in class discussions. The way a teacher uses questions in the classroom is a crucial aspect that has to be considered.

A number of research have been conducted concerning questioning techniques to build a knowledge base that shows how much instructor questioning aids in student learning. However, it is observed that generally in the language classrooms particularly in Pakistani classrooms questioning is not encouraged. Textbooks are central in teaching and learning and the instructors prevent students from participating in activities that require them to consider multiple viewpoints. (Hasil, 2012). Because the answers to the questions are readily available from the book, Pakistani classroom teachers frequently deploy a series of factual, low-level information-based questions that rarely test students' critical thinking abilities.

This study is conducted to investigate the impact of teacher questioning on the involvement of ESL students while considering all of the things mentioned, the relevance of class participation, and the lack of research in Pakistan on participation and teacher questioning.

STUDY AIMS AND RATIONALE

Although much research has been done on questioning techniques regarding the higher level and lower-level questions, the purposes of asking questions, the importance of questions, there is need to look into the role of questioning in students' participation in the ESL classrooms specially in Pakistani context, where the questions asked in the classrooms are the textbook questions or the ones related with management.

Research Questions

1. What types of questions are used during the daily practices of teachers in a primary EFL class at UCP?
2. What are the aims of the questions asked by the teachers at UCP?
3. What is the frequency of different types of questions in EFL classes at UCP?

Significance of the research

This research can be very useful to the ESL teachers to improve their questioning techniques. The research also highlights the different kinds of questions which can increase students' participation in the ESL classrooms. The real practice of the ESL teachers in Pakistan is also highlighted through this research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the fundamental strategies a teacher may employ to promote critical thinking, learning, and class involvement is the use of questions. By inspiring and retaining students on task, its successful application involves the students in real and helpful method. The answers to a teacher's questions aid the students in understanding the material needed to respond. Student thinking is facilitated, engagement is encouraged, and classroom engagement is promoted through asking questions.

According to Ornstein (1998) in a primary school classroom, asking questions may help students' critical thinking abilities. A classroom which is dominated by the teacher and where the

teacher overuses factual questions, in such a classroom it is very difficult to motivate and to emphasize meaning. (Ramsey et al. 1990)

According to Kwit(2012), a key tool for teaching well is questioning. Students should be asked open-ended questions that have been prepared beforehand in order to meaningfully involve them in the debate. They should also be given the time to consider and react.

Lewis (2010) also asserts that an essential component of understanding is the ability to ask and respond to questions. I might aid in the pursuit of new information if inquiry is handled properly. Jalongo (2011) found that the capacity to ask and answer to questions, according to him, is a crucial aspect of comprehension. If inquiry is handled appropriately, I could assist in the search for fresh information. According to Critelli and Tritapoe (2010), In order to discover connections between the numerous questions raised and the students' responses, they also employed the questioning approach. They also determined which of these had the greatest impact on getting students to respond more. A teacher who commands conversation and asks too many basic concerns is to motivating students and does not place enough emphasis on meaning. Every teacher establishes a culture in their classroom. Students must have the flexibility to present themselves intellectually in an atmosphere where they may practise analytical and higher order conceptual understanding. (King, 1990). Every day teachers ask a number of questions and, over a million during a professional lifetime (Wragg, 2001). Inside the classroom, asking questions has long dominated the teaching process. The crucial quality of a question is that it encourages ability to think critically in the classroom. (Filippone, 1998). Nearly 40% of class time has been spent in question-and-answer sessions, according to studies by Johnson, Markle, and Haley-Oliphant. (1987). Questioning helps to enhance comprehension, strengthen memory, build creativity, and promote problem-solving. There are inquiries pertaining to classroom management. Twelve potential purposes of inquiries are outlined by Turney et al. (1973) in their first edition of the Sydney Micro Series. According to Brown and Edmondson 1989, Elevated questions were utilised by teachers in an effort to capture students' interest and comprehension. Instructors of minimal groups placed greater emphasis on comprehension and administration, whereas instructors of medium-ability courses mentioned more checking and revision questions. However, instructors of mixed-ability classrooms favoured acquiring comprehension, directing attention toward a teaching point, managing the classroom, and revising. (Wragg, 2001). In his

analysis stevens (1912) reported that out of the 400 questions teachers asked each day, 65% had to do with remembering knowledge from textbooks, indicating that hardly any of the questions students asked had anything to do with understanding. After Twenty-three, Haynes (1935) found just 17% of the questions teachers posed to students in grades 12 and 13 encouraged them to think, with 70% requiring factual responses. Similarly, Gall (1984) showed just 20% of teacher questions required students to think more than a level of memory, while the remaining 80% contained procedural issues like classroom instruction, with 60% of teacher questions requiring students to recollect things in the same way they were delivered. In a research conducted by Gaiton, Simon, and Kroll (1980), according to a research on primary schools, just 12% of teaching time was spent on questions, 29% on basic inquiries, 23% on concepts, and more than 47% on provisional and regular managerial chores. According to Kerry (1989), he examined the questions that instructors asked throughout 213 hours of classes in five secondary schools' RE, French, history, mathematics, English, geography, and music. He came to the conclusion that just 4% provoked conceptual understanding, while 54% dealt with administration and 42% with data.

It is important to look at the strategies involved in asking questions along with considering the types of questions that the teacher asks. Wragg in 2001 has given a list of following errors.

- Trying to ask several topics at once
- Posing a query and providing your own response.
- Interrogating just the smartest or friendly students
- Asking many challenging questions too early in flow
- Asking the questions that are not relevant
- Again and again repeating the same kinds of questions (e.g. closed questions)
- Asking an Intimidating questioning
- Not implying a modification in the question's form
- Not asking insightful questions
- Not allowing students chance to evaluate
- Missing the consequences of students' responses
- Not building on solutions

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research explores both quantitative and qualitative study, in order to investigate what kinds of questions are asked in ESL courses and how frequently they are utilized. The qualitative information is acquired via observation of teachers in ESL classes in terms of the questions they asked and the appropriateness of those questions. The number of questions utilized by the ESL teachers in their lessons, which are monitored and analyzed.

Participants

The teachers and students of four BS English semesters (2,4, 6 and 8) at University of Central Punjab are the participants. Convenient and Purposive Sampling method is used. Observation sheets are filled in by the observer while observing the classrooms. The data collected is analyzed through excel. The study's primary goal is to obtain insight into which question kinds are more appreciated by ESL teachers in order to increase students' involvement in language classes; however, the sample size is limited to derive any general conclusion about the appreciated question types of ESL teachers.

PRESENTATION OF DATA ANALYSIS

Research Question-1

Effective teacher questioning is aimed to focus students' interest in understanding content of the lesson, evoke their peculiarity, enhance their creative power, and encourage them to gain new information (Hussin, 2006), so to ensure student engagement and a productive learning environment, a range of questions should be given to spark students' ideas. What kind of inquiries are utilized in class to do research for efficient instruction? Table 1 presents the findings of the study and answers to Question 1 (Research Question) on the types of questions observed by educators in a primary EFL class.

Table 1-

Question type	Total
Yes/No questions	41
Short answer/ retrieval-style questions	24
Open-ended questions	15
Display questions	13
Referential questions	11
Non-retrieval, imaginative questions	8

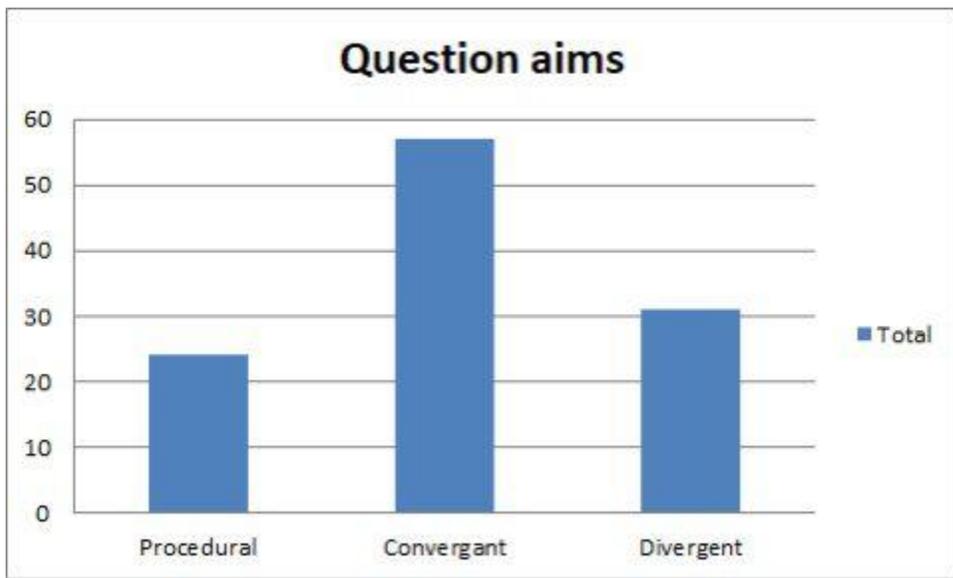
Overall, the data demonstrates that Yes/No questions are the most popular question type, with 41 out of 112 totals. According to Thompson (1997), the rationale for the high preference for Yes/No questions is that they are typically easier for learners to respond, making them more acceptable for weak learners. Non-retrieval – imaginative inquiries, with a total of 8, are the least common type of teacher inquiry, according to the data. When comparing the distribution of Yes/No and non-retrieval questions in schools, it is evident that there is a significant difference.

Research Question-2

The questions distribution in terms of the intentions they communicate to answer Question 2 is shown in Table 2. According to Richards & Lockhart (2000, p. 186), convergent questions are used to recall background information but do not require higher-level thinking. The table illustrates that connecting questions are popular, accounting for 57 of the total 112 questions asked in EFL classes, which are hardly more than twice the number of divergent questions. The remaining 24 of the 112 questions are procedural questions, which support instructors in keeping the teaching and learning process moving smoothly and in order in the classroom.

Table 2

Question aims	Total
Procedural	24
Convergent	57
Divergent	31



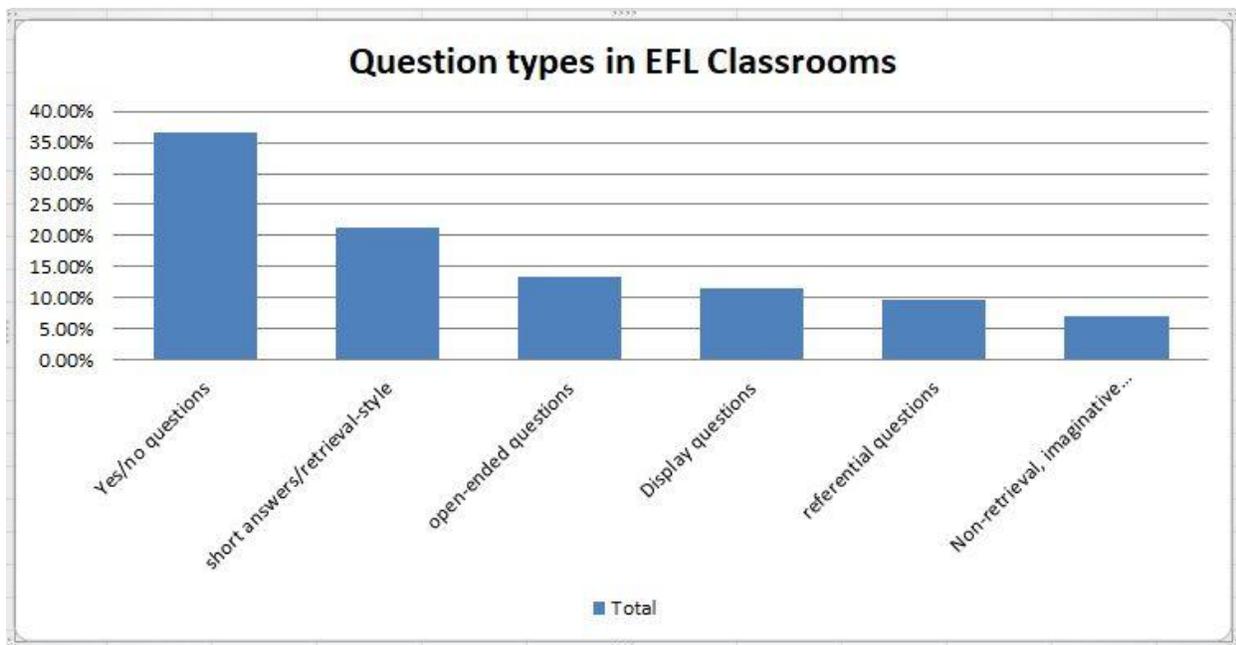
Research Question-3

Table 3 demonstrates that the mostly used question type in EFL classrooms is Yes/No questions, which is the third question of this study (36.60 %). Display questions are far more frequently used in the classrooms, according to research, than referential questions, and this study also finds the same results, despite the fact that the frequency of the two types is close to each other, with display questions accounting for 11.60 % of 112 questions and referential questions accounting for 9.82 % of all. Short answer/retrieval style questions are the second most popular question type, according to this survey (21.42%). According to the findings of the study, the purpose of

asking these kinds of questions is because they need short words and are not as difficult for students to answer.

Table 3

Question type	Total
Yes/No questions	36.60%
Short answer/ retrieval-style questions	21.42%
Open-ended questions	13.39%
Display questions	11.60%
Referential questions	9.82%
Non-retrieval, imaginative questions	7.14%



DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

According to Wajnryb (1992), while teachers frequently arrange their questions in terms of the lesson's content, they appear to lay less focus on considering questions in terms of the learner's cognitive and linguistic needs. The results show that Yes/No and short answer-retrieval questions are the most popular. Both of these questions place students in a passive information seeker-receiver posture in the classroom. These sorts of questions do not sufficiently push students to think at higher levels of cognition. Thompson (1997) proposes a different perspective for yes/no questions, stating that yes/no question (especially if the answer is fairly obvious or non-controversial) encourage students to participate in group activities, even if they are timid or hesitant. Adding that follow-up questions should be asked for further practice. The findings, however, suggest that there is just a little amount of interaction between these question categories.

Another common issue in questioning is the display vs. referential comparison. Display questions, according to Dashwood (2005), are typical of teacher-led sessions in which information transfer from instructor to student is the desired form of engagement, and so are not conducive to discussion.

Referential questions, on the other hand, require students to engage their schema and process higher levels of thinking in the same way as open-ended questions do.

Having 7.14 % of 112 questions, non-retrieval/imaginative questions take the last position in the study. It is evident that, despite their relevance in the learning process, these types of questions are not widely used by teachers.

According to the statistics, convergent questions are the most often utilized in the classroom, accounting for 57 out of 112 questions. Overuse of convergent questions is discouraged in EFL since they typically comprise Yes/No, quick response, and display type inquiries. Divergent questions, such as open-ended, referential, and non-retrieval/imaginative inquiries, on the other hand, are more difficult. Divergent questions are an essential and required tool for promoting set the direction and effective usage target language in the classroom.

Conclusion

The findings show that the higher ratio of convergent questions are used as compare to the divergent questions in EFL classrooms. Convergent questions are mostly used ones with 57 in 112 questions; whereas, only 31 out of 112 divergent questions are asked in the EFL classrooms. The purpose behind asking convergent questions is that these questions are easy to answer for students as these questions are Yes/No, short answers, and display type questions. Over use of convergent questions are not favored in EFL (Adedoyin, 2010). On the other hand, divergent questions are more challenging which includes open-minded, referential and non-retrieval/imaginative questions. Divergent questions are an essential and required tool for promoting, set the direction, and effective usage target language in the classroom (Azerefegn, 2010). Moreover, this study reaffirms the previous research conducted by Hamiloğlu, and Temiz (2012).

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