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## **AN ANALYSIS OF TEACHER’S QUESTIONING STRATEGIES IN ENGLISH CLASSROOM : A CASE STUDY AT SMK NEGERI 4 MEDAN**

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### **Abstract**

*The research was about An Analysis of Teacher’s Questioning Strategies in English Classroom : A Case Study at SMK Negeri 4 Medan. The aims of the research were to describe the types of questions commonly used by the teacher and to analyze the function of using the questions. The method of the research was descriptive qualitative method. The data were obtained by videotaping the classroom interaction between teacher and students in English Class. The result of the study revealed that there were two types of questions commonly used by the teacher in the class; they were display and referential questions. The total percentage of display question was 74 % and referential questions was 26 %. The functions of the questions were to arouse interest and curiosity concerning a topic, to focus attention on a particular issue or aspect, to develop an active approach to learning, to stimulate students to ask questions to teachers and other students, to check learner’s understanding, to elicit information and to control the classroom.*

**Keywords:** *Teacher, Questioning Strategy, Referential Question, Display Questions, English Classroom*



## **A. Introduction**

The analysis of classroom discourse has been used as a research tool for investigating teaching practices and interactions among language learners and teachers. One of the many aspects examined is the act of teacher questioning. Researchers have found that classroom teachers spend most of their instructional time conducting questioning sessions. Brualdi (1998) pointed out that eighty percent of a teacher's school day was taken up asking questions to students.

One of the skills that must be possessed by a professional teacher is the questioning skill. Teachers' questioning skill can influence the success of teaching learning process. In classroom setting, Cotton (2003) claimed that teacher questions and student answers are considered a powerful teaching approach if they are used to expose contradictions, challenge assumption, and lead to new wisdom and knowledge. To get good results in the process of asking questions in the classroom, a teacher must design questions which can expand students' knowledge and promote creative thinking. The teacher should know the strategies in giving question to the students in the class.

Teachers' questioning strategy used by teachers should consider the following functions of questioning serves in the classroom as proposed by Cotton (2003):

1. Asking questions helps teachers to follow up and elaborate on what a student has said. . students can openly express their ideas through answering teacher questions.
2. asking questions enhances students' interest and keep them actively involved.
3. the act of questioning let students benefit from various explanations of the material by their peers.
4. questioning is a good tool for evaluating student learning and reviewing the lesson as necessary.
5. asking questions enables teachers to control class discipline and student behavior.

In fact, in the process of teaching, a teacher seldom notice the functions of giving question to the students. There are still many teachers



provide simple questions to the students without considering the importance of questioning strategy in improving students' high order thinking skills.

To apply the aforementioned functions of teacher questions in the teaching process, teachers should be provided with information on types of questions that can facilitate the learning process and maximize the classroom interaction. A teacher should know the types of questions used in the classroom interaction. Barnes (1969) examined teacher questioning and classified the questions into four types. The first type contains questions concerning factual matters, that is, the questions beginning with "what". The second type includes questions of inference beginning with "why" and "how". The third type encompasses open questions which do not require any inference. And the last type has questions for communication, which could control the behavior of learners. Barnes further classified the second type into closed questions and open questions. Questions are closed because there is only one existing answer, while to open questions there is more than one answer.

In reality, many teachers still use the same pattern in giving questions to the the students.They did not make variation of questioning strategy when they are teaching in the class.

Long & Sato's (1983) classified two questioning types that is display and referential. In display questions the answer is already known to the teacher and they are designed to elicit or display particular structures. For example, "what is the past tense of eat?" On the contrary, referential questions refer to the questions that teachers do not know the answers to, and require long syntactically complicated answers containing interpretation, elaboration, giving opinions and subjective information. For example, "why don't students score full marks in writing essays?" Some studies have been conducted related to the types of question used in the classroom. The results of the studies revealed that teachers used display questions more than referential ones and referential questions create less classroom interactions than the display ones.( Qashoa,2012; Hamiloğlu and Temiz2012).



Types of questions can be analysed in terms of syntactic structures.. In terms of syntax, question syntactic categories include wh questions, yes/no questions, or questions (alternative), tag, declarative and indirect questions. (Brock, 1986; Pica, 1986) examined the effects of teachers' display/referential questions on students' syntactic response. They found that inexperienced ESL teachers ask more yes/no questions and fewer wh- questions than experienced teachers. Consequently, learners' responses were more than twice as syntactically complex in response to wh-questions as compared to yes/no questions.

It is important to realize that the earlier-mentioned benefits of asking questions depend on the teachers' ability to use the method effectively. Depending on personal characteristics, teachers' questioning method may also vary. Teachers's questioning goals, the level of their questions, questions types, use of probing questions, waiting time for follow-up questions, to whom they direct their questions (individual, group, whole class) and their reactions after asking questions demonstrate this variance in strategy. One dimension of teachers' questioning involves motive. The awareness of the aim and the results of asking questions seem to be important. Therefore the researcher is interested to analysis the questioning strategy.

This study aimed to explore the types of questions which are used by teachers in the class and to find out what purposes the questions convey in the process of teaching. The study is based on the following questions: (1).What kinds of question strategies were used in English classroom?; (2) What are the function of questioning strategy were used by teacher in English classroom ?

## **B. Method**

### **Research Design**

This research employed descriptive qualitative method research because the data were in the forms of words from the classroom interaction between a teacher and students in English classroom. The source of data was the process of teaching and learning in the English classroom. There were two classes of the 1<sup>st</sup> grade students at SMKN 4 Medan.



The data were obtained by videotaping from the interaction of teacher and students in learning-teaching process. The researcher took the video in the class and the length of every video was around 45 minutes.

### **Technique of Analyzing Data**

The data were analyzed by applying the steps proposed by Cresswell (2012).. There were some steps in analyzing according to Cresswell :

1. preparing and organizing the data for analysis
2. exploring and coding the data
3. coding to build description and themes
4. representing and reporting qualitative findings
5. interpreting the findings
6. validating the accuracy of the findings

### **C. Research Finding**

After collecting data, the data were analyzed to answer the question about the types of questions that commonly used by the teacher in the English classroom and the functions of using different types of question to the students in the English classroom. The findings in this study pointed out that the total number of questions asked by the teacher in the two classes was 54 . The following discussed about the types of questions used by the teacher in the classroom and the functions of using different types of questions.

#### **Display and Referential Questions Used in English Classroom**

Based on the analysis of data it was found that the teacher used two types of questions in the class, they were display question and referential question. Display questions refer to ones that the teacher know the answer and which are designed to elicit or display particular structures. Referential questions refer to the questions that the teacher do not know the answers to and can provide various kinds of subjective information.

The numbers of questions types were given in table 1 since the first objective of the study was to investigate the frequency of referential and display questions in addition to the second one (the syntactical between them). It is noted in table 1 that the total number of display question was



14 (26 %) and referential question was 40 (74%). The teacher asked 40 display questions during the lesson and 14 referential questions which means that display questions were more widely used than than referential questions.

Table 1 The Numbers of Questions

Syntax of Question	Referetial question	Display Question	Total Number / %
Wh-Questions	5	28	33/61,1%
Yes/ No	8	11	19/35,1 %
Other	1	1	2/3,8 %
Total Number / %	14/26%	40/74%	54/100%

Concerning about the syntactic structures of teacher questioning, table 1 indicates that wh-question took the lion share (61,5%) of teacher questions; yes/no (35,1%) while others (tag, or questions, statements with rising/falling intonation) scored only 3,8% of teacher questions.

### **The Function of The Questioning Strategy Used by Teacher in English Classroom**

Based on the classification of Brown and Wragg, and Lunan and Lamb, the teacher's questions function as a tool to arouse interest and curiosity concerning a topic, to focus attention on a particular issue or concept to develop an active approach to learning, to stimulate pupils to ask questions of themselves and others, to check learner's understanding, to elicit information and to control the classroom. Here, the researcher analyze the function of teachers' questions based on the types of questions. There were some functions of using questions in English classroom

#### **a. Checking Learners' Understanding**

The first function of a display question was to check learners' understanding. The understanding was related to the subject matter, of



what is being learned about a certain topic. In this research, the students in class A and class B learned about simple past tense and other some questions. Table 2 below showed some questions used by a teacher to check students' understanding about the topic.

Table 2 Questions Used in Checking Students' Understanding

No	Question	Students' Response
1.	How about using verbal questions ?	S + V2 + Object
2.	Is it right ?	Yes, It is
3.	Is she a teacher ?	Yes, She is
4.	What are you ?	I am student
5.	Am I a teacher	Yes, You are
6.	Do you understand?	Yes, I do
7.	Is it clear for you?	No, It is not

The teacher in the class discussed about simple present and past tense. All the questions above were used in order to check how far the students understand about the topic being discussed.

**b. Arousing Interest and Curiosity Concerning a Topic**

The next function of a display question was to arouse students' interest and curiosity concerning a topic. It was presented in table 3 below :

Table 3 Arousing Interest and Curiosity Concerning a Topic

No	Question	Students' Response
1.	Is it positive or negative ?	Positive
2.	Change it into negative form. Can you ?	I was not happy in this cinema
3.	Who is Batakness in here ?	Andreas



Questions as listed in the table above were asked by the teacher when the teacher explained some examples of simple past tense.

**b.Focusing Attention on a Particular Issue or Concept**

The function was focusing students' attention on a particular issue or concept it can be seen in table 4 below :

Table 4 Focusing Attention on a Particular Issue or Concept

No	Question	Students' Response
1.	Is it a board marker ?	Yes
2.	Is it wrong ?	Yes
3.	Do you think so?	Student silent
4.	Change into negative form. Who knows ?	Student silent

In asking this question, the teacher wanted to get their attention to the topic being discussed.

**c.Controlling Classroom**

Some questions used by the teacher can function to controll the classroom. Th example of the question is *If you dont understand what I say, what will you say ?* and student's response is *No, we have not.*

The question above was posed to control the classroom. At the time, the students were too noisy in the classroom. They were talking with their classmates and gave no attention to what the teacher had said. The teacher asked this question to attract the students' attention back to the lesson even though she just said one student's name.

**d.Eliciting Information**

Another function using referential question in classroom interaction is to elicit the information from the students for example teacher's question *What did you do yesterday ?* and the student response is *I ate a plate of rice yesterday.* The question was shown when posing those referential questions, it meant to elicit information from the students.

It was related to their activities in the past. As stated by Ellis (2012:122), referential questions were asked to gain information about





situations, events, actions, purposes, relationship, and properties. This type was asked when the teacher did not know the answer. Here the teacher did not know about their activities and his father's condition in the past. Compared to display questions, referential question was posed mainly to elicit information from the students. The other two functions, which were to develop an active approach to learning and to stimulate students to ask questions of themselves and others were not applied in this questions.

#### **D. Discussion**

Gattis (2002:41) stated that a question is one of the most important tools in guiding and extending students' learning. It can help the teachers to develop their own strategy to enhance the students work and thinking. The finding of the research revealed that the teacher did 54 questions during the process of teaching English in the class. This is in accordance with the findings of some classroom interaction studies and it is in consistent with Bruald's (1986) claim about the big amount of teacher's time taken up by asking questions.

Concerning the types of question, the result indicated that display questions were the most widely used by a teacher in the class (74%). This result concurs with the findings of some studies which confirmed the overuse of display questions in EFL classes (Qashoa,2013 ; Hamiloğlu dan Temiz,2012; and Yang, 2006). It is noted that display questions were used to warm up the class, review previous lessons and elicit factual information. For example, "How to change positive into negative ?", "When we use simple past ?", "Is it positive or negative?", "How about number 3 ?". Additionally, teachers' desire to involve all the students in the interaction and the nature of the lessons might make teachers ask more display questions since they elicit short answers.

In this study, referential questions were used as much as 26 %. The referential questions were asked to convince the teacher whether the students had understood about the discussed topic. For example, "Do you understand?", "Have you understood?", "Is it clear?", "Is it clear for you?". Besides, referential questions were also used to get specific information



about the students. For example: "Who is Batakness in here ?","What did you do last night ?","Did you eat a plate of rice last night?","What is your name ?", "What did you do last night ?","Where did you go yesterday ?","Where is your note ?"

Regarding syntactic structures of teacher questions, the teacher used wh-questions and yes/no questions. It can be inferred from the obtained data that wh- questions were most frequently used (61,1%) in the classes. This finding is unsurprising because classroom is the most important place for using wh- questions and teachers utilize them to expand learners' knowledge, activate and engage students in classroom sessions (Celce& Larsen, 1999). The overuse of wh questions in L2 classes might affect positively students' language ability by giving them grammatical structures that seek out new information and then lead to more communicative interaction. At the same time, the usefulness and simplicity of yes/no questions in instruction should not be ignored. Unfortunately, the teacher did not use of other questions like tag, alternative, statements with intonations.

An analytical look at the questions used in the class indicates that most of wh-question got no response from the students. The students just kept silent when the teacher asked them with Wh-question. The use of yes/no questions by the teacher only elicited short answer from the students. . Although the number of referential questions asked in the classes was less than the display ones, longest student responses were elicited by referential questions (it was about seven words).

Brown and Edmonson (cited in Çakmak, 2009) classify some purposes teachers' questions. They are (1) to arouse interest and curiosity concerning a topic;(2)to focus attention on a particular issue or concept;(3)to develop an active approach to learning;(4)to stimulate pupils to ask questions themselves and others(5) to diagnose specific difficulties inhibiting pupil learning;(6)to express a genuine interest in the ideas and feelings of the pupils;(7)to provide an opportunity for pupils to assimilate and reflect upon information.

The study found out that the purpose of using question in the class were (1)to arouse interest and curiosity concerning a topic;(2)to focus



attention on a particular issue or concept;(3) to diagnose specific difficulties inhibiting pupil learning;and (4) to express a genuine interest in the ideas and feelings of the pupil. These types of questions do not challenge students enough to think at higher levels of their cognitive capacity rather lead them to quick and cognitively limited responses The teacher did not ask questions in order to develop an active approach to learning, to stimulate pupils to ask questions themselves and others, and to provide an opportunity for pupils to assimilate and reflect upon information.If the teacher questions to meet the last functions of the questions can improve students' high order thinking skills.

## E. Conclusion

Having analyzed the data, some conclusions were drawn as the following:

1. The questions that commonly used by the teacher were display and referential questions. A display question is a question that the teacher knows the answer and a referential questions is the questions that the teacher does not know the answer and can provide various kinds of subjective information. The total percentage of display and referential questions were 61,6 % for wh-questions, 35,1% for yes/no questions and 3,7 % for others.
2. There were some function of questioning strategies such as checking learners' understanding, arousing interest and curiosity concerning a topic, focusing attention on a particular issue or concept, controlling classroom, eliciting information.

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