

## English Teacher's Questions In Classroom Activity at SMPN 11 Tidore Kepulauan

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### Abstract

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This study aims to determine the types of questions in English lesson given by the English teacher in the classroom activity and the function of the questions given. This study was conducted on teachers of first grade at SMPN 11 Tidore Kepulauan. This study was descriptive qualitative and the technique of data collection is by observing and interviewing. The results of this study were that in the grade 1, teacher at SMPN 11 Tidore Kepulauan only used 2 types of questions, namely Display Questions and Referential Questions, there were no Open - Closed Questions in the learning process because the teacher considers the class level of the students is still low. The purpose of the teacher in giving Display Questions and Referential Questions type questions was to find out students' knowledge of what they are learning and to provide opportunities for students to dare to ask questions and speak English in the classroom

**Keywords:** Teacher's Questions, Classroom, Activity

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### INTRODUCTION

In teaching English, the teacher should give more attention to the questions for helping students in understand the materials. One of the problems that teachers could not create a good situation in teaching processes is they did not find out the alternative strategies to make the learners are attracted and active. Giving questions is a kind of the alternative strategies that teacher can used in classroom activity.

Questioning plays a critical role in the way teachers structure the class environment, organize the content of the course and has deep implications in the way that students assimilate the information that is presented and discussed in class. Given that questioning can be a tremendously effective way to teach, and recognizing that teachers are willing to engage in the process of asking questions while instructing (Leven and Long's research shows that the typical teacher asks between 300-400 questions per day).

From the development of the Socratic method, to the 1860 edition of Barnard's American Journal of Instruction that states, "to question well is to teach well," educators have long known that questioning is a useful way to aid in the transfer of knowledge from teacher to students (Ross, 1860). Over the past 100 years, multiple U.S.-based studies have focused on the use of questioning as a successful and universal pedagogical approach. Yet despite these studies and their findings, not much has changed in terms of the manner in which teachers ask questions. Leven and Long found that teachers in 1912 spent approximately eighty percent of the school day asking questions – a statistic that was replicated by their study of classroom teachers and their use of questioning in the 1980s (Leven and



Long, 1981). And Wilen's work shows that the vast majority of questions asked by teachers are low-level cognitive questions that require students to focus on the memorization and recall of factual information rather than questions which foster deeper student understanding (1991).

"Teachers' skill in questioning and in leading discussions is valuable for many instructional purposes, eliciting student reflection and challenging deeper student engagement" (Danielson, 1996, p. 92). Unskilled questioning focuses on "rapid-fire, short-answer, low-level questions" as vehicles for checking students' knowledge. Danielson calls this "recitation" rather than 'discussion', because the questions are not true questions but rather a form of a quiz in which teachers elicit from students their knowledge on a particular topic. ...poor questions...are boring, comprehensible to only a few students, or narrow—the teacher has a single answer in mind even when choices are possible".

Skilled questioning engages students in a true exploration of content. When they are carefully crafted and framed, questions "enable students to reflect on their understanding and consider new possibilities." Students are allowed "think time" before responses are expected and teachers often "probe a student's answer, seeking clarification or elaboration through such questions as, 'Could you give an example of...?' or 'Would you explain what you mean?'.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher interest in observing "English Teacher's Questions in Classroom Activity at SMPN 11 Kota Tidore Kepulauan." So that, the researcher addressed the questions in this research as follows:

1. What types of questions do the teacher ask?
2. What are the functions of the questions asked by teacher of English to first grade students?

In addition, the significance of this research is to know the type of questions the teacher used and the function of those questions. So, the teacher can choose questions, they give to their students correctly. The researcher limits this research only in first grade students of Junior High School.

## **Question**

A question is any sentence which has an interrogative form or function. In classroom settings, teacher questions are defined as instructional cues or stimuli that convey to students the content elements to be learned and directions for what they are to do and how they are to do it. The present review focuses on the relationship between teachers' classroom questioning behaviors and a variety of student outcomes, including achievement, retention, and level of student participation. This means that certain other subtopics within the general area of questioning are excluded from the present analysis. It does not deal, for example, with the effects of textual questions or test questions, and it is only incidentally concerned with methods used to impart study skills, including questioning strategies, to students.

What are the purposes of teachers' classroom questions? A variety of purposes emerge from analysis of the literature, including:

- To develop interest and motivate students to become actively involved in lessons

- To evaluate students' preparation and check on homework or seatwork completion
- To develop critical thinking skills and inquiring attitudes
- To review and summarize previous lessons
- To nurture insights by exposing new relationships
- To assess achievement of instructional goals and objectives
- To stimulate students to pursue knowledge on their own

These purposes are generally pursued in the context of classroom recitation, defined as a series of teacher questions, each eliciting a student response and sometimes a teacher reaction to that response.

Within these recitations, students follow a series of steps (consciously or unconsciously) in order to produce responses to the questions posed. These steps include:

- Attending to the question
- Deciphering the meaning of the question
- Generating a covert response (i.e., formulating a response in one's mind)
- Generating an overt response; and often
- Revising the response (based on teacher probing or other feedback). (Kathleen Cotton).

### **Functions of Questions**

Brown & Wragg (1993: 4) list several functions of questions, such as "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." However, with reference to language teaching, Nunan & Lamb (1996) state that teachers ask questions mainly to check learners' understanding, to elicit information and to control their classrooms. Peacock (1990: 128) says that "more often than not teachers appear to ask questions either to find out what pupils do or do not know and understand, or to remind them about work completed in a previous lesson, or perhaps to challenge, stimulate and develop their thinking". Morgan and Saxton (1991, cited in Brualdi 1998) add that teachers ask questions for several reasons. They ask questions to keep their learners involved during lessons, to express their ideas and thoughts, to enable learners to hear different explanations of the material, and to help teachers to evaluate their learners' learning and revise their lessons when necessary.

### **Types of Questions**

Questions can be classified into many types, but in this research the focus will be on the following four: display, referential, open and closed.

- ***Display Questions***

Ellis (1994: 700) defines the display question as "one designed to test whether the addressee has knowledge of a particular fact or can use a particular linguistic item correctly". Lightbown & Spada (1999) note that teachers ask display questions not because they are interested in the answer, but because they want to get their learners to display their knowledge of the language. Display questions are often used for instructional purposes to determine if students are able to "display" their knowledge of factual content.

Example:

“What color is your shirt?”

- **Referential Questions**

Nunan & Lamb (1996: 88) define referential questions as “those to which the asker does not know the answer”. Ellis (1994: 721) also explains that these are questions which are “genuinely information-seeking “. Lynch (1996) argues that teachers should ask referential questions because (a) learners tend to give longer answers than they do to display questions and (b) learners will be less willing to answer questions if their purpose is always to test knowledge. Referential questions are questions teacher ask the students because he/she do not know the answer.

Example:

“What did you do last weekend?”

“What is your favorite color?” (Gebhard, 71:1996).

- **Open & Closed Questions**

Nunan & Lamb (1996: 84) describe open questions as “those that encourage extended student responses”. Ellis (1994: 695) suggests that in open questions the teacher does not have a particular answer in mind and different responses are possible. He also mentions that some questions seem to be open, but in fact they are closed (these can be called ‘pseudo-questions’). In contrast, a closed question is “one that is framed with only one acceptable answer in mind”. A question like "What color is that block?" evokes a one-word answer. But an open & closed question, "Tell me about the blocks you are using," encourages a student to describe the blocks or explain what she/he is doing. There is no right or wrong answer here. An answer to an open & closed questions gives us a window into what the students is thinking and feeling. And the response is sometimes wonderfully creative. In explaining or describing, students also use language more fully (Ellis 1994: 695 in Alfarsi).

Example:

“How will you use the information? That will help me with our search”.

“I'd like to help you find the best possible information. Can you tell me more about your subject?”

## **RESEACRH METHODS**

### **Setting the research and the subject**

This study was descriptive qualitative research. The subject of this study is teacher of first year class at SMPN 11 Tidore Kepulauan. The teacher is female with about 12 year experience in teaching English. The total number of students in her classroom are 25 students, they consisted of 8 male students and 17 female students.

### **Observation**

Observation in this research is non participate observation, the researcher as an observer that focused on how to observed, how to record, how to learn and to write teachers' questions when it gave to the students and the students' response. Nonparticipant observation is a data collection method used extensively in case study research in which the researcher enters a social system to observe events, activities, and interactions with the aim of gaining a direct understanding of a

phenomenon in its natural context. As a nonparticipant, the observer does not participate directly in the activities being observed. Nonparticipant observation has a long history in the social and behavioral sciences. It is distinguished from participant observation by the observer's level and kind of involvement in the research setting, the nonparticipant observer adopting a more distant and separate role. At its most extreme, the nonparticipant observer has no contact whatsoever with the researched, but watches and records events through one-way mirrors or with cameras. (Liu and Maitlis).

### **Data Collection**

The researcher used video record to record teacher's questions in teaching learning process. The teacher's questions in a lesson were studied. In addition, the researcher made field notes during the lessons; these were questions during classroom activity.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was using Creswell's theory; raw data, organizing and preparing, reading through all the data, coding the data, description, and interpreting the meaning of description.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

In classroom activity teacher begun with introduction, giving some questions about the students' life and what they learned in last meeting. The teacher give aperception to make correlation between the lesson she ever teach before and she want to teach. After that she told what material they want to learned, and give students task with time limit about 15 minutes.

During the students doing their task the teacher always give explanation if the students do not understand what material they learned. After the students finished their tasks, the teacher give them question about the answer of the task they have done. The teacher give the students chance to talk more and to write down what they know about the questions on whiteboard. In last activity, teacher give questions about the students' feeling in learning and their summarize.

### **Types of Questions**

In the research, the researcher found many types of questions that teacher gave to the students, they were:

1. Who are absent today?
2. Who else?
3. How are you?
4. What the material we studied yesterday?
5. What month is it now?
6. What month last month?
7. The next month?
8. Ready?
9. Who is finish?
10. If any question?
11. Mei is the day of?
12. Who can answer?

13. The date of Independence Day?
14. The date of Youth Pledge Day?
15. The date of Mother Day?
16. The date of Heroes' Day?
17. The date of Earth Day?
18. The date of Batik Day?
19. The date of National Children Day?
20. The date of Pancasila Sanctity Day? When?
21. How many National Day in Indonesia?
22. What the summarize of our lesson today?
23. How the lesson today? Is it good?

## **DISCUSSIONS**

### **Functions of questions**

This shows that by far the most common function of questions was checking or testing learners' knowledge. Asking questions to get learners to practise language and to encourage learners to participate were also quite common. Questions asked with the purpose of showing interest in what the learners had to say were very rare. It is perhaps not surprising to find that in this research teacher asked questions mainly to check learners' knowledge. The researcher analyze the function of questions that the teacher had give to the students.

#### *1. Display Question*

The questions that the researcher analyze as display question are:

- What the material we studied yesterday?
- What month is it now?
- What month last month?
- The next month?

To know simple bit of students' knowledge about their lesson before, to make feedback between student and teacher and to relate the lesson before and they want to learn. The teacher usually used these questions when they want to start the lesson.

- 2 Mei is the day of?
- Who can answer?
- The date of Independence Day?
- The date of Youth Pledge Day?
- The date of Mother Day?
- The date of Heroes' Day?
- The date of Earth Day?
- The date of Batik Day?
- The date of National Children Day?
- The date of Pancasila Sanctity Day? When?
- How many National Day in Indonesia?

To know students knowledge about the lesson today and to clarifying what the students have learned. Teachers give these questions when students done with their work in class such as reading.

#### *2. Referential Questions*

Referential questions that the researcher found in the research are:

- Who are absent today?
- Who else?
- How are you?

The teacher give questions to know the students' situation in the beginning of learning process and to know how many students attend the class. And they try to motivate their students to speak up.

- Ready?
- Who is finish?
- If any question?

To know students had finish their task, and to give students chance to give questions.

- What the summarize of our lesson today?
- How the lesson today? Is it good?

To give opportunity to students to share their feeling about learning process. Teachers create a situation which is they want their students feel comfort and speak what they feel during the lesson.

## CONCLUSION

This research has made the researcher more aware of the types of questions the teacher used. The teacher used just two types of questions in classroom activity, Display and Referential Questions and the questions was in lower level of question. There was no Open & Closed Questions because the teacher thought that the students still at first grade of Junior High School. The function of the questions was commonly to check the students' knowledge about the lesson, engage and motivate the students to speak English and to share their feeling about the lesson. The researcher hope that these findings will make readers interested in studying what happens in their own classrooms as it is clear from the literature on classroom discourse, and the teachers' questions play as a central role in classroom interaction. They also influence what learners are able to say and how much they can talk. Teachers' questions are an important factor in foreign language learning.

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