

A Case Study of Teacher Questioning in English Class in Chinese High School

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Abstract: As one of the teaching activities, questioning in class is always a central topic for research. Teachers raise questions constantly in class in order to provoke students' interest in the context, which will create a favorable atmosphere. In English teaching, the importance of classroom interaction is obvious. Among the various kinds of interactions, teacher questioning and student answering is the most important one, however it is difficult for teachers to decide on the questions they should ask and the way they should phrase them. Based on the observation of reading classes of a key middle school, related suggestions are given to English teachers on how to achieve better questioning effects.

Key words: high school questioning; display question; referential question; wait-time; distribution; questioning effects

Introduction

English, commonly held as the world language, plays a highly important role in this modern world. It is estimated that 1.2 billion people are now speaking English and that 89 countries regard English as their second language. When it comes to Chinese students, English is becoming increasingly important with the development of the society, economy, and the more frequent cross-cultural communication. In this situation, it's necessary for middle school students to learn English well.

To some extent, all of our knowledge comes from questions. At each stage of our education, questions are the core element around which communication between teacher and student takes place. Teacher questioning is not only a communicative tool, but also an effective device to help students improve their linguistic ability.

Due to the important role that questioning plays, it is important that teachers find ways to improve the way of raising questions. This research was carried out based on three concerns of the author.

First, the studies of teacher questioning may contribute to a better understanding of how English is learned, especially through conversational interaction in the classroom.

The second reason is that, at present, most of the English learners are not satisfied with their English education. As an important part of classroom interaction, teacher questioning is also a main part they are complaining about. Studies of teacher questioning in terms of questioning skills, etc. will meet the learners' demands. Second, in the hope that the studies of teacher questioning in terms of questioning skills, etc. will meet the learners' demands.

Third, the studies of teacher questioning will contribute to English teacher education. Based on Tobin's research (Tobin, 1987), teacher questioning has been identified as one factor that distinguishes effective teaching practices from ineffective ones (Tobin, 1987). As Richards (1987) indicates, although a number of questioning techniques used by effective teachers have been identified in other classrooms, there is no assurance that the same techniques used by foreign language teachers will also result in effective teaching. By investigating three English teachers' questioning behaviors, this study will provide some insights into effective questioning practices for English teachers.

It will first do some general introduction of questioning theory. The author will do a research into the English class at teachers' questioning, and then discuss the problems in teacher's questioning. Finally, the paper will give some practical suggestions that will be used in English teaching and draw a natural conclusion.

Theoretical Approaches to Teacher Questioning

In this part, three different factors of teacher questioning are discussed one after another, and the previous studies undertaken by others will be introduced.

Types of questions

There are many ways to classify questions. Each reflects a different focus or purpose. Different scholars categorize questions from different perspectives. Barnes (1976) divided questions into closed questions and open questions, he explained that a closed question has one fixed answer, and an open question has many different responses.

The Longman Dictionary of English language provides the following definition for a question: a command or interrogative expression used to elicit information or a response, or to test knowledge.

Long and Sato classified questions into display questions and referential questions. “Display questions are those to which the questioner already knows the answer and is merely testing the respondent’s knowledge or understanding, while referential questions are ones to which the questioner does not know the answer and is genuinely seeking information” (Long & Sato, 1993). Thompson (1997) classified questions from three angles: form (yes/no questions or why-questions), content (fact or opinion) and purpose (display or communicative).

Long and Sato (1993) and Brock (1986) have investigated the role of questions in second language learning in the classroom environment. They have worked on the role of teacher's question types (especially display and referential questions) and their facilitating the learning. They believe that classroom questions of whatever sort are designed to get the learners to produce language. Brock contends that referential questions increase the amount of learner output; therefore, an increased use of referential questions by teachers may create discourse which can produce a flow of information from students to the teacher, and may create a more near-normal speech.

However, it is believed that display questions require short or even one-word answers and hence are less likely to get learners to produce large amounts of speech. Lynch quotes a number of researchers who investigated the balance between referential questions and display questions in the foreign language classroom. He summarizes his findings as followings.

Referential questions which considered as information-seeking questions predominant conversation outside classrooms (76% of all questions asked) made up a 14% of questions asked by teachers. This result suggests that, contrary to the recommendations of many writers

on second language teaching methodologies, communicative use of the target language makes up only a minor part of typical classroom activities. "Is the clock on the wall?" and "Are you a student?" are still the staple diet, at least for beginners.

Further qualitative distinctions were made by Long and Sato (1993) who suggest that learner responses would differ not only quantitatively but also qualitatively, depending on the type of questions. Referential questions, which seek information unknown to the speaker, were thought more likely to elicit longer, more authentic responses than display questions, for which responses are predetermined by lesson content. This hypothesized effect of a process variable was tested both in a simulated classroom interaction and in a natural classroom experiment. The results suggested that referential questions elicited slightly longer and more student utterances.

The study reported here consists of two parts: in the first part which is more or less qualitative in nature, no predetermined line of search is followed; rather, obtained data is investigated for recurring patterns of English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' questioning behavior. This aspect of the study will reveal generalizable patterns of teachers' use of questions in the observed EFL classrooms. However, the second part, which is of a quantitative nature, is concerned with clarifying two issues. The first issue concerns EFL teacher's questioning behavior, and the second concerns with the amount of interaction caused by teacher's questions.

Long and Sato researched question types with six English as a second language (ESL) teachers and their students, and found that teachers asked more display questions than referential questions. Long and Sato also concluded that teachers in ESL classes asked more display questions than referential questions. Another interesting study on question types found that teachers who put more referential questions into their classes' stimulated students' responses that were longer, more complex, and that contained a greater number of connectives (Brock, 1986). Long and Sato studied question types and learner output with six high school ESL teachers, and found that teachers asked more referential questions after training, but there was no significantly more student speech after referential questions (244). Musumeci (1996) also researched question types, and found teachers asked more display questions while students initiated more referential questions. In China, Zhou Xing and Zhou Yun (2002, p.59-66)

researched this topic with four English teachers and their students in Zhejiang University and found the opposite fact. They found that teachers asked more referential questions than display questions.

The findings of these researches are somewhat mixed. However, at a theoretical level, referential questions can encourage students to think more deeply and critically, to solve problems, to have discussions and to stimulate students to seek information on their own. Therefore, referential questions are likely to trigger more immediate output.

Arrangement of wait-time for questions

Another dimension of teachers' questions that has been considerably researched is "wait-time", including the length of time elapsing between the teacher's question and the student's answer, and between the student's answer and the following teacher's speech act (Tobin, 1987).

In most classes, students are typically given less than one second to respond to a question posed by a teacher. Research shows that under these conditions students generally give short, recall responses or no answer at all rather than giving answers that involve higher-level thinking. Studies beginning in the early 1970s and continuing through the 1980s show that if teachers pause between three and seven seconds after asking higher-level questions, students respond with more thoughtful answers and that science achievement is increased. This finding is consistent at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels and across the science disciplines.

However, some research studies have suggested that the benefits of increasing wait time may depend on factors such as student expectations and the cognitive level of the questions. In a study of increased wait time in a high school physics class, students became more apathetic in classes where the wait time was increased. This might have occurred because this strategy did not match students' expectations of how a high school physics course should be conducted. In a study at the elementary level, a decrease in achievement was attributed to waiting too long for responses to low-level questions

In the examination of a large number of elementary school science classes, Mary Budd Rowe (1974) found that although students need more time to think, research shows that

teachers wait only approximately one second before calling on a student and one second before probing the response, rephrasing the question, redirecting to another student, or providing the answer. She analyzed 900 tapes of teacher wait time and concluded that there were many positive effects of teacher waiting three to five seconds for student responses during questioning.

Shrum and Tech investigated French and German high school classes and came to similar conclusions as Rowe on the average length of wait time following questions (Richards, 1987). Specifically, they found that wait time following questions was less than two seconds (Shrum & Tech, 1985). Long and Crookes report a similar finding in an investigation of ESL teachers in Hawaii (1993, qtd. in Ellis, 1994).

Distribution of questions

Another factor is the distribution of questions. In general, the teacher offers speaking turns to students by either appointing who is to take the turn or by giving it to the whole class. The former can be done by nominating or by using gestures such as gaze. It is generally considered desirable to give questions to all students rather than restrict them to a few students. By offering response opportunities widely, all learners are kept alert and given an opportunity to respond. However, most teachers might find that they would like certain students to answer questions if they have a record of their teaching. Furthermore, it is usually the more competent students who get called (qtd. in Ellis, 1994). This means that those who need opportunities most are probably given the least classroom talking time.

Research design

With the rapid development of its society and economy, China is getting more powerful and drawing more worldwide attention. With the globalization trend, English learning is brought into more Chinese people's focus, even from the childhood age. English learning in senior middle schools is more important. So it's vital to improve the class questioning. However, the situation in China is not ideal. Before the author began the action research, he was puzzled why some of the students lost their interest in English questioning. Though some

of them worked hard, they were still weak in answering, the author took the following aspects into consideration when designing the research.

First, in traditional English teaching process, the class was teacher-centered, especially questioning. Teachers only drew the passive learners' interest in pronouncing the new words and phrases, explaining the grammar points and demonstrating the useful expressions or idioms by example sentences, which were teachers' interest but not the students'. When it comes to the questions, the teachers raise up too many true or false questions. Teachers wanted their students to review the learned knowledge, but students often failed to do so. This is so called "TEACH", which means the teachers deprived the students of their creative discovery. Meanwhile, it resulted in the students neglecting the main idea of the passages as well as the author's thought and the implied meaning of the text. Teachers stress the presentation of knowledge, explanation of grammar and questions raising instead of the promotion of the students' interest in questioning.

Ways of asking questions are single and stiff. Some teachers lack passion to provoke students' interest while asking questions. For example, some teachers are very tough-looking in the class and seldom smile, which makes the students feel very nervous. To some extent it will negatively affect them in answering. There are also some teachers who just stood on the platform, reading books without caring any of their students' reactions.

Some teachers don't give fair opportunities to students when asking questions but they always ask questions to the some high score students from time to time or the students seated in front rows who are mostly good students in the teachers' eyes.

Second, some students, especially the top ones, would rather answer their questions directly than share ideas with their peers. Most of the students can easily find answers from their books, so they seldom add their own thoughts to their answers. Though they've learned English for years in middle schools, our Chinese students are still deeply influenced by their mother tongue. The style of Chinese and English writing is quite different from each other. When they're given a piece of reading passage, they are puzzled. They want to keep every word of this passage in their mind, but some new words and phrases hinder them from doing so. If this passage is adapted from a resent newspaper or fashion novel, they are even more

confused by the native English idioms. In this case, they'll give up and just wait for teacher's explanations. As the time goes by, their interest in reading will lose.

Young people are always interested in new things. They are eager to catch up with the tide and the fashion. This provides teachers with a good idea to arouse students' interest in answering question. A skillful teacher won't neglect this point.

Some students lack confidence in voicing their own opinions when asked to present their own ideas. They are afraid of making mistakes and thus being laughed at by their peers.

Some students seated in the back rows are often neglected by some teachers because of their bad English performance. As time goes by, they lose confidence in English learning and can easily get absent-minded in classes.

Third, the class size of 50~65 students may have some negative effect, too. It's hard for everyone to get involved in classroom participation.

Finally a well-designed questioning must be concerned with how to arouse the students' interest in the topic and try to motivate them to answer it. Teachers also have to design some steps to encourage students to reach their goals and praise the students' achievement, either big or small. Good or OK is not enough. Some words like wonderful, excellent, great should be introduced into the classroom.

Method of the Research

During five reading classes (200 minutes), Mr. Zhou explained the texts in three aspects, tape-recording, transcribing, and analyzing. And the author also attended another English teachers' class to take some notes about the teacher's questioning skills. The lessons were not especially prepared for the research. Although the teacher was aware of the tape recorder, he did not know the purpose of the research. Thus, he did not change his teaching plan. The author personally attended the classes and took notes. Since the author was seated among the students and was simply regarded as a university student, her presence exerted no significant influence on the students' performance in class. In a word, the data was collected from a natural teaching context.

Purposes of the Research

This research intends to investigate the following three factors of the inquiry answer actualities at middle school English reading classes by case study:

- 1) The allotment of display questions and referential questions which applied by the English teacher
- 2) The distribution of the students who were given the questions according to specific subject in each period.
- 3) The objection in the existent methodology of teacher raising questions.

Subjects of the Research

The subjects of this study include the English teacher Mr. Zhou and his students from in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. The data analysis was collected from Mr. Zhou's class. His students' ages range from 16 to 17 and they have studied English for three years or so. The author also attended two other English teachers Mrs. Zhu and Mrs. Zhang's reading classes. The detailed information from Mr. Zhou's class is shown in table 1:

Table 1. Overview Information of Mr. Zhou's Class

Teaching Experience	Number of Students	Grade Of Students	Textbook	Degree of the teacher
19 years	53	Senior 1	SEFCBook1A	BA

Data Analyses and Findings

Ratio of display questions and referential questions

Table 2 shows that totally 144 (90.00%) display questions and 16 (10.00%) referential questions were asked by Mr. Zhou. It's clearly to be seen that the teacher raised more display questions in class. There are three reasons why there were so many display questions in Mr. Zhou's reading classes.

Table 2. Ratio of display questions and referential questions in Mr. Zhou's reading classes

Reading Class	Display Questions	Ratio (%)	Referential Questions	Ratio (%)	Total
1st	31	91.1	3	8.8	34
2nd	34	87.2	5	12.8	39
3rd	21	95.4	1	4.5	22
4th	27	90.0	3	10.0	30
5th	31	88.6	4	11.4	35
Total	144	90.0	16	10.0	160

First, English is a foreign language for both Mr. Zhou and his students. As we all know, learning a foreign language is different from learning our first language. Mr. Zhou had to use the knowledge he had obtained to make the new information comprehensible. It was found that the teacher seemed to have effectively used display questions: (1) to attract her students' attention to specific vocabulary words; (2) to relate the messages of reading assignment to the students' real-world experiences; (3) to provide the students with familiar contexts in which they practiced how to use the taught items. Therefore, his questions had to focus on the language points, such as the meaning and usage of the words and expressions, the translation of sentences from English to Chinese and Chinese to English, the understanding of the texts and so on. Most of these questions were display questions.

The second reason is that the time for questioning is limited. In most cases, English teachers are required to finish explaining the words and one text within 2.5 periods (100 minutes). The referential questions raised by English Teachers usually lead to classroom discussions, which will occupy more time. Therefore, in order to finish the lesson on plan, Mr. Zhou had to be very careful when advising students with referential questions and sometimes he had to give up asking such kind of questions in order to save time.

The third reason is about the English teachers' personal academic level. If the teacher is knowledgeable enough and can provide the students with updated information, he will have

the ability to ask more referential questions. What is more, according to the research, if the English teacher can share his personal experiences with his students, the students will be more enthusiastic to give their opinions.

Wait-time of teacher questioning

In the three teachers’ class, the teachers gave their students more post-question wait-time than post-response wait-time. This was why the students complained that the teacher did not wait patiently for them to finish their answers. As for this problem, the time factor and the dominant role of the teachers that are mentioned before can provide the answers. Since the three teachers controlled the speaking turn, they would stop the student if he had got the wanted answer. The teachers gave their students less post-response wait-time also because of their classmates. Sometimes other students spoke out their answers before teachers gave their comment or even before the student finished showing his answer.

According to the research, the three teachers waited for a longer time after giving the students referential questions, while for those display questions, they did not wait as long as they did for referential questions. This is because for the latter, the students need more time to think about or find out the answers.

Distribution of teacher’s questions

Table 3. Distribution of questions raised by Mr. Zhou in his reading classes

Reading Class	Number of Students Seated in the First Four Rows Being Questioned (Total: 53)	Number of Questions	Ratio (%)
1 st	18	34	52.94
2 nd	20	39	51.28

3 rd	14	22	63.64
Reading Class	Number of Students Seated in the First Four Rows Being Questioned (Total: 53)	Number of Questions	Ratio (%)
4th	13	30	43.33
5th	21	35	60.00
Average	17.2	32	53.75

From Table 3 we can find out that on average 53.75% of the students who got the chances of specific solicits to answer Mr. Zhou's questions were seated in the first four rows. What is more, according to the research, one student was given 6 chances to answer questions while other students got only two or three chances.

The students sat in the front rows were mostly the ones good at study. In most cases, many of them prepared the lessons much better than the others, thus, Mr. Zhou preferred to ask them to answer the questions. They had looked the meanings of the new words and expressions up in the dictionary, and also had thought over the texts. So once given the chance, they could immediately find out the answer and offer a very satisfactory answer. However, for those who sat in the back rows, many of them even did not know which part of the text the teacher was talking about. What is more, some students' spoken English was so poor that Mr. Zhou preferred not to ask them because nobody in the classroom could understand their answers. As time goes by, the students who don't be pointed to answer questions will lose confidence in learning English.

Further explanation and suggestions

This part tries to give some feasible suggestions to English teachers on how to achieve better questioning effects.

What to ask

The three teachers often ask display questions because they are mostly exam-oriented. In order to achieve higher scores they ask display questions concerned with language points, some new words or the content of the text. Seldom did they connect the questions to the students' real life. Life is the origin of knowledge. Most of the high school students lack interest in learning English because the English class do not closely related to their life and feelings in real lives. In the SEFC, there are texts introducing the famous people around the world. For example, in the Unit 17, it's the Great Women. In Mrs Zhu's class, she just asked some questions about the four great women based on the text, such as their background and their personal characters. The students could easily find the answers because the teacher had handed out the paper to the students the day before the class. They could refer to it for help and thus easily find out the answers. In this way, the students will gradually lose their interest in questioning because they take it mechanically. They needn't to add their own ideas to their answers. Take Unit 17 for example the four famous women lived in the years far away from now, which will cause strangeness to the young students. And it's difficult to raise their interest in answering. Yet, if teachers ask questions like "What kind of people do you think can be called famous?" and "who do you admire most in your life? Why?" These kinds of questions which come from real life, will closely connect the students to questions and also the teachers. It definitely will raise their passion to answer the questions and to give their own ideas from their personal life experiences. It's important for the teachers to decide on what to ask.

Deciding on what to ask depends on different matters and the students. Generally speaking, English teachers should try to give students interesting, challenging, scientific and creative questions to help them comprehend the texts. Morgan and Saxton also gave us eight characteristics of a good question:

- 1) A good question is an expressive demonstration of a genuine curiosity, and behind every question there must be the intention to know.

- 2) A good question has an inner logic related in some way to the teacher's focus and the students' experiences;

3) In a good question the words are ordered in such a way that the thinking is clarified both for the students and the teacher;

4) In a good question the intent must be supported by intonation and non-verbal signals. The pace of the question should match the intent;

5) A good question can provide surprise. Students will sometimes respond to a good question by talking about things that neither they nor the teacher were aware that they knew;

6) A good question challenges existing thinking and encourages reflection; a good question is seen as part of an on-going dialogue which involves relationships between speakers;

7) A good question has reason, focus, clarity and appropriate intonation. It can challenge and surprise but should not be seen as a weapon by which to diminish others;

8) A good question maintains student engagement, stimulates thought and evokes feelings. (Morgan & Saxton 1991)

Besides, English teachers should prepare some questions that can relate the texts to our daily life. For example, when Mr. Zhou gave the lesson of *Adventure Travel* he asked the students to share their personal travel experiences with the whole class at the beginning of the lesson. While talking about the tips for travel, Mr. Zhou divided the whole class into nine groups and asked them to write down travel tips as many as possible for the coming National Day. Thus, students' interests were aroused and they showed great enthusiasm in the discussion.

When to ask

English teachers should notice that students do not want to answer questions at certain times during the classes.

The students do not want to answer questions when they do not have enough knowledge and experience from which they can draw an answer. In Mr. Zhou's class there are some students being questioned and they appeared to express some uninformed and ill-informed opinions. In fact, this is a time when the students should be encouraged to ask questions, but not answer them.

The students do not want to answer questions when they are working out the answers. In Mrs. Zhu's class she tended to enter into a group discussion by using a question. She asked the students "Are there any problems?" and "How are you all getting along?" In fact, the students regard this kind of questions as interruptions. It is better for English teachers to sit down to listen to and notice the difficulties they have.

In Mr. Zhou's class, the author noticed some students who seem to have some problems, Mr. Zhou asked something like "Are you all right?" and "What seems to be the problem?" It is much better to say, "You are very quiet today" and then become a listener, allowing the student to do the talking if he wants to. In this way the student will know that the teacher is concerned with him not demanding an answer.

When it comes to the wait time part in the class. Two of the three teachers didn't spent enough time on it. Mr. Zhou. Mrs. Zhu and Mrs. Zhang wanted their students to give the answers promptly; sometimes they even stopped the students while they were thinking over the questions. Students should be given enough time to think about their answers. Generally speaking, students who are given adequate time to think will give better answers and participate more actively in teacher questioning. English teachers should try to avoid asking questions too frequently because it will add great pressure to the students and will lead to more communication failure in the classes. Therefore, lack of success caused by inadequate time of thinking will undoubtedly frighten the students.

Whom to ask

According to the research, there are some common problems about the ways in which teachers distribute the questions. Some teachers tend to ask boys questions while some tend to ask girls. In Mrs. Zhu's class she asked more girl students to answer questions. Mrs. Zhang prefers to ask high achievers questions while some others tend to ask low achievers. And Mr. Zhou would like to save his questions for students seated in certain rows while some others do not.

Surely, these behavior will exclude some students' participation during teacher questioning. Morgan and Saxton (1991) said that the keys for unlocking general participation are to: "support the weak; encourage the triers; tolerate (and see the potential for learning from)

contrary opinions; and appreciate the contributions made by your bright students, as aids to your own teaching process”.

Wringe (1989) once proposed to divide students of one class into three categories: A) Those who, if given the chance, would respond correctly and with ease; B) Those who may respond correctly, but for whom this would represent an achievement; C) Those who will almost certainly be defeated by the question. The proportion of students who belong to categories A, B and C are not constant, but will vary depending on the different questions. According to Wringe’s opinion, English teachers should ask the student who may give a more or less satisfactory response (category B). Because the answer of a student of category A will leave us nothing to develop; the answer of a student of category B will tell us something more and will eliminate the embarrassment of students of category C.

Wait-time

In the three teachers’ teaching, students are typically given less than one second to respond to a question posed by a teacher. Research shows that under these conditions, students generally give short, recall responses or no answer at all rather than giving answers that involve higher-level thinking. Studies conducted in early 1970s and 1980s show that if teachers pause between three and seven seconds after asking higher- level questions, students respond with more thoughtful answers and that science achievement is increased. This finding is consistent at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels and across the science disciplines.

However, some research studies have suggested that the benefits of increasing wait time may depend on factors such as student expectations and the cognitive level of the questions. In a study of increased wait time in a high school physics class, students became more apathetic in classes where the wait time was increased. This might have occurred because this strategy did not match students’ expectations of how a high school physics course should be conducted. In a study at the elementary level, a decrease in achievement was attributed to waiting too long for responses to low-level questions.

Increasing the wait time from three to seven seconds results in an increase in: 1) the length of student responses 2) the number of unsolicited responses, 3) the frequency of student questions, 4) the number of responses from less capable children, 5) student-student

interactions, and 6) the incidence of speculative responses. In addition to pausing after asking questions, research shows that many of these same benefits could be achieved when teachers pause after the student's response to a question, and when teachers do not affirm answers immediately.

Increasing wait time also increases science achievement, and students' participation in inquiry. Research indicates that when teachers increase their wait time to more than three seconds in class discussions, achievement on higher-cognitive-level science test items increases significantly. This holds for test items involving content, the process skills, and items involving probabilistic reasoning.

However, care must be taken in applying wait time judiciously. The optimal wait time for a given question should be adjusted to the cognitive level of the question, and student's responses should be carefully monitored.

Questioning skills

Presenting Questions

Most questions that teachers ask are simple recall questions that require the student to remember some factual information and recite it to the teacher. Comprehension questions require the student to demonstrate understanding in addition to mere recall. Analysis questions cause the student to apply that comprehension to a new setting. Evaluation questions ask the student for his or her beliefs or opinion.

Most people think that questioning is so straightforward and easy that anyone can do it right. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Here are a number of simple guidelines to asking questions that would improve most teachers' questioning skills:

1. Be sure that the question is clear in your own mind. Think through what you want from the student before you ask the question.
2. Frame (state) the question without calling on a specific student. When you call on a student before the question is asked, every other student is free to ignore the question.

3. After framing the question, pause while everybody has a chance to think of an answer, then (AND ONLY THEN) calls of a student to respond. That is called wait time, and it is amazing how few teachers use this important questioning skill. The average wait time, when the teacher waits at all after a question, is less than a second. There should be at least 2 to 4 seconds after any question before any student is called on to answer it. You might even try counting to yourself to force you to wait an appropriate time.

4. Ask only one question at a time. Multiple part questions are confusing and are likely to result in student misunderstanding. That is where the teacher asks a series of related questions or restates the same question over and over without getting (sometimes without allowing) an answer.

5. Use recall questions first to be sure the students have the knowledge. Then proceed to comprehension and analysis questions. Follow those up with evaluation questions.

Using Probing

Effective use of probing is one of the most important questioning skills. If the student does not provide a complete answer, he or she may know a partial answer. In some cases, even though the question is perfectly clear to the teacher, it might need to be restated or broken down into smaller pieces. The teacher should not accept "I don't know" as the final response.

Probing is the use of further questions to force the student to put together his or her partial knowledge into a more complete answer. Probing often involves the use of follow-on or leading questions to help the student answer the initial question or to provide a more complete answer.

Probing means going deeper; it means digging. It can sometimes be painful to both the student and the teacher. It requires patience on the part of the teacher. In any case, it means not answering your own questions until you have tried to make the students think through the answer. Even a simple recall question may lead to important new learning on the part of the students if probing is used effectively.

Shifting Interaction

Another important questioning technique is called shifting interaction. This involves redirecting the class discussion from one student to another. If a student's response is incomplete or incorrect, the teacher should try probing that student first. If that is not productive, responsibility for the question should be shifted to another student. Positive reinforcement should be provided to the first student and the same question should be redirected to a second or even a third student.

Sometimes a student will respond to a teacher's question with another question, with shifting interaction, the teacher simply redirects the student's question to another student. If the student asks for an opinion, the teacher may even redirect it back to the same student.

Conclusion

The evolution of English teaching methods from the traditional grammar translation (which is a teacher-dominated method) to the communicative shows the trend that learners' role have begun to be identified, though in actual daily teaching practices, learners still do not enjoy their due position in the language teaching. The old language teaching method like grammar teaching method picks teachers as the controller of language teaching in the classroom, whilst its controller should be the students. Learners' positions are important whilst teachers' roles lies in exploiting students' potentials of learning a foreign language, cultivating their interests about it and introducing effective strategies of foreign language teaching. With the increasing awareness of the learners' role and position in the language teaching, the situation changes a lot. Teacher's questioning is an obvious progress of this.

Most EFL students learn English from their teachers in class, so class study is very important in English teaching and learning. On one hand, everything that happens in a classroom happens through a process of person-to-person interaction, but on the other hand, the classroom is a place where interactions of various kinds take place, and it offers students opportunities to learn English. In most English classes, the interaction comes between teachers asking questions and students answering them. Therefore, teacher questioning is a significant area for us to study.

English teachers' questions can give the students impetus and opportunities to produce comfortable language. They can give the teachers immediate feedback about students' comprehension. English teachers' questions also provide students with opportunities to find out what they think by what they say. These all require English teachers to master the questioning behavior artfully.

Foreign language learning experience is different from other subjects' learning in that the former needs to maximize learner's role to the last degree as it is a hard physical work. It requires learners' to be interested in it, to be highly motivated, to take charge of their own learning since it needs long time to master a foreign language. It is highly individualized act. Without enough patience, interest and motivation, she or he can not be a great language learner. In the era of 'Global Village', everything needs to be viewed in the long run and foreign language learning is no exception either. Advocating teachers' questioning is not only useful to learners' language learning but also beneficial to their learning of other subjects.

This paper gives some feasible suggestions on what questions to ask, when to ask questions and whom to ask questions, which need our attention.

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