USING QUESTIONS EFFECTIVELY AS A TEACHING DEVICE

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ABSTRACT

English teaching is a process that the teacher interacts with students. Asking and answering are the primary ways to communicate with each other, so questioning plays a central role in classroom. It urges students to think actively and develops their creative thinking. Because of the importance of questions to the research process, one of the things a teacher at a university tries to teach students is how to ask good questions, and how to answer them appropriately. This makes the process of questioning important in every class taught at a university. Questions are important to the students in a class for two reasons: (1) Students learn to ask questions by asking questions. Students learn to ask good questions by asking questions and then receiving feedback on them. Students learn to become scholars by learning to ask good questions; (2) student asking a question is at that moment a self-motivated learner - a researcher. This is the behavior trying to nurture.

Keywords: Questions, Effectively, Teaching Device.

INTRODUCTION

As the education has already welcomed the 21st century's dawn, we have entered the personal digitization information age, and it has appeared many changes in classroom teaching and in the students' activities since the educational reform (Lindley, 1993). Teaching has become more scientific, interesting and vivid. Teachers' questioning has traditionally been viewed as an important component of teacher talk and the core of effective teaching in classroom context. Asking questions is one of the most common teaching tactics used. Qualitative questions directly influence the classroom activities. Effective questions depend on the using of teachers' skills.

A common problem that EFL (English as a foreign language) teachers are facing is to deal with a passive class, where students are unresponsive and avoid interaction with the teacher. This is especially true when a teacher seeks interaction in a teacher-class dialog, such as asking questions to the class as a whole, expecting at least one student to respond. This can be a frustrating experience for the two sides (Marshall Brain, 1998). Obviously, there will be time when no student can answer a teacher's question. However, students often are reluctant to make response even if they understand the questions, know the

answers, and are able to produce the answers. What more, students are rather reluctant to give feedback.

The students, as a whole, don't respond voluntarily to the instructor's questions and don't participate in class discussions. Most of the class members sit looking straight ahead using minimal facial expressions, gestures and verbal utterances. Thus the teachers receive little oral feedback. What the teachers want are the students to be more positive and overtly communicative in their feedback. It is necessary for teachers to understand how the dynamics of classroom communication influence students' perceptions and participation in classroom activities, and then it may enable them to monitor and adjust the patterns of classroom communication in order to create an environment that is conducive to both classroom learning and second language acquisition. Classroom is regarded as a unique communication context. The patterns of classroom communication ultimately determine students' participation in classroom activities by using the language, and the opportunities and efficiency of the target language acquisition. One of the key language teaching methods is to use questioning as a learning tool to promote classroom interaction. Questions are easy to "trigger" thinking, ignite inquiry and establish dialogic relationships. However, it is important to know that not all questions achieve these. Being a teacher, have you ever thought about the questions you ask your students?

How do your teacher-student interactions change depending on the questions you ask? What kind of questions and structures will get the best results from your students? Questioning plays an important role in teacher talk which is considered to have a potential effect on learners' comprehension, and which has been hypothesized to be important for Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Certain skills are involved in the questioning process. What kind of questioning skills to choose is totally different to individual teachers? Teachers' personal taste, educational beliefs and cultural background may have an impact on their own choice and application of strategies. Nowadays mutual communications between different races and areas are becoming more frequently than ever before

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Classroom questioning plays a core role in English teaching, which is one of the most important ways to initiate the communication between teachers and students (Yang 2017:162). According to Naz, et al (2013) Effective communication involves quality interactions between teachers and students in order to gain mutual understanding and enhance learning. Teacher of education courses should teach pre-service teachers how to promote classroom discourse and the classification of question levels, phrase of questions, order of questions, wait time, feedback, and follow-up questions. Moreover, by the end of a teacher education course the pre-service teachers should understand how to: (1) differentiate and ask factual recall, convergent, and divergent questions for varied purposes, (2) phrase questions, (3) organize questions in a logical order, (4) provide appropriate wait time for student's thinking, (5) build a positive classroom environment that encourages and motivates student's participation, (6)

provide constructive feedbacks that facilitate classroom interaction, (7) ask follow-up questions focusing on student's reasoning skills, and (8) apply various questioning techniques while teaching a mini-lesson (Zhank and Patrick 2012:172).

a. Reasons for asking students questions

Ask students questions to:

1. Get them thinking
2. Motivate learners
3. Improve lesson effectiveness
4. Foster rapport between you and your students
5. Enhance learning through communication among learners
6. Assess prior knowledge
7. Assess learning
8. Assess teaching effectiveness
9. Guide those having difficulties back to the task
10. Encourage personal connections to the content

(BCIT, 2010)

b. Negative Pressure

There are a number of forces at work to discourage students from asking questions. A good teacher works constantly to overcome these negative forces.

The primary negative pressure against questions is "stupid" pressure. Students tend to feel stupid when asking questions. They especially feel stupid if the teacher answers questions in such a way that it makes them look like a fool in front of their peers. But "stupid" pressure is at work even when you are tutoring a student one-on-one, because nobody wants to admit that they don't know something: this is part of being human (Marshall, 1998)

Many other forces work against questions. Large classes discourage dialog and questions because any intimacy or friendliness between students and teacher is discouraged by the sheer size of the class. Questions are also discouraged by time pressure. You may need to get through a certain amount of material on a given day, and you therefore leave fewer gaps for questions.

Another pressure that frequently discourages questions is the attitude or personality of the teacher. If the teacher insults students who ask questions, or makes them feel foolish, or sends signals that questions waste time (e.g. - negative tone of voice, monosyllabic answers, saying "we don't have time for that question", etc.), then students will not ask questions, and the class will become a monologue.

c. Encouraging Questions

A teacher cannot encourage questions solely by standing at the front of the class and asking, "Are there any questions?" There is so much pressure forcing students NOT to ask questions that it cannot be overcome by this single act. According to Dos et al (2016:2073) teachers have misconceptions about convergent and divergent questions. Wrong questions for wrong aims might lead to wrong results. In addition, teachers' statements that they ask questions mostly

to attract students' interest and attention might provide information about how the lesson is taught.

The only way to encourage questions is to create a complete "question-asking environment" in the classroom. You must encourage questions constantly, using a variety of techniques.

The most important technique that you can use to encourage questions is to always answer questions kindly. Even if you have answered the same question three times already, the fourth answer should be even and friendly, and should include a new example. The student may have been copying something down, or may have been daydreaming. But normally questions occur multiple times because students cannot understand the language you are speaking. Questioning is a highly prestigious teaching skill which requires a well-planned lesson. In planning stages, teachers can prepare questions which completely analyze the content of lessons and engage students in active interaction during classroom participation (Hamiloglu, K, 2012:6).

Here are some other ways to promote questions:

- a) Make students who ask questions feel like they have done you a favor by asking a question. Reward students for asking a question. Try saying, "That's a great question" for every new question you get.
- b) Leave gaps for questions that are long enough for students to actually formulate questions. Rustle through your notes or drop a pencil or erase the board - leave good sized gaps throughout your lectures.
- c) Do not insult students, even subtly, when answering a question. Take a tape recorder to class one day, and then play it back and listen to how you answer questions. How do you come across? Would you like to be talked to in that way? Put yourself in your students' shoes. Also listen to the answers you give - do you answer the questions?
- d) Use questionnaires at the end of class. Ask your students to write down one thing that they don't understand from that day's class. Then go over those questions at the beginning of the next class. Once students realize that everyone has questions, they will be more inclined to ask questions vocally during class.
- e) Have your students work problems during class. Put a problem on the board and let students work it in their notes. Then show them the right answer. You can do examples all day, but nothing is learned until the students do a problem themselves. It shows them exactly what they don't understand, and this often leads to questions.
- f) Make lists of questions that you get asked during your office hours, and then repeat those questions to everyone during the next class.
- g) Give homework assignments that force students to think about and question the material, and make time available in class to answer homework questions. If a homework assignment generates no questions, then it is probably useless.
- h) Use tests to find out where you have been unclear, and where questions remain. A well designed and well graded test tells you as much about your teaching as it does about your students.

- i) Start each class by briefly reviewing the material from the previous class.
- j) Introduce a difficult concept for 5 minutes at the end of class. Then cover the concept fully during the next class. Students will have a day or two to become familiar with the concept, and will be more inclined to ask questions when they see it again.

A good question-asking environment is a fragile and delicate thing. It must be nurtured every day. Once a good environment is created however, it can make a significant contribution to the quality of your class

d. What are the questioning pitfalls:

We can all ask questions, but if we are not careful we can use them in such a way that we close down the learning and make a lesson seem very bitty. Here are just a few of these pitfalls.

- 1) Asking too many closed questions
- 2) Yes or no questions
- 3) Short answer recall-based questions
- 4) Repetitive questioning
- 5) Inappropriate level questioning.
- 6) Poorly phrased ambiguous questions

e. Type of question

Below are the levels of the taxonomy, a brief explanation of each one, and examples of questions which require students to use thinking skills at each level (William and Linda:1).

Knowledge - Remembering previously learned material, e.g., definitions, concepts, principles, formulas.

Examples:

What is the definition of "verb"?

What is the law of supply and demand?

What are the stages of cell division?

Comprehension - Understanding the meaning of remembered material, usually demonstrated by explaining in one's own words or citing examples.

Examples:

What are some words which are commonly used as adjectives?

What does the graph on page 19 mean?

Explain the process of digestion.

Application - Using information in a new context to solve a problem, to answer a question, or to perform another task. The information used may be rules, principles, formulas, theories, concepts, or procedures.

Examples:

Using the procedures we have discussed, what would you include in a summary of Bacon's essay?

How does the law of supply and demand explain the current increase in fruit and vegetable prices?

Based on your knowledge, what statistical procedure is appropriate for this problem?

Analysis - Breaking a piece of material into its parts and explaining the relationship between the parts.

Examples:

What are the major points that E. B. White used to develop the thesis of this essay?

What factors in the American economy are affecting the current price of steel?

What is the relationship of probability to statistical analysis?

Synthesis - Putting parts together to form a new whole, pattern or structure. How might style of writing and the thesis of a given essay be related?

Examples:

How are long-term and short-term consumer loan interest rates related to the prime rate?

How would you proceed if you were going to do an experiment on caloric intake?

Evaluation - Using a set of criteria, established by the student or specified by the instructor, to arrive at a reasoned judgment.

Examples:

Does Hemingway use adjectives effectively to enhance his theme in *The Old Man and the Sea*?

How successful would the proposed federal income tax cut be in controlling inflation as well as decreasing unemployment?

How well does the Stillman Diet meet the criteria for an ideal weight reduction plan?

f. Lower and Higher-Level Questions

At times instead of referring to a specific level of the taxonomy people refer to "lower-level" and "higher-level" questions or behaviors. Lower level questions are those at the knowledge, comprehension, and simple application levels of the taxonomy. Higher-level questions are those requiring complex application (e.g., analysis, synthesis, and evaluation skills).

Usually questions at the lower levels are appropriate for:

- 1) Evaluating students' preparation and comprehension.
- 2) Diagnosing students' strengths and weaknesses.
- 3) Reviewing and/or summarizing content.

Questions at higher levels of the taxonomy are usually most appropriate for:

- 1) Encouraging students to think more deeply and critically.
- 2) Problem solving.
- 3) Encouraging discussions.
- 4) Stimulating students to seek information on their own.

QUESTIONING CATEGORY	BLOOM'S CATEGORY	STUDENT ACTIVITY	TYPICAL STEM WORDS
LOWER LEVEL	Knowledge	Remembering: Facts Terms Definitions Concepts Principles	What? List Name Define Describe
	Comprehension	Understanding the meaning of material	Explain Interpret Summarize Give examples ... Predict Translate
	Application	Selecting a concept or skill and using it to solve a problem	Compute Solve Apply Modify Construct
HIGHER LEVEL	Analysis	Breaking material down into its parts and explaining the Hierarchical relations.	How does ... apply? Why does ... work? How does ... relate to...? What distinctions can be made about ... and...?
	Synthesis	Producing something original after having broken the material down into its component parts.	How does the data support...? How would you design an experiment which Investigates...? What predictions can you make
	Evaluation	Making a judgment based upon a pre-established set of criteria.	What judgments can you make about ...? Compare and contrast ...criteria for ...?

CONCLUSION

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This makes the process of questioning important in every class taught at a university. Questions are important to the students in a class for two reasons:

1. Students learn to ask questions by asking questions. Students learn to ask good questions by asking questions and then receiving feedback on them. Students learn to become scholars by learning to ask good questions.
2. A student asking a question is at that moment a self-motivated learner - a researcher. This is the behavior trying to nurture.

Questions are also important to the teacher:

1. Questions tell you that your students can understand and are thinking about what you say. If you begin to talk at too high a level, students will stop understanding and thinking, and will ask no questions. Questions tell you whether your class is asleep or awake.
2. If encouraged, students will ask questions about concepts they do not understand. These questions give you immediate feedback when you are unclear, and tell you where you need to spend more time.
3. Education is a dialog between student and teacher. It is not a monolog - if it were, students could simply buy the textbook and read it themselves. Students attend classes so that two-way communication can occur. Questions are an important part of this dialog.

For all of these reasons, questions should be actively and constantly encouraged.

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