

Questioning in the EFL Classroom: Teachers' and Students' Perspectives

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Abstract: Interaction is one crucial aspect that should occur between teacher and student to achieve learning objectives. Asking questions is one of the ways to get to the interaction. The interaction between teachers and students in the classroom, therefore, needs to examine. This qualitative research aims to analyze teachers' and students' perspectives on teachers' questioning. The purpose of this study is to know teachers' and students' perspectives on teachers' questioning in the classroom. The result of this study was analyzed descriptively, and the data were collected by interviewing three teachers and eight students at an Islamic Junior High School in Banda Aceh. Based on the finding of the result, it showed that the teachers and students believe that teachers' questions are important because teachers' questions help teachers check their students understanding, motivate students in speaking practice, and motivate students in learning. The findings of this research help teachers realize that teachers' questions are important, so the teachers can use a proper type of questioning in the classroom. Furthermore, the teachers can build more interaction and help students to get more understanding and critical thinking. Finally, the researcher offers some implications and recommendations derived from this study. First, recommend that the teacher ask more high-order questioning in the classroom. Second, employing questioning strategies throughout the entire lesson. The third, paying attention to all students.

Keywords: EFL classroom; questions; teacher questioning.

How To Cite: Fajria, R., Aziz, Z., & Aulia, M. (2024). Questioning in the EFL Classroom: Teachers' and Students' Perspectives. *Al-Ta'lim Journal*, 31(3). doi:<https://doi.org/10.15548/jt.v31i3.922>.

Article info: Submitted: 19th December 2023 | Revised: 30th October 2024 | Accepted: 31th November 2024

INTRODUCTION

Interaction between teachers and students in the classroom is one of the crucial parts in developing relationships to transfer and share knowledge, provide feedback, and engage in other learning activities (Huriyah & Agustiani, 2018; Nurpahmi, 2017; Sagita, 2018). Without interaction between teacher and students, teaching and learning activities will not happen, and learning objectives will not be achieved. Because interaction is an exchange of information between one person and another Kalantari (2009), maintaining the relationship with individuals become very important.

One of the best strategies to maintain good interaction is gaining students' attention and participation in the classroom, and it can be done, among others, is by asking questions. Any sentence with an interrogative form or function can be defined as a question (Lindawati, 2016; Qizi, 2024; Yessenbayeva et al., 2020). Questioning has important implications for how students receive and process material provided and discussed in class (Duran, 2017; McComas, 2004; Pangbourne et al., 2020; Tawfik et al., 2020). Furthermore, teachers will receive feedback from their students by asking questions. The feedback concerns their comprehension of the information or lesson they have learned. In this situation, teachers can find mistakes about the topic and assess students' understanding of their learning goals by looking at how they respond to their

questions (Walsh & Sattes, 2016). According to Rosenshine (2012), a teacher can use questions to assess a student's understanding of a subject and determine whether further learning is required. When learning objectives are included in the questions, students learn more effectively (Fuchs et al., 2014; Navtria et al., 2020a). Those questions reflect low and high-order questions, depending on the student's abilities, the instructional objectives to be met, and the aim of the questioning.

Asking questions can also give students more opportunities to participate and improve their understanding of learning activities. Many teachers underestimate the types of questions. Based on observations done by the researchers recently at an Islamic School in Greater Aceh, teachers have applied seven various types of questions, including procedural, divergent, and convergent questions (Ashwin et al., 2020; Pollard et al., 2023), closed and open questions (Gardner, 2019), and display and referential questions (Kao & Weng, 2012a). In teaching English, teachers have showed to apply closed, display, and convergent questions in one meeting. It was determined that closed, display, and convergent questions were the most common types of spoken questions used by teachers in the English teaching and learning process. It showed that teachers tend to use low-order thinking questions in the classroom. This also shows that teachers are not aware of the importance of questions in the classroom.

Other researcher findings have showed that teachers mostly used remembering questions in the classroom (Nevrtia, 2020; Omari, 2018). Aprina & Andriyanti (2020) have also found that divergent and referential questions were less commonly asked by the teacher and more frequently convergent and display questions. Astrid et al. (2019) found three types of teachers questioning strategies teachers use in their teaching and learning processes: convergent, divergent, and procedural. Teachers mostly used convergent questions (yes/no and short answers). The types of questioning most frequently used by teachers are referential and display questions (Ciptaningrum et al., 2021; Tofade et al., 2013). From these research findings, it showed that questioning is one of the essential parts that should happen in the classroom.

However, most teachers underestimate this kind of issue. Many teachers use low-order thinking questions in the classroom. Teachers are supposed to be familiar with many types of questions, questions can make a better interaction between teacher and students and help students develop their understanding and critical thinking skills. According to Safitri (2021), in terms of the importance of teacher questions in classroom interaction, teachers should be aware of the types of questions that can help students learn the target language. This present study has formulated the research questions as "What are teachers' and students' perspectives on teachers' questioning?"

The research findings will be beneficial for English teachers and English teacher trainers. This research helps teachers realize that teachers' questions are important, so the teachers can use a proper type of questioning in the classroom. Then, teachers can help students gain more understanding and develop critical thinking in the teaching and learning process.

Questioning

A question is any interrogative language that can enhance and develop learners' attention to the topic items to be learned and help them acquire knowledge (Astrid et al., 2019a). According to Cotton (2001), a question is any sentence with an interrogative form

or purpose. Marhaeni et al., (2018) suggest that a question is any interrogative language the speaker uses to elicit information from the listener (Erlinda & Dewi, 2016; Rachmawaty & Ariani, 2019; Yang, 2021). Based on Özerk (2001), the teaching and learning processes necessarily mean questions.

In a classroom context, a question can be characterized as an instructional cue or stimulation that helps the teacher communicate the lesson's content and direction on what the students should do and how they should accomplish it (Cotton, 2001; McCarthy et al., 2016). Irawati et al., (2021) suggest that the teacher may establish a relationship with the students by asking them questions during the teaching. This can also signal an interest in sharing an idea. The teacher can also determine each student's prior knowledge and understanding of a subject.

Questioning refers to the instructional signals or stimuli that communicate to students the material items to be learned and the tasks they must complete. The use of questions in teaching and learning is beneficial. Teachers use questions to assist students in studying, checking comprehension, stimulating critical thinking, fostering creativity, stressing a point, supervising classroom activities, and for other reasons and objectives (Buck et al., 2018; Craig, 2019; Gervasio et al., 2011).

The Purpose of Questioning

According to Frazier & Brown (2001), teachers' questions serve a few purposes in the classroom. Teachers' questions can, firstly, provide students with the motivation and chance to produce language satisfyingly, as many EFL students are hesitant to start class discussions independently without the teacher's encouragement. Asking the right questions will provide silent students with an excellent opportunity to communicate with others through their use of language. Secondly, questions asked by teachers can provide a stimulus to encourage students to engage in conversation and group activities. Starting a conversation might take one question; however, students will not be ready to get things going without that first question. Thirdly, teachers can provide students with immediate feedback regarding their understanding by asking questions. A teacher can identify linguistic or subject issues in a student by asking a question and then using the student's response. For instance, a student's response may highlight phonological or grammatical issues and provide the teacher with specific guidance on correcting them. Finally, teacher's questions will give students the chance to hear what others say to learn what they think. They can learn about their ideas and feelings as they are prodded into answering questions concerning, for example, a reading or a movie. This introspection is constructive for planning activities.

Asking questions is one of the most crucial learning methods (Aflalo, 2021; Ladson-Billings, 2011; Ren et al., 2021; Rothstein & Santana, 2011; M.-Y. Wong, 2021; S. S. H. Wong et al., 2023). Questions evaluate new ideas, facts, information, knowledge, and experiences. They have an essential role in communication. In communicating ideas and negotiating meanings, questions, and responses are unavoidable. As a result, they are one of the most significant tools for improving education and language teaching in general (Azerefegn, 2008; Barjesteh & Moghadam, 2014; Dos et al., 2016). Chin & Osborne (2008) have stated that the importance of questions in teaching can be justified by stimulating and maintaining students' interest, encouraging students to think and focus on the lesson content, allowing teachers to check students' understanding, allowing a teacher to elicit specific structures or vocabulary, and encouraging student participation in a lesson.

Therefore, it can be suggested that questions are at the heart of all communication between teachers and students in the teaching and learning process.

Types of Questionings

Teachers usually ask questions before, during, and after instruction (Kawalkar & Vijapurkar, 2013; Salerno & Kibler, 2015), which means that teacher's questions occur in the three stages of teaching, namely pre-teaching, while-teaching, and after-teaching. According to Rodriguez-Valls (2014), various experts have proposed several questions. There are procedural, divergent, and convergent questions in terms of aims. Questions about the classroom procedure are referred to as procedural questions. Divergent questions allow students to express their thoughts or judgments rather than recall past material. Convergent questions, on the other hand, require students to recall prior knowledge.

Al-Zahrani & Al-Bargi (2017), say that four questions are usually introduced in classroom interaction. Firstly, there are "recall questions," which require students to memorize knowledge that has been taught or mastered. Secondly, "convergent questions" require students to explain, interpret, provide examples, or summarize concepts in their own terms. Finally, "divergent questions" examine students' ideas and opinions about a subject. Fourth, assessment questions ask students to make a value judgment, express their thoughts, offer criticism, or ask their questions. They need the highest level of reasoning, with no right or wrong responses to evaluative questions.

Open and closed questions are based on the type of responses (Connor Desai & Reimers, 2019). Closed questions accept only one correct answer, but open questions accept several correct answers. According to Scrivener (2012), questions are divided into three types based on how much flexibility the learner has to respond in various ways: Polar closed, Closed, and Open. Polar closed questions are those that have only two possible one-word responses. Closed questions have only one correct answer or few viable responses. Open questions do not have a single correct answer, allowing the student to respond in various ways.

Feng (2013) divides classroom questions into "closed" and "open" categories based on the learner's expected thinking level. A closed question usually has limited answers, but an open question might have many answers as long as the student justifies them. The former category includes naming questions, observation questions, control questions, and pseudo-questions, while the latter category contains reason or analysis questions, evaluation questions, and problem-solving questions. Scrivener (2012) divides questions into three categories based on what teachers expect to achieve with them: real questions, check questions (test questions), and concept questions. According to Kao & Weng (2012b), there are display and referential questions regarding the type of interaction. A display question is one for which the teacher already knows the answer. A referential question, on the other hand, is one in which the teacher does not know the answer.

A fundamental question is one in which the person asking it is interested in the message contained in the answer, such as "Has she bought it?" Teachers ask check questions (Test Questions) when they already know the answer, such as "Is this a noun or a verb?". In concept questions, they are designed to determine whether students comprehend the meaning and application of specific grammar and vocabulary. In a similar context, display and referential questions are further questions (Ayouni, 2022; Feng, 2013; Kalsoom et al., 2021; Rahmah, 2018; Wright, 2016; Zohrabi et al., 2014). Display questions

are those for which the teacher already knows the answers but wants to see if students can remember specific material provided, such as “What is the past participle of “send”?”, “What happened to the older man's money?”, “During his journey, how many cities did the writer visit?”. Referential questions, conversely, demand students to supply authentic information that neither the teacher nor the other students in the class may possess. Referential questions include “What is your favourite character in the story and why?”, “Is there another way to end the story? How?”, “What would you do if you were in the position of the judge?”. The types of questions the teacher asks are significant because they determine the variety of opportunities for students to use the target language, which is done through answering questions (Erlinda & Dewi, 2014).

Teachers' Role in Questioning Strategies

In the context of language acquisition, Clough & Herman (2017) states that the teacher's questioning technique plays some role in stimulating the students' brainstorming process in creating their ideas to react to the teacher's explanation. Effective questioning engages students and reveals their thinking. Questions' role in helping students make meaningful connections can be crucial but less obvious. However, questioning is essential for assisting students in identifying errors in their present opinions and developing more accurate concepts.

According to Johnson (2021), the main objective of the classroom questioning strategy is to make it easier to apply various teaching methods and strategies. Several questioning strategies are available to help students take more responsibility for their learning and participate in the teaching and learning process. Teachers should examine their methods by creating more interesting, engaging, collaborative learning environments. As part of the learning assessment, teachers used a questioning method to effectively identify how to plan, organize, and prevent new learning. Creating a questioning strategy requires a much bigger priority for allowing students to think individually, collectively, and thoroughly to generate and share better answers.

The teachers' strategies significantly affect the classroom interaction environment. Questioning is one of the strategies that may be used to improve student participation. As a result, if teachers use appropriate questioning strategies when delivering material, students will be actively engaged and truly understand the material.

METHOD

Research Design

This qualitative research with a case study approach aims to analyze the perspective of teachers and students on teachers' questioning. The result of this research is in a descriptive analysis format. The data were collected using semi-structured interviews to answer the questions. An interview guide to interview the teaching and learning process was used. The observation was held in two class meetings at an Islamic Junior High School 1 Banda Aceh.

Population and Sample

The research participants were three English teachers and eight students from Islamic junior high school 1 Banda Aceh. The participants were chosen purposively based on the research need. The object of this research was all teachers and students interviewed

answers to teachers' questions in the classroom. The subject of this research was three English teachers and six students.

Instruments

The interview data on teachers' and students' perspectives on teachers questioning were translated into English. The instrument of this research was a set of interview questions to guide the teachers and students. Seven questions for about fifteen minutes asking about their perspective on teachers' questioning were constructed.

Data Collection Technique

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Eight students from six classes and three English language teachers were questioned by the researcher. The researcher asked six questions and follow-up questions about the teachers' questioning strategies and the perspectives offered by the students during the fifteen-minute interviews.

Data Analysis Technique

The data was analyzed by the researcher using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana approach. Several important steps are involved in the data analysis technique, such as data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification. According to the steps, the researcher transcribed the interview data and organized it. Next, decided which types of questions the teacher used in the classroom and described it briefly. Then, concluded the data.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

After conducting interviews with three English teachers and eight students, it is found that most of them had the same perspective on teachers' questions in the classroom. The teachers and students stated that teachers' questions in the classroom are important. One of the teachers T1 stated:

*"I always ask the students questions."
"Yeah, I think that is very important." (Teacher 1)*

Other teachers also believe that asking questions in the classroom is crucial. Moreover, some students also believed that teachers' question in the classroom is important. As stated by student 1 below:

"Important? Yeah. For me it is important." (Student 1)

Not only Student 1, other students also believed that teacher question is very important for them. The reason why the teachers' questions are important is because of the implication of the question itself. As the researcher explained before, there are four implications from the interview results with the teachers and the students. Because of those implications, the teachers and the students believed that teachers' questions in the classroom were important. The reasons for the importance of teachers' questions are elaborated in detail below.

Teachers Perspective on Teachers' Question

The teachers believe that the teachers' questions in the classroom are very important.

To Check Understanding

Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 believed that the teachers' question is important because it help the teachers to check their students' understanding.

"Why asking question is important? I think we have to ask the students about our teaching material because if we don't ask them, we don't know they understand about our material."

"Yes. To recall their knowledge."

"Yeah. So we need to know.. to know clearly about their understanding of our material. I think that's why." (Teacher 1)

T2 believed that teacher question is important because they help the teacher check their student' understanding. T2 stated that It's crucial for teachers to ask their students to at least "Do you understand about..." if they want to get good results from them once they comprehend what we are teaching or perhaps after they learn something from our concept, topic, or lesson. I believe we need to know how well-understood they are (T2). Those results showed how important teacher questions are to build students understanding in the classroom.

To Motivate Students' Speaking Practice

Teacher 3 said that teachers' question is important because it helps the teachers to motivate their students' speaking practice.

"No questions, no speaking English."

"All of us have to know that. What kind of sentence is it? Is it a nominal sentence or verbal sentence? If a nominal sentence, we have to know using to be is it in the past or in the simple present form. And we use questions word, yeah.. what kind of questions word that we use? Except "who". Who.. we don't need to put auxiliary verb after that. Who did tell you? No. who told you? Yeah?.. that is it. Because they don't know how to use a questions word, so that make the class silent class, passive class. So, how the way to make the class active? By doing discussion." (Teacher 3)

Along with the result of the teacher interview, it can be stated that the other why teacher questions are important is because they can motivate students to practice their speaking skills.

To Motivate Students in Learning

The other reason, why the teachers' questions in important is because they can motivate students to learn. As T1 stated that:

"... for the example I ask them maybe for example, I asked them before I start the new material. They always learn before. Oh, today is English class, we must read what's the last material because the teacher will ask will ask us about the last meeting material. So, I think they start to learn. I think that's my answer." (Teacher 1)

Based on the interview other reasons why a teacher's question is important, it is because they can motivate students to learn.

Students Perspective on Teachers' Question

For the students, is striking that they have the same interpretation about the use of the teachers' questions. The result is shown below:

To Check Understanding

Some students believed that the teacher's question is important because it helps the students to understand more about the lesson, as stated by student 1:

"Because, in that class we will have an exam soon, and then we will get questions like that. So I think that's important."

"Can understand more about descriptive text? simple present tense earlier, very useful for exams or maybe our future later." (Student 1)

Not only Student 1 but also other students believed that teachers' questions helped them to understand more about the material that had been given.

To Motivate Students' Speaking Practice

Some students also believed that the teachers' questions in the classroom motivated the students speaking practice.

"Because we think, then we think about what English is also so we can train our ability to speak."

"The way I talk too" (Student 7)

Furthermore, Student 5 added that even if the question by the teacher is difficult, the teacher helps them to answer the question in English sometimes. So, that helps students to speak in English. This showed that teachers' questions help students a lot in practicing their speaking skills.

To Motivate Students in Learning English

Some students also believed that teachers' questions in the classroom motivated the students to learn English. Student 8 stated that:

"... just because we were asked, we don't know, so curiosity arises so we look for more later after school." (Student 8)

Additionally, other students also believed that teacher questions motivate them in learning. Student 1 stated that she feels happy when the teacher asks her questions because those questions make her want to know more about the material.

The finding above shows that all the teachers and the students agree that the teachers' question in the classroom is important. Those teachers' questions in the classroom help the teachers a lot in checking their students' understanding and making the classroom active. As teacher 1 stated, teachers' questions are important because the teacher can check their students' understanding by asking questions. Moreover, Teacher 2 also stated that the reason why the teachers' questions in the classroom are important is

to find out how well their students understand the material that the teachers teach. Additionally, Teacher 3 added that the teachers' questions in the classroom are important because they can make the students discuss in the classroom, motivate them to speak, and make the class active.

Based on the interview findings, it is noticed that there are various perspectives on teachers' questions in the classroom from the teachers as well as the students. The first perception is that one of the key motivations for using questions in the classroom, according to the teachers interviewed, is to evaluate student understanding. This perspective is consistent with one of the primary goals of education: to make sure students understand the content that they are learning. Teachers can assess students' comprehension of the topic material by asking questions. This provides a formative assessment, allowing teachers to control their lessons to their students' special needs.

Aline with the student's point of view, the teacher's questions are essential for assessing their understanding of the subject. The students argue that knowing they will be questioned about the subject motivates them to study and learn the material well. From this perspective, it shows how students understand the significance of teachers' questions in the classroom for their learning.

The teachers' and students' perspective above is aligned with Tsui theory. (Sert, 2019) stated that, based on the kind of response questions were categorized into two categories: open and closed. Teachers can use questions like these to measure how well their students understand a subject. A researcher had also conducted a research based on this theory. According to Navtria et al. (2020b), in the classroom, teachers primarily employ memorization questions, which does not assess student understanding.

The second important point raised by the teachers is that questions can be used to drive students into speaking practice. Teachers create opportunities for students to engage in conversation and express themselves by asking questions. This exercise is essential for language learning since it allows students to improve their speaking skills and gain confidence in using the language.

Furthermore, students also stated that their teachers' questions encouraged them to practice speaking. Responding to questions in class requires students to express their views and knowledge in the target language. This practice not only improves their speaking abilities but also helps students gain confidence in using the language in real-life situations.

In this case, Display and referential inquiries fall into different categories within the interaction category, according to Kao and Weng (2012). Teachers can use some of these questions to encourage their students to communicate of questions. Hasanuddin & Ciptaningrum (2021) have also found that referential and display questions are the most commonly utilized question types by teachers.

The third important point is that teachers emphasize the importance of asking questions to encourage students. Teachers encourage students to take their studies seriously and prepare earlier by setting the expectation that they should be prepared to answer questions about the material. The anxiety of being questioned might motivate students to engage with the material, ensuring that they are fully engaged in the learning process.

Students added that teachers' questions serve as an aspect of motivation for learning. The possibility of being questioned stimulates students' interest and inspires them to seek extra information and expertise beyond what is taught in the classroom.

Curiosity can lead to self-directed learning, in which students are inspired to learn more to improve their understanding of what they are learning.

As the result above, questions fall into three categories based on their goals: procedural, divergent, and convergent inquiries, according to Richards & Lockhart (1994). The questions encourage students to think critically. Astrid et al., (2019b) have found that convergent, divergent, and procedural questions are the three teacher questioning strategies identified and employed in teaching and learning processes. Teachers frequently used convergent questions, which asked yes/no questions with brief answers.

Both teachers and students recognize the importance of teachers' questions in the classroom. These questions serve several functions, including assessing comprehension, inspiring speaking practice, and motivating students on their learning journey. Teachers' and students' perspectives highlight the importance of good questioning tactics in the teaching and learning process. Teachers may apply this knowledge to improve their questioning strategies, ensuring that they fit the needs and objectives of their students. In addition, students can realize the importance of active participation and engagement in the classroom, resulting in a more successful and enjoyable learning experience.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion, it was found that the teachers and students believed that teachers' questioning is important. Teachers' questions play a vital role in promoting student engagement, understanding, and language development. The perspectives from both teachers and students emphasize the value of thoughtful and strategic use of questions in the classroom, providing guidance for teachers to enhance their teaching methods and encouraging students to actively participate in their learning process.

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