

Exploring the Types of Teachers' Questioning Strategies Used in EFL Secondary School Classroom

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ABSTRACT

Questioning strategies are a significant way for EFL teachers to encourage student's participation and interaction in learning a language, particularly at the secondary level. This research examined the types and applications of questioning strategies used by a seventh-grade English teacher in an EFL classroom at MTs NU Mranggen in Central Java, Indonesia. A qualitative case study methodology gathered video-recorded lessons and teacher interviews, and analysed thematically. The study outcomes revealed that teachers used four types of strategies – prompting (14), probing (7), repetition (3) and redirecting (1) – with prompting dominant across lesson stages. The prompting strategy was often employed because it increases students' thought processes and improves critical thinking. The teacher employed these strategies at the lesson's opening, main, and closing activities. Educators and researchers can use the insights to improve their approaches and establish a dynamic learning environment.

Keywords: *Questioning Strategies, English Classroom, Classroom Interaction*

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INTRODUCTION

Questioning strategies are one of the most frequently used techniques in language teaching, particularly in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, and they can help teachers develop strategies to enhance the students' work and thinking. Teachers might establish an active classroom by encouraging student participation through questioning, a critical way to enhance good teaching and learning activities. It is essential for structuring instruction, stimulating students' creativity, and improving their understanding (Yang, 2017). Asking questions without knowing the proper approach is different from delivering them. A crucial factor in assessing the effectiveness and capacity of their instructional sessions is the quality of the questions and the questioning strategies that educators apply during teaching and learning activities in the classroom (Shanmugavelu et al., 2020). Strategies for asking questions have an enormous influence on how teachers and students interact in EFL lessons, especially when it comes to seventh grade. Even though questioning is one of the best ways to encourage interaction, the harsh reality is that there are still many situations where students cannot make verbal contact during the learning process. Teachers should be able to develop and ask questions that test students' knowledge and motivate them to participate in learning actively. A finding states that a teacher has used more than one type of questioning strategy and carried it out at every stage of learning in class. It significantly influences student activity and increases understanding (Wandasari et al., 2023).

Based on the research by Cárdenas (2021), the study highlights that questioning, if employed correctly, is one of the most effective teaching techniques. It enhances interaction patterns within the classroom, students' communicative abilities, and critical and creative thinking skills. Reflective and self-improvement in questioning techniques should be the aim of every teacher. For example, studies have shown that when teachers use open-ended questions, students are more likely to engage in meaningful discussions, enhancing their

ability to articulate ideas, ask clarifying questions, and explore diverse perspectives. This, in turn, fosters a learning environment where students feel confident in expressing themselves and building upon the contributions of others. Teachers, therefore, need to be mindful of the frequency of questioning, the types of questions posed, and the context in which they are asked, as this greatly influences the quality of classroom interactions. As this body of research underscores, an intentional and thoughtful approach to questioning can lead to more effective learning outcomes, greater student involvement, and an overall improvement in educational experiences (Cárdenas, 2021).

Additionally, the study's results demonstrate that with questioning strategies, online teaching can foster meaningful teacher-student interactions. The "4Es" framework - Encourage, Enlighten, Enrich, Entertain- effectively overcame common online classroom barriers. These insights are valuable for enhancing current and future remote or hybrid teaching practices (Gülten, 2023). Other studies mention using questioning strategies, one of which is at the college level. The results show that English lecturers used four types of questions: probing, requesting, redirecting, and repeating, with prompting being the most common. Prompting and probing were the most dominant choices; however, students preferred the requesting question strategy because of the clues it provided for constructing a response. This indicates that using structured questions in various ways helps encourage active participation and more effective language acquisition, which requires greater attention (Sulistio & Dwinata, 2023). Extensive research has shown the benefits of questioning when used correctly. The article emphasises that a teacher must understand various taxonomies of questions and combine a balance of low-level and high-level thinking questions with questioning strategies. Thus, intentionally and skilfully using questions can significantly improve teaching quality and foster higher-level cognitive development in students (Woreta Haile et al., 2024).

This study aimed to investigate two main problems: what types of questioning strategies are used mainly by the English teacher for seventh-grade students at MTs NU Mranggen, and how these strategies are implemented throughout the teaching and learning process. While previous research has explored questioning strategies in general EFL contexts, a limited number of studies focus on their application in faith-based junior secondary schools, particularly among seventh-grade learners who are still adapting to new academic and social environments. Therefore, this study also highlights the importance of using appropriate questions to enhance classroom interaction. Moreover, the findings are expected to guide English teachers in improving classroom interaction and instructional delivery and serve as a reference for further research in language education.

METHOD

This research used a qualitative case study design proposed by Yin (2011) to explore teacher questioning strategies in a natural classroom context. The case study approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth understanding of a specific phenomenon within a bounded system—in this case, it explores the questioning strategies used by seventh-grade English teachers in an Islamic junior secondary school. The data were collected through classroom observations and interviews with seventh-grade English teachers. Field notes were also taken during the observation. In the observations, the lessons focused on asking and giving directions on the material. This material provides many contexts for analyzing how questioning strategies are used to increase student engagement and interaction.

After the observation, a semi-structured interview was conducted with the teacher to explore the reasoning and reflections regarding the questioning strategies employed. The interview guide contained open-ended and follow-up questions and was conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to ensure clarity and depth of response.

Respondents

The respondent of this study was a seventh-grade English teacher. The researcher chose this teacher because of her proficient and innovative teaching style, which contributes

significantly to the class. The reason why researchers chose the seventh grade as the population is that the seventh grade is still adapting to the environment and friends and teachers who are new to them, so it is possible that this could trigger a lack of interaction in the classroom. Islamic-based schools became the place of the researcher's research because there was a gap in research results. Not much research has been conducted in religious-based schools, so this study was interesting.

Instruments

To collect data in this qualitative case study, the researcher used two primary instruments: field notes and interview checklists. Field notes were used during classroom observations to record what questioning strategies teachers used in their teaching and learning activities. Observations focused on specific aspects such as the types of questions used (e.g., prompting, probing, redirecting, repeating) and their implementation across learning activities. The observation checklist included indicators for each question type and space for reflective and analytical notes, allowing the researcher to capture both the behaviour and the context in which the behaviour occurred. Interview checklists were prepared with semi-structured questions designed to explore teachers' perceptions of their use of questioning strategies. This type of interview can be shaped according to the current situation of the interviewer, the answers given by the participant, and their views on the subject. For teachers, questions focused on the types of questions they typically used, their purpose, when they used them during the lesson (beginning, middle, or end), whether they planned their questions, and how they adjusted or supported student responses (e.g., using prompts or commands). In addition to note-taking, video recordings were used, with permission, to record classroom interactions and interview responses. These recordings supported the analysis of verbal interactions to identify types of questions and the relationships between teachers and students.

Procedures

The data in this study were analysed using the interactive model by Miles and Huberman (1994), which includes three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Transcripts from the classroom recordings and interviews were read and manually coded to identify emerging patterns related to questioning strategies. Triangulation of data sources (observations and interviews) was used to increase credibility, and member checking was used by sharing initial findings with the teacher to confirm the accuracy of interpretations. A simple grouping of each type of sentence was carried out according to the strategy used. The data were then displayed as narratives, tables, and transcriptions to identify the question strategies used by teachers and their implementation at each learning phase. Finally, the researcher drew conclusions based on the categorised data and verified them through triangulation so that the data could be proven valid and reliable according to the results of the observations.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of data analysis are based on Wangru's (2016) theory, which divides questions into four types: prompting questions, probing questions, redirecting questions, and repeating questions. These categories serve as an analytical framework to identify the types of questions teachers use in classroom interactions with seventh-grade students at MTs NU Mranggen, Central Java, Indonesia. The researcher analysed the field notes and video recordings of teachers' teaching in class, and based on the video of what the teacher did when teaching in class, the teacher used four types of questioning strategies. Table 1 explains each category of questioning strategies and example sentences used based on the research data.

Table 1. Explanation and Example of Questioning Strategies by the Teacher

No	Type of Questioning Strategy	Description	Frequency	Example
1	Prompting	Giving clues, initial words, or hints to guide student responses	14	- "Today, we are going to learn about asking and giving directions, <i>apa itu?</i> " - "What is the meaning of across?"

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				"Bisakah kamu membantuku, in English please, can you...?"
2	Probing	Asking for clarification, elaboration, or deeper understanding	7	- "There is a post office, a hospital, and a bookstore. Where is the hospital?" - "Can you show me the library on the map?" "Arah bank dari sekolah, how?"
3	Redirecting	Redirecting a question to another student to broaden participation	1	- "Selain mas A, coba mba N, apa yang kita pelajari kemarin?"
4	Repetition	Repeating or rephrasing questions to ensure understanding	3	- "On the corner?" "Any questions?"

Prompting Questions

Prompting was the most frequently observed strategy, occurring 14 times throughout the lesson. Prompting questions were used to give students cues or initial words to help them generate answers.

Expert 1

"Today, we are going to learn about asking and giving directions, *apa itu?*"

"What is the meaning of across?"

"Bisakah kamu membantuku, in English please, can you...?"

Prompting questions involves giving students cues, initial phrases, or partial information to guide their thinking and help them get to the correct answer. This strategy is used at various lesson stages, especially when introducing new material and vocabulary recall. This finding aligns with classroom practices where teachers often combine prompting with strategies such as redirection, probing, and granting wait time (Nuryanti et al., 2024). However, their implementation does not always lead to optimal outcomes. Furthermore, the teacher explained in the interview, "I often ask questions that encourage students to answer with their thoughts, usually with hints, clues, or hand signals..." (#Datasample1). This confirms that the teacher frequently applies the prompting strategies observed during classroom interaction. The teacher also mentioned the reason for choosing the prompting strategy because the strategy facilitates students' thinking processes and stimulates critical thinking. The teacher believes that well-posed questions help students get the correct answers and increase interaction in the classroom. This aligns with theoretical claims by Wangru (2016) and Cárdenas (2021) that asking questions can support and challenge students cognitively and emotionally in the EFL context.

Probing Questions

Probing is used less frequently but is important in stimulating deeper cognitive engagement. Based on the interview, the researcher found the results about probing, prompting, redirecting, and repeating strategies. Asking probing questions encourages students to elaborate on, clarify, or explain their responses. For instance:

Expert 2

"Can you show me the library on the map?"

"Arah bank dari sekolah, how?"

"What did we learn about today?"

The teacher provided in-depth questions for students to apply their understanding of expressions related to directions in English, encouraging critical thinking and elaboration. Probing was identified seven times and was particularly effective during practice activities and review of materials. The teacher also mentioned that she sometimes uses inquiry to challenge students' thinking and elicit elaborations, "... I also ask questions that explore their thoughts on a topic so that they are challenged to elaborate on their answers." (#Datasample2). That confirms the intentional use of this strategy to provoke deeper responses.

The effectiveness of probing in promoting students' critical responses and reflection is consistent with insights from Sulistio and Dwinata (2023), who emphasised its role in encouraging students to think critically about their arguments. The teacher mentioned in an

interview, "They always look enthusiastic and active... students become more motivated, encouraged to answer questions, so the class becomes active." (#Datasample3). Moreover, the positive impact of well-structured questioning on student motivation and confidence also aligns with the findings of Cárdenas (2021), reinforcing the value of intentional question design in EFL classrooms.

Redirecting Questions

Although used minimally (once during observation), redirecting increases class participation and encourages collaborative learning.

Expert 3

- "Selain mas A, coba mba N, apa yang kita pelajari kemarin?"

The teacher stated, "... sometimes, so that one student doesn't feel pressured... can make students participate actively without being forced." (#Datasample4), redirecting helps create a more inclusive environment where students feel comfortable and less pressured. Redirecting strategies can support a more student-centred EFL classroom, involve students in discussions, and promote interaction (Al-Zahrani & Al-Bargi, 2017).

Repetition Questions

Repetition appeared three times and was used when students hesitated or seemed confused.

"On the corner?"

"Any questions?"

"What was the material in the last meeting?"

Repetition ensures student understanding, especially when the teacher's initial question delivery elicits no response. The teacher explained, "I will occasionally repeat my question in a more understandable form with the help of a starting word or phrase." (#Datasample5) That repeated or rephrased questions to support comprehension and reduce confusion. This aligns with the discovery that asking repeated questions is used to direct and involve students, especially when students are silent, encourages participation, and obtains responses collectively and individually. To assist the students in comprehending the question and properly thinking about it, teachers frequently restate it or reword it in particular situations (Woreta Haile et al., 2024).

Based on classroom observations and supported by interview data, it can be concluded that teachers used four types of questioning strategies as categorized by Wangru (2016): prompting, probing, redirecting, and repeating. The researcher found that, out of all of them, teachers most frequently used the prompting strategies. This strategy provides an increased level of participation in the classroom by supporting students' responses with hints, opening phrases, or contextual guidance. This result is consistent with previous research perspectives, Cárdenas (2021) and Fitriati et al. (2017) which highlighted that carefully thought-out and chosen questioning techniques elicit student responses and improve classroom relationships. Therefore, in the context of an EFL classroom, effective questioning techniques – particularly prompting – contribute significantly to facilitating meaningful teacher-student interactions.

Implementation Across Lesson Stages

Table 2. Implementation of Questioning Strategies in Each Lesson Stage.

No	Learning Stage	Activity	Questions Strategies Used	Example
1	Opening	Greetings, checking attendance, reviewing previous material, and introducing a topic.	Prompting, redirecting, and repetition	"What the material in the last meeting?", "Selain mas A, coba mba N, apa yang kita pelajari kemarin?"
2	Main Activity	Scaffolding, checking understanding, practice	Prompting, probing	"There is a post office, a hospital, and book bookstore. Where is the hospital?", "Arah bank dari sekolah, how?"
3	Closing	Reflection, summary, checking comprehension	Probing, repetition	"Do you have any questions?", "What did we learn about today?"

As shown in Table 2, based on video observations of teachers, teachers' use of questioning strategies consistent throughout the lesson indicates the teacher's strategic approach "Yes, I constantly utilise questioning strategies at all the phases of learning..." (#Datasample6) which aligns with Nappi's (2017) model, which encourages questioning at all learning stages for optimal interaction and assessment.

Opening Stage of Learning Activities

In the opening stage, the teacher begins the lesson by reviewing the previous material through questions such as,

Expert 1

"Apa saja materi yang dipelajari pada pertemuan terakhir?"

"Selain Mas A, coba Mba N, apa saja yang sudah kita pelajari kemarin?" The questions serve to make an assessment of the previous knowledge and to set the context for the day's learning objectives.

Prompting, leading, and repeating questions are employed at this point to create an engaging and encouraging environment for students to start the lesson. The teacher asked questions several times in Indonesian to reduce students' affective filters so they were confident in answering the questions and did not feel pressured. Instead of continuing to ask questions in English, the teacher creates an environment familiar with Indonesian.

Main Stage of Learning Activities

The teacher used phrase fragments to aid student understanding, demonstrating this responsiveness and the interviews endorsed this practice. For instance:

Expert 2

"There is a post office, a hospital, and a book bookstore. Where is the hospital?"

"Arah bank dari sekolah, how?"

During the main activity of the learning stage, questioning becomes more dynamic and centred on the student's responses, providing opportunities for practice and encouraging deeper engagement. In line with the research results, students need direct instruction on creating and asking deep questions (Paul & Elder, 2019). In the interview, the teacher explained, "... I provide hints and encouragement to answer with the help of initial words or phrases of the answer..." (#Datasample7). When teachers encounter students who are having difficulty answering, teachers will use hints, phrases, and simplified rephrasing of questions to support their thinking. The probing questions deepened engagement and aligned with higher-order thinking skills in Bloom's Taxonomy (Parashchuk, 2017). The questioning process is further enhanced by integrating visual aids and realia, such as the map in the students' worksheet.

In the main activity, the teacher showed how questions were modified in response to student responses. The teacher modified her strategy when students showed uncertainty or confusion by changing the question or providing more cues, so that students would better understand a question. The teacher used physical cues (hand gestures), which further increased interaction, as supported by (Gülten, 2023). The teacher also used phrase fragments to aid student understanding, demonstrating this responsiveness, and the interviews endorsed this practice.

Closing Stage of Learning Activities

In the closing stage, teachers used questions to consolidate learning further and encourage reflection. Questions as:

Expert 3

"Do you have any questions?"

"What did we learn about today?"

At the end of a class, it is critical to ask the students a question to measure their understanding, evaluate their learning, examine their contributions, and assess the effectiveness of the teacher's instruction (Nappi, 2017). Questions such as "What have we learned today?" and "Are there any questions?" help to measure students' overall understanding of the lesson material. This stage aligns with Davoudi and Sadeghi (2015) view that questioning strategies are formative assessment tools. The teacher's spontaneity in

delivering questions also reflects her adaptive style: "No, it was just spontaneity because as a teacher I have to be able to build an active class..." (#Datasample8), supporting Fitriati et al. (2017) that effective questioning is part of responsive teaching communication. Moreover, these concluding questions help reinforce important terms and expressions covered in the session. Here, the lesson's primary goals are reviewed to ensure they have been realised using repetition and probing techniques.

Based on classroom observations and supported by interview data, it can be concluded that teachers used four types of questioning strategies as categorized by Wangru (2016): prompting, probing, redirecting, and repeating. The researcher found that, out of all of them, teachers most frequently used the prompting strategies. This strategy provides an increased level of participation in the classroom by supporting students' responses with hints, opening phrases, or contextual guidance. This result is consistent with previous research perspectives, Cárdenas (2021) and Fitriati et al. (2017), which highlighted that carefully thought-out and chosen questioning techniques elicit student responses and improve classroom relationships. Therefore, in the context of an EFL classroom, effective questioning techniques – particularly prompting – contribute significantly to facilitating meaningful teacher-student interactions

In addition, the teachers' flexible questioning strategies in EFL classes improve engagement, communication, and learning. Furthermore, the flexibility with which enquiry types can be changed in response to students' responses shows a move towards a more student-centred learning method. By encouraging students to evaluate, consider, and expand on their responses, this flexibility not only speeds up language learning but also fosters higher-order thinking abilities. As a result, questioning techniques reinforce modern EFL instruction's communicative and interactive character by acting as essential elements that connect theoretical frameworks with actual classroom dynamics.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined various questioning techniques employed by an English teacher at an Islamic junior high school teaching seventh grade. The results highlight the significance of matching questioning strategies to the demands of the students and the lesson's level to promote active learning. This study provides our understanding of questioning as a teaching strategy and encourages educators to consider using these methods in more types of learning environments. More participants or other classroom settings may be used in future research to develop further our understanding of questioning in EFL contexts.

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