

## Investigating Teacher Question Types in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) Primary School in Thailand

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### ABSTRACT

*Teacher questions have become an important role in the teaching process, especially in English classes. This study investigates the various types of teacher questions used in the classroom during the teaching and learning process. This study held at primary school in Darul Ulom Nibong Baru, 4082, Sateng Nok, Mueng Yala, Thailand. This study aims to find out the types of questions that are often used by teacher n foreign language classes. The questions were identified and classified based on the framework of Richards and Lockhart (1996) as procedural, convergent and divergent. This study used a qualitative method and data was collected through observation for 55.37 minutes from two teaching sessions. This research was conducted by observing (video recording) both teachers and students and interviewing the teacher. The results of this study indicate that questions with Convergent type is the most frequently used by teachers in class (86%) compared to procedural (9%) and divergent (5%) questions. Convergent question types are often used by teachers because these questions encourage students to always answer based on the material taught by the teacher during the learning process*

**Keywords:** *Question Types, EFL Classrooms*

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### A. Introduction

Teaching and learning are reciprocal processes that influence each other in the world of education. Teachers and students can learn from each other, but teachers is more dominant in the classroom. In English as a foreign language context (EFL), the teacher's role in learning is very important, because the teacher is responsible for supervising and guiding how students learn English. Bajrami (2015) states that, never ignoring the role of the teacher in the learning process. There will be no teaching and learning process without the teacher, because the teacher acts as the class manager, facilitator, and is asked to encourage students to express their opinion. Being a teacher

must have a lot of knowledge, because the teacher leads the course of learning in the classroom. They must be able to be advisors, friends, in other words to be people who are versatile, and more flexible in interactive teaching. Alhodiry (2016) stated that, the teacher must always be able to support whatever the students do, but there must also be certain limits. The organizer of learning and partners when communicating with students is the role of the teacher. Many responsibilities a teacher must do to guide students to learn foreign languages (Huleaa, 2015). In the learning process, the teacher must be able to make students always feel happy, be comfortable in the classroom, not feel intimidated, so students can get knowledge more easily and increase their curiosity during the learning process. Xhemajli (2016) said that, being a good teacher cannot impose his attitude, because it has a very bad impact to students. Students must be spend their ideas, argue, but the teacher must also be able to control the ideas or opinions of students so as not too far, must be in accordance with the limits of the curriculum that has been set. Course (2014) states that, Educators' utilization of the objective language satisfies various purposes including demonstrating language, evoking data, giving information and chances to yield, just as dealing with the exercise, the nature of connection in the exercise, and sorting out the learning condition.

The teacher has a role to dominate the conversation in the classroom, so the teacher must know how to stimulate students' thinking to be more active and critical. One manifestation of teacher conversation is the teacher's question or classroom questions, because with teacher questions students' can be more thinking active and critical. Teacher questions has become an important role in the teaching process especially in English classes. Effective questions can make students more interactive and more quickly mingle in the classroom. Yang (2017) said that, Classes will be more effective if there is interaction between teacher and students, students and students. The intended interaction is question and answer in class, so that it can activate the classroom atmosphere, the teacher can also improve communication with students, and can motivate students' interest in learning in the classroom. Shahrill (2013) also states that, with the question and answer interaction in the classroom the teachers can know the extent to which students concentrate in paying attention to what taught by the teacher. Teachers sometimes only teach without asking questions in teaching and learning

activities. Some factors are because they are in a hurry, lack understanding of the material, do not care about students, or they are lazy. Omari (2018) suggests that, when the teacher can provide questions that can stimulate students more critically, the teacher will be able to assess student learning progress. However, most teachers only give questions to students which are only intended to remember information, change speech, and correct mistakes. Most teachers give questions that make students bored, because the questions given don't make students more creative to answer. Hsiao (2017) said that, Classroom question can help teachers to be more able to focus student attention and student focus in listening. Therefore the role of teacher to provide several types of question is very necessary.

In the classroom the teacher often gives many questions. From general question to questions that focus on the material given by the teacher. Omari (2018) states that, there are several categories of the classroom questions that need to be used. Based on Richards & Lockhart (1990) there are 3 types of questions, they are asking about the state of students, not about class material, that is procedural questions, more specific questions and not broad answers are convergent questions, and questions that require answers broader, and making students think harder about the complete answers is divergent question, this question is high-level question (as cited in Öztürk<sup>2</sup>, 2016). The other theories 1. Open and Closed questions, 2. Display and Reverential question, 3. Yes or No question (Farahian & Rezaee 2012). Close questions can be interpreted as questions that can only get limited answers, and can't be developed, which require broad answers are open questions. In the display question the teacher only wants to test the extent of the students understands, and teacher already knows the answers, but the reference question for the truth of the answer is only known by the who learner it, even though the teacher doesn't know the truth of the answer, and yes/no question is a question that only requires a short answer yes/no. Actually there are still many types of questions from the other experts, but researchers focus on the types of questions from the Richards & Lockhart (1990). The researchers hope that from the several categories of questions above can help the teacher to know more about the types of questions that are suitable for use in the classroom, considering many problems in the classroom about student focus. The main subject of this research is the teacher, where the teacher should

know the extent of their students' understanding of the material in the class by giving many question.

It's true, that giving many questions in the class is very influential on student learning. Omari (2018) studied a number of teacher in private school in Amman-Jordan with 1.574 questions in class. Omari (2018) said that, giving the types of question not only had to match the level of the class or the level of students' thinking but also had be able to force students to think more creatively in answering question. It is highly recommended to use open questions or reverential question, or divergent question in the upper class, so that students at the upper level can think more broadly and are forced to think higher ,because it will be can used as long life learning.

This research was designed to investigate how teacher questioning plays a role in enhancing student learning. In the classroom, the teacher plays a role in managing the course of learning. Whatever students do is instruction from the teacher that is the importance role of the teacher in the learning process. Alhodiry (2016) said that, teachers plays the role as a place to accommodate all students' thinking, and stimulate students to be more active and creative in the classroom. Some of the problems faced by teachers in the classroom towards the low focus of students in the learning process, the teacher must be able to use effective strategies. Inan and Fidan (2012) stated that, there is nothing learning class if nothing question the teachers do in the classroom. Based on the background above some questions from this research are formulated bellow:

What types of the question that teachers use in the daily practices of teaching in the EFL classroom?

## **B. Research Method**

This research used qualitative methods to determine the real situation that occurs in the field. This method is used to determine the extent to which these types of questions are applied in the EFL class. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2009), qualitative research is a suitable method for analyzing complex and structured data. This method teaches researchers to see and assess how phenomena occur naturally in the EFL classroom. Based on the theory above, researcher used descriptive to analyze the data. The main data was collected through recording the teaching and learning process

in the classroom to find out about the types of questions commonly used by teachers when teaching in the class, and also aims to find out what types of questions are preferred in grade 4 of this primary school. Researchers also record video and audio and copy them to help research analyze and categorize the types of questions.

### 1.1. The Participants

This study held at primary school in Darul Ulom Nibong Baru, 4082, Sateng Nok, Mueng Yala, Thailand. The participant in this study was an English teacher who was teaching in the fourth grade of primary school with 25 students. The students were composed of 25 (10 male and 15 female) students aged 9-10 years. The students have 4,5 hours of English a week. The participant teacher has been teaching English in this school for 5 years. She graduated from the Prince of Songkla University at Pattani Thailand.

### 1.2. The Data

This study utilizes video recordings as a data collection method. Data was collected from video recordings of the teaching and learning process for the English subject Darul Ulom Nibong Baru, 4082, Sateng Nok, Mueng Yala, Thailand. The data that included 1 hours of video recording. After recording the teaching and learning process the researcher records the results in written form so that it's easier to analyze the data than just listening to the video. After copying the results, researcher can categorize the data to find out what kind of teacher questions are to use.

### 1.3. Data Analysis

The applied to analyze the data in this research is qualitative method. The questions in the transcribed data were identified and classified based on the framework of Richards and Lockhart (1996). They classify the questions teacher ask in classroom atmosphere as procedural, convergent and divergent.

Procedural questions are questions that are concerned with what is happening in the classroom, with class management. Usually used at the beginning of the class, and not related to lessons. Convergent questions are usually related to the material that has been presented which focuses on the main topic. This question only makes student focus on learning or material that has just been taught, reviewing the material just presented.

Divergent questions are questions that require higher thinking for students. This question requires students to analyze or evaluate the knowledge they have obtained.

After identifying the questions, copying in writing all the questions in the video, they are classified according to the above framework assisted by an English tutor to ensure the reliability of this research.

## C. Research Finding and Discussion

### Types of Teachers questions

The total questions in the 2 sessions were 57 questions. These results were obtained by copying all the questions contained in the video recording which are presented in table 1 below:

Tabel 1: Types and number of questions asked by the researcher

Questions Types	Frequency	Percentage
Procedural	12	21%
Convergent	37	65%
Divergent	8	14%
Total	57	100%

Analysis of research video recordings conducted by the teacher for 1 hour, there are 57 questions consisting of 12 procedural questions, 37 convergent and 8 divergent questions. The researcher starts from the first type of question, which is a procedural question where this question can attract students' attention to the focus of learning, encouraging students who are not involved in interactions to become interested in paying attention to what the teacher is conveying in class. The excerpt presents some examples of procedural questions:

#### **Extract 1:**

Teacher : How is going today?

Students : I'm fine thank you, and you?

Teacher : Alhamdulillah, I'm fine thank you

#### **Extract 2:**

Teacher : What day is today?

Students : Today is Friday

Teacher : What day was Yesterday?

Students : Yesterday is Thursday

As stated in the quote above, the teacher conducts procedural questions at the beginning of starting class to break the class atmosphere by asking how the students and teacher are doing. Then the teacher gives questions about the day to stimulate students to be ready to start the lesson that will be delivered afterwards. Procedural questions, which help the teacher to have order in the classroom in terms of classroom management and the flow of the teaching and learning process. Richards and Lockhart (1996) suggest that procedural questions serve to perform classroom routines. Convergent and procedural questions that have meaning where the answer to the question it has short answers and doesn't make students think to a higher level. In general, the data shows that teachers use convergent questions to ask for descriptions, revise vocabulary, and check students' understanding of the lessons presented. Below are examples of some of the convergent questions that were carried out in class:

**Extract 3:**

Teacher : What is this feeling? (Shows the picture)

Students : Sad

Teacher : That one?

Students : Angry

Teacher : That is right angry?

Students : Yes,

Teacher : Good

Teacher : What is this feeling? (Shows the picture)

Students : Sleepy

Teacher : Is that correct sleepy?

Students : Yes

Teacher : Yey

As stated in the extract above, teachers often use convergent questions which are repeated for 1 hour of learning. The result of using this question too often, results in

students becoming bored in class. Students are also not given the opportunity to ask questions, because the teacher only gives pictures and asks what happens in the pictures until the lesson is over. This learning results in interactions that are only one-way and are very much dominated by the teacher. In the classroom, questions are the teacher's orders so that students are more active in thinking and can develop their thinking patterns (Sujariati, et al, 2016). but in this class the teacher does not provide opportunities to be able to develop the mindset of students, maybe by making one sentence according to the picture that has been displayed.

Lockhart (1996, p. 187), divergent questions “encourage students to provide their own information and engage in higher-level thinking.” However, the number of such opportunities, as stated in the following extracts, is really scarce in this classroom.

**Extract 4:**

Teacher : What is that mean envious?

Students : (Answer in Thai and confused, not all can answer)

Teacher : What is that mean scared?

Teacher : How did you show your feeling, that you are scared?

Student : (Silent)

Teacher : What is that mean scared? One two three (count)

Students : (Answer in Thai)

Teacher : Oke

Looking at some of the examples above, divergent questions are very limited in use by teachers because of the lack of interaction between teachers and students. Providing students with questions that provide several reasons can make students think higher (Yahya, et al, 2013). However, in this class students cannot engage in higher order thinking and express ideas or expand their vocabulary. Even if they are forced to keep asking questions like that it results in the teacher waiting too long for answers from students. In the end the teacher always chooses to help with expressions or help answer, giving gesture codes. Sometimes the teacher also changes the type of question from divergent to convergent when the teacher feels that students have difficulty understanding and answering questions. For this reason, it can be concluded that the



scarcity of divergent questions in this classes and inability to provide effective transitions between the question types use decrease the level of effective interaction in this classroom.

## D. Conclusion

There are three types of questions which are procedural, convergent and divergent questions. In this study, the researcher classifies all the questions in the video according to the 3 types of questions. The researcher found 57 questions in 2 videos (2 learning sessions) which lasted 1 hour. There were 12 (21%) questions classified as procedural questions, 37 (65%) classified as convergent questions, and 8 (14%) were classified as divergent questions. Almeida (2012) states that, teachers can find out the level of students' thinking by knowing how students respond when given high, medium, low level questions. In this finding the teacher mostly uses convergent question types, where students only answer questions that are appropriate to the pictures and to what the teacher has instructed. This causes learning in the classroom to become learning that is only focused on the teacher. Whereas for procedural questions, the teacher uses them only to ask about student readiness, student responses to start a lesson. Divergent question types are rarely used, in fact almost invisible, because if the teacher occasionally gives this type of question, the student's response or answer is definitely not appropriate or even the student doesn't answer at all, and hinders learning time just waiting for 1 answer. The conclusion is that with so many types of questions, convergent questions used by the teacher, the students become passive, or even bored with 1 hour of study time. This research is a research on a narrow scale, namely only by observing 1 class and 1 English teacher. This research still really needs improvement or expansion to reach more classes and all English teachers in the school can participate.

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