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Levels and Types of Questions Raised by EFL Teachers In Southern Al-Mazar Directorate of Education

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at investigating the levels and types of questions raised by EFL teachers in Southern Al-Mazar directorate of Education. The study comprised (12) female/ male teachers. The results of the study showed that ;male/female teachers asked (1603) questions ;(1290) questions were within the low level and (313) questions were high level. Female/male teachers asked (1603) questions where (393) questions were open and (1210)were ended questions .

The results also showed that female teachers asked (729) questions whereas male teachers asked(874) .Also, the results of the study showed that female/ male teachers with high experience asked more questions than those teachers with less experience. In light of the results of the study , the researcher has suggested some recommendations to the concern.

Keywords :

Introduction

The art of questioning is considered as the most effective and motivating weapon in the educational armory of the teacher. Good questions are educational, and they have an immense effect in all places and situations of all kinds of learning if used in their proper way and in the proper time. Good questions lead to good realms of understanding; they serve as a means of organizing knowledge, or correlating the results of educational experiences, of integrating personality and of tying together units learning (Underhill, 1991). (Kummer, 1995) said that a bad questioner is a bad teacher, who may be a good lecturer. Therefore, it is not exaggeration to say that the success of a teacher in any particular lesson, and in teaching in general, depends on the teacher's ability to question well. One of the essential ambitions of a young teacher is the acquisition of a good style of questioning (Dnkel,1997). It has been said,

"I keep six honest serving men, they taught me all I know, their names are what and why and when, and how and where and who" (Aggarwal, 1997).

Teachers usually ask questions for several purposes; to test their students' previous knowledge, recall and recognize something, to think and reason about something, elicit something from their students, to promote initiative and originality, stimulate the interest and effort on the part of their students to focus attention on a particular issue, to develop an active approach to learning, and to keep children mentally alert (Raymond, 2004). Also, (Hargreaves ,1994 and Joyce and Well,1986) mentioned that questioning might be used to stimulate the curiosity of their students, to revise the lesson as well as to check whether students are following the lesson or not, to link new aspects of knowledge with the previous ones, to create a type of cooperation between the students, to discover the weak points of their students, and to formulate general rules as well as to develop the skills of synthesis (Moallem&Earle, 1998 and Al-Aweiny,2002).

(Al-Khataybeh, 2003) considered the process of questioning as a skill. Therefore, the teacher should bear in mind the following.

1. The question should be raised and then the student is to answer.
2. All students in the class should be asked.

3. Give your students plenty of time to think about the answer.
4. The teacher should anticipate the students with the ability to answer the question.
5. The teacher should not ask his students in a fixed order.
6. In order to internalize the answer the teacher should ask the students to repeat their colleagues' answers.
7. The questions should be leveled and their language should be simple and not ambiguous.
8. Questions should be within the students' capabilities, varied, interesting, and of a developing nature.
9. Long answer should be given by more than a student should.
10. Good answer should be immediately reinforced.

Gabrielaros (2004) added that EFL teachers ask questions for the following reasons ; the need to minimize teachers' talking time so that teachers do not dominate the lesson, the importance of involving learners and eliciting and generating as much learner thinking and talk as possible, and the need for time- effectiveness which is the complaint of teachers that there never seems to be enough time to deal with the set syllabus.

Questions are divided into three levels; lower level, middle level and the higher level (Veenman, Veten & Lem, 1987). Also, there are many types of questions; probe and diverged questions, comparison and contrast, application, classification, illustration, criticism, inference, discussion, definition, recall, summary , observation, forming new questions, and cause and effect questions (Freiberg & Waxan, 1998).

Gabrielaros (2004) mentioned that there are four types of questions according to the response required ; yes/no, open-ended, convergent , and divergent questions.

The Problem of the study

Modern teaching is not a mechanical process. It is an interaction where the teacher brings both the student and the subject matter together. The teacher and the activities are to be incorporated, so teaching is not telling and testing (Doran, Chan and Tamir, 1998). The teacher is not an instructor or taskmaster, he is a helper and guide. The most effective teacher is the teacher who can motivate his students to answer his questions, so, the effective teacher is the teacher who can ask a varied number of questions covering the whole material

as well as covering all students in the classroom (Burden and Byrd, 1998).

It is said that questioning is a skill that a teacher should master. Therefore, many training courses on questioning were held by the Ministry of Education in the Sultanate of Oman as well as many researches had studied questions in terms of motivating students to ask and answer questions in their varied kinds and levels, the time allotted by the teacher to ask a question and to answer, characteristics of good questions and how to write questions (Ministry of Education, 2003).

In spite of the fact that much attention is given to the questioning skill, our teachers are still complaining of their students levels as well as students complaining of their practicing questions (English and Reigeluth, 1996).

This study tries to study the above deterioration through answering the following questions;

- What is the amount of time spent by teachers to ask questions in their English classrooms?
- Do teachers of English Language vary their questions among the level of their students?
- Does the time allotted help students to answer and participate freely and effectively?

The Importance of the Study

The importance of this study is stemmed from the point that teachers of English language in Jordan complain that their students do not respond to their questions in their classes effectively (Doraj, 2004).

Therefore, this study is the first study that dealt with questions in terms of the time during the classroom.

Also, the importance of this study is stemmed from the results that the study may reveal in the areas of training teachers.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the levels and types of questions raised by EFL teachers in their English language classes in Southern Al-Mazar directorate of Education.

The Questions of the Study

The study tries to achieve its purpose through answering the following questions;

- 1 What is the total number of questions that are raised by EFL teachers in Southern Al-Mazar directorate of Education?
- 2 Does the number of questions differ due to gender?
- 3 Does the number of questions differ due to the teachers' experience?

Operational Definitions

The following terms are going to be used according to the purpose of the study:

Question: A set of words that a listener is to be exposed to and interpret intentionally, then to respond according to the speaker's discourse (Burden, Byrd, 1998). A question also is defined as: a thing asked in order to find out: a sentence, in interrogative form, addressed to some one to get information, inquiry.

In this study; a question is defined as what the teachers ask in the classroom waiting for an answer or not in relation to the subject matter.

Question level: questions are divided according to Bloom's level from the simple to the complicated (Veenman, Veten and Lem, 1987).

In this study; the level of the questions is divided into two levels;

Low level questions (recalling, comprehension and application).

High level questions (Analysis, synthesis and evaluative).

EFL teachers: those teachers who are teaching English for the 10th grade classes, and they have B.A. in English language and Literature.

10th Grade classes: these are the highest classes in the basic stage.

Review of Related Studies

Al-Subaie (2007) conducted a study aimed at investigating the questions asked by EFL teachers of 2nd secondary grade through classroom interaction and classifying these questions. The sample of the study consisted of (19) teachers who were teaching English language of the second secondary grade students in Tabouk during the first semester 2006/2007. The results of the study showed that teachers raised four levels of questions where the memory questions was the most frequent whereas the evaluative level questions was the least frequent.

Tan (2007) examined classroom questioning behaviors and their impacts on Chinese students' development. He observed nine university English lessons and conducted semi-structured interviews with six teachers and made groups of students. The data showed that many of the questions asked were lower-cognitive questions. The findings of the study revealed that questioning was employed by the teachers to check text comprehension and to hold students attention on the tests. The results also revealed that the identified questions were likely to have negative impact on the students.

Khorsand (2009) examined the cognitive levels used by Iranian EFL teachers in advanced reading comprehension tests. The sample of the study comprised (20) EFL teachers who asked 215 questions. The results of the study showed that the most dominant question type was the knowledge questions followed by comprehension questions which means that most of were in the first two levels of Bloom's taxonomy.

(Shtnawi, 1998) studied types and levels of questions raised by EFL teachers and students in the first secondary classes in Irbid First and Second Directorates of Education. The sample of the study consisted of (20) EFL teachers. To achieve the objectives of the study two observation forms were used.

The results of the study revealed that; male and female teachers used nearly the same number of questions, there were a significant difference between male and female teachers in favor of male teachers in using questions, and all male and female teachers raised 243 questions, (132) questions for male teachers and (111) questions for female teachers.

Long and Sato (cited in Allright and Baily, 1991) analyzed transcripts of six elementary adult ESL classes with an average of twenty students per class. The researchers compared teachers' speech with base line data collected in an experimental study of native and non native speakers interacting in pairs called "dyads". One point of this research was teachers' use of display and referential questions. They found that ESL teachers used significant more display than referential questions in the classroom. They also used significantly more display questions and significantly fewer questions than did the native speakers in the "dyads".

(Beyer, 1997) mentioned that the teacher's ability to vary his questions as well as to respect learners' questions and answers will develop the learners critical thinking and arouse their curiosity.

(Davis and Rimm, 1994) paid much attention to the questions according to their levels, dividing them into; recalling, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluative. They

also defined types of questions according to those levels. Moreover, many researchers and studies dealt with questions in their low levels (recalling, comprehension, and application) where as high levels (synthesis, analysis, and evaluation) are neglected due to their sophisticated nature.

Time is considered as a crucial factor in the teaching process where the teacher explains, asks and answers (Kummer, 1995). (Veenman, Veten, and Lem, 1987) mentioned that teachers' speech time should be reduced, so as to give the students the opportunity to participate, ask, and answer.

(Almosawi, 1991) conducted a study about oral questions raised by history classroom teachers in AL-Bahrain. The study revealed that 76% of the questions raised in the classroom were within recalling and comprehension levels, 30% of the questions were synthesis. Where as 1% of the questions was an evaluative nature.

(Al-Eid, 1995) in her study using the Flanders Decimal system to study the diploma female student verbal interaction found that 92.4% of the time in the class was produced by the students speech. Also, 26% of the questions were diverged questions.

Al-Ibrhim (2003) conducted a study to investigate the verbal interaction in English Language courses in Irbid Educational Directorate. The sample comprised (10) teachers. The results of his study revealed that the total speech of the teacher was 89.12% of the whole time allotted, also, 4.41% of the questions were diverged questions only.

The study investigated the effects of teacher and student sex on question type. This investigation also explored teacher immediacy(communicative behaviors that enhance closeness to another) and how it impacted student questions. Trained coders audio taped and observed classrooms across the university. Thirty courses in seven colleges (Arts and Science, Business Administration, Communication, Education, Engineering and Technology, Fine Arts and Health and Human Services) were randomly selected. Four coders noted the frequency of teacher verbal immediacy behaviors in their classrooms. Coders also compiled and sorted out the student questions asked and the antecedent and subsequent teacher comment when a student question was asked.

Brock (1986) conducted an experimental study to determine whether high frequencies of referential questions had an effect on adult ESL classroom discourse. The subjects for the study included (24) non-native speakers of English enrolled in classes at the university of Hawaii, and four experienced ESL teachers(two males and two females). Results indicated that ESL learners' spoken English responding to referential questions tended to produce better oral performance qualitatively and quantitatively than students responding to display questions. Learners' responses to referential questions were significantly longer and syntactically more complex than their responses to display questions. Also, responses in the treatment group classes contained greater number of connectives.

Talebinezahd (2003) mentioned that questions and answers form a high percentage of classroom activities that are supposed to get learners involved in creation or re-creation of meaning through language .

Reviewing the mentioned studies, the researcher found that most of the questions studied were beyond the low level of Bloom's taxonomy, most of the time is used by the teacher, a trend toward adopting the prepared tests as well as a fewer use of the diverged questions.

The Study Design

This is a descriptive survey study, where the researcher intends to investigate a specific phenomenon also ,it might be as a field study. The researcher used observations, and recording cassettes as tools to collect the information the study requires.

The Population of the Study

The population of the study consists of (64) teachers who are teaching English for the 10th grade in Southern Al-Mazar directorate of Education during the first semester 2011/2012.

The Sample of the Study

The sample of the study comprised of (12) teachers; (6) males and (6) females teaching English language for the 10th grade classes who were randomly selected.

The Instruments of the Study

The researcher used three observational instruments;

- Stop watch
- Recorder
- Observational checklist.

Procedures of the Study

- The researchers arranged with the teachers to attend their lessons about "Mothers Day". Also, the researchers had taken their weekly timetables and he arranged with them when to attend their lessons.
- The application period extended to (6 days) where the researchers attended two classes or one class every day.
- The researchers went to the school on the appointed dates, attending the class/classes with the teacher/teachers who he agreed with in advance.
- The researchers entered the class having the stopwatch, the recorder and the observation check list sheet.
- The researchers fixed the stopwatch and played the recorder cassette as the teacher started the lesson.
- The researchers recorded(540) minutes.
- The researchers recorded (1603) questions during those (540) minutes.
- The researchers calculated the total time of each lesson, which is about (36-45) minutes with an average of (40.5) minutes.
- The researchers observed and calculated that (90) probe questions were asked by the teachers .
- The researchers had practiced listening to the cassette more than 3 times to calculate the questions that are related to the classroom subject matter directly or indirectly.
- The researchers utilized the checklist sheet to check the distribution of the questions on all of their levels.
- The time observed is (540) minutes which is 45 minutes x 12 classes = 540 minutes, meanwhile the recorded time is (486) minutes which is 40.5 minutes x 12 classes =486 minutes.

The Results of the Study

The results of the study are presented according to the order of the questions respectively :

The first question: what is the total number of questions that teachers asked in their questioning skill? Table one shows the time that the teacher utilizes in the questioning skill.

Table one shows the total number of questions that teachers asked in their questioning skill.

Table (1)
Number of questions asked by teachers

Type of question	open	%	ended	%	Total	%
Low level	194	49,36	1096	90,57	1290	80,48
High level	199	50,63	114	9,43	313	19,52
Total	393	100	1210	100	1603	100

Table (1) shows that most of the questions asked by the teacher were among the low level, where teachers asked (1290) questions that is (80,48%), where as, teachers asked (313) questions, that is(19,52%) within the high level. Also, those teachers asked (1210) that is (75,48%)ended questions and (393) which is (24,51%) open questions.

Results related to the second question: Does the number

of questions differ due to gender? Table (2) shows the total number of questions according to gender.

Table (2)
The total number of questions differ due to gender

Type of question	sex	open	ended	Total
Low level	Male	110	503	613
	Female	84	593	677
High level	Male	170	91	261
	Female	29	23	52
Total	Male	280	594	874
	Female	113	616	729
		393	1210	1603

Table (2) shows that male asked (874) questions (613) questions were the low level and (261) were within the high level, where as females asked (729) questions (677) were within the high level.

Results related to the third question; Does the number of questions differ due to the teachers' experience? Table (3) shows the total number of questions as effected by the teachers' experience.

Table (3) The number of questions according to the teachers' experience

type of question	Experience/year	Open	Ended	Total
Low Level	1-7	91	554	645
	8-14	60	340	400
	15-	43	202	245
High level	1-7	89	60	149
	8-14	70	32	102
	15-	40	22	62
Total	1-7	180	614	794
	8-14	131	372	503
	15-	83	224	307

Table (3) shows that teachers whom their experience is (1-7) years asked (645) questions within the low level, (400) questions within the same level were asked by those teachers whom their experience is from (8-14) years. Also teachers whom their experience more than (15) years asked (245) questions within the same level. Table (3) also, showed that teachers whom their experience ranged from (1-7)asked (149) questions within the high level, (102) questions were asked by teachers whom their experience from (8-14) years, moreover, teachers whom their experience more than (15) years asked (52) questions within the high level.

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Discussion of the Results

The discussion of the results will be proposed according to the questions respectively. The first question: What is the total number of questions that the teachers of English used in their questioning skill? As shown in table (1) where teachers asked (1290) questions within the low level, which could be attributed to the teachers' concentration on the material itself, as well as, due to the teachers' method in teaching, where they depend on memorization in their teaching. Also, this result could be attributed to the teachers' style of assessment that focuses on the first levels of Bloom's taxonomy. On the other hand, this result shows that there is no opportunity for classroom interaction.

Results related to the second question; Does the number of questions differ due to sex?

According to the results shown in table (2), these results could be attributed to the idea that female teachers' use ended questions more than male teachers in the low level due to their linguistic capabilities as well as, they tend to ask restricted questions that have specific answers or they know their answers. Therefore, they cannot vary their question that they can not negotiate freely. So, they restrict themselves to the levels and types of questions they know.

Results related to the third question; Does the number of questions differ due to the teachers' experience? Table (3) shows that there is a relationship between the teachers' experience, where fresh teachers asked more questions than those with a long experience. This could be attributed to the teachers preparing programs at the colleges of Education where those teachers are well trained and prepared on how to motivate their students, how to prepare their tests covering all types and levels, and that they studied different courses in practicum and methodology. Also, this could be attributed to the idea that those teachers studied educational courses more than pure specialized courses.

Recommendations

In light of the results of the study, the researchers suggested the following recommendations that concern the concerns;

- 1- Reviewing the programs of preparing teachers at the universities level in terms of;
 - The emphasis on the teachers role as a guide supervisor, motivator of their students.
 - The emphasis on the students role.
 - Suggesting new course about creativity and questioning.
 - Allotting more grades for the students' creativity, participation, and questioning in the classroom.
- 2- The ministry of education should hold some training courses for teachers on how to motivate their students in their classes.
- 3- Conducting continuous courses for teachers on how to prepare their tests.



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