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TEACHERS' BASIC QUESTIONINGS USED BY ENGLISH TEACHERS IN TEACHING ENGLISH

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Abstract

This study examined the use of teachers' basic questionings of Sydney Micro Skill (1983) in *Teaching English as a Foreign Language* (TEFL). There were nine components of teachers' basic questionings, namely structuring, focusing, phrasing, redirecting, distributing, reacting, pausing, prompting, and changing the level of cognitive demand. The objectives of this study were to describe the types of basic questionings, explain the teachers' ways in keeping the students active to respond their questions and explain why the teachers use those teachers' basic questionings. It was a qualitative research which was also supported by quantitative data. It used audio visual, observation/field note and interview to collect data. The result showed that most of English teachers applied those nine components to build a good classroom interaction and the dominant was distributing. The teachers had four ways in keeping the students active to respond their questions; they used questions randomly, interesting medium while delivering the questions, active in motivating the students, and promoted a group discussion. Moreover, the teachers also had reasons why they used those teachers' basic questionings, such as to find out the students' attitudes, determine the students' understanding, and to motivate and appreciate the students.

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a highly complex process and, for the beginning professional, needs to be broken down into meaningful and acquirable parts (Turney et al, 1983: 2). It is meaningful if the teachers have an effective teaching or interesting teaching strategy in order to get the students' motivation in learning English. A common problem in *Teaching English as a Foreign Language* (TEFL) is that in many cases the teachers face a passive class where the students are not enthusiastic in joining the learning activity and avoid interaction with the teacher. In order to build up a good classroom atmosphere, teachers should have the initiative to activate the students.

Classroom interaction in the classroom activities also relates to the ability of speaking between the teacher and the students. Speaking is a productive skill that can be directly and empirically observed (Brown 2004: 140). It is how a learner might try to communicate fluently, accurately and acceptably.Considering the importance of speaking in the classroom interaction, the use of questioning can be one the solutions. Cotton (1988:1) defines question as any sentence which has an interrogative form or function. Sadker and Sadker (1990: 113) also state that questions play a crucial role in classroom interaction and in the educational process.

As cited in Fauziati (2010), Rubin and Thompson (1994: 30) states that people send and receive messages effectively and negotiate meaning since the main goal of learning a foreign language is to be able to communicate. As a teacher, the writer observes several problems when the students communicate in English. Most of them do not have intention of communicating in English because of their limited knowledge of English. They often encounter unfamiliar words that inhibit their communication. In addition they do not have any idea about how to compensate their communication in target language.

Mauigoa (2006) provides teachers' questioning skills to improve learning and thinking in Pacific Island early childhood centers. It proposes a modified model called 'Questioning and Understanding Improves Learning and Thinking' (QUILT) which focuses on different teacher behaviors and skills in the process of questioning. The study shows the result that it is important to focus on promoting novice teachers' knowledge and skills in questioning so that they can support children's higher levels of thinking.

Teaching English as a foreign language is teaching English to students whose first language is not English. Broughton et al (2003: 7) state that learners of English as a foreign language have a choice of language variety to a larger extent than second language learners. The choice of variety is partly influenced by the ability of teachers and geographical location.

As cited in Broughton (2003: 8), West (1953) states that the foreigner is learning English to express ideas rather than emotion: for his emotional expression he has the mother tongue. In addition, it is a useful general rule that intensive words and items are of secondary importance to a foreign learner, however common they may be. This remains that English does not tend to be used for the most private purposes and the speakers' emotional life is expressed and developed largely through the mother tongue.

Tan (2007) adds that teacher asks questions at the beginning of activity to motivate and discover what makes students interested in learning. Orlich et al (1980: 193) state that the importance of questioning is (1) it is the common strategy in teaching, (2) it can improve the students' quality in learning, (3) the teacher can determine the level of students' cognitive, (4) the teacher can determine the first level of students' knowledge.

According to Richards and Lockhart (1994: 186), there are several reasons why questions are commonly used in teaching and learning that (1) they stimulate and maintain students' interest, (2) they encourage students to think and focus on the content of the lesson, (3) they enable a teacher to clarify what a student has said, (4) they enable teachers to check

students' understanding, and (5) they encourage students' participation. Chun-Maio (2007: 30) states that the aims of delivering questions are; 1) letting the students to present information like facts, idea and opinion; 2) making examination about learners' understanding, knowledge or skills; 3) engaging learners actively in participating their learning.

One of questionings that can be applied in the classroom interaction is teachers' basic questioning of Sydney Micro Skill (1983). The use of teachers' basic questionings can construct all the whole class interaction. Turney (1983: 62) states that the skill of questioning is fundamental to a teacher's repertoire. Teacher talk may involve the giving of explanation, the presenting of facts and ideas, and controlling the direction of the lesson, but without skilled use of questioning a teacher has difficulty knowing how well students understand material presented to them and/or what additional assistance may be required.

Table 1. Teachers' Basic Questionings of Sydney Micro Skill

No	Question Types	Brief Explanation
1	Structuring	Teacher gives specific information about the task immediately before or after a series of questions.
2	Focusing	Teachers concerns with the number of tasks.
3	Phrasing	Questions should be phrased in words that are appropriate to the level of development of the group
4	Redirecting	Teacher maintains attention to one question and to invite several students to respond
5	Distributing	Teacher distributes questions randomly to the class
6	Pausing	Teacher pauses for a few seconds after asking a question of the whole group and before requesting to respond
7	Reacting	Teacher shows the enthusiasm and warmth to the students' answers and participation
8	Prompting	Teacher gives an opportunity to develop a better understanding
9	Changing the level of cognitive demand	It is balancing questions requiring factual recall with more difficult questions

Dagarin (2004: 128) states that classroom interaction is defined as a two-way process between the participants in the learning process. The teacher influences the learners and vice versa. Dagarin (2004: 130) also provides that the most frequent ways of organizing classroom interaction, depends on who communicates with whom: (1) teacher – learners, (2) teacher – learner/a group of learners, (3) learner – learner and (4) learners – learners.

Another definition of classroom interaction is stated by Richards and Platt

(1992). According to them, classroom interaction refers to the patterns of verbal and non-verbal interaction and the types of social relationships which occur within classrooms. In short, it can be a classroom process in which teacher and students negotiate during the teaching and learning activity.

METHODS

In this study, the researcher used case study. It used qualitative approach and also supported by quantitative data. Miles (1984: 5) stated that qualitative data were a source of grounded, rich description and explanation of process. On the other hand, the quantitative was used to support the data and determine which component of teachers' basic questionings was mostly used in observing the frequency of teacher's distribution in gaining the teaching learning process.

The data was taken from the teaching and learning activity of State Junior High Schools. The participants were six English teachers in State Junior High Schools of 01 Salam Sub-district, Magelang Regency. They were nonnative speakers of English who use English and Indonesian in conducting the classroom activities. They had completed their study at college majoring in English education. They were experienced teachers who had taught for several years.

The data collection of this study was audio visual, observation/field note and interview. The use of audio visual was very useful since it could be examined many times and captured many details of a lesson that could not be easily observed by other means. The next data used observation sheet which aspects were class, time, language, material, learning method, learning media, students' activity, teacher and students' interaction and applying nine basic questionings. Then, the writer used guided interview including the teachers' educational background, the length of teaching, the problem faced in the classroom, the solution in solving the problem and the strategies they used in teaching English. This study concerned on the teachers' utterances in the classroom interaction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the result of audio visual, all six English teachers applied nine components of teachers' basic questionings in different ways. There were 425 questions and the examples of teachers' excerpts could be seen as the following:

The excerpt below applied pausing in which it used 'are you sure' to ensure the student's answer.

T : Let's see the text. In your opinion, which is the orientation?
S : Paragraph 2.
T : **Are you sure?** Let's check it. Please show it using this mouse, click the mouse. Then, you will find the answer.
(One of the students shows the orientation by clicking the mouse.)

Another example of the excerpt showed the use of prompting. It was used to assist the student when they had wrong answer. The excerpt showed that the student's answer was grammatically incorrect and then the teacher helped him to correct it.

T : The rabbit has long ears. The rabbit is heemm hemm
S : Funny.
T : Yes, the rabbit is funny. Next sentence.
S : **The rabbit is small tail.** (incorrect grammar)
T : Small tail? **Yak, it has small tail**. Good. Please make sentence freely. For example, the giraffe is tall. The tiger …

The following excerpt used the type of redirecting. It was used to give question for a certain student. It could be by naming, coding or pointing. The teacher mentioned the student's name and pointed one student to answer the questions.

T : Now, we know that structures of the letter are …..
S : the time, the receiver, opening, content, closure, sender.

T : **Randi, repeat please!**
S (Randi) : the time, the receiver, opening, content, closure, sender.
T : Well, what is time? (**pointing one student**)
S : waktu.
The use of reacting could be seen in the following excerpt which showed how the teacher appreciated the student's answer by saying 'good'.
T : Next, what is the text about? Read the text please and find the theme! What's your answer? Where did Mr. and Mrs. Sani go for tour? Have you found it?
S : B, Europe.
T : OK, **very good**. Next, how many people? Count it!
S : A, two.

As the result of this study, the following explanation would show the examples of teachers' utterances for each type.

Structuring ***Hold?*** *For example, the remedial test will be* ***held*** *on Saturday after school.. to be plus verb., jadi kalimat pasif.. To celebrate education day, the school will* ***hold*** *a wall magazine contest. So, what is the meaning of* ***hold****?*
Phrasing Who is the **receiver** of the announcement? What is **receiver**?
Focusing (It was based on the material which focused on a certain topic)
Re-directing What is orientation? Yes you, read please! (pointing one student); Alright, sixth group please, number 2; Anisa, next please!
Distributing Have you finished?; Do you understand?; Anyone knows?
Pausing Is it right?; Are you sure?; Any other answers?
Reacting Give applause!; Good; Well done
Prompting Small tail? Yak, it has small tail.; bike? It should be going by bike.
Changing the Level Please, what did we learn today? Tell me, please!; What is the summary of this personal letter?

Table 2. Calculation of Teachers' Basic Questionings

No	Teachers' Basic Questionings	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	Total
1	Structuring	3	4	1	4	2	8	22
2	Phrasing	1	1	1	2	1	5	11
3	Focusing	14	6	3	24	2	3	52
4	Re-directing	7	16	6	9	14	16	68
5	Distributing	24	9	21	28	35	31	148
6	Pausing	3	11	3	4	6	2	29
7	Reacting	3	17	8	17	13	26	84
8	Prompting	1	1	2	1	2	2	9
9	Changing the level of cognitive demand	-	1	1	-	-	-	2
Total of Teachers' Questions		56	66	46	89	75	93	425

It showed the calculation of teachers' utterances in using teachers' basic questionings based on Sydney Micro Skill. From the table above, it could be concluded that not all the teachers used teachers' basic questionings in delivering questions. They had different types of questions. The following would be the percentage of it.

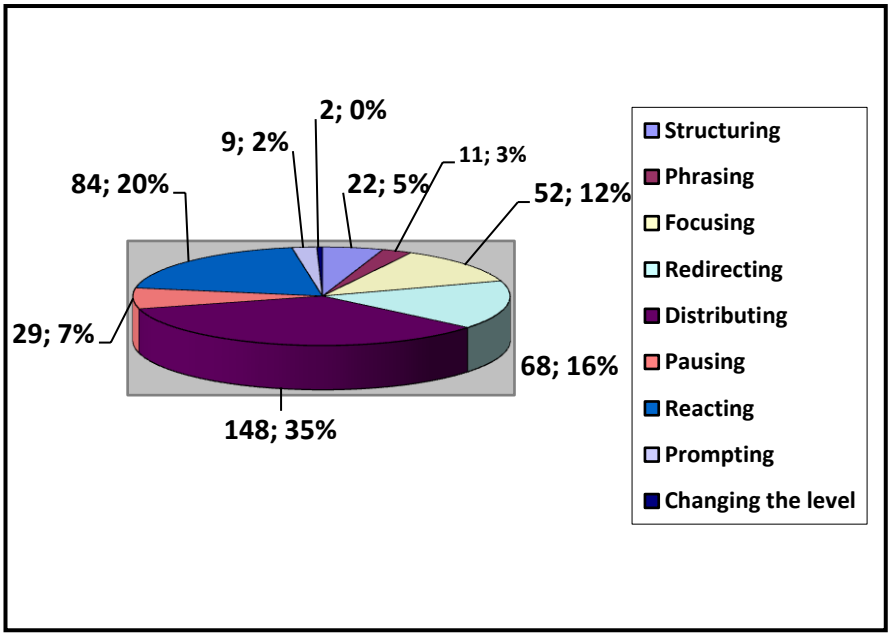

Figure 1. Total Percentage of TBQ

There were 425 questions of six English teachers and they had nine teachers' basic questioning. The dominant was the questions of distributing (35%). All teachers contributed to these types. The second was reacting (20%) and then redirecting (16%). The next was focusing (12%), pausing (7%), and structuring (5%). Another types were phrasing (3%), prompting (2%) and the last was changing the level of cognitive demand (0,5%).

Another result showed the teachers' ways in keeping the students active to respond the questions. Here, it had been concluded that there were four ways in keeping the students active to respond their questions. Those ways were: 1) the teachers liked having questions randomly in order to involve the students during the teaching and learning activity; 2) the teachers used interesting medium while they delivered the questions, so the students would understand about the teachers' questions; 3) the teachers were very active in motivating the students by using reacting, so the students would be more appreciated; and 4) promoting a group discussion in which it could help the students to be more confident when the teachers gave questions to them because they had discussed with their friends.

The last result showed the reasons why the teachers use those teachers' basic questionings. The teachers could find out the students' attitudes by asking some questions through distributing. They asked questions randomly and they would find out the students' attitudes. Moreover, the use of redirecting also helped the teachers to find out the students' attitudes and the students would pay attention to the teachers' questions.

To determine the students' understanding in mastering the materials, the teachers asked the questions using structuring, focusing, phrasing, prompting, pausing and changing the level of cognitive demand. Those types of questions related to others since it could increase the atmosphere of classroom interaction and build up the students' ability in learning English. The use of reacting was very effective to motivate the students. Since it showed the teachers' appreciation to the students, it would increase the students' personality in learning English. It also could improve the students' feelings. For example, when the teacher had reacting to him or her, it was obvious that the student would be very confident then he or she could join the teaching and learning activity well.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The result showed that those nine components were used by six English teachers with 425 questions and the percentage of distributing (35%), reacting (20%), redirecting (16%), focusing (12%), pausing (7%), structuring (5%), phrasing (3%), prompting (2%) and changing the level of cognitive demand (0,5%). The dominant type was distributing. The result of observation sheet showed that there were four ways in keeping the students active to respond the questions; they were (1) using questions randomly, (2) using interesting medium while delivering the questions, (3) active in motivating the students, and (4) promoting a group discussion. Moreover, the teachers also had reasons why they used those teachers' basic questionings; they were (1) to find out the students' attitudes, (2) to determine the students' understanding, and (3) to motivate and appreciate the students.

The use of teachers' basic questioning of Sydney Micro Skill (1983) is recommended for teaching and learning activity since it can construct the whole class interaction. First, it is important for the teachers to find out the students' attitudes in delivering the questions. Then the teachers also should activate and motivate the students in joining the classroom activity. The last, the teachers should have the higher level of questions in order to improve the students' ability in learning English.

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