

## Analysis of Classroom Questions in EFL Context of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at Undergraduate Level

### Abstract:

*This paper examines different kinds of questions utilized by EFL teachers in the context of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at the undergraduate level. The study was conducted on the EFL teachers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to determine what kinds of questions and why a particular set of questions are utilized during classroom interaction. The results showed that the majority of the EFL teachers employ Yes/No questions for confirmation or negation and short answers questions for the elicitation of information from the learners. Display questions, open-ended questions, referential questions and none retrieval questions are also utilized in their classrooms. They integrate all types of questions to stimulate the curiosity of learners, develop an active approach to learning, diagnose students' weak areas, get students' attention and involve them in actual language learning. The study recommends that these questions should be integrated into the EFL classroom for better interaction and producing a positive impact on the learners' language skills.*

### Key Words:

EFL Classroom, Interactions, Open-ended Questions, Questioning Technique, Referential Questions, Retrieval Questions

### Introduction

Teacher-talk has a significant place in the teaching-learning process. Language teaching is facilitated by teachers in many ways. One of the essential ways is teacher-talk, and it is necessary for classroom interaction (Walsh, 2002). When teachers want to initiate classroom interaction, they bring different strategies under their use. Among those strategies, questioning is an important method to start interaction with the students. Interaction can occur among the teacher and students, as well as among students. However, the teacher is always the central figure in the classroom interaction. In such a situation, the teacher is bound to ask various questions to trigger the classroom interaction in an effective way. Brock (1986) thinks that teacher-talk and questions will affect the learning and interaction of the classroom. Teachers can make the classroom boring or interesting and motivating; it depends upon the teacher's role and questions in the class.

Interestingly, second language classroom always depends upon the discourse which occurs in the class. Such discourse is the outcome of teachers' questions. Various questions can be used for different purposes. Some questions are very short and simple, which need only yes/no answers. And some questions are more elaborative and explanatory in nature, where respondents are expected to elicit more information. So, elicitation technique is used for getting information from the students. Walsh (2013) illustrates that elicitation technique is one of the essential methods to start classroom interaction. Moreover, he defines that elicitation technique is the name of those strategies where learners respond to the questions of their teachers. Teachers ask different types of questions in their classroom for interaction. The most common types of questions

are; Yes/No question, referential questions, display questions, convergent questions, divergent questions and procedural questions (Wajnryb, 1992). These are the questions which are frequently asked in EFL classroom by teachers for the initiation of classroom interaction. This classroom discourse is helpful in language learning.

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The more interaction, the more learning occurs in the class. Therefore, classroom discourse and interaction is of great interest for language teachers. Among many ways, teachers' questions have a significant role and impact on the learning process of the students. In this study, the researcher tried to find out teachers questions in the EFL classroom of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. It is worth investigating to find out what types of questions teachers use in their EFL classroom and why they are used. The most commonly used types of questions are highlighted in the present research study.

## **Literature Review**

In English language teaching, different methods are being used by practitioners for the purpose of better outcomes in the target language. All the methods have some unique features and characteristics which differentiate them from one another. Nevertheless, these are concerned with better learning outcomes. Almost all the methods focus on students' interaction in the classroom. The more students are involved in classroom interaction, the sooner they will acquire the target language. This maximization of classroom interaction depends upon various strategies and techniques. One of the most dominant techniques is teacher questioning. Teachers are the ones who are responsible for the initiation of classroom interaction. For this purpose, teachers use the questioning technique to initiate classroom interaction. [Cotton \(1988\)](#) opines that teachers give thirty-five to fifty percent of the instruction time to questioning.

Question is defined that any sentence which interrogates something in order to get a response from the person ([Erlinda & Dewi, 2014](#)). Similarly, in-classroom context, it is an instructional cue and stimuli to activate learners and help the teachers in teaching. It facilitates the teachers where to take their lesson ([Cotton, 1988](#)). There can be different types of questions that teachers ask their students. As ([Richards & Lockhart, 1996](#)) and ([Hamiloğlu & Temiz, 2012](#)) say that they are convergent, divergent and procedural questions on the basis of purposes. Procedural questions are related to classroom routines, convergent questions demand students to recall their previous knowledge, and divergent questions let the students give their opinion and judgment about the topic ([Yang, 2010](#)). Similarly, closed-ended questions are used for yes/no answers, while open-ended questions are used for detailed answers from the respondents (Kao & Weng, 2012). Apart from these, there are referential questions and display questions. In-display questions, the answer is already known, while in referential questions, the answer is not known to the students and teachers. These are the various kinds of questions that EFL teachers use for better classroom interaction.

The importance of the question depends upon the instructional value and situation when it is posed. All the questions are equally important for classroom interaction. These questions are a stock of language teachers, which they use at the right time. Asking questions is a very effective intellectual tool to use in the EFL classroom (Postman, 1979, p. 140). It gives the teacher to know about students understanding, level of the learners, to check previous knowledge of the students, warm-up tool, comprehension check, enhance learners participation, motivate the learners and involve them in classroom activities. The ultimate aim is to increase classroom interaction. Apart from the above-mentioned benefits, questions also keep the classroom stirring and interesting (Marzano & Simms, 2012; Vogler, 2005; Wragg & Brown, 2001). In addition, questioning also has cognitive significance in language learning. There are two main streams of questions in terms of cognitive interpretation of Bloom taxonomy; lower-order thinking questions and high order thinking questions (Wilson, 2016). In such circumstances, approximately sixty percent of the questions which are asked by teachers are usually lower-cognitive questions, while 20 percent of the questions are higher-cognitive questions. It suggests that teachers do not ask problem-solving questions from the learners ([Cotton, 1988](#)).

Questioning strategy has pedagogical implications in the EFL classroom. Research studies illustrate that teachers should be equipped with questioning pedagogy for better outcomes. Moreover, questions should be asked in a sequence, not in an individualistic way. Teachers should also be trained to use questions in a sequence. Learning questioning sequence will help teachers to properly keep the students engaged in various interactive tasks (Marzano & Simms, 2012, p. 12). Similarly, Marzano and Simms (2012) give four phases of

questioning sequence; details, categories, elaborative and evidence. So, teachers should keep the sequence of questioning from the learners.

However, in the Pakistani context, there is no such study available on teachers questioning technique. Teachers' questions are an inseparable part of EFL classroom interaction. Here, the classroom environment is still mostly teacher-centred. No proper investigation has been made in this regard in the teachers' questions. This aimed to explore teachers questioning technique in the EFL classroom of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. Furthermore, this study highlighted different kinds of questions that teachers used in their EFL classroom. It was an interesting study where the researchers came across different teachers who rarely used questioning technique in their classroom. Although the majority of the teachers used all of the different types of questions in their classrooms, they did not know about the classification of those questions.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The questioning technique is one of the essential ways to initiate classroom interaction, solve problems and facilitate the learners. In teaching-learning, it is one the pivotal instructional strategies and the most frequently used tool in the classroom ([Edwards & Bowman, 1996](#)). Theoretically, this research study is based on the three key assumptions of asking questions in the classroom. First, it is used as a diagnostic instrument to know whether students understand or not. Secondly, it is used as an instructional instrument that facilitates learners in terms of integrating them with their previous knowledge. Thirdly, questions are used as a motivational instrument to keep the learners lively and engaging in the classroom ([Hamiloğlu & Temiz, 2012](#)). On the basis of the aforementioned arguments, analysis of teachers' questions has great importance in the EFL classroom.

## **Research Problem**

Teachers are mostly concerned with the student's results and performance of the target language. They use different tools, strategies and techniques to maximize students' language capability in the target language. For this purpose, they focus on classroom interaction. In such a situation, they are bound to use various questions in their class to maintain classroom interaction. It is not clear that which type of questions teachers use in their classroom most of the time. This study explored the various kinds of questions the teacher asked in the class for sustaining the interaction. A detailed and comprehensive analysis of the teachers' questions is given. Moreover, it is also analyzed what questions are mostly asked by teachers in the EFL context of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. What types of questions are more prevalent in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the EFL classroom in terms of classroom interactions and initiation of discussion among the students for teaching-learning purposes?

## **Research Objectives**

1. To explore the types of questions frequently asked by EFL teachers in the classroom
2. To know the reason behind these questions being frequently used by teachers.

## **Research Questions**

1. What types of questions do EFL teachers frequently ask in the classroom?
2. Why is a particular set of questions frequently used by EFL teachers?

## **Material Methods**

The universe of this study is Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The study was conducted on the various college lecturers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. English is taught as a compulsory subject in the initial four semesters of every BS degree programs. Moreover, their exams are held in the English language. The respondents of this study were English teachers of various colleges of KP. They teach English as a Foreign language in the different

colleges of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. All the teachers had more than three years of experience in the field of teaching. In addition, all of them have attended various language courses in the English language.

This research study carried a quantitative research design. The questionnaire was used as a data collection tool for this study. Data was collected from the respondents through a questionnaire. The questionnaire was adopted from the classification of [Richards & Lockhart \(2000\)](#). All the respondents were given the questionnaire to fill it. After that, the questionnaires were collected by the researchers from the respondents. The data were collected from 40 different EFL teachers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at the undergraduate level. Later on, the collected questionnaires were analyzed, and the results were extracted from them. The results were presented in two tables, and further detailed description has been given in the discussion section. The inferred results have been highlighted and elaborated on in the discussion.

## Results and Discussion

The responses of the participants are given in the following tables.

**Table 1.** Types of Questions

S. No	Statement	Yes	No	Uncertain	Total
1	Most of the time, I use Yes / NO questions in my class for classroom interaction.	18(45%)	16(40%)	6 (15%)	40(100%)
2	Most of the time, I use short answers/ Retrieval type of questions in my classroom.	20(50%)	12(30%)	8(20%)	40(100%)
3	Most of the time, I use none-referential questions for classroom interaction in my class.	15(37.5%)	20(50%)	5(12.5%)	40(100%)
4	Most of the time, I use Opened Ended questions in my class for classroom interaction.	25(62.5%)	10(25%)	5(12.5%)	40(100%)
5	Most of the times, I use display questions in my class for classroom interaction.	19(47.5%)	11(27.5%)	10(25%)	40(100%)
6	Most of the time, I use referential questions in my class for classroom interaction.	22(55%)	12(30%)	6(15%)	40(100%)

In the above table, the results show that 45% of the teachers ask Yes/No questions in their classroom, while 40% of the teachers responded in negation. Similarly, 15% of the respondents were uncertain. It illustrates that the majority of the teachers ask Yes/No questions in their EFL classroom, which is good for specific and objective answers. Apart from Yes/No questions, retrieval types of questions are also very essential in the classroom. Retrieval questions need short answers. The results show that 50% of the respondents say that they use short answers questions. On the other hand, 30% of the respondents say they do not use retrieval questions in their classroom. 20% of the respondents showed uncertainty about the above question. Retrieval questions are used to elicit and retrieve information from learners ([Moreira, Pinto, Starling, & Jaeger, 2019](#)). So, the teachers used such questions to assess their learners' understanding in an immediate way during the classroom interaction.

There is another kind of questions which are used in the language classroom to maintain the interaction. Non-referential questions are used to keep the learners lively and active in teaching-learning. In the table.1, 37% of the respondents say they ask non-referential questions from their students, while 50% of the respondents said. No, and 12% of the respondents showed uncertainty. From the above results, it is clear that

the majority of the teachers do not use non-referential questions. They ask questions for meaningful conversation, which is fruitful for classroom interaction. An open-ended question is another very essential way for classroom interaction. Teachers pose such questions to obtain a variety of answers from the students. In the above table, 62.5% of the respondents use Open-Ended questions in their classroom, While 25% of the respondents do not use Open-Ended questions in their classroom. It shows that the majority of the respondents use Open-Ended questions in the classroom. Such questions give more opportunities to learners for interaction in the classroom. It also gives learners a chance to demonstrate their knowledge with another. So, for useful interaction among learners, open-end questions have a pivotal place.

In the aforementioned table, 47.5% of the respondents say they use display questions in their classroom, while 27.5% of the respondents do not ask display questions in their classroom. At the same time, 25 % of the respondents showed uncertainty about the use of display questions in their classroom. Display questions are one of the major classroom interactive strategies. So, here the majority of the teachers use this strategy to initiate classroom interaction among learners. In addition, the referential question is another kind of question that is essential for classroom interaction. 55% of the respondents say they ask referential questions in their class for classroom interaction. On the other hand, 30% of the respondents negated the use of referential questions, while 15% of the respondents showed uncertainty about it.

**Table 2.** Aims of Questions

S. No	Statement	Yes	No	Uncertain	Total
1	Most of the time, I use imaginative questions in my class for classroom interaction.	16(40%)	14(35%)	10(25%)	40(100%)
2	Most of the time, I use procedural questions in my class for classroom interaction.	18(45%)	16(40%)	6(15%)	40(100%)
3	Most of the time, I use convergent questions in my class for classroom interaction.	15(37.5%)	15(37.5%)	10(25%)	40(100%)
4	Most of the time, I use divergent questions in my class for classroom interaction.	17(42.5%)	14(35%)	9(22.5%)	40(100%)

In table 2, questions are included on the basis of aims. This is another categorization of classroom questions. In the given table, 40% of the respondents say that they use imaginative questions in their classroom, while 35% of the respondents do not use them. On the other hand, 25% of the respondents are uncertain about the imaginative questions. Imaginative questions are more efficient in getting various responses from the learners. So, it brings variation to the classroom environment. Procedural questions are used to maintain classroom routine and activities. In the above table, 45% of the respondents say they use procedural questions for classroom interaction. On the other hand, 40% of the respondents say they do not use it in their classroom, While 15% of the respondents showed uncertainty. The results suggest that procedural questions are an integral part of the classroom interaction. Classroom procedures, management and routine play an essential role in EFL classroom for better interaction.

Meanwhile, in the above table, 37% of the respondents say they use convergent questions in their classroom for interaction. Similarly, 37% of the respondents do not use convergent questions in their classroom, while 25% of the respondents showed uncertainty about the said questions. So the results show that half of the teachers use convergent questions, and the other half does not use them. Again, divergent questions are those questions that have one correct answer. They are used to arrest the attention of the students in the classroom. Opposite of that is divergent questions which get many answers from the learners. In table No.2,

42% of the respondents say they use divergent questions, while 35% of the respondents do not use divergent questions in their classroom. On the other hand, 22% of the respondents showed uncertainty about the given statement. It shows that the majority of the respondents use divergent questions in their classrooms which are essential for effective interaction among learners ([Wittmer & Honig, 1991](#)). In addition, it is essential to know about the importance of various questions in their uses in classroom interaction.

In the results of the above data, it is found that teachers used various sets of questions for different purposes. The major questions teachers employed are; Yes/No questions for confirmation or negation and short answers questions for the elicitation of information from the learners. At the same time, they also exploit display questions, open-ended questions, referential questions and none retrieval questions in their classrooms. They integrate all types of questions to stimulate the curiosity of learners, develop an active approach to learning, diagnose students' weak areas, get students' attention and involve them in actual language learning. Integration of various questions in the language classroom is an effective way of classroom interaction ([Davoudi & Sadeghi, 2015](#)). Consequently, these questions can be used for teaching and learning in language teaching for better output from the learners. It enhances the learners' active participation in the language classroom, which is an integral part of classroom interaction among learners.

On the basis of the above results, it is pertinent to mention that all questions play a vital role in classroom interaction. Teachers should use a variety of questions for better classroom interaction and students participation ([Almeida, 2012](#)). The respondents' results illustrate that teachers use various kinds of questions to enhance classroom interaction among learners. After the analysis of the results, it is found that the majority of the teachers use a variety of questions to stimulate students' interest, to arrest their attention and engage them in classroom interaction. In classroom discourse, questions play an important role, whether it between teachers and students or between students and students. The more teachers ask questions; the higher is the participation of learners. So, for better outcomes in the EFL classroom, the questioning technique should be effectively used to stir up students' curiosity and interest in the teaching-learning process ([Skilton, & Meyer, 1993](#)). Moreover, the study found that teachers' questions in EFL classroom fulfil the three major aims of questioning technique; instructional instrument, diagnostic instrument and motivational instrument. The first one means where teachers use it as a method of instruction in teaching. It is an integral part of introducing the topic and sharing information. In the second type, it is used for the purpose of diagnosing the weak areas of the learners. The teachers address those areas in their teaching to overcome them. The third and last aim is to use it for the sake of motivation. Teachers use these questions to motivate the learners in the classroom for better output. Motivation is directly connected with classroom interaction. The more students are motivated, the higher will be their interaction. So, these three major aims are fulfilled by the various kinds of questions being asked by teachers.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This research study focused on the analysis of teachers' questions in the EFL classroom at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The study found that the majority of the teachers use a variety of questions in their English classes. Teachers always resort to various kinds of questions for better classroom interaction and students participation. Asking different kinds of questions stimulate the interest of the learners to engage themselves in the learning process. At the same time, it also arouses the curiosity of the learners about the topic. In addition, questions are also used as an attention-grabbing technique in the EFL classroom to keep the learners attentive. Moreover, the questioning technique promotes an active approach towards learning among learners. These are some of the fundamental benefits of posing various questions. On the other hand, questions are used as a diagnostic instrument to find out the weak areas of students to improve them. Questions are also used as an instructional instrument where the teachers use them for instructional purposes. Finally, questions are used as a motivational instrument to stir up and motivate the students for lively and engaging interaction in the classroom. Asking dynamic questions in the EFL classroom has a positive and productive impact on the

students' performance. So, these are some of the essential purposes of teachers' questions in the EFL classroom.

These research papers have the following recommendations. First, the Questioning technique is an invaluable skill in classroom interaction. Teachers should plan lessons according to the need of the learners and incorporated various questions. Second, Teachers should use a variety of questions in the classroom. All the questions should be integrated to make the classroom environment engaging and interactive. Third, Teachers should ask high-order as well as low-order questions in the classroom to trigger interaction among the learners. Some easier and demanding questions should be asked. Furthermore, teachers should be trained to incorporate different types of questions into their EFL classroom to enhance students' interaction.



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