



Teachers' Question Types and Students' Speaking Performance in EFL Classroom

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Abstract

Questioning could help students in improving their speaking skills along with critical thinking skills. Thus, this study was aimed to find the most asked question type used by teachers and what type of question that could encourage students to speak more in EFL classroom in SMAN Kota Padang. The data were collected from classroom observation and stimulated recall interviews with the teachers. From the data analysis, it was found that LOTS questions were the most asked question. However, HOTS questions were able to encourage students to speak more compared to LOTS questions. From the interview, it was found that students' could answer longer with the help of stimulus or the questions helped them to relate with daily life surroundings. On the other hand, some active students and their backgrounds could affect the questioning activity in the classroom. Students with limited knowledge of vocabularies or timid personality found it harder to speak longer so they tend to answer the questions with few keywords only. The finding suggested that question type could encourage students to speak longer under some circumstances.

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INTRODUCTION

English First (EF) has conducted research done in 100 countries in 2019 and found that the average English language skill of Indonesian students was ranked in number 61 out of 100 countries. In Indonesia itself, Sumatera Barat province was ranked in very low proficiency with an average test score of 48.36 in rank 14 out of 22 provinces where the test was conducted. From this fact alone, it can be said that there is a problem why a lot of Indonesian students do not have good English proficiency though English has been taught since they are in elementary school.

Somehow, the problem lies where the teaching strategy has not met the students' needs. Patahuddin, Syawal, and Bin-Tahir (2017) found that memorization was still a popular learning strategy in Indonesia and Khamees (2016) agreed that the strategy will not give students chances to make inferences of their lesson. In the end,

it will affect their ability in critical thinking where students' are expected to gain during the school lesson.

On the other side, teacher could use questioning to improve critical thinking skills since it takes lot of classroom time. The questioning is so crucial since it will invite students to think and find a solution of the question asked. Briefly, there are some questions type that teachers could ask the students. Kipper and Rüttemann (2010) agreed that questioning was important to motivate them to think more critically and deeply. The questions could be categorized as display questions and referential questions, as well as Low Order, Thinking Skills (LOTS) questions or the High Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) questions.

Astrid, Amrina, Devitasari, Fitriani, and Shahab (2019) found that teachers' purpose in questioning are to recall students' understanding, attract their attention, and encourage them to develop higher thinking skills. Almeida (2012) also agreed that questioning will help students and teachers in achieving higher level of learning. However, teachers still did not have enough awareness of question types in classroom (Almeida, 2020 & Yang, 2017).

Naz, Khan, Khan, Daraz, and Mujtaba (2013) stated that HOTS questions were preferable to enhance students' ability in critical thinking. Prasetyanto (2019) also agreed that questions that invite students to elaborate their answers such as divergent question will help students to learn more.

Furthermore, thinking critically will help students with their speaking skills. Sanavi and Tarighat (2014) found that students who were exposed explicitly in critical thinking learning improved their speaking proficiency. Having a similar result, Ramezani, Larsari, Kiasi (2016) suggested that students who had a good performance in speaking had good results too in their test regarding critical thinking. Bagheri (2018) also stated that the ability of critical thinking affects positively students' motivation to speak English, especially when they got the freedom to speak their idea.

It can be seen that speaking performance has a deep relationship with critical thinking and critical thinking skills can be achieved through questioning in the classroom. According to Wahyudi (2017), the questioning in the classroom affected students' speaking skills in the English language as a foreign language. Boyd (2015) stated that the questions could facilitate students to improve their skills. Jiang (2020) also conducted research regarding teachers' questioning and students' response through classroom observation. They found that the two correlate a lot.

Studies related to questioning and speaking have been conducted by many researchers. However, the study about the types of questions and how it will engage students to speak in EFL classroom, particularly in SMAN Kota Padang has not been studied yet. Therefore, the present study aims to know the most asked question type and the question type that will encourage students to speak in EFL classroom in SMAN Kota Padang.

RESEARCH METHOD

The design of this study was secondary descriptive research with the population of the study is all English teachers in senior high school in Kota Padang, excluding the private schools. By using random sampling, the researcher chose

SMAN 3 Padang, SMAN 10 Padang, SMAN 9 Padang and SMAN 16 Padang with three teachers from each school.

The instruments were observation checklist and Stimulated Recall Interview (SRI) as the research instruments. SRI was used to allow the researcher in gaining more understanding of participants' self-reflection on certain things that happened during the observation (Zainil, 2018).

In collecting the data, the researcher observed the learning activity by focusing on teacher questioning in the classroom. The researcher also took video recording as it was permitted by the teachers and took notes. After doing the observation, the researcher did SRI with the teachers to gain deeper comment, explanation or perspective from the teacher about the questioning section and its relation to students' motivation to speak.

After collecting the data, students' and teachers' utterances related to questioning were transcribed and analyzed with conversation analysis. Teachers' questions were divided into six type of questions that were remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating questions.

Furthermore, students' answers were analyzed based on how long and how much words they answered orally for each type of questions. The word counts and duration from each types of question were measured and the average data will be compared. The data from the interview were additional information to know the factors about students' tendency in answering certain questions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Research Finding

The total amount of questions asked by 12 teachers were 664 questions. From those questions, it was found that 393 questions were remembering questions. It was followed by understanding questions with a total 157 questions as the second most asked questions. Moreover, the total of applying questions, analyzing questions, evaluating questions and creating questions are 32, 31, 30, and 21 questions. The percentage could be seen on the chart below:

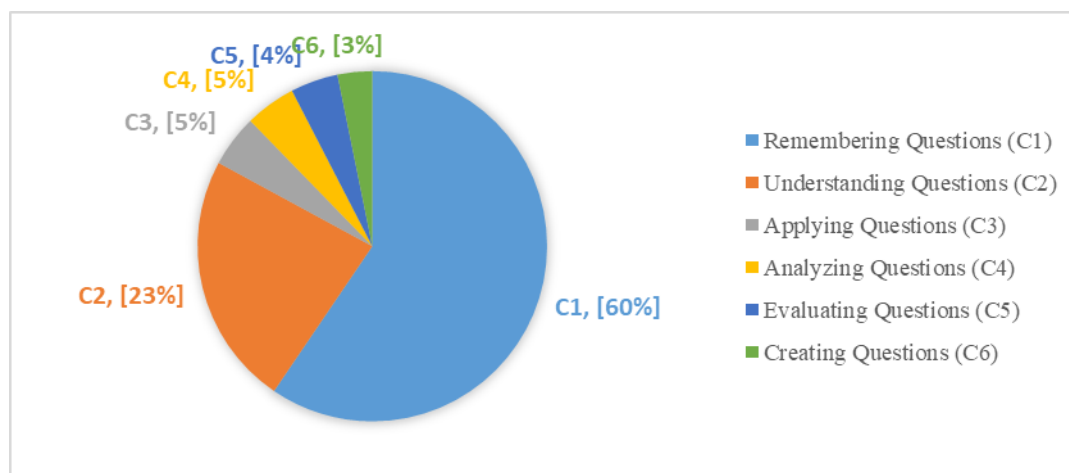


Figure 1. Percentages of Questions Type Asked by Teacher

Although the LOTS questions were dominating the most asked question type by teacher, the students' responses to the questions showed different result. HOTS questions were found to be the questions that encouraged students to speak more. The total word counts, duration and the average for each type could be seen in the table below:

No	Questions Types	Total Questions	Total Words in Answers	Average Word Counts	Total Duration	Average Duration
	Analysing Questions					
1	Creating Questions	31	170	5	137 s	4.42 s
2	Understanding	21	96	5	76 s	3.62 s
3	Questions	157	706	4	542 s	3.45 s
4	Evaluating questions	20	112	4	69 s	2.30 s
5	Applying questions	32	107	3	69 s	2.16 s
6	Remembering questions	393	951	2	627 s	1.60 s
	Total	664	2142	23	1520 s	17.65 s

Table 1. Average Word Counts and Duration for Each Question Types

The table showed the average measurement of total words answered and the duration for each question type where the data had been sorted from the highest to the lowest average. The analysis showed that students spoke more in answering the analyzing, creating and understanding questions with average 5 words for each question. In contrast, students spoke with average 2 words in answering remembering questions.

The similar results showed in the matter of duration. Students spoke longer in answering analyzing questions compared to other questions type with the average 4.42 seconds. It was followed by creating and understanding questions with average 3 seconds. In addition, the result also showed that students longer in higher level questions that are analyzing, evaluating and creating questions. It was different with the remembering questions that only took students speaking for approximately 1 seconds in average.

Furthermore, stimulated Recall Interview had been done to investigate teachers' reflection of their questioning performance in the EFL classroom in SMAN Kota Padang. The teachers were asked about the three prominent problems found in the EFL classroom observation. The table below showed problems acknowledged by teachers in their classes:

No	Problems Found	Teacher H	Teacher I	Teacher K	Teacher E
1.	Students only answered the questions with few words.	√	√	-	√
2.	The amount of HOTS and	√	√	-	√

LOTS questions for oral interaction were unbalanced.						
3.	Students' background affected their activeness during the class.	√	√	√	√	√

Table 2. The Problems during the Questioning

Students Answering with Few Words

It was found that students still tend to answer questions with short answers or only say one to three key words related to the answers. There were some instances of the different questions type with only short answers from students.

- 1 T *The other group gives suggestion. The first is give compliment and*
- 2 *then u have to give suggestion, what you like from the presentation*
- 3 *and what should be improved. Actually there some other groups, but*
- 4 *because of limited times, I would like to ask you, why should we*
- 5 *know about the qualification needed?*
- 6 S *Menyiapkan diri.*
- 7 T *To prepare our self to get that position, do you agree have to see the*
- 8 *qualification from the job?*
- 9 S *Yes.*

Figure 2. Instances where Students Answering with Few Words

From this interaction, there were two questions found. The first question was evaluating questions were the teacher asked about their judgment on the importance of the lesson meanwhile the second question was remembering question asking them whether they agreed or not with the previous answer. However, students preferred to answer them with few keywords only.

Teacher I said, "... a lot of students like to answer questions limited to what they have known only, from their previous knowledge."

Teacher I also added that a lot of factors could influence students' tendency in answering questions. However, the students usually found difficulties in understanding question itself or sometimes teachers not saying it clearly.

Unbalanced Questions Type Asked

Low Order Thinking Skills questions were often asked by teacher by taking 80% out of the total questions. There was an example of interaction in the classroom using low level questions:

- 1 T *Okay, I have a picture. Observe the picture! Do you see at the back?*
- 2 *What picture is it?*
- 3 S1 *Banjir.*
- 4 T *What is it in English?*
- 5 S2 *Flood.*
- 6 T *Yes, flood. How do you spell it?*

- 7 S F – L – O – O – D.
8 T Okay, have you ever seen atau find flood in your environment?
9 S No.
10 T What else?
11 S Never.

Figure 3 Instances of Teacher Asking LOTS questions

Reflecting to some interaction that Teacher E had done in EFL classroom, she stated that using LOTS questions was important to help students doing brainstorming about the topic. LOTS questions were mostly used to help students engaging with the topic, recalling their background knowledge and brainstorming in the start of the lesson.

Teacher E said, "... both types are important, I used LOTS questions to help students brainstorming the topic and HOTS questions to encourage them taking indirect meaning and lesson from the topic. I usually put HOTS questions more in their exercise too, individually or in group."

This showed why Teacher E used LOTS questions more in oral interaction since the HOTS were in their exercise activity. In addition, the said exercise was mostly done in written activity instead of spoken activity so it resulted the low amounts of HOTS question in spoken activity.

Students' Different Background

There were some exceptional activities when active students answered questions from teacher with longer answers. In the EFL learning process with Teacher K, there were students that stood out among the whole students and were able to deliver their idea with longer answers in answering teacher's analysing question.

- 67 T What is the difference?
68 S Ooh—
69 T Ok, raise your hand! Raise your hand! Uh yeah, Ratu!
70 S1 Uuuh, in letter invitation ... it uses ... ooh ... formal ... combine! Combining the
71 purpose. If in invitation card ... it's more like ... uh, informal? Use word that uh
72 ... more like free—free ways than the—the invitation letter one.
73 It seems that you say that the invitation card is kind of like non formal.
74 T Uh, it's not all that—non formal. If we compare it with invitation letter ... it
75 means oh ... invitation card is more formal—uh invitation letter, than invitation
76 S1 card.
77 Okay, if you make the percentage, how many percent of this?
78 Oh ... one—
79 T One hundreds? What for the invitation card?
80 S1 ...
81 T Seventy? Fifty?
82 S Fifty!
83 T
84 S1

Figure 4. Active Students Answering in Long Sentences

The Stimulated Recall Interview was done to know the background of this activities. The teacher explained the reasoning and some factors related to this active behaviour from the students.

Teacher K said, "... the questions during the learning process was chosen based on students' previous knowledge and their interest so they can respond to it actively. In addition, the students in that classroom were chosen students after they had gone through tight selection to enrol to the school. Another factor of their activeness in classroom may be related to their majoring in social class so they like to express their idea and debate more, and some of them have additional courses outside the school time."

Teacher K also stated that questions could be more interesting for students when it helped them relating it with their daily life. Teacher K used the term contextual questions where questions did not show out of nowhere, but it appeared to help the students linking the lesson with their surroundings.

The positive reaction was mostly from active students with various background such as they got additional courses outside school time or they simply liked English lesson compared to other students. However, this could be a hindrance for timid students. Teacher I and Teacher H agreed that it was not rare for active students interrupting the shy students or students who needed more time to think in answering questions.

Teacher I said, "... active students tend to answer faster than shy students, or students who have difficulties in speaking English so they often overshadow those shy students more."

Teacher H said, "The interruption from active students often becomes obstacles for students who have difficulties in processing the questions. It was also inevitable because students come from different background and skills."

Furthermore, the teacher did not blame the active students for this situation. They both agreed that teachers were the ones who were responsible to manage the class so all students got their chance in answering questions and speaking.

Discussion

From 12 teachers, 664 questions were found and 393 out of the total questions were remembering questions. The second most asked question type was understanding questions with the total amount 157 questions. This finding had similar result with Alemeida (2012) where teachers still preferred to ask low level questions. It also was similar to result of the research done by Yang (2017) where teacher were still lacking in asking high level questions to the students.

In contrast of the data of total questions, in stimulated recall interview teachers said that they were aware of the HOTS and LOTS questions in the EFL classroom. They also showed that they were not lacking in the knowledge related to the HOTS and LOTS questions and they tend to blend the types during the lesson. As it was also suggested by Naz et. al. (2013) teachers used to mix the type of questions during learning process where LOTS questions could be used to raise students' awareness of the topic and HOTS questions were used to enhance students in analyzing and

synthesizing. The interviewed teachers expressed that they mix the type too. LOTS questions were usually used in the beginning of the lesson and HOTS questions were used for deeper analysis and in exercises, resulted in less HOTS questions in spoken interaction.

Furthermore, based on the finding by Astrid et. al. (2019) that stated about teachers' various purpose in questioning, the observed teachers also expressed that they had some purposes in using different types of questions. By using lower level questions, students were invited to recall their previous knowledge and the higher level questions were used to encourage students to think deeper about the learning material they were learning at that moment.

In the matter of which question that would invite students to speak, HOTS questions showed that the questions encouraged the students to speak more. This result went to the same direction with what Sanavi and Tarighat (2014) and Bagheri (2018) had found where critical thinking skills which could be improved through HOTS can influence students' speaking skill. Nevertheless, teachers agreed that students needed stimulus, such as pictures or video, or questions that connected them to their daily surrounding to make them answer the questions longer.

However, there was still a problem where students answered the questions with few related keywords of the answer. It was likely caused by their lack of knowledge in vocabulary, having difficulties in understanding the questions, or simply being too shy in answering them orally. This was also similar with what Jiang (2020) had found in their research where students preferred to answer in short utterances, especially where the students likely answered the questions together in the form of choral answers.

There were indeed some exceptions where few students showed more speaking skill compared to their peers. The teachers commented that it was because the students had different backgrounds such as they were chosen students for favourite class or they liked English as a favourite lesson. Wahyudi (2017) also stated in their research that students who had background knowledge about the topic could participate more in the discussion during the lesson.

Boyd (2015) also said that teacher guidance and support would help students to improve their speaking skills. The teachers in the study expressed that along with questioning, there were more effort that they used to encourage students to speak. Teacher H admitted that she used the reward strategy such as compliment and additional scores so students were motivated to speak.

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the observation and analysis, LOTS questions were the most asked question type by teachers in EFL classroom in Kota Padang. On the other hand, HOTS question attracted students to speak more compared to LOTS question under some circumstances. They could be questions provided with a stimulus such as picture, videos or reward. In addition, contextual HOTS questions that helped students to relate with their daily surroundings helped students to speak more.

However, it was not rare where students faced some problems in answering questions. The problems could come from the limited knowledge of vocabulary,

difficulties in understanding and answering questions in English, and influence of active students to more timid students.

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