



TEACHERS' QUESTIONING IN ENGLISH READING CLASSROOMS – A CASE STUDY

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Abstract: Questions are a crucial part of classroom life, and thus questioning is one of the strongest tools at a teacher's disposal as it engages students in the learning process and challenges levels of thinking. Many of the questions teachers ask in each lesson are concerned with the recall of textbook information. The question then is how classroom questioning strategies can become more effective, therefore, help teachers fulfill their mission of language instructions and development of students' language competence. This study aims at exploring the questioning strategies used by teachers in the reading classes through a case study, where three classes of Reading (by one teacher who voluntarily joined in the study) were audio-recorded and observed. The teacher's questions (and classroom interaction) were transcribed and categorized. The findings reveal that there are two main categories of questions: audience-oriented questions and content-oriented questions. The audience-oriented questions are used three times more frequently than the content-oriented questions. The triangulation of the data sources reveals that Eliciting response, Focusing information, and Checking comprehension are three functions that make up the biggest percentage in the seven functions of questions proposed by Chang's (2012) through the reading activities. There is also a mapping relationship between question functions and the question forms used by the teacher to facilitate her Reading classroom. The consolidations of question functions the teacher employs to support students' responses propose that the teacher attempts to involve students in the interaction and guide them to a higher level of cognitive competence.

Keywords: teacher's questioning, question function, question form, Reading class

1. Introduction

Classroom interaction has always been considered to take an important role in the process of teaching and learning. When it comes to teaching and learning English in a classroom context, question-and-answer activity is the most popular form of information exchange between teachers and students. Lynch [12] states that using questioning behaviors is one of the techniques that teachers usually promote and create classroom interaction. In other words, questioning techniques used by teachers might contribute substantially to encouraging students to be more active in their learning process. Also, a question proposed by teachers can stimulate students' learning, participation, and thinking, especially critical thinking [27]. Therefore, the types of

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questions and questioning strategies teachers use have an adequate influence on students' understanding and manipulating their learning tasks. Hussain [5] points out that teachers need to regularly adjust their questioning techniques to achieve the desired goals of the questions posed. Some researchers in language learning are concerned with the distinction of question types. This study discusses an approach with two main categories: audience-oriented questions and content-oriented questions, and how these two types of questions motivate students' learning processes and trigger their conscious knowledge. The findings indicate a better insight into the influence of EFL teachers' questioning on the EFL Reading classroom interaction and the study also draws on the connection between teachers' questions and students' learning behaviors.

2. Literature review

2.1. Teachers' questioning

Teachers' questioning is possibly an essential factor to facilitate effective classroom discourse. Teachers' questioning forms considerable parts of the teacher talk in the classroom [9] which not only supports students' construction of knowledge but also evaluates what students know because the nature of questioning is constructivist-based and inquiry-oriented in lessons. Gall [9, pp. 42–45] and Richards and Lockhart [21, p. 185] claim that teachers' questions contribute considerably to checking students' understanding, determining the amount of students' learning, enabling a teacher to clarify what a student has said, enabling a teacher to elicit particular structures or vocabulary item; providing cues that could lead students to focus on particular content of the lesson; stimulating and maintaining students' interest; enhancing students' engagement and participation; and encouraging students to think and promote the development of thinking skills.

2.2. Taxonomy of questions

2.2.1. Taxonomy of question functions

A large number of questions techniques used inside the EFL classroom are investigated by different researchers. A first typical example is the categorization of questions into convergent and divergent by Wilen [27]. Convergent questions are designed to engage students in the content of learning, facilitate students' ideas and push the classroom interaction, while divergent questions require students to analyze, synthesize or evaluate information or knowledge on their own. Correspondingly, authors such as Faruji [8], Toni and Parse [25], Scoboria and Fisico [23], and Sardareh et al. [22] classify questions into three main types: low-, medium-, and high-level questions. Another classification for teacher's questions presented by Bloom et al. [1] is known as Bloom's taxonomy of learning. Bloom's taxonomy describes six levels of the description of

question types to determine the accuracy of students’ cognitive activities that the teacher asks. These six levels fell into two categories: lower-order and higher-order questioning [14].

This study bases on the framework of question functions or the taxonomy adopted by Chang [3], who integrates and develops the taxonomies proposed by Thompson [24] and Camiciottoli [2]. These researchers classify questions into two main categories: audience-oriented and content-oriented questions. After researching the materials of question functions studied by both Thompson [24] and Camiciottoli [2], Chang [3] takes over and gives a supplementary subcategory in the type of audience-oriented questions known as classroom management/engagement. As a result, the new combined framework of question functions designed by Chang is described as audience-oriented questions with five subcategories as eliciting responses, class management/engagement, soliciting agreement, checking comprehension, and requesting confirmation/clarification, and content-oriented questions with two subcategories as focusing information and stimulating thoughts (Figure 1).

From the five functions of audience-oriented questions, *eliciting responses* is used to invite students to provide a piece of information of the course content; *class management/engagement* is a question type to manage the classroom and make activities smooth; *soliciting agreement* is to appeal to students to agree with teacher’s suggestions; *checking comprehension* is to examine whether students understood what his/her classmates or the teacher present, and the last function is *requesting confirmation/clarification*, which is used to check if the teacher understood and heard correctly or incorrectly students’ answers. Regarding two functions of content-oriented questions, *focusing information* is a type of question posed by the teacher to call for students’ attention to

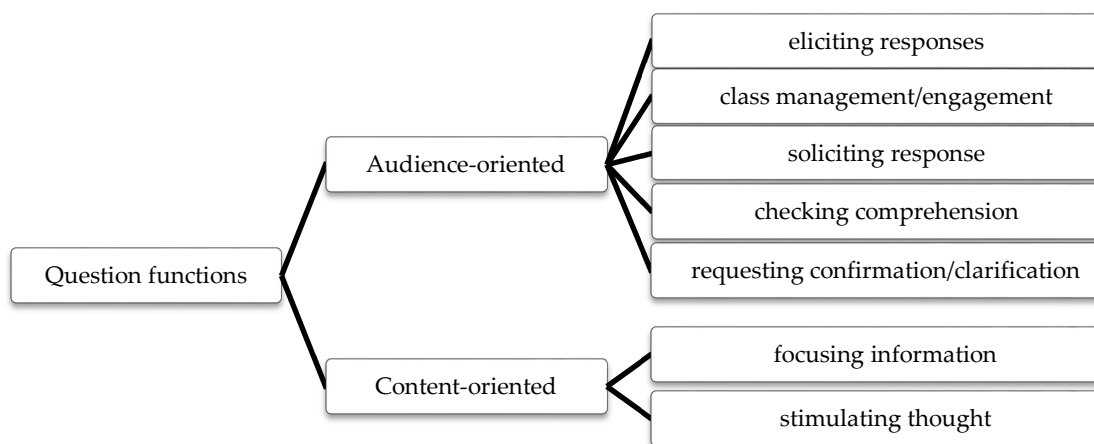


Figure 1. Taxonomy of question function proposed by Chang [3]

upcoming information; whereas, *stimulating thought* is a type of question in which teachers give no answers immediately. Instead, they only comment and evaluate to encourage students to respond to their questions.

2.2.2. Taxonomy of question forms

In this study, we adopt the taxonomy of question forms proposed by Chang [3], who develops question forms from the model of Quirk et al. [19], in which some modification is made from Thompson [24] and Wu and Chang [28]. After the modification, the taxonomy comprises six categories: (1) Wh-questions, (2) Yes/no questions, (3) Tag questions, (4) Declarative/imperative + word tag questions, (5) Alternative questions, and (6) Incomplete questions; among which the Declarative/Imperative + word tag question form is adopted from Thompson [24], and Incomplete question form is adopted from Wu and Chang [28].

2.3. Impacts of teachers' questioning on teaching reading

The practice of teachers' questioning in the EFL reading classroom has been studied and proved essential to assist students' learning. Manikam [13] revealed that using wise questioning strategies in EFL reading lessons plays a crucial role in improving students' reading skill and setting up an active classroom atmosphere that assists in teaching and learning reading. The impact of teachers' questioning on students' learning behaviors cannot be underestimated. When the students are not sure what to answer, the teacher's questions may lead them into merging how the teacher wants them to think. Therefore, teachers' questioning in EFL classroom reading supports the students to focus attention on specific information as well as to check understandings, knowledge, and reading skill. Numerous other researchers have confirmed the connection between teachers' proper use of questioning strategies and effective practice of teaching reading comprehension, which highlights the importance of when, where, and how questions are to be used; questions as the mainstay of reading comprehension instruction for decades; and the persuasiveness of questions in textual materials and assessment [17, 18, 20].

2.4. Constructivist approach to teaching and learning

In the study, we also employ major components of the Constructivist theory of learning as the foundation of explanation for the connection between teachers' questioning and the stimulation of students' learning behavior.

Constructivism is an approach to learning the assumption of which is that the knowledge people built up for themselves or experiences a learner may want to gain depend heavily on their self-activeness or willingness [6]. Its central idea is that human learning is constructed and that

learners build new knowledge upon the foundation of previous learning [16]. Referring to the previous knowledge and to confirm the social background of building new knowledge, Dewey [4] claims that learning is a social activity — it is something we do together, in interaction with each other, rather than an abstract concept. Vygotsky [26] supports this claim with the belief that community plays a central role in the process of “making meaning”. McLeod [16] discusses that the constructivist learning theory underpins a variety of student-centered teaching methods and techniques and focuses on the new role of the teacher in a constructivist classroom. This author advocates that teacher’s primary responsibility is now to create a collaborative problem-solving environment, where students become active participants in their own learning.

3. The study

3.1. The data

This research was carried out following both quantitative and qualitative approaches. For the quantitative data, we counted the frequency of teachers’ using questioning patterns in terms of question functions and question forms. For the qualitative data, audio-recordings and classroom observations of English classes were employed. The research is a case study. The class consists of a teacher and 30 first-year English majors.

3.2. Data collection

3.2.1. Audio-recording

The data for the study were mainly collected through audio-recording of the teacher’s talk in the classroom. Audio recording has been one of the most widely used qualitative research methods as Heller [11, p. 257] presented “*Some things can be recorded manually, in writing, by memory; some things require recording and more careful transcription...*”. Upon agreement by the teacher as a research participant, a microphone was worn by the teacher to record her classroom discourse and possible monitoring activities of the teaching sessions. Three classes of the Reading-2 module by one teacher at English Department, University of Foreign Languages, Hue University were chosen for recording. These classes (100 minutes each) were expected to provide ample supply of interaction verbal patterns regarding researched teacher’s questions for analysis.

3.2.2. Classroom observations

According to Marshall & Rossman, observation is a systematic description of the events, behaviors, and artifacts of a social setting [15, p. 79]. The target of classroom observation in this study is to collect information on the actual teaching and learning process and take notes on the teacher’s and students’ behaviors during the lesson regarding the teacher’s questioning and the

students' oral responses, all of which is to support the validation of data collection from audio-recording. Furthermore, the authors did not participate actively in classroom interaction during the observations or recordings.

3.2.3. *Transcription and coding*

The teacher's questions from the reading classes were collected and transcribed. Bearing the research purpose and the kind of analysis in mind, the researchers selected the teacher's questions and the students' responses for transcription. At first, the recordings were carefully but rather generally transcribed. The second time transcription was carried out with a closer selection of the teacher's questions and the students' responses. The audio recordings were played the third time, and the researcher checked and validated all the transcriptions before coding.

The audio-recordings were transcribed upon collection. The transcripts were then coded by identifying and categorizing the parts of the teacher's questions. Audience-oriented questions were coded with the initial A and a number from 1 to 84 (e.g., A16). Content-oriented questions were coded with the initial C and a number from 1 to 34 (e.g., C13).

4. Results and discussion

The collected questions were transcribed and classified according to the chosen framework of Chang's taxonomy [3]. One hundred and eighteen questions are constituted, among which 84 questions are of audience-oriented type (71%) and 34 questions are of content-oriented type.

4.1. *Teacher's audience-oriented questions*

The audience-oriented questions are categorised into five functions (Table 1). The two most frequent functions used by the teacher are questions "to elicit students' responses" (38%) and "to check students' comprehension of the lecture content" (15.2%). The frequency of using question functions as "to solicit agreement" and "request confirmation/ clarification" is relatively low, among which "soliciting agreement" (10.2%) is twice as frequently used as "requesting confirmation/clarification" (5.1%). Besides, the question function "class management or engagement" is employed with the lowest frequency (2.5%). These findings might be interpreted that question strategies as "elicit audience's responses and check their understanding" thus seem to be the most common types of audience-oriented questions used by the teacher in the reading classroom. These two strategies might contribute directly to the promotion of students' learning behavior that facilitates reading comprehension.

Table 1. Frequency of teacher's using audience-oriented question functions in three Reading-2 lessons (84 questions, 71%)

Function	Frequency (%)	Example
1. Eliciting response	38	<i>They don't live one-way, they travel from here to there. You have a phrase in Vietnamese. What is it? <du mục> So, in English, you say...? <nomadic> (A27)</i>
2. Class management/ engagement	2.5	<i>What are you going to do when watching a video? (A45)</i>
3. Soliciting agreement	10.2	<i>For example, I'm sick, I need some medicines, so I say "I drink medicine", right? (A51)</i>
4. Checking comprehension	15.2	<i>If you have stomachache, you say "I feel sore". But you just come back home after school, your mother asks to do washing-up, you're tired. So, you say "I feel pain", what are they different? Sore and pain? (A63, A64, A65)</i>
5. Requesting confirmation/ clarification	5.1	<i>Ethnic, maybe. It is ethnic?</i>

Table 2. Frequency of teacher's using content-oriented question functions in three Reading-2 lessons (34 questions, 29%)

Purpose	Frequency (%)	Example
6. Focusing information	18.8	<i>When oil companies appear, they will exploit the areal underground. What causes might happen when exploiting oil? Uh... pollution, and how does pollution make citizen? (C18, C19)</i>
7. Stimulating thought	10.2	<i>In mountainous area as A Luoi, there are also culture, art, legend, language of Maori people, which need preserving. So, are there a large number of people here? Are they trying to preserve them? How do they adapt in modern life to preserve their culture? (C25, C26)</i>

4.2. Teacher's content-oriented questions

The content-oriented questions are categorised into two functions: "focusing information" and "stimulating thought" [2] (Table 2).

The results show that the teacher tends to use more focusing information questions (18.8%) than stimulating thought questions (10.2%) although the figures for both types reflect relatively equal importance of these two functions in triggering students' conscious knowledge for the practice of reading skill.

4.3. Discussion of the teacher's use of questioning strategies in the Reading classroom

From the findings of the teacher questioning patterns in the study, it is clear that the teachers' questioning aims at promoting students' learning and triggering students' conscious knowledge, which contributes to achieving the learning goals. Although content is a key element of a reading lesson, guiding students and directing them towards proper learning attitude and behavior are more central to the teaching activity of language instructors. Table 3 and Table 4 illustrate the distribution of the question functions during the three teaching hours. The audience-oriented questions are used three times as frequently as the content-oriented questions. Next, the most frequent function used is "asking questions to elicit responses" (38%), and this is served as "an invitation to lessons to teach vocabulary and trigger upcoming information related to the course content" [3, p. 106].

Extract 1: Examples of classroom interaction in which the teacher asked (audience-oriented) questions to elicit students' responses

(A27) T: *They don't live one-way, they travel from here to there. You have a phrase in Vietnamese. What is it?*

Ss: *Du mục*

T: *So, in English, you say...?*

Ss: *Nomadic*

(A18) T: *một số trường hợp dị ứng, da mình bị gì? (in case of allergy, what happened to the skin?)*

Ss: *Bị mẩn đỏ*

T: *vậy "mẩn đỏ" Tiếng Anh là gì? (What does it mean in English?)*

Ss: *Rash*

As seen from the extract, the teacher's questions like "What is it?"; "So, in English, you say...?"; "What happened to the skin?" and "What does it mean in English?" are used to elicit students' responses, guiding them towards the learning of vocabulary for the later reading comprehension stage. These questions are categorised as "audience-oriented" as they direct the stimulant learning purposes into learners who are seen as the "audience" of the teaching process. This finding coincides with that of a multi-study researched by Chang [3], where a large number of teachers' "eliciting responses" questions were used in classrooms of three divisions at a university in Taiwan.

The constructivist learning theory claims that learning is a social activity [4]. This means students learn when they speak and interact with their teacher and with each other. In a

classroom, teacher's questioning serves to activate the interaction that encourages students to be involved in the lesson if they are asked, shared, discussed, and confirmed. Therefore, teachers' questioning is not only the interaction between teachers and their students but the application of knowledge as an integral technique of learning as well. Therefore, the teacher's questioning that links to exciting situations in students' daily life is predicted to play a crucial role in connecting students with the acquisition of new knowledge before reading a text. This is useful and necessary to engage learners in pursuing the flow of the lesson.

The next more frequent audience-oriented questions that the teacher uses in the reading classroom are to check students' comprehension of the lecture content, and they account for 15.2% of the total. This result is very much similar to Chang's study where this question function was practiced at a very high rate and also stood the second position in all the three divisions. Checking comprehension is always a crucial classroom technique that requires the teacher to manage and come up with good strategies. For the phase of teaching vocabulary or presenting new language structures, teachers might rely heavily on this type of question to check their students' comprehension of the lecture content or their instructions delivered before. Below are some examples.

Extract 2: Example of "checking comprehension" question function used in the reading classes

(A63) T: *If you have stomachache, you say...*

S: *uh...*

T: *I feel sore?*

(A64) T: *But you just come back home after school, your mother asks to do washing-up, you're tired. So, you say....*

S: *I feel pain?*

T: *'sore' is a part of the body affected which can last for hours or for days whereas 'pain' is often sharp in character, and can be mild (feelings or manner) or severe (physical) which can last for a second or for years. 'Sore' isn't for 1 or 2 seconds.*

(A65) T: *what are they different? Sore and pain?*

S: *.....*

Extract 2 illustrates the teacher's using questions to confirm students' comprehension, where she sets up some strategies to check her students' understanding of her instructions in presenting new vocabulary before reading the passage. The teacher distinguishes the meaning of different words that help students to differentiate one word from another, and she also examines

if the students understand what she has presented by questioning: “What are they different, sore and pain?”

From the constructivist learning theory that emphasizes that each meaning the teacher constructs is to make students receive the message better, it is understandable that teachers need to allow students to experience, provide close evidence in daily life to help their understanding by giving simple examples before coming to the reading comprehension stage. Hein [10] explains that the essential activity of constructing meaning is mental – it happens in the mind. Therefore, the teacher’s providing of questions engaging the mind is crucial for students in the process of accepting new knowledge and support them to understand more easily.

Thirdly, “soliciting agreement and stimulating thought” is the fourth most-frequently-used function (10.2%). This technique is generally used when others seem to fail, which serves to invite students’ agreement on proposed solutions (answers). This goes in line with the research by Thompson [24], which supports the assumption that the questions to solicit agreement reduce the pressure for students to seek their agreement with the teacher in a controversial point. The following example illustrates the point.

(A51) T: *For example, I’m sick, I need some medicines, so I say “I drink medicine”, right?*

Lastly, questions to “manage/arrange class” and “request confirmation/clarification” are limitedly used in the researched reading classes. The frequency of the teacher’s using these types is especially low. Given that it seems to be no difficulties for the teacher to understand students’ answers (example A80, A81) and emphasize on less class management for the first-year English major students at tertiary level (example A45, A47).

(A45) *What are you going to do when watching a video?*

(A47) *where is your paper?*

(A80) *Ethnic, maybe. It is ethnic?*

(A81) *It is origin, right?*

However, as Chang [4] points out from his study at a university in Taiwan, there might be a slight difference between the frequencies of using the “class management/engagement” question technique investigated in the three divisions from soft fields to hard fields. Therefore, a conclusion is drawn out that the teachers tend to place more emphasis on class management in hard fields as Humanities and Arts than in soft fields as Social Sciences and Education. In this case study, the setting is a reading class, which belongs to Social Sciences and Education (soft field). This result conforms to the other research results [3, 24] that class management/engagement questions are possibly less used in the soft-field classes.

Regarding content-oriented questions, the “focusing information” and “stimulating thought” questions are both used much less frequently than the above-mentioned audience-oriented types in the researched reading classes (only 29% for both). The results also show that the teacher is proportionally more likely to use the type of question to focus on information (18.8%) than to stimulate thoughts (10.2%). The reasons can be deduced from the fact that for hard-field knowledge, teachers tend to use more focusing information questions that might help to highlight the topic and focus on students’ attention. Moreover, this finding confirms Thompson’s argument that questions that highlight new information are often more controlling than those used to stimulate thoughts. In addition, this type of question seems to be a particular technique teachers use to involve students in the course content, make them understand deeply, and follow upcoming information in the textbook. For reading comprehension, locating key information is of the utmost importance. It is necessary for the teachers to guide students to concentrate on the key information that leads to the comprehension of the reading passages. Besides, “focusing information” is the second most frequent function found in the data, as shown in examples C18 and C19 below:

(C18) *When oil companies appear, they will exploit the areal underground. What causes might happen when exploiting oil?*

(C19) *Uh... pollution, and how does pollution affect citizen?*

Besides, the question to stimulate thought, designed to release a process of reasoning, might be to deal with the difficult questions rebuilt in simple structures into textbooks, where the authors could formulate and revise texts with commenting and evaluating questions without giving immediate answers. This function is usually used in the post-stage of reading to stimulate students’ thought by initiating a reasoning process to arrive at an answer [3], as illustrated in the following examples.

(C25) *In mountainous area as A Lưói, there are also culture, art, legend, language as Maori people which need preserving. So, are there a large number of people here?*

(C26) *Are they trying to preserve them? How do they adapt in modern life to preserve their culture?*

In short, the study reveals that the teacher’s constructed questions with different strategies correspond to the taxonomy of functions proposed by Chang [3]. All the questions used have proved to not only stimulate students’ learning behaviors but also promote their conscious knowledge in the lecture content.

4.4. Teacher's use of question forms to represent different functions

This study examines the teacher's question forms used to represent her different question functions.

Table 3. Taxonomy of question forms

Question forms	Frequency N = 118 (%)	Example
Wh-question	72 (61)	<i>Which equipment do you use? (A42)</i>
Yes/ no question	23 (19.5)	<i>Are you allergic to anything? Are you allergic to onion? Are you allergic to seafood? (A67)</i>
Tag question	0	<i>xxxxx</i>
Declarative/ imperative + word tag	9 (7.6)	<i>Preserve ethnic, indigenous culture, right? (A56)</i>
Alternative question	5 (4.3)	<i>I have a stomachache, I need to go to the hospital, you say, I feel pain or I feel sore? (A59)</i>
Incomplete question	9 (7.6)	<i>If you want to check whether you have a fever or have a temperature or not, you will use....? (A5)</i>

As shown in Table 3, it is understandable that the two most common question forms (Wh-questions and Yes/No questions) are used in the reading classes with a high frequency (61% and 19.5%, respectively), and they assist the teacher most in teaching reading comprehension. Wh-Questions are used for seeking content information relating to persons, things, facts, time, place, reason, manner, etc., while Yes/No questions are used to check information or ask for confirmation. The three least common question forms found in this study are *Declarative/Imperative questions*, *Incomplete questions*, and *Alternative questions* with a frequency of 7.6, 7.6, and 4.3%, respectively; and even "tag questions" has never been used in the researched reading classes. This finding is similar to the results of Chang's study in Taiwan in terms of the most and least common question forms used to represent question functions.

In addition, how each question form is used for different functions is also investigated.

Table 4 displays that *Wh-questions* is the most common type of question form employed for a diverse number of functions and used most frequently for *eliciting responses* (24.5%) and *focusing information* (18%). Besides, this kind of question form serves all question functions at the highest range and becomes the most popular form of all.

Table 4. Frequency of using question forms to represent each function (%)

	Question functions (N = 118)	Question form					
		Wh-	Yes/No	Tag	Declarative	Alternative	Incomplete
1	Eliciting response (45 questions)	29 (24.5)	8 (6.7)	0	0	1 (0.8)	7 (5.9)
2	Class management/ engagement (3 questions)	2 (1.7)	1 (0.8)	0	0	0	0
3	Soliciting agreement (12 questions)	1 (0.8)	4 (3.4)	0	7 (5.9)	0	0
4	Checking comprehension (18 questions)	9 (7.6)	4 (3.4)	0	0	4 (3.4)	1 (0.8)
5	Requesting/ confirmation clarification (6 questions)	2 (1.7)	1 (0.8)	0	2 (1.7)	1 (0.8)	0
6	Focusing information (22 questions)	21 (18)	0	0	0	0	1 (0.8)
7	Stimulating thought (12 questions)	8 (6.8)	4 (3.4)	0	0	0	0

For example:

(A35) *Where is New Zealand?*

(A36) *What is New Zealand famous for?*

(C23) *Why is the leech dangerous to you?*

The second most popular question form is *Yes/No questions*. This type is used to perform almost all functions and ranges from 1 to 7%, with the most frequent use for the *Eliciting response* function.

(A83) *Will the indigenous culture survive?*

(C34) *Can you give me one specific indigenous culture, they still live the way that they have lived for thousands of years?*

Declarative, Alternative and Incomplete questions are modestly used to perform the seven functions. Particularly, declarative question forms are used most to solicit agreement (5.9%); alternative questions are used more often to check comprehension (3.4%); incomplete questions are performed mainly to elicit students' responses (5.9%).

(A56) *Preserve ethnic, indigenous culture, right?*

(A59) *I have a stomachache, I need to go to the hospital, you say, I feel pain or I feel sore?*

(A5) *If you want to check whether you have a fever or have a temperature or not, you will use....?*

These findings go in line with Chang's and Thompson's studies where the most common types of question forms are Wh-Questions and Yes-No questions and that these two question forms are also the most common ones to realize almost all question functions in the researched classrooms.

5. Conclusion

This case study investigates the practice of asking questions of an English as a Foreign Language teacher in the reading classes offered at University of Foreign Languages. The findings indicate that the teacher's questions in the EFL Reading classroom perform various functions as strategies to enhance students' learning and that teachers use a variety of question forms to represent these functions. The study provides more insights into two main categories of teachers' questions: audience-oriented questions and content-oriented questions with seven functions proposed by Chang [4]. The taxonomy of question functions includes eliciting response, class management/engagement, checking comprehension, soliciting agreement, requesting confirmation/clarification, focusing information, and stimulating thought. Audience-oriented questions that are believed to motivate students' learning behavior were asked three times more than content-oriented questions, which serves to trigger conscious knowledge of students in the reading classroom. The most commonly used functions are eliciting responses, focusing information, and checking comprehension. Besides, Wh-questions and Yes/No questions are the question forms the teacher employed most to represent various functions and stimulate classroom interaction. To make clear the connection between teachers' questions and students' learning behavior, the study bases its discussion on claims of constructivist learning theory inspired by Dewey [4] and Vygotsky [26].

The findings of the study help propose that teachers should be aware of the characteristics of questions functions as audience-oriented and content-oriented categories to adjust the types and purposes of questions used during different reading stages to maximize the capacity and effectiveness of classroom interaction that facilitates students' learning to read. Another implication drawn from the study basing on the constructivist learning theory is that the teacher needs to plan ideas relating to students' social practice context to help form learning behavior and construct knowledge for students through questioning; as well as engage them in the real world to lead information and enhance the level of comprehension. Additionally, teachers are

suggested to vary their use of question forms to better accommodate students' comprehension and preference of interaction patterns. More importantly, students with low-level reading comprehension skills or students of hard fields should be facilitated with question functions that strongly support their perceptions and practice as soliciting a response, checking comprehension, or requesting confirmation. Regarding administration and professional development, teachers should be aware of the learning outcomes defined in the syllabus to stay connected to the students' achievement of the learning outcomes, where more workshops, seminars on EFL classroom interaction and management (with focus on questioning and other classroom techniques) should be organised for teachers' improvement of their professional development. Further, a discourse-based curriculum should be intentionally designed and implemented on a large scale for the sake of developing the language competence of students while maintaining first their discourse competence. All these suggestions are towards the enhancement of the learning environment for English-major students in particular and EFL tertiary students in general.

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