

A Study on Teacher Questioning Strategies at English Class in Secondary Schools of Japan

Song Chunyan

(Xinjiang Bingtuan NO.2 Middle School, China)

Chapter1 Introduction

Question, broadly speaking, refers to the form or asking any question function sentences, more precisely, asking questions in class refers to the teaching tips or "transmit the content of principles of learning stimulation or what they do and how to do the instructions". The ancient Greek scholar Plutarch (Plutarch) as early as 3,000 years ago pointed out: "mind is not a container needs to be filled, but one needs to be lighted torch." Responsibility of teachers is to use their own star of the fire, to ignite the torch of students, and the effective classroom questioning is this spark. And in the ancient Greece, appeared famous "Socratic questioning method". In the process of teaching, Socrates does not teach students directly the specific knowledge, but through the answering, conversations or debates to elaborate their views. In 1912, the United States, Stevens (R. Stevens) found that teachers and students to ask and answer questions about went to the ordinary hours of 80%. Teachers in the course lectures, each 2-4 minutes about mentioning a problem. Barack (Belarck) through the study found that secondary school classroom teachers in teaching process is the core of questions, students answer, then the teacher of the student's response to respond. When done effectively it can promote involvement, enhance learning, motivate students, and provide both teachers and students valuable feedback about learning progress (Eggen & Kauchak, 1997). In my teaching experience I have become aware of the fact that questioning is one of the most important teaching techniques used by teacher, and different kinds of questions can lead students to think in different degrees.

Chapter2 Practical Analysis on Teacher Questioning Strategies

2.1 Data collection

The research's participants were the 19 English teachers at junior and senior High schools in Japan. They completed the questionnaires during December of 2011.

2.2 Data analysis

2.2.1 Teachers' understanding of questioning strategies

Table 2.2.1 Teachers' understanding of questioning strategies

Questionnaire Item1	Do you know anything about questioning strategies?			
Choices	A good understanding of	Know a little	Heard about it	Never heard of
Ratio (%)	0	68.42	15.79	15.79

Table 2.2.1 demonstrates the teachers' understanding condition of questioning strategies. It shows that among the 19 teachers investigated, nobody can name all the questioning strategies. Most of them know some questioning strategies accounting for 68.42. They can name some, such as: using open-ended questions (descriptive question and comparative question), redirection, and probing, etc. And there are 3 teachers only heard about it before, but they are not clear. Then there are still 3 teachers who never heard about the questioning strategies.

2.2.2 Application of planning strategies

Table 2.2.2 Teachers' application of question planning

Questionnaire Item2, 3	Item2: Do you plan the questions and write them down before class?			Item3: What do you do in questioning-planning?		
Choices	always	occasionally	never	Deciding on the goal	Selecting content	Phrasing questions
Ratio (%)	15.79	78.95	5.26	57.89	73.68	15.79

Table 2.2.2 shows us that during preparation for new lesson, there are about 15.79% of teachers who plan the questions will be raised in class and write them down. Most of teachers occasionally do this. Only one teacher never plans questions and just asks question randomly in class.

Such result shows that most teachers haven't realized the importance of question planning before class, especially the rich experienced teachers. However the way in which you frame your questions will relate closely to their effectiveness.

Table 2.2.2 also shows that how teachers plan their questions before a new lesson. About 57.89% of teachers decide the goals or purposes of the questions. Teachers who select the content account for 73.68% and 15.79% of teachers phrase the questions before the new lesson.

2.2.3 Teachers' application of question-designing strategies in class-----question

types

Table 2.2.3 The result of question types that were designed by teachers

Questionnaire Item4	What kind of questions do you usually ask in class?					
Question types	Yes or No Question	Thought-Provoking Question	Challenging question	Questions relevant to student's life	Referential questions	Display questions
Ratio (%)	63.16	73.68	0	36.84	73.68	36.84

It can be found that in Table 2.2.3 there are 63.16% of teachers like to ask Yes or No question. Why more than half of teachers would like to raise this type of questions. That's because Yes or No questions are so simple that most of students can answer without deep thinking. And 73.68% of teachers raise thought-provoking questions but nobody use challenging questions. The reason why teachers favor thought-provoking questions is that this kind of questions can stimulate students motivation and more interest to make deep thinking. And more thought-provoking questions can be good for develop students' cognition and ideation and improve their ability to analyze and solve problem. Then if they get the right answer, it's also good for increasing the self-confidence to be successful. However, the challenging question may be so difficult that can difficult get students fully involved in class, and if someone get failure, he or she may be easily lose confidence, and will be fear to answer this kind of questions. The fourth, 36.84% of teachers like to raise questions that's relevant to student's life and display questions. Some teachers like to raise the first type of questions which's because student-related questions make students easily express their idea and students feel relaxed when giving answer. And the reason for display questions is that students need to understand with the surface, short-term memory, or to quickly find the text, will be able to find the answer. At last 73.68% of teachers raise referential questions.

2.2.4 Application of question controlling strategies

Table 2.2.4 Result of question sequencing in class

Questionnaire	If you want to explain a complex issue, the questions raised are from concrete to abstract, and from shallow to deep?
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Item5			
Sequencing	Sequencing	Occasionally	never
Ratio (%)	78.95	5.26	15.79

Table 2.2.4 shows that among the 19 teachers researched, 15 teachers always sequence the questions according to the objectives, content and students' proficiency level. About 5.26% of students occasionally sequence the question and there are 3 teachers who have no sequence in questioning. Through this result we can see that most of teachers lay emphasis on arranging their question list in some logical sequence (specific to general, lower level to higher level, a sequence related to content). Because having a prepared and sequenced list of questions will help to assure that teachers ask questions appropriate for their goals and representative of the important material.

2.2.5 Results and analysis of question directing

Table 2.2.5 Result of question directing in class

Questionnaire Item 7	How do you ask questions in class?				
Directing	NA	NSS	NPS1	NPS2	NN-PS
Ratio(%)	78.95	0	0	10.53	5.26
Note: NA: nominating the average; NSS: nominating superior students; NPS1: nominating poor students; NPS2: nominating positive students; NN-PS: nominating not-positive students					

In terms of question directing, as shown in Table 2.2.5, about 78.95% of the teachers would like to distribute the questions to the whole class, but 10.53% of teachers would like to wait for the positive students (volunteers) after raising a question. About 5.26% of teachers will give the chance to the not-positive students (non-volunteers). However, no one would like to nominate the superior students and the poor students. It can be seen that directing questions to the whole class, waiting for the volunteers and nominating the non-positive students are the three most popular and most frequently used methods. And teachers don't nominate the poor students, the reason, I think teachers consider that poor students will make mistakes when answer questions, which they take it as face-losing and dignity-hurt. For not nominating the superior students, the reason for which is that teachers want to give the chance for thinking to the other students. Then as for non-positive students (non-volunteer) teachers

should encourage them to answer questions and maintain a highly positive attitude towards non-volunteering students. Ask non-volunteers questions that they will be likely to answer successfully. Once the student has responded appropriately, give generous positive feedback to encourage him or her to continue responding.

Anyhow, it is the teachers' responsibility to direct questions to average students, trying to avoid this unbalanced distribution.

2.2.6 Results and analysis of wait-time

Table 2.2.6 Result of wait-time in class

Questionnaire Item8	How long will you wait for students to answer if you ask questions?			
Choices	More than 8 seconds	5 - 8seconds	3 - 5 seconds	Less than 3 seconds
Ratio (%)	31.58	42.11	21.05	0

According to the table 2.2.6, after a question being raised, 21.05% of the teachers offer students 3 to 5 seconds of wait-time; 31.58% of the teachers offer average more than 8 seconds; 42.11% of teachers offer about 5 to 8 seconds. The statistics typically shows that all the investigated English teachers have realized the importance of wait-time. And the more wait-time is given to students, the better quality of responses will be got after raising the questions.

2.2.7 Results and discussion of question redirecting and probing in class

Table2.2.7 Result of question redirecting and probing in class

Questionnaire Item9	If students could not answer the question or answer incorrectly, how would you do?				
	Probing	Rephrasing	Increasing waiting-time	Redirecting	Teacher answering
Ratio (%)	84.21	84.21	5.26	57.89	15.79

From Table 2.2.7 we can see that when students give flimsily thought-out answers or only half-answers to question, majority of the teachers would like to ask probing questions by giving a hint or example or rephrasing the question to be an easy way to help the students get the right answer. 5.26% of the teachers increase the wait-time; 57.89% of the teachers redirect the question to another student when the first one can't give the satisfactory answer; 15.79% of the teachers prefer to answer the question by themselves. According to this figure we can see that probing, rephrasing and redirection are the most popular question strategies when the students answer in correctly or half-correct, the

reason for which is that the three ways not only make students enjoy the learning but also increase the amount of student participation and involvement and consequently, to greater learning and increased interest.

2.2.8 Results and analysis of evaluating strategies

Table 2.2.8 Results of evaluating in class.

Question naire Item10,11	When the students answered correctly or incorrectly, how would you do?						
	Positive feedback			Negative feedback			
	Short and simple praise	Praise plus repetitio n	Praise with commen t	Interrup ting for correcting	Guide to self -correctio n	Ask anothe r student	Criticiz e
Ratio (%)	42.11	84.21	31.58	0	42.11	5.26	47.37

Table 2.2.8 shows that 84.21% of the teachers would like to praise and repeat the answer when the students give the right answer, 42.11% of the teachers would like to use short and simple sentence to praise students; 31.58% of the teachers like to praise the students and comment the students' answers. However, when students give the wrong answer, 42.11% of teachers will extend the wait-time to guide students to self-correction; 5.26% of teachers will ask another student to answer the question, for the more, 47.37% of teachers will criticize the students. Through the results we can see that most teacher prefer the positive feedback to the negative feedback. Especially praising the students and repeating the right answer that the student gave is used most widely. That's because repetition can make other students hear the answer and emphasize the answer. And using positive feedback is helpful to increasing the motivation of students and creating the friendly atmosphere in class. Short and simple praise such as "good", "great", "perfect", "well done" also have this function, but if teacher's this kind of repetition seems to be so automatic that will undoubtedly weaken its ultimate effect on the learners to some degree.

Then as for negative feedback, is rarely favored by teacher although some teacher still use it. It's not recommended by researchers. Because it makes students ashamed and discouraged in answering questions. The teacher who asks a question to criticize or punish a student is turning a positive learning situation into a negatively reinforcing one. The result is that the teacher not only "turning off" the learner but also shuts down the learning process.

Chapter 3 Discussion

Main findings are summarized as follows:

1. Effective questioning is influenced by various factors such as teachers' attitudes and behaviors, teachers' feedback, question designing and teachers' questioning skills.
2. Some teachers are not acquainted with the questioning strategy systematically, which confines the application of the strategies in teaching. It is necessary for teachers to develop their educational theory and fulfill the demands of English teaching development.
3. As far as question planning is concerned, teachers haven't formed the habit of planning questions and writing them down. Most of teachers occasionally plan questions and write them down. Among these teachers most teachers are careful in choosing the content of the question and phrasing the question.
4. As for question designing, teachers tend to present more " Yes or No questions, thought-provoking questions and referential questions. But no one like challenge questions. However, for some time this kind of over level question is important to stimulate the depth of thinking.
5. With regarding to the questioning controlling strategy, almost all the teachers sequence their questions, nominating after raising the questions. When students give improper response, most of the teachers try to modify the questions to probe and guide for a better answer or redirect to another student.
6. Most teachers try to praise students for their write response as much as possible. And nearly all the teachers rarely criticize or punish students for wrong response.

Chapter 4 Conclusion

First, When planning the questions, teachers should identify the goal or purpose for the questions clearly, then different types of questions can be designed for different purposes. Secondly, teacher should design questions that can promote learning, ensure high success rates and provide adequate coverage

of subject matter. Third, as for different questions, different students, teachers should employ different question strategies. Fourth, generally speaking, teacher should direct the questions to the students averagely. Besides, teachers should call upon non-positive students(non-volunteers), coy students or absent-minded students in a friendly non-threatening manner. Fifth, from the results of the study, we know that most teachers have realized the importance of wait-time and offer enough wait time to students thinking. As we discussed before, if teachers can wait for 5 to 8 seconds to response, positive effects always appear in class. Finally, teacher should give more positive feedback to underachievers to encourage and praise them more, thus, they will more enjoy learning. Meanwhile, teachers should be careful when giving negative feedbacks. The way which teacher should employ is to guide students to self-correction.

After investigating I also deeply realized that being a language teacher, noticing more about the techniques of raising questions seems particularly relevant and important to teaching and students learning involvement as well as students thinking. we will also bear the distinctions among different types of questions in mind, and the desirable aim is to male students act independently and autonomously. For preparing lessons, we should consider the questions we will ask and plan them well ahead of schedule. When asking questions, we should adopt different types of questions for different teaching contents, concerning about classroom activities, students' background knowledge and their language levels.

In addition, some other aspects of asking question also should be taken into account. For example, we should choose students to answer different types questions. It's better to distribute the questions to the average class to keep the balanced distribution, instead of only asking volunteer or superior students. We should also probe or redirect to help the one who fails to answer and encourage him or her to answer again, giving more patience, wait-time and praise.

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