

TEACHER QUESTIONS

Chapter 1

Introduction

Background of the Study

Asking questions in the classroom is frequently employed by teachers to have learners actively participate in classroom activities. This question is known as teacher question which is actually one manifestation of teacher talk in classroom teaching and learning activities.

In teaching and learning activities, students are expected to do most of the talking in the classroom. Ideal classroom situation is one in which students are actively involved and participated in the lesson. However, in many language classrooms, the teacher is the one who does most of the talking whilst students remain silent (Walsh, 2002). Questions, therefore, are expected to be stimulations for the students to participate and get involved in language classroom actively.

Addressing questions to students, moreover, is significant to be applied in order to develop their oral production. Through questions, quiet students are triggered to speak in order to respond to the questions raised by teachers. In addition, it elicits students who are feeling reluctant to

dynamically partake in the classroom activities. By asking questions, teachers essentially stimulate students to present their ideas, and test their comprehension knowledge or skills in learning.

In regard to the skills, Richards (2008:19) proves that the mastery of English speaking skills has become priority for many second-language or foreign language learners. It asserts that speaking is a fundamental skill in classroom interaction. Without being able to speak in the classroom activities, both teacher and students cannot develop meaningful classroom interaction.

Dealing with the classroom interaction, some students are reluctant to respond to the teacher questions in the seventh grade of Junior High School in Cita Hati Christian School-West Campus Surabaya. Even though they are good at speaking English, some of them are still being silent in the classroom interaction.

Teacher questions, therefore, are significant to build a lively interaction between teacher and students in the classroom activities. Through the questions raised by teachers, the students are encouraged to practice their English speaking skills. The students may not be aware of practicing their

English speaking skills when they respond to the questions asked by teachers. In addition, it may be assumed that their English speaking skill is non-deliberately acquired from giving responses to questions posed by teachers in classroom teaching and learning activities.

In addition, questioning has been traditionally viewed as an important component of teacher talk and the core of effective teaching in a classroom context (Walsh & Sattes, 2005). Questioning is a major factor leading to teaching-learning situations in both content classes devoted to teaching science, math, and language classes (Gall, 1986; Nunan, 1991). In the latter one, especially in EFL environments, the classroom is generally the only setting in which learners have regular exposure to the target language (Brock, 1986); therefore, what is made available to the learners in terms of input and interaction is of crucial importance. It shows that questioning plays an important role in language acquisition, because, as Ellis (1994) claims, language learners mostly have the opportunity to participate when they are asked a question. Apart from its contribution to second language learning, questioning and questions that teachers ask in classroom settings also have pedagogical benefits, like stimulating and

maintaining learners' interest, encouraging learners to think and focus on the content, enabling teachers to check understanding, elicit, and clarify (Richards & Lockhart, 1998).

However, some of Indonesian learners are anxious about either asking questions or being asked. They attempt to turn their face when teachers are either going to inquire them questions or provoke them to pose questions. Their anxieties may be caused by their lack of English speaking skill or the lack of understanding the questions. Young (1990:539) in Occhipinti (2009:6) demonstrates that speaking in the foreign language is often the most anxiety-producing experience for the learners. It demonstrates that learners are anxious to speak in a language classroom.

Teacher questions, therefore, may be able to solve the problem encountered by the learners in classroom activities. In addition, it depends on the teachers' skill of asking questions to have the learners get involved and actively participated in language classroom activities.

The teacher is furthermore the main model - who is more familiar with the situations in the classroom than others who are not involved in the classroom. In addition to being the main model, the teacher may determine the types of questions

which are able to elicit learners' active participation in the language classroom. The questions should be considered as questions that do not affect learners to avoid from answering them, for some Indonesian learners are anxious of being asked. Teacher questions must therefore be a tool to achieve learners' active participation in the language classroom during the teaching and learning process. In other words, teacher questions must not be threats that make learners anxious any longer but make them fully participated in the language classroom activities. Unfortunately, some teachers do not realize the importance of using appropriate types of question and strategies to raise questions in order to assist the learners to get involved and actively participated in the language classroom.

Dealing with questions, various types of questions are posed by teachers in classroom activities with different purposes. Various categories of questions have been categorized according to their cognitive domain (Bloom, 1956:18); purpose (Richards & Lockhart, 1996:185); form (Celce Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Biber et al., 1999), form, content, and purpose (Thompson, 1997). From various categories of questions, they are simplified into two major

types of questions which are known as display and referential question. Display questions are ones for which the teacher has already known the answer; they simply test the learner's knowledge of previously taught studies, whereas, referential questions are genuinely information-seeking questions, aiming to acquire new information (Ellis, 1994).

Both display and referential questions employed by teachers in classroom activities have become significant issue to conduct research. These types of questions cannot be avoided in interacting, especially in classroom activities. Moreover, some results of studies indicate that display questions are used by the teacher more frequently than referential questions (David, 2007; Temiz, 2012; Qashon, 2013; Vebriyanto, 2014).

A study which investigated the effects of the display versus referential questions on the length and complexity of the sentences produced by the learners demonstrated that those learners who were asked more referential questions produced significantly longer and more syntactically complex responses (Brock, 1986).

In contrast, Shomoossi (2004) claims that not all the referential questions create long utterances in language

interaction. Since referential question is defined as the question which is aiming to acquire new information, it does not make sense that it creates longer utterances. For instance, asking someone's name or address does not require longer utterances to respond. This illustration is clear to be understood in regard to definition between display and referential questions, for asking someone's name or address may be considered as acquiring new information.

Those recent findings show that display question was more frequently employed than the referential question. The findings also demonstrate that referential question produced longer responses, yet it was not always true. Regarding these findings, classroom interaction is a worthy topic to be studied. In relation to classroom interaction, teacher questioning is an important technique to be employed in the teaching and learning process. Teacher, moreover, may address different types of questions to the learners to achieve similar or different types of learners' responses.

Considering the importance of teacher questions in the teaching and learning process from some previous research findings, this present study entitled "*Teacher Questions in Junior High School Classroom*" is worth conducting. This

study is definitely different from previous studies which mostly focused on the length of students' responses toward certain teacher questions types. In other words, those previous studies appeared focusing on the language form responded by the students while this study focuses on the teacher questions which are used either to teach or to test.

Research Questions

Deriving from the title of this thesis and the background of the study, four relevant research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What types of teacher questions are addressed by the teacher in the seventh grade classroom of Cita Hati Junior School – West Campus Surabaya?
2. Which types of teacher questions occur most frequently in the seventh grade classroom of Cita Hati Junior School – West Campus Surabaya?
3. Why do teachers address those high-frequency questions to the seventh grade classroom of Cita Hati Junior School – West Campus Surabaya?
4. What verbal responses do the students give to the teacher questions in the classroom?

Purposes of the Study

In relation to the research questions above, this study aims to:

1. classify the types of teacher questions addressed by the teacher in the classroom,
2. find out the types of teacher questions which occur most frequently during the lessons,
3. identify the reasons the teacher address those high-frequency questions to the seventh grade classroom of Cita Hati Junior School – West Campus Surabaya,
4. find out the verbal form responses the students give to the teacher questions in the classroom.

Scope and Limitation

The English teacher and students of the seventh grade of *Cita Hati Christian School-West Campus-Surabaya* were chosen to be the participants of this study. The participants were of similar level to the previous studies which were also conducted in junior and senior high school teacher than college teacher (Farahian & Rezae, 2012), (Temiz, 2012), and (Vebriyanto, 2014). This study attempted to categorize teacher

question types, find out the frequency of teacher question types spoken, the reasons why the teacher addresses the most frequently questions asked, and what the students respond to the questions.

As it is mentioned above, the participants of this study were limited to the seventh grade teacher and students, so that the researcher focused and studied more from the participants. Furthermore, this study focused on the teacher questions asked in the spoken form.

The teacher question types were limited to display and referential questions spoken by the teacher in the classroom. The teacher and students talk were recorded during the teaching in the classroom. In addition to the audio-recording, interview was done to gain further information dealing with the teacher's reasons for asking the most frequently questions in the classroom.

Theoretical Framework

Question is any sentence which has interrogative forms (Yes/No or WH form), content (outside facts, personal facts, or opinion), and purposes (display or referential). Question is employed to help students review, to check on comprehension,

to stimulate critical thinking, to encourage creativity, to emphasize a point, to control classroom activities and cut down on disruptive behavior, to help determine grades, to encourage discussion, to discourage inattentiveness, and for other reasons and purposes (Blosser, 2000). Questioning style and content varies from teacher to teacher, student group to student group, and situation to situation.

In classroom settings, teacher questions are defined as instructional cues or stimuli that convey to students the content elements to be learned and directions for what they are to do and how they are to do it (Cotton, 2014).

In regard to the questions, teachers inevitably ask a lot of questions to students in teaching and learning activities in the classroom in order to achieve active participation from the students. By contrast, some questions are not well accepted by some learners in certain class activities. The unaccepting comes up with the anxiety of the learners in the classroom activities.

In accordance with this case, teacher who is the main model in the classroom should have skills of asking questions in the classroom. Teacher questions, therefore, become significant in this study as the underlying theory to solve the

problems encountered. Brown (2007:169) suggested that one of the best ways of teacher being an initiator and sustainer of interaction is by employing questioning strategies. Furthermore, Suk-a-nake, Heaton, Chantrupanth, and Rorex (2003:32) reported that the use of questions with various types of question benefits classroom interaction.

The theoretical framework of the study, therefore, determines its stance on the following teacher question types (Long & Sato, 1983). As communication is the utmost goal in language classrooms, *display* and *referential* have become the most prominent category in the related contemporary studies. In display questions, the answer is already known to the teacher and they are designed to elicit or display particular structures. For example, -what is the opposite of big?|| On the contrary, referential questions refer to the questions that teachers do not know the answers to, and require long syntactically complicated answers containing interpretation, elaboration, giving opinions and subjective information. For example, -why do you study English?|| (Long & Sato, 1983)

Significance of the Study

The findings of the present study are expected to contribute new insight about asking questions in the classroom interaction. The findings of the present study, moreover, are expected to contribute lively interaction in the classroom through proper teacher questions.

Assumptions

In the teaching learning process, there is classroom interaction between teacher and students. Since this study is concerned with the teacher questions and the students' verbal form responses, this study is conducted under the following assumptions:

1. The teacher talk during the English lesson in the seventh grade classroom of Cita Hati Junior School – West Campus Surabaya contains teacher questions,
2. The students talk during the English lesson in the seventh grade classroom of Cita Hati Junior School – West Campus Surabaya also contains students' responses to the teacher questions.

Definition of Key Terms

- Teacher talk is any words spoken by teachers during the teaching and learning process in the classroom.
- Teacher questions are teacher's words which have forms such as Yes/No or WH form, questioning intonation, outside facts, personal facts, or opinion, and purposes (display or referential) employed in the classroom activities.
- Frequency is the quantity of a particular type of teacher questions contained in teacher talk over a precise period of time or in a particular sample.
- Display question is a question the answer of which has already been known by the teacher and it is designed to check the students' comprehension.
- Referential question refers to a question the answer of which has not been known by the teacher; it requires long syntactically complicated answers containing interpretation, elaboration, giving opinions, and subjective information.

Thesis Organization

The thesis organization presents the details of the writing of this study that is written in five chapters. The five chapters were details written as follows:

Chapter I : this chapter presents introduction that consists of background of the study, the research questions, and the purposes of the study, scope and limitation, theoretical framework, definition of key terms, significance of the study, assumption, and thesis organization.

Chapter II : this chapter presents review of literature that covers questions, teacher questions, the types of teacher questions, the functions and purposes of teacher questions, and questioning strategies.

Chapter III : this chapter presents research method that consists of research design, subjects/participants, sources of data, data, and unit of analysis, instruments and tools, data collection, data analysis, and triangulation.

Chapter IV : this chapter presents results and discussion that comprise the results of the study and the discussion of the findings. The results of the study cover types of teacher questions and its frequency, teacher's purposes for asking high-frequency questions, and the students' verbal

responses. Furthermore, the discussion of the findings will discuss the result of the study.

Chapter V : this chapter presents conclusions and suggestions that write about the conclusions of the result found in the study and suggestions for English language teachers as well as areas for further studies related to the present study.