

QUESTIONING STRATEGIES AND STUDENTS' PREFERENCES (BETWEEN REALITY AND EXPECTATION)

Fahmi Hidayat¹

Universitas Lambung Mangkurat, Banjarmasin, Indonesia
Fahmihidayat@ulm.ac.id

Ninuk Krismanti²

STKIP PGRI Banjarmasin, Banjarmasin, Indonesia
ninukkrismanti@stkipbjm.ac.id

Abstract

This study was set to investigate questioning strategies employed by lecturers and students' preferences on the strategies. The study involved two lecturers and 72 students taking General English classes. The lecturers and students came from two different institutions in South Kalimantan, University of Lambung Mangkurat and STKIP PGRI Banjarmasin. The data in this descriptive qualitative study were collected through observation and questionnaire techniques. The researchers conducted the observations four times online to get the data on lecturers' questioning strategies. The observed classes were recorded to help the analysis. The questionnaire was distributed to students to get the data on students' preferences regarding questioning strategies. Teachers' strategies were analyzed based on four questioning strategies categories suggested by Wangru (2016). The findings of this study showed that probing and redirecting strategies were most frequently employed by the lecturers. Repeating was the strategy employed the least. On students' side, most students chose prompting as their favorite questioning strategy. Students also agreed that types of questions contributed in determining their responses to the questions.

Keywords: question strategies, online classroom, general English

1. INTRODUCTION

There is nothing better for teachers and students than having fun classes. However, creating a fun and dynamic classroom is not an easy task for many teachers. Teachers who provide comfortable and supportive environment to students are likely able to manage the classroom interaction more effectively. Lively classroom interaction is only possible when students are positioned not as mere listeners. A fun and dynamic class can only be achieved when both teachers and students are actively participated in the teaching and learning process. In

this matter, questioning strategies applied by teachers play an important role. Hall (2016) stated that questioning is teachers' way of getting the information on what students have understood and what they still need to improve; questioning provides the information on gap between the two to reach the objective of learning. In addition, Sujariati *et.al.* (2016) argue that questions uttered by teachers are regarded as the cues given to students so that they understand what they are learning and what they need to do in the classroom as well as how they shall do

it. In short, questions are crucial integrating part of classroom interaction.

Questioning and responding to questions enable students to participate actively in the classroom. Furthermore, questions also serve the function of stimulating students' critical thinking. In the field of ELT, we are all familiar with the concept of Bloom's Taxonomy that divides questions into two level namely lower order thinking and higher order thinking. The division does not justify that the higher order thinking is better than the lower one; all level of questions are needed in the classroom. However, by following the hierarchy of questions suggested in Bloom's Taxonomy, teachers are enabled to arrange the questions in order to boost students' critical thinking better. However, not all questions are effective to engage students' participation in the classroom interaction and to help the development of their critical thinking. This is supported by Feng (2013) stating that EFL teachers must have the expertise on making good questions and applying proper strategies if they aim to develop students' critical thinking. Therefore, teachers should utter their questions in a certain manner so that their questions lead to desired responses by students. This manner is called questioning strategy.

In this work, questioning strategies uttered by two lecturers were analyzed to be compared with students' preferences on the strategies. This research was set to reveal if the questioning strategies by lecturers met students' expectation based on their personal preference. By conducting this study, it is expected that lecturers, as well as teachers in general, are more aware of students' preferences on the strategies to utter the questions. Vice versa, for students, the findings of the

study enable them to see the purposes behind strategies applied by their lecturers.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES

2.1. Related Studies

In context of Indonesia, the study on questioning strategies has been carried out by many researchers including Ragawanti (2009), Sujariati *et.al* (2016), Astrid *et.al.* (2019), and Marzona & Astria (2019). To compare this research with works of other researchers in similar field, the researchers would review two journals. The first journal was written by Ragawanti (2009). In her study entitled *Questions and Questioning Techniques: A View of Indonesian Students' Preferences*, Ragawanti (2009) found that students preferred random nomination technique over pre-arranged format nomination. Moreover, nominating volunteering students and giving-wait time were the two techniques less favorable by the students. In terms of types of questions, students liked yes/no questions better than other types. In comparison to this study, study by Ragawanti (2009) focused on students' preferences only, while this study focused on both lecturers' actual practices and students' preferences on questioning strategies. Also, the ground theory chosen to guide the findings was different. Ragawanti (2009) did not employ theory by Wangru (2016) in her study.

The second journal reviewed was written by Sujariati *et.al* (2016). The research by Sujariati *et.al.* (2016) was set to describe questioning strategies by teachers, the reasons behind the strategies, and their impacts on students. The findings of the research showed that teachers employed the strategies in different sessions of teaching by asking

different types of questions. Teachers also employed other strategies including translating questions into Indonesian language and giving rewards to students. For students, this study revealed positive impacts of the questions in students' learning activities. As comparison, the work of Sujariati *et.al.* (2016) and this study were set in different objectives. The objectives of this research were to describe lecturers' questioning strategies and students' preferences by employing the theory by Wangru (2016). In short, the ground theory used as protocol of the research in this work was different from the ground theory used in the research by Sujariati *et.al.* (2016) even though both studies investigated questioning strategies in the classroom.

2.2. Types of Questions in ELT Classroom

Many experts in ELT have differentiated types of questions commonly found in ELT classroom. One of them is Wajnryb (2012) who divided types of teachers' questions into six:

- a. Yes/No questions
e.g.: "Do you understand?"
- b. Short answer questions
e.g.: "Who can answer number 1?"
- c. Open-ended questions
e.g.: "Why do we need to learn culture when learning foreign language?"
- d. Display questions
e.g.: "What day is today?"
- e. Referential questions
e.g.: "What did you read last night before going to bed?"
- f. Non-retrieval, imaginative questions
e.g.: "Let's have role-play for now. What do you think of practicing how to say the prices? You and the

person next to you should act like buyer and seller."

2.3. Questioning Strategies

In employing any teaching strategy, teachers should pay attention not only to cognitive aspect but also the affective one. Afriana (2015) stated that affective strategies should meet three criteria namely 1) lessening anxiety, 2) giving encouragement, and 3) waving out emotional temperature. When teachers focus only to cognitive aspect and neglecting affective one, students will not feel content about their learning which can lead them to lose respect to their teachers and their study. Therefore, choosing the strategy that can accomodate both cognitive and affective aspects is a must.

In relation to questioning strategies, Wangru (2016) categorized questioning strategies applied by teachers in the classroom into four:

- a. Prompting
Prompting is a questioning strategy applied by teachers when students fail to give correct responses. This can happen when the questions are too difficult for students to understand. Prompting in the strategy where teachers give clues for students so that they can answer better.
- b. Probing
Probing is a questioning strategy applied by teachers in form of follow-up questions to one student shall his/her previous answer still needs improvement. Teachers apply probing strategy when they want their students to think deeper and higher. Probing is usually done by asking 'why?' to the selected student.
- c. Repeating
Repeating is a questioning strategy applied by teachers to meet several

purposes namely 1) ensuring students listen to the question, 2) checking students' understanding on the question, 3) encouraging students to deliver their thought, 4) breaking the passiveness of students, and 5) giving more thinking time for students. Repeating strategy is employed by asking the same question when none of the students answers.

d. Redirecting

Redirecting is a questioning strategy applied by teachers by asking a similar question to different students so that the students can clarify or give more critical answers that complete their fellows' previous answers.

One thing to note, teachers' strategies in giving questions to students are not without flaws. Problems regarding the matter sometimes occur. Yang (2017, p. 159) described three problems that possibly occur in relation to questioning strategies. The problems are 1) questions distribution, 2) lack of wait-time, and 3) lack of feedback.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1. Research Design

This study was intended to describe questioning strategies by two lecturers and their students' preferences of the strategies. Seeing from the objectives of the research, this study was carried out under descriptive qualitative method. Cresswell (2007) mentioned that in qualitative research, the researcher should collect the data in natural setting and the findings must represent the voice of research participants and judgment from researcher; furthermore, the analysis is done descriptively to reveal holistic, factual, and reliable findings based on phenomena being studied. Based on the statement by Cresswell (2007), this

study best fitted descriptive qualitative design.

3.2. Data Collecting Procedures

In this study, the data were collected by two instruments: observation and questionnaire. Observation in this study was intended to find observed lecturers' questioning strategies. There were total four observations made to gather the data. The observations were conducted in two general English classes taught by two different lecturers. The first general English class observed was offered in University of Lambung Mangkurat. The students of the class were 42 students. Another class observed was from STKIP PGRI Banjarmasin. The students enrolled in this class were 38 students. Each class was observed two times online. The first class was observed via Zoom on November 9th and November 16th, 2020. The second class was observed via Google Meet on November 11th and 18th, 2020. The four meetings were recorded to clarify the data when needed.

To collect the data on students' preferences on the questioning strategies, questionnaire was used. The questionnaire was designed to cover both closed-ended questions and open-ended questions. The questionnaire was distributed to all students from both classes via Google Form. However, only 72 of 80 students responded the questionnaire. The rest eight students did not fill the form.

3.3. Data Analysis

The analysis of the data was done separately. The data gathered from observations were analyzed by classifying the questioning strategies of the lecturers into four categories suggested by Wangru (2016). The data collected from questionnaire were analyzed based on students' answers.

The findings of the two analyses were then compared and described narratively.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Questioning Strategies by Lecturers

Asking and responding to questions are common practices in the classroom. Questions as defined by Sujariati *et.al.* (2016) is the arrangement of verbal and non-verbal language aims to obtain information based on the reply uttered by the interlocutor. In classroom setting, questions are beneficial for both teachers and students. Meng, Zhao, and Chattouphonexay (2012) mentioned that questions by teachers give advantages for both teachers and students as the questions help teachers to maintain students' involvement in the class. They also enable students to stimulate their thinking. In short, the importance of questions in classroom will never get old as questions serve crucial functions in the teaching and learning process.

In questioning the students, teachers should arrange the questions properly in order to ensure the effectiveness of the questions. Sujariati *et.al.* (2016, p.17) mentioned that questioning strategies as the ways of asking students in order to achieve certain purposes in the teaching and learning process. Teachers' questioning strategies vary depending on purposes of the questions, teaching styles, number of class members, and other factors. To put in mind, all questions uttered in the classroom by teachers are set for good purposes; however, the impact they bring for students may be different. Thus, teachers need to be smart in managing their questions so that the students can benefit maximally from the questions. In other words, how teachers execute their questions matter.

In this study, the researchers found 128 questions uttered by the lecturers during four observed meetings. The 128 questions were uttered in different strategies as displayed in the table below:

Num.	Questioning Strategies	Frequency
1.	Prompting	21
2.	Probing	52
3.	Repeating	7
4.	Redirecting	48

Table 1. Questioning Strategies by Lecturers

To get a better picture on the distribution of questioning strategies employed by the lecturers, the following chart shows the distribution in percentage:

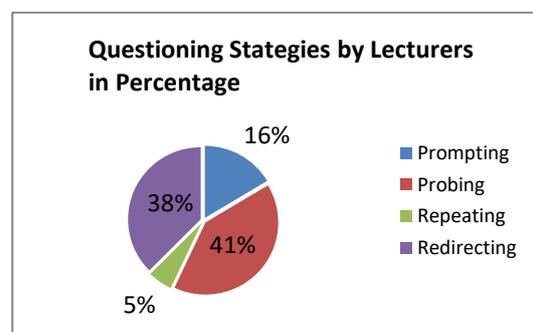


Chart 1. Distribution of Questioning Strategies by Lecturers in Percentage

Probing and redirecting were employed more frequently compared to the other two strategies. Probing occurred 52 times (41%) of 128 questions analyzed, while redirecting occurred 48 times (38%). Probing is usually directed to one student when the teachers aim to seek for a better answer. This happens when the student is yet to provide desirable answer or when the teachers believe the student is able to answer better. In this study, both observed lecturers employed probing more frequently than other strategies because students' answers left rooms for improvement and the students were able to utter more complete answers should the lecturers followed the

previous answers by other probing questions.

The example of probing occurred in the data is as follows:

Lecturer	:	... so do you think learning tenses is important? <i>Menurut kalian belajar tenses itu perlu gak sih? Hhh... ya Atha?</i>
Student	:	Hmmm... I think yes, Ma'am. <i>Perlu sih, Ma'am...</i>
Lecturer	:	Why?
Student	:	Anu, Ma'am ei.. <i>soalnya kan kalau belajar tenses Bahasa Inggrisnya kada salah-salah lagi kaya itu na, Ma'am.</i>
Lecturer	:	So you think it is important to learn tenses because you will be able to avoid mistakes and errors. Is that right?
Student	:	<i>Inggih, Ma'am.</i>

In the chunk of interaction above, the lecturer probed the student's answer by asking 'why?'. This question led the student to provide further answer to complete his idea of why learning tenses is important. In this research, the two lecturers employed probing most frequently with the hope that students' answers were longer. The longer the answers were, the more students stimulated their thinking.

Other than probing, redirecting strategy was also employed frequently

by the lecturers. Redirecting is the strategy used by asking the same question to different students when teachers intend to seek answers from different students. By doing this, the teachers are able to get more complete answers as the answers from one student to other students grow and complete each other. For students, answers they hear from different students give them more input and consequently their understanding can increase on the matters being asked.

The example of redirecting strategy found in the data is shown below:

Lecturer	:	Do you still remember our material from last week? <i>Waktu itu saya bahas beberapa situasi kapan simple present tense digunakan. Ada yang masih ingat pada situasi apa saja? Hmmm.. Humaira, maybe?</i>
Student 1	:	<i>Kalau gak salah ingat anu, Ma'am... untuk sesuatu yang kita lakukan sehari-hari... terus untuk sesuatu yang sudah pasti. Iyalah, Ma'am?</i>
Lecturer	:	Good... Thoriq... Thoriq ada? In what situation we have to use simple present tense?
Student 2	:	<i>Sama kaya jawaban sebelumnya, Ma'am. Kalau kegiatan kita lakukan tiap hari...</i>
Lecturer	:	Aisya, what do you think?
Student 3	:	<i>Seingat saya, Bu... untuk menunjukkan kegiatan sehari-hari. Terus untuk sesuatu yang permanen. Terus lagi untuk mmmmm... apa itu? Untuk fenomena alam juga, Ma'am.</i>
Lecturer	:	Good! <i>Ada lagi yang mau nambahkan?</i> In what situation do we need to use simple present tense?
Student 4	:	<i>Saya boleh nyoba menambahkan, Ma'am? Untuk memberi arahan biasanya pakai tense itu. Bener lah, Ma'am?</i>
Lecturer	:	Very good! <i>Bener, selain yang sudah disebutkan temannya tadi, to give instructions or directions kita juga menggunakan simple present tense.</i>

From the chunk of interaction above, one question was directed by the lecturer to more than one student. The question was answered by four different students. By doing this, the lecturer obtained a more complete answer as desired. Furthermore, students' memory on previous lesson was refreshed by listening to their friends' answers. In the observed classrooms, both lecturers redirected the questions when they hoped to find more holistic answers when the answers from the first students were still inadequate.

Other two strategies proposed by Wangru (2016), prompting and repeating, were not employed frequently by the lecturers. Prompting occurred 21 times (16%) in the data, and repeating occurred 7 times (5%).

Prompting is the strategy employed shall the nominated student cannot give any answer or the answer is unclear. Students usually fail to answer the questions correctly because of two reasons. First, they do not understand the question, or the question is beyond their ability to answer. Second, because they do not pay attention to the class so that when being asked, they are confused and cannot provide expected answers. In the observed classes, lecturers employed prompting strategy mostly when they aimed to get certain students' attention to the classroom. Teaching virtually required lecturers to make extra efforts in making sure the classes were attended by all students. Prompting can be used to serve this purpose.

The example of prompting found in the data is shown in the following excerpt:

Lecturer	: Can you give me an example of expression we can use for leave taking? Dina? Dina?
Student	: (after several seconds) <i>Apa tadi pertanyaannya, boleh diulang?</i>
Lecturer	: Give me an example of expression <i>yang bisa digunakan untuk</i> leave taking!
Student	: Hmmmmm
Lecturer	: <i>Kamu tau</i> leave taking <i>kan? Untuk perpisahan itu lo contoh ekspresinya gimana?</i>
Student	: <i>Oh iya... contohnya apa ya? Goodbye boleh gak?</i>
Lecturer	: Okay, good. Goodbye <i>boleh</i> .

From the example above, we can see that the lecturer prompted because the nominated student did not provide the expected answer. The lecturer prompted by repeating the question by mixing English and Indonesian language. When the student still could not answer the question after wait-time, the lecturer uttered another prompt by paraphrasing the question. After this prompt, the student finally managed to answer the question. Prompting strategy was not found as frequently as probing

and redirecting because most of the time the students were able to answer the questions though not all answers were complete. When students' answers are incomplete, the lecturers employed probing and redirecting strategies as explained previously.

Repeating in this study was not found frequently. Based on the observations, students answered directly when being asked by the lectures. There were only seven questions being repeated because none of the students

initiated answers. Repeating strategy also did not occur that frequently as the lecturers nominated names of students to answers their questions when no one

volunteered to answer. By nominating students' names, repeating strategy could be avoided.

The example of repeating in found in the data is as follows:

Lecturer	: What is auxiliary verb?
Lecturer	: (after several seconds and none of the students answers) What is auxiliary verb? <i>Ada yang tau? Hmmm... gak ada yang jawab ya? Syarwani, kamu tau apa itu auxiliary verb?</i>
Student	: <i>Yang is, am, are itu kan, Bu?</i>

In the example above, the lecturer repeated the question because no student volunteered to answer. Repeating strategy was employed by the lecturer after wait-time. As illustrated in the excerpt above, the repeating strategy was no longer needed when the lecturer nominated a student's name to give his answer. Nominating students' names is always effective to break the silence in the class.

4.2. Students' Preferences on Questioning Strategies

It is often forgotten that students also have their preferences when it comes to how their teachers utter the questions in the classroom. In this study, 72 students from two institutions responded to the questionnaire. Their preferences are shown in the following table:

Num.	Questioning Strategies	Students Favoring the Strategies
1.	Prompting	32
2.	Probing	21
3.	Repeating	2
4.	Redirecting	17

Table 2. Preferred Questioning Strategies by Students

To illustrate the percentage of students' preferences, see the chart below:

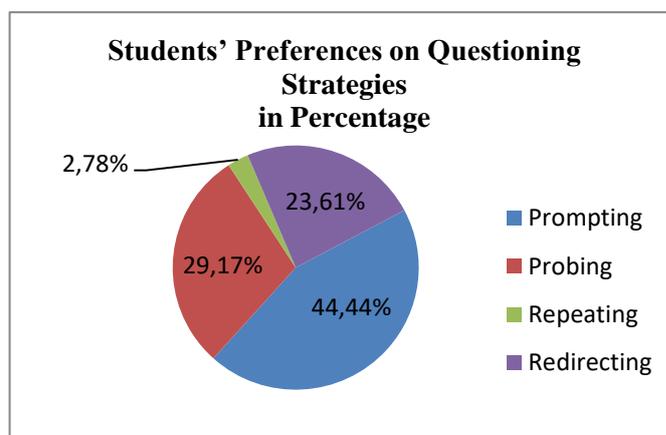


Chart 2. Distribution of Students' Preferred Strategies in Percentage

Of 72 students, 32 students (44.44%) chose prompting, 21 (29.17%) chose probing, 2 (2.78%) chose repeating, and 17 (23.61%) chose redirecting as their preferred questioning strategies. This finding is in the contrary of the fact that lecturers employed more probing than prompting strategy. According to their responses, students favored prompting because of two main reasons. The first reason is because prompting provided more clues to students to answer the questions. Students found the clues helpful for them to arrange words to answer. When getting a question from the lecturer, some students could not help to feel nervous even though they knew the answer. It is because some of them were afraid of sounding stupid. Some others were nervous because the subject was English. Therefore, by applying prompting, the lecturer helped them with the clues or examples given. The second reason they favored prompting over other questionings strategies is because prompting gave them more time to think. Longer time to think help students prepared themselves to answer better. This is why students did not like it when lecturers nominated names, especially when it is their names. Being nominated by the lecturer to answer the questions was scary; even worse when the students were not sure about the answers. They liked it better when a student volunteered to answer instead of being nominated by the lecturer.

The second favorite questioning strategy for students was probing. For 21 students, probing was challenging as it required students to explore their answers more. Probing is usually directed to one student; therefore, this student is able to extend his/her answer and feels listened. When lecturers move to another student to give the answer before the previous student finished

delivering his/her opinions, this student will feel betrayed. The investigated students agreed on this matter. They did not really like it when their lecturers asked another student to answer the question when they had not finished their answer yet. They claimed that sometimes they wanted to extend their answers, but the lecturers did not the chance for them. Moving to the next student was great when they were not sure about the answers, but it was disappointing when the students wanted to answer more yet given no opportunity to do so. Therefore, managing wait-time is super important for the lecturers.

Based on the findings of this study, redirecting was frequently employed by the investigated lecturers in the classroom, but it was not favored by the students. Of 72 students, only 17 claimed that redirecting was their favorite strategy. Those who liked redirecting strategy said that they liked this strategy because they could get inspiration to answer the questions after hearing their friends' answers.

The least favorable questioning strategy for students was repeating. Of 72 students, only two students chose this strategy as their favorite. According to these two students, repeating strategy was a good way of clarifying the questions. However, other students chose other strategies as their favorite for the reasons previously explained.

The students in this study mentioned that questioning strategies are important, but the types of questions also determined their responses. Students were more confident to answer yes/no questions, display questions, and referential questions compared to open-ended questions. In short, it was always easier for them to arrange words to answer a shorter and a more personal question than a long, elaborated one.

5. CONCLUSIONS

What lecturers practiced and what students expected are sometimes different. This study proved it; in reality, the lecturers employed probing and redirecting more than other strategies in questioning the students. On the other hands, students preferred their lecturers to employ prompting more as prompting helped them get adequate clues to answers the questions directed to them. Prompting also provided the students more time to prepare the answers. This study also revealed that students possibly responded differently based on the types of questions uttered, not merely based on the questioning strategies employed by the lecturers.

REFERENCES

- Afriana, A. (2015). Analysis of Students' Reading Strategies at Riau Kepulauan University. *Journal Basis*, 2(1), pp. 9-24. Retrieved from <http://ejournal.upbatam.ac.id/index.php/basis/article/view/2756>
- Astrid, A., Amrina, R. D., Desvitasari, D., Fitriani, U., & Shahab, A. (2019). The Power of Questioning: Teacher's Questioning Strategies in the EFL Classrooms. *IRJE (Indonesian Research Journal in Education)*, 3(1), 91-106.
- Creswell, J.W. (2007). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*. London: Sage Publications.
- Feng, Z. (2013). Using Teacher Questions to Enhance EFL Students' Critical Thinking Ability. *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching*, 2 (2), pp. 147-153.
- Hall, G. (2016). The Importance of Questioning. Retrieved online at <https://garyhall.org.uk/importance-of-questioning.html>
- Marzona, Y., & Astria, W. (2019). The Effect of Questioning Strategy and Students' Motivation Toward Reading Comprehension of Narrative Text at The Eleventh Grade Social Science of SMA Negeri 1 Talamau Pasaman Barat. *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Scholastic*, 3(2), 32-39.
- Meng, J., Zhao, T., & Chattouphonexay, A. (2012). Teacher Questions in a Content-based Classroom for EFL Young Learners. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 2(12)2, pp. 2603-2610.
- Wajnryb, R. (1992). *Classroom Observation Tasks*. Cambridge: Cambridge.
- Wangru, C.(2016). The Research on Strategies of College English Teachers Classroom Questioning. *International Education Studies*, 9 (8).
- Ragawanti, D.B. (2009). Questions and Questioning Techniques: A View of Indonesian Students' Preferences. *K@ta*, 11 (2), pp. 155-170.
- Sujariati, Rahman, Q & Mahmud M. (2016). English Teacher's Questioning Strategies in EFL Classroom at SMAN 1 Bontomarannu. *ELT Worlwide*, 3 (1), pp. 107-121.
- Yang, H. (2017). A Research on the Effective Questioning Strategies in Class. *Science Journal of Education*, 5(4), pp. 158-163.