

# Teacher Questions And Student Responses In The Speaking Class Of Non-Formal Education

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## **Abstract.**

*Giving questions in a speaking class is necessary to encourage students to speak in the target language. It is challenging for the teacher to carry out suitable questions in the teaching learning process. This study investigates the types of teacher questions, how the students respond to the teacher questions, and which teacher question type encourages and discourages students from speaking along with the reasons. A case study was used as a research method to explore teacher questions' role in creating active learning as seen from student responses in an English course in Indonesia. The data were gathered through observation, documentation (audio-recording and field notes), and interviews. The result shows that display/close-ended question types became the most posed questions by the teachers and were more influential to students' speaking skills because they were frequently asked questions and responded to by the students excitedly as a group or individually. However, it was also less influential because the students received no responses in several times and the teachers gave excessive responses. Meanwhile, the choral response became the most response that students gave. This study underscores that display/close-ended questions are good enough for beginners to encourage them to speak but should not be excessive.*

**Keywords:** *Teacher question, student response and speaking skill.*

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

English has spread around the world for centuries ago. Many countries have widely used English as a language of instruction in many aspects, such as economics, business, politics, health, and education. In education, English has a vital role in students' academic development during this globalization era. Attending a non-formal school (besides a formal school), such as an English course, is one way to improve English skills. Many students have joined this course before. Some intrinsic and extrinsic factors encourage them to join this course, whether awareness from themselves or demands from their parents. Through English course, the students will get more opportunities to learn English skills than in formal schools. Because the conditions and environment in formal school are less supportive of learning English deeply. Furthermore, in this study, this English course focuses more on speaking (beside writing, listening, and reading skill). Speaking is the most important skill in English to be acquired because it becomes the first judgment from the others about language mastery in society (Brown and Yuke, 1983; Rao, 2019) and it also plays a vital role to communicate with others. Especially in speaking class that places classroom interaction as one of the key factors in engaging EFL classes actively (Ellis, 1990; Farahian and Rezaee, 2012). Classroom interaction also become more important because it provides language input and opportunities for students to try applying the target language (Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Yang, 2021) where English only studied in the class but does not used in daily life which eliminates the opportunity for students to communicate outside the class (Block & Cameron, 2002; Jenkins, 2007; Yang, 2021).

Therefore, the class have to provide communicative learning, so the students can implement and participate actively through the inquiry process and actively engage in active cognitive engagement to gain knowledge and skills in foreign languages (Caravaca, 2019). It becomes a challenge for teachers to create an active engagement and environment to interact with their students. To answer this challenge, one of the ways is by asking or giving them questions. Questioning is considered as an important element in designing classroom instruction as a teaching technique (Lee and Kinzie, 2011; Magnusson, C. G., 2021) and teacher asks a lot of questions during whole-class teaching based on classroom research (Dillon, 1990; Durkin, 1978–1979; Farrar, 1986; Myhill, 2006; Parker & Hurry, 2007; Wragg & Brown, 2001; Magnusson, C. G., 2021). Through questions, it can stimulate them to think critically or process the knowledge in their mind in order that they can have active participation in the class (Zeeger and Elliot, 2018). When they are actively

involved in learning, they feel more motivated and interested in the material being studied. It also allows them to have direct experience, feel more involved, and can express their opinion independently. Teacher question is the one forms of teacher talk where it plays an important role in language learning because the teacher act as a controller of activities in the class and as a giver of input that students are likely to accept (Cullen, 1998; Farahian and Rezaee, 2012).

Teacher question has several functions that are for focusing attention of students in the classroom, mobilizing disciplinary control, receiving the feedback, and the most important thing is pushing the students to participate (Farahian and Rezaee, 2012). However, teacher's skill to ask the question is also needed because it can encourage students' inquiry and help their scientific investigation (Ritz, 2007; Lee and Kinzie, 2011; and Whittaker, Y. 2012; Caravaca, 2019). They should be able to conform the question with the desired goals. convey it effectively, and know how to handle the students when they answer the question. Teacher can ask different types of questions to attract students' interest in learning and gain new informations through the function of each question types. Several studies in the field of teacher questions found several types of questions which used by the teachers in different level of EFL classes (Farahian & Rezaee, 2012; Jiang, 2014; Caravaca, 2019). Not only to find out the types of questions, this study also seek how the students responsd to the teacher questions. Then, the relationship between them will be seen which one is more influential in encouraging the students to speak and not where it has not been investigated before. This study takes place in an English course with Indonesian elementary students where the learning environment, which is the English course that focuses more on speaking, will provide more opportunities for them to speak English, so the teachers also will get more opportunities to pose the questions.

## II. METHODS

Two regular classes in an English course which consist of 13 and 11 Indonesian elementary students and a teacher in each class participated in this study. Case study was used as a method to explain the natural phenomenon that occurred in the class that was what were teacher questions used and student responses arose during the lesson along with the reason. Observations, documentation, and interviews were used to collect the data. The researcher first collects the data from audio-taped documentation and interviews that were done in February-March 2024. Then, the data was selected, focused, simplified, and categorized according to the appropriate theme (teacher questions and student responses). Teacher question types were categorized by Long and Sato's (1983) and Wajnryb (1992) theories such as:

- 1) Yes/No question: a question that only requires yes or no answer or a restricted answer. It's a general question or interrogative construction that only needs one or two answer options where the one requires an affirmative answer and the other requires a negative answer.
- 2) Display/close-ended question: a question where the questioner knows the answer that is used to ask the answerer to explain their knowledge of a subject matter, to check their understanding or memories, and stimulate the students.
- 3) Referential/open-ended question: a question where the questioner does not know the answer or requests new information that is usually used to know someone's reflection of their feelings, experience, knowledge, or behavior which is known by themselves.

Meanwhile, student responses were categorized according to Jiang's (2014) theory as mentioned below:

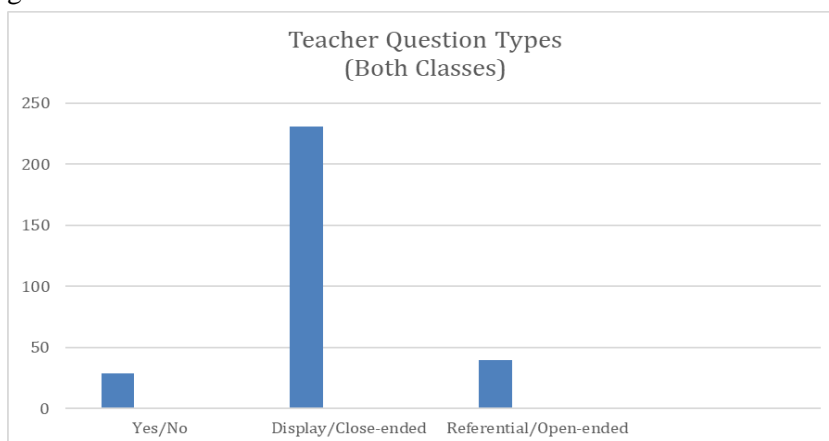
- 1) Individual response: the answer given by each individual that allows them to get deeper information personally.
- 2) Choral response: the answer the whole group or class gives simultaneously that limits individual opinions or answers.
- 3) Teacher answers: the teacher who answers their question, which can be caused by an excessive teacher answer or no answer from the students. It makes the students lose their opportunity to respond and makes them rely on their teacher.
- 4) No answer: where the students do not answer their teachers' questions or remain silent, which results in no information being obtained.

Data that have been categorized and analyzed was presented in charts and enough descriptions. During that process, the data were cross-checked with the raw data to obtain validity. Then, the researcher analyzed the reasons why those types of questions could encourage them or not through the final data. After the data were completely analyzed, the researcher drew a conclusion by reading frequently to reflect and deepen understanding.

### III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### 1. Teacher Question Types

The data were collected from observations, interviews, and field notes in two regular classes which consist of 13 and 11 students that were chosen because they are in the same grade (3-4 grade) and at the same age (9-10 years old). From those data, the researcher found several types of questions used by the teachers such as yes/no question, display/close-ended, and referential/open-ended. Detailed numbers can be seen in the following charts:



**Fig 3.1.** Teacher Question Types

From these questions, display/close-ended questions were the most frequently used by the teachers in the two classes. From the chart above, it can be seen that display/close-ended questions were the most common teacher question type with 247 data, then referential/open-ended question type 40 data, and the least of teacher question type was yes/no question with 29 data. In this study display/close-ended questions were posed the most on almost all occasion such as in the beginning (to attract students' early interest), middle (to refocus students' attention), and end (to evaluate students' learning) of the class. These questions were functioned to check students' memorizing or understanding. Mostly it was about vocab that day. It can be seen as the excerpt below:

*T: Ok now we will study about adjective. Adjective adalah kata yang menjelaskan keadaan suatu benda/seseorang. Contohnya, "this is my friend, she is beautiful". "Beautiful" is for girls, and "handsome" is for boys. Ok now "Ini adalah temanku. Dia sangat ganteng"?*

*S : This is my friend. He is so handsome*

*T: What is the meaning of " this is my friend"?*

*S : Ini adalah temanku*

*T: "dia sangat cantik"?*

*S : She is so beautiful*

Furthermore, the teachers also stated that display/close-ended question was the most frequently asked question that can be seen as follow:

*TA: "The most often questions that I asked is display/close-ended questions because this is speaking class and it was suitable to check their memories about vocabs that have been given".*

*TB: "The most often is display/close-ended questions because it is focus on the lesson that we taught that day. It is suitable to check their memorizing or understanding about it".*

Some studies also elicited the same results such as Long and Sato (1983) found that display/close-ended questions (N=426) were more used than referential/open-ended questions (N=128) inside the

classroom. Then, Shomossi (2004) noticed that the teachers deliberately used more display/close-ended questions because their students who had low proficiency failed to respond referential/open-ended questions. Farahian and Rezaee (2012) also found the same results as Shomossi (2004) where the students also had low language proficiency. They also found that it was also caused by the lack of teacher experience. Moreover, in CLIL class also used it more where it could be concluded that the quality of this class was low (Caravaca, 2019). In addition, if display/close-ended questions were overused, it will cause the lack of communicative value which result the student unable to express their own opinion or feeling naturally and only repeating the information that was obtained before (Cullen, 1998; Farahian and Rezaee, 2012). However, in the result of teacher interview in Farahian and Rezaee's (2012) study, the teacher said that although display/close-ended questions did not generate critical thinking, it could improve student's awareness and self-confidence and pave their way to participate in the class and also lead to the acquisition of a foreign language. Meanwhile, referential/open-ended were better because the students could express their own opinions and could integrate the language. But, it was more suitable for higher level than the beginners because they were more skillful in mastering L2 and the vocabulary.

Furthermore, referential/open-ended questions indicated higher-order thinking to facilitate deeper learning and develop critical thinking (Jiang, 2014). In this current study, it was used as opening question (such as when greeting the teacher asking the student's condition and feeling that day) and related to daily life (daily habits) that was in line with Farahian and Rezaee (2012) such as the excerpts below:

*T: Assalamualaikum wr wb. Hello guys, good afternoon!*

*S : Waalaikumsalam wr wb. Good afternoon ms!*

*T: How are you feeling today guys? tired or hungry?*

*S : Hungry! Tired! Lazy!*

*T: Hello mas Fian, are you hungry? sad? or happy?*

*S : Happy ms*

*T: Alhamdulillah.. How about you mas azzam, mas sakif?*

*S : Lazy*

*T: Now, Jingga, What foods do you ever try?*

*S: I ever try meatball, noodles, spaghetti*

*T: What drinks do you ever try?*

*S : I ever try ice tea, fruit juice, coffee*

In line with Pourhaji et. al, (2019), this question was also usually used to maximize students' participation during oral fluency work. Therefore, it required high teacher proficiency to make or organize the question and also high student proficiency to process the words in target language to elicit more participation and more meaningful learning. If learning was just transmitting the content and checking what was remembered or understood, the students would not learn to think by themselves and there would be a few of chances to develop the language (Hunkins, 1989; Llinares, Morton, and Whittaker, 2012; Caravaca, 2019). Then, yes/no questions showed the lowest number of the two previous types of questions. In line with this study, Farahian and Rezaee (2012) also found that yes/no questions were mainly used to get feedback and to make sure or confirm whether the students have understood or not to the lesson that had been taught like the excerpts below:

*T: Can you write it?*

*S: Yes I can miss.*

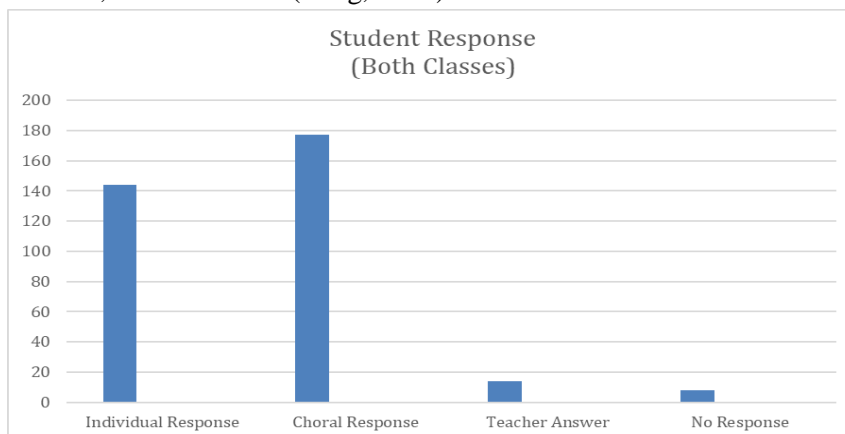
*T: Next, I will dictate to you and write it in your book. Are you ready?*

*S: Yes I'm ready*

Indeed, yes/no questions only require affirmative or negative answer or restricted answer (Wajnryb, 1992). Therefore, it is helpful for the beginners or who do not feel ready to talk to produce the language (Dalton-Puffer, 2007; Farahian and Rezaee, 2012). Although it is simple, it can involve the students to have an active participation in learning.

## **2. Student Responses**

These three types of questions were responded by various student responses such as choral (whole or group), individual, teacher answer, and no answer (Jiang, 2014). The chart below shows the detail:



**Fig 3. 2. Student Responses**

From the chart above, choral response became the highest response that was shown by the students with 178 data. Meanwhile, individual response became the second most frequent response after choral response. Then, the second one was individual response with 144 data. Insignificance difference between these two responses indicates that students involved as group or individually. Through choral response we can see the enthusiasm of the students all the time and showed that they were encouraged individually which was realized together into a group voice. It also showed that their thinking abilities are achieved equally when understanding the lesson. While individual response happened when one of the students answered faster than others because only he/she knew the answer or when the teacher mentioned their name which required them to answer individually:

*T: Ok finish. If you have finished, close your book. Who is ready?*

*S: I'm ready miss*

*T: How to say "menikmati makanan"?*

*S: Enjoy the meal*

*T: Ok, how to say "gurih"?*

*S: sour eh salty*

*T: Now, Afifa what do u do on a rainy day?*

*S: Play in the rain*

*T: Ok bermain hujan-hujan. Dhiara, what do u do on a rainy day?*

*S: Drinking a tea*

In addition, the students also said that they would answer the questions that they have known first as they stated below:

*SA: "I want to answer quickly because I know the answer and I am not afraid"*

*SC: "If I know the answer, I will answer firstly. If I don't know, I will wait my friend first to answer to check whether my answer is correct or not. Then, I try to answer too. I don't want to keep silent".*

But, it was contrary with Jiang's (2014) study where individual response became the most response (48%) than choral response (36%) because most of questions were answered by each student and the teacher called one of them when they were less responsive because the teacher wanted every student could be able to convey whatever in their mind. Meanwhile, in this study, the sum between choral and individual response were not significant. The teachers tried to deliver the questions equally, both to the whole class or individually. Then, the following responses indicated student's passive response that was teacher answer and no answer. When the teacher answers his/her own questions, it could restrict students to convey their opinion, either because they did not respond or teacher's excessive answer that can be seen from the excerpts below:

*S: My friend's house*

T: Using 's right?why?

S:....

T: because it's hers.

T: Using "to" or not guys?

S: No ms

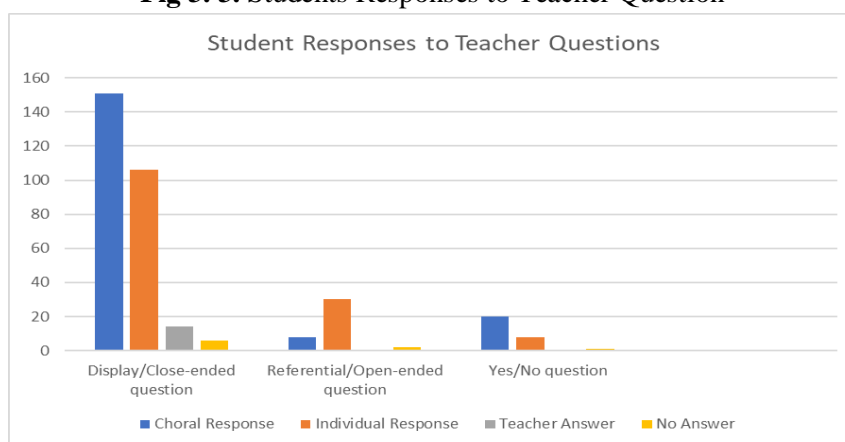
T: Why?because if there is verb ing like swimming,playing, going it's don't need "to"

The sum of these responses were also equally low, that was 14 data for teacher answer and 9 data from no answer. The difference was very significant from the two previous responses. In line with Jiang (2014) also showed the same results where the percentage of each teacher answer and no answer were 8%. The students made a silence due to limited knowledge and teacher's spontaneity in answering her own questions were the reason.

### 3. Teacher Questions that Can Encourage and Discourage Students to Speak.

From the types of these questions and responses could be drawn the relationship between them which one was more influential in encouraging the students to speak and not that can be seen from the chart below:

Fig 3. 3. Students Responses to Teacher Question



The result showed that display/close-ended questions could encourage the students to speak because it was responded to by them simultaneously (choral response) with 146 data. Indeed, this question was addressed to the whole or entire class (Farahian and Rezaee, 2012). This questions were also asked almost at every occasion in the class such as in the beginning, middle, and even in the end of the lesson. Furthermore, it was also suitable for speaking class to know whether they have understood or memorized the vocabs or not as said by the teachers below:

TA: "The most often questions that I asked is display/close-ended questions because this is speaking class and it was suitable to check their memories about vocabs that have been given."

TB: "The most often is display/close-ended questions because it is focus on the lesson that we taught that day. It is suitable to check their memorizing or understanding about it."

In addition, display/close-ended questions also encouraged the students as individuals with 101 data. The student who knew the answer or faster, answered the question first and those who did not know just became silent.

T: Ok finish. If you have finished, close your book. Who is ready?

S: I'm ready ms

T: How to say "menikmati makanan"?

S: Enjoy the meal

T: Ok, how to say "gurih"?

S: sour eh salty

They who answered it first or faster wanted to did it because of their own desired as they said below:

SA: "I want to answer quickly because I know the answer and I am not afraid."



SC: *"If I know the answer, I will answer firstly. If I don't know, I will wait my friend first to answer to check whether my answer is correct or not. Then, I try to answer too. I don't want to keep silent."*

Moreover, when the teacher mentioned their name, made the student has a responsibility to answer the question although he or she was nervous or afraid that can be seen from the excerpts and interview below:

T: *Ok good job mas sakif. Ok now "rumah temanku"?*

S: *My friend's house*

T: *How to write it mas alif? c'mon the others please hear it carefully*

S: *MYFRI...IN*

SA: *"I feel nervous and afraid if make mistakes."*

SB: *"I feel nervous and afraid if make mistakes."*

SC: *"I am happy and also afraid if I make mistakes."*

Although it did not generate higher level of thinking, it also could engage the students to have active participation as a group or individual, which showed that they have high enthusiasm for learning. Also, it is necessary to keep them focused or refocus their attention on the lesson. It also teaches them to have self-confidence and making mistakes is normal. Unfortunately, display/close-ended questions also discourage the students to speak because they were responded to by teacher answer (with 14 data) and no answer (with 6 data) from students. These two responses were related to each other because one of the reasons why the teacher answered his/her own question was there was no answer from the students. The excerpts below were shown as the example:

T: *Ok now, how to say "rasanya makanan itu gurih"? what's in English?*

S: ....

T: *"rasa" in English?*

T: *Anyone know how to say "pahit" in English?*

S: ....

T: *Bitter is pahit*

Even though the student were silent, the teachers keep trying to encourage them to answer by giving a clue. It can help the students to think or remember again about the vocabs that have been known or learned. So, it is an opportunity for the the teacher to train the students to have critical thinking. When the students took a long time to respond, the teacher answered her own questions to shorten the time. Or when the teacher unconsciously answered it by herself which caused the students have limited space to convey their thoughts, whereas the appropriate pause was 3-4 seconds (Tuan and Nhu, 2010; Farahian and Rezae, 2012). Then, the teacher realized and did not do it again because the students would quickly forget the lesson and become meaningless for the students (Jiang, 2014). Meanwhile, the main reason why the students gave no answer response or just kept silent was because mostly they did not know the answer and would keep silent that was in line with Farahian's and Rezae's (2012) study as they said below:

SA: *"I will keep silent because I am afraid."*

SB: *"I will keep silent."*

SC: *"I will say to my teacher that I have not know the answer."*

Their limited knowledge and the teacher did not force the students to answer were also the reason behind it (Jiang, 2014). Allowing them to find the answer by themselves could assist them to have self-learning and gain deeper understanding. By not providing the answer or information that they did not know immediately, probably could engage students' enthusiasm and increase their motivation to learn. If it was compared with other types of questions, they actually have their own reason such as being rarely asked or having their own purpose such as referential/open-ended questions. It was used to know someone's thoughts, feelings, or behavior that only known by themselves. So, the teacher often asked this question individually. And also the teachers only asked a few of these question types. Meanwhile, yes/no questions also have much fewer numbers than the two types of questions above, both in terms of the frequency of questions asked by

the teachers and also student response. They were used to confirm something or check student understanding with short and limited answers. The teachers only did it when it was necessary. This is why it could happen.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In summary, in this current study, the researcher examined the types of teacher questions and how students respond to them in basic speaking classes. The finding showed positive results, where display/close-ended questions became the questions that were most responded to by almost all students simultaneously. However, it also has a negative impact, as this question causes the students to have passive responses. It can be concluded that giving questions is essential and necessary to engage the students actively in language learning, especially foreign language, but should not be excessive. However, considering the learners are at a basic level, it is good enough to encourage them to speak. Hence, display/close-ended questions are suitable for beginners.

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