Classroom Questioning:Pre-Service EFL Teachers' Questioning and Modification Strategies

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Abstract
One of the most important keys to create an interactive language classroom is initiation of interaction by the teacher. In order to foster interaction in foreign language classrooms, "questioning" is known as one of the effective ways. However, asking lots of questions inforeign language classrooms does not guarantee stimulation of interaction for language teachers. Thus, the quality of the questioning strategies employed by foreign language teachers has of significance.The present study takes exploratory-descriptive inquiry into research issue under investigation and sets out to search teacher questions posed in EFL classrooms in Turkey. The participants of the study are 10 senior pre-service EFL teachers.The data is gathered by means ofobservation, field-notes and audio-recordings of classroom observations held in secondary school classrooms. The results reveal that Turkishpre-serviceEFL teachers mostly use display questions and use modification strategies like rephrasing, simplification, repetition, decomposition, and probing.However, they have challenges when sequencing questions. They tend to ask many things at a time or prefer very general questions. They fail when giving prompts, clues or examples andthey tend to reply to their own questions. The present studyoffers some implications for teacher education programs to increase the quality of pre-service teacher training.
Keywords: Questioning Strategies, QuestionTypes, Modification Strategies, Pre-Service EFL Teachers.

Introduction

As learners do not have many tools for initiating and maintaining language, teacherquestions provide the necessary starts for communication in foreign language classrooms. Thus, questioning is considered as one of the prominent ways of fostering interaction and it can fulfill a number of functions such as: to enable learners to be able to produce language comfortably without taking risksof initiating language by themselves; to develop interest and motivate students to become involved in lessons;to help to serve to initiate a chain reactionamong students; to reviewrecently learned issues, or remind earlier procedures;to provide teachers with immediate feedback on learners' comprehension;to help teachers maintain control over classroom discourse; to aid classroom management- settling out the class by directing attention to the teacher; to help weaker students to participate; to help elicit particular structures and vocabulary;to stimulate thinking and allow expression of feelings, views, and thoughts; and to enable learners discover their own opinions and reactions (Kyriacou, 1991; Brown, 1994; Astrid, 2019). In their review, Davoudi and Sadeghi (2015) mention that questioning also stimulates critical thinking skills of foreign language learners.

Questioning is important in the initial stage of a lesson as well as throughout the lesson. However, asking lots of questions in your language classrooms does not guarantee effective interaction. Thus, the quality of questioning strategies

employed by foreign language teachers has of significance with regard to good language teaching practices. The results of the research study by Harumi (2011) on classroom silence reinforce tertiary level foreign language learners' suggestion to reconsider the quality of teacher questions posed in foreign language lessons. Some effective tips for good questioning include the followings:to ask questions that are appropriate to students' cognitive level;to avoid asking too many display questions; to use questions throughout the class; to provide prompts and clues when needed; to provide positive feedback to students for their contributions; and to pay attention to wait-time (Kerry, 1982; Brown, 1994).

Questioning strategies of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers havealways been a popular research topic and many studies have focused on the questioning strategies of EFL teachers in classrooms. Regarding the question types preferred, research studies reveal predominance of factual questions (closed- lower order questions- display questions) as opposed to reasoning questions (open- higher-order questions- referential questions) in foreign language lessons, which contrasted with the use of questions in naturalistic settings (Long & Sato, 1983; Kyriacou, 1991; Shomoossi, 2004; David, 2007). The results are quite similar in recent studies. In their study in Indonesian EFL context, Astrid et. al, (2019) mention that yes/no, short- answer and open-ended questions are the most common types of questions used by teachers. Likewise, according to the data gathered from high school students, Hasanuddin and Ciptaringnum (2021) state the motivating function of leading, display and open-ended questions in their research. Milawati (2019, and Nashruddin and Ningtyas (2020) similarly emphasize the dominance of open and close-ended questions in their data.

Previous research also reveals that, relatively little communication is going on among teachers and students in EFL settings. That is, EFL learners tend to prefer keeping silentor giving typically short answers to teacher questions that in turn forces teachers to use some modification strategies. Modification strategies have been categorized by different researchers; however, the most popular of all is the taxonomy designed by Wu (1993). In the taxonomy,

Wu (1993) suggests five common modification strategies: rephrasing, simplification, repetition, decomposition, and probing. Furthermore, a number of research studies focus on the modification strategies used by foreign language teachers at various EFL settings at different levels. For instance, Yu (2010), analyses modification strategies used by tertiary level EFL learners and reports repetition, code-switching and pauses as common strategies used by teachers at tertiary settings. Hasanuddin and Ciptaningrum (2021) report probing as the most popular modification strategy employed by EFL teachers. However, little is known about the questioning and modification strategiesof pre-service EFL teachers. In a study in primary school context, Jusoh (2020) analyses the modification strategies of preservice EFL teachers and determines repetition and translation as the most common of all modification strategies. Triggering the above fact that there being limited studies on pre-service EFL teachers' questioning and modification strategies, this study aims at investigating the questioning strategies and modification techniques of Turkish pre-service EFL teachers.

In order to determine the questioning strategies and modification techniques of Turkish EFL teacher trainees, the following research questions are posed:
- What types of questions do Turkish pre-service EFL teachers use?
- Is there a preponderance of any particular type(s)?
- What modification techniques do Turkishpre-service EFL teachers employ when questions are not understood?

METHODOLOGY

Since the aim of this study is to identify the questioning strategies of pre-service EFL teachers, it takes exploratory -descriptive inquiry into the research issue under investigation.

PARTICIPANTS

The participants of the study are 10 Turkish pre-service EFL teachers attending ELT department of a university in Turkey. They are all senior teacher trainees in their 5th semester. 6 of these pre-service teachers are female, and four are male. The trainees are selected on the basis of their willingness to participate.

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

The data is gathered by means of classroom observations held in secondary school classrooms as part of their teaching practice applications.Field-notes andaudio-recordings of their teaching sessions are used as data sources of the present study. In theseteaching sessions, each pre-service teacher is to practice teaching within a communicative framework of language teaching, with an emphasis on four language skills, grammar and vocabulary. All the observations take place in secondary schoolsettings in Turkey.There are almost 30-35 students in each class. The students are 6th to 8th grade-learners who are at A1 /A2 levels of foreign language proficiency. The observations yield 6 lesson-hour of classroom teaching.

DATA ANALYSIS

The first step in data analysis is to transcribe the audio-recorded observations and then categorize the questions used by pre-service EFL teachers during their teaching practice sessions.

Questions have been categorized differently in the literature. Brown's classification is frequently used by other researchers and also selected for the present study. The data is analyzed using Brown's (1994:166) seven categories of questions: *knowledge questions, comprehension questions, application questions, inference questions, analysis questions, synthesis questions and evaluation questions*. The seven categories of questions range from display questions, that attempt to elicit information already known by the teacher, to highly referential questions that request information not known by the questioner.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Totally 163 questions are coded for the study. Lesson content and objectives of the lesson are considered as two important factors affecting the number of questions posed in a lesson. The distribution of the questions according to 10 pre-service EFL teachers is shown in Table 1 below:

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Table 1 Number and Percentage of Questions used by Each Pre-Service EFL Teacher

PRE-SERVICE EFL TEACHERS (PET)	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS	
	F	%
PET 1	8	5
PET 2	4	2
PET 3	19	12
PET 4	2	1
PET 5	6	4
PET 6	22	13
PET 7	44	27
PET 8	27	17
PET 9	14	9
PET 10	17	10
TOTAL	163	100

Secondly, the questions are categorized according to their types. It is found out that Turkish pre-service EFL teachers in this research study use two question types: display questions and a very limited number of referential questions as shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2 Types of questions used by pre-service EFL teachers

PRE-SERVICE EFL TEACHERS (PET)	DISPLAY QUESTIONS	REFERENTIAL QUESTIONS
PET 1	8	-
PET 2	4	-
PET 3	17	2
PET 4	2	-
PET 5	6	-
PET 6	12	10
PET 7	41	3
PET 8	26	1
PET 9	14	-
PET 10	17	-
TOTAL (N=163)	147	16

In the data the 90 % of the questions are coded as display questions- knowledge and comprehension questions and only 10 % of the questions are evaluated as referential questions. The resultsare also consistent with the results of previous research (Long & Sato, 1983; Kyriacou, 1991; Nematullah, 2004; David, 2007). The questions used by each pre-

service EFL teacher are analyzed using Wu (1993)'s classification of modification strategies: rephrasing, simplification, repetition, decomposition, and probing.The data reveals that Turkish preservice EFL teachers use all modification strategies. The extracts given below exemplify the preservice EFL teachers' use of modification strategies.

SIMPLIFYING AND REPETITION

When PET2 realizes from students' silence that the question is too difficult for students to respond to, he continues the conversation by first simplifying and then repeating the question once again. Then, the modification strategy works, and the student (S) is able to give the expected response as shown below:

PET2: What does his mother advise him to do?
  S: (silence)
PET2: His mother advises him something.
  It is written. Look at the paragraph. Because he is ill, too ill. What does his mother advise?
S6: You should take medicine.
PET2: Very well, thank you.

In another context, PET8 successfully uses the simplifying strategy and encourages the student to continue talking and give the appropriate response as seen below:

PET8: As we look at Turkish, we see there are words which come from other languages. Can you give examples?
  S: (silence)
PET: We know the word as a Turkish vocabulary, but the origin of the word is not Turkish.
  S: We use "exercise". I think it comes from English.

PROBING

Probing includes a teacher's asking more questions to students in order to let them continue interacting. PET3 below, show a caseof probing.

PET3: He is Mr. Green. As you see he has some problem. What is his problem?
  S1: Mr. Green loves she but she not love Mr. Green.

PET3: doesn't love. Why do you think so?
  S2: (silence)
PET3: Because she doesn't sit next to him. Is it because of love or something else?
  S3: Because his ill go to her and she will be ill too.
PET3: Yes, if he sits next to her husband, she will also get ill. So, she doesn't sit next to him. Ok. She loves her husband. Ok? What should Mr. Green do?
………

DECOMPOSITION

The results also indicate Turkish pre-service EFL teachers' tendency to ask many things at the same time. Since the students are unable to respond to all the questions all at once, pre-service EFL teachers continue by using decomposition strategy and formulate the questions in two or more parts as shown below:

PET8: Are you satisfied with Bursa? Do you like Bursa? What do you like about Bursa? What you don't like about Bursa?
  S: (silence)
PET8: First, let's start what you like about Bursa.

During observations, besides successful questioning, and modification strategies of pre-service EFL teachers, some ineffective questioning strategies are noticed. For instance, in the extract below, the class is practicing a song to promote listening comprehension skill. PET6 initiates the conversation by asking simple yes/no questions. After students' very short, one-word responses to teacher questions, the pre-service EFL teacher continues asking too many things at a time. As result of the pre-service EFL teacher's poor questioning skills and her failure to use appropriate modification strategies, the students keep silent and PET6 continues talking on his own:

PET6: First of all, Do you know anything about this song?
  S1: Yes.
PET6: Who is he?
  S2: Robin Williams
PET6: Do you like him?

S3: Yes
PET6: What about pop music? What about pop music culture of teenagers? What do you think about that?
　　S: (silence)
PET6: Do you like pop music?
　　S3: yes
PET6: Generally, teenagers like pop music. Why do you think so?
Do you have any idea?
　　S: (silence)
PET6: Maybe we can say that they are very popular. The singers, pop stars are very popular. Their life is always on TV, on magazines, on newspapers. So, we have lots of things about them. And I think teenagers are interested in trendy things. So, we love pop music. We love rhythm. …

In the following part of the lesson, the same pre-service teacher faces with another challenge of asking too many things at a time.

PET6: Now, I want you to work in pairs and express me: What is the problem of Robin Williams? Why do you think he wrote this song? What does for example… look at the first sentence "Come and hold my hand". Who is he talking with?
　　S: darling
PET6: Maybe his darling, his girlfriend, the woman in love. Why is he singing a song like this? Why is he talking with God? Why is he singing God? ….
The same problem is also observed in PET7's data.

PET7: How can we get these new words from TV? Especially in English? Do you know any words from English? Do you watch CNBC?
　　S: yes
PET7: you watch. Do you only read the sentences in Turkish? Do you listen what they say? Can you understand?
　　S: sometimes
Similar communication failuresare noticed in PET1 and PET3.Both PET 1 and PET3 ask too general questions and fail to continue interaction effectively:
PET1: What do you see in the picture?
　　S: Child

PET: There is a child.
　　S: Child's mum.
PET: Any idea? Very good.
　　S: (silence)

As seen in the extract below, PET3 starts the interaction with such a general question. By probing further questions and eliciting key words from students, the conversation somehow continues:

PET3: I have another man. He is Mr. Brown. What is he doing? What do you see?
　　S:
PET3: He is… He is lying on the beach.
　　S1: The sun …
PET3: Yes, the sun is shining.
　　S2: He is sunbathing.
PET3: Yes, he is sunbathing.
　　S3: Maybe he will go to on holiday.
PET3: Yes, he is on holiday.
　　S4: He is in the beach.
PET3: Yes, he is on the beach. He is sunbathing. A you see his eyes are closed. So, he is sleeping in sunshine. So, what do you think about his problem? For example, if he stays on the beach for a long time, what will happen?
　　S5: If he stays long time, he …
PET3: sunburn
　　S5: sunburn and ill
……..
Another example of an unsuccessful interaction among the pre-service teacher and the students is observed in the following case. The students are studying a reading passage from their book. The passage is about Tom. Tom is talking to his mother on the phone and telling her that he is unable to go to the basketball match as he is too ill. Because the PET1 has problems in sequencing questions in a logical way, the students face with difficulties to understand what the teacher is asking about:

PET1: What do you think he is talking to on the phone? He is on the phone.
　　S: His friend.
PET1: He is talking to his friend. Ok. Any idea? Any other idea? OK.
What is his mother doing? His mother?

S2: Who is he talking to on the phone (Asking his L1- Turkish)

T1: She says something.

S3: She is talking.

T1: She is talking to her child. OK.

The data also reveals that in some of the teacher-student interactions, unfortunately, pre-service EFL teachers fail to use the modification strategies appropriately. For instance, in the following two cases, PET2 rejects giving support to the students and responds the questions by herself as shown below:

PET2: When is the basketball match?

S: The basketball match ….

PET2: is that afternoon. Yes, very well. Thank you.

PET2: Where? Where will he go?

S: Where he will go?

PET2: He will go to school, or he can join his friends.

In another extract, probably because, PET8 is not sure about how to modify the question, he prefers continuing with another volunteer student:

PET8: Who is the article for? Yes, Deniz

S: I don't think so but I think it is different and may be it is not useful for our language.

PET8: Yes, OK. Any others?

S: It is for adults because it explains why do teenagers use them.

Similarly, in the following extract, PET 10 is doing a listening activity about "traffic accidents". However, PET 10 is rather impatient to give the correct response. Although the student is quite successful and provides a reasonable response, PET10 takes the student's turn and causes communication breakdown without successfully employing modification strategies.

PET10: Now let's look at the illustrations on page 140. Please quickly examine the illustrations. What about the first one? What are they doing in that picture?

S: There is two men talking on the phone. One of them says his name and I think he is asking "May I have your name?

PET10: He may be looking a table making a reservation at a restaurant.

A similar kind of a teacher behavior is observed in the following extract. PET3 presents a picture of a fat couple- Mr. and Mrs. London and asks students to find out their problem. Since he is focused too much on the correct response, he ignores students' all possible answers although they are quite reasonable. Finally, the teacher applies rephrasing strategy effectively, and students give the expected response.

PET3: Here Mr. and Mrs. London. Ok? They look very happy. As you see they are smiling. But they have a problem. What is their problem? What do you think?

S1: Their jobs are very hard. The fireman is in a he goes in night and Mrs. London is a nurse. She's job is very hard so she is go to night in a hospital.

PET3: You, you think that they have problem in their marriage. Ok. We don't know about their marriage when we look at. Look at the picture. Can we say? Can we say something about their marriage? We don't know about their marriage. So, just look at the picture and what is their problem? They may have some problems like you said. But in the picture we don't see. Ok. Concentrate on the picture. Ok? Yes, Ali?

S2: They are too fat.

PET3: Yes, that's their problem. As you see both Mr. London and Mrs. London are very fat. So, this is their biggest problem and they want to be thinner. OK? And, What advice do you give them? What should they do?

S3: diet

………..

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the present study is to determine the questioning strategies and modification techniques of Turkish pre-service EFL teachers. The results of the study indicate that Turkishpre-service EFL teachers mostly use display questions (knowledge and comprehension questions). The findings of the study are compatible with those revealed in some of the previous studies of Long and

Sato, 1983; Kyriacou, 1991; Shomoossi, 2004; David, 2007. Depending on the type of teachers' questions, students' responses vary from a word or a phrase to longer ones. The analysis of the data reveals that Turkish pre-service EFL teachers use modification strategies like rephrasing, simplification, repetition, decomposition and probing. However, they have challenges when asking effective questions. It is observed that they have difficulties in sequencing questions, and they tend to ask many things at a time or prefer very general questions. Other challenges include their failure to provide prompts and give cluesand examples when needed. The data also indicate cases where pre-service EFL teachers tend to reply their own questions without waiting answers from students or totally ignore students' responses by focusing only on their own correct response.

The study is important as it sheds light on a neglected area in teacher-education research and offers us insights about the questioning strategies of Turkish EFL pre-service teachers.The study has some implications for teacher educators, teacher education programs, and pre-service teachers themselves. Although the aspects of questioning strategies are included in the syllabi of English Language Teacher Education Programs in Turkey, the content of such courses should be reconsidered.A similar implication is suggested by Parashchuk(2017) to increase the quality of education provided at teacher training institutions in Ukraine. It is evident that it is not enough to simply equip pre-service EFL teachers with some theoretical information, but we should let them gain some practical insights through some other ways such as micro-teaching activities. As teacher educators, we may support our pre-service teachers during their lesson planning procedures and ask them to reflect about their own and their peers teaching during teaching practice experience through self- and peer-evaluation and teacher feedback.

It is probable that, since one's teaching is influenced from his/her learning experience as a learner, pre- service EFL teachers may tend to use questioning strategies that they have actually experienced and avoid others they are not familiar with at all. As a follow up study, we may ask pre-service EFL teachers to mention the questioning strategies that they are familiar and unfamiliar with to gain more information about this issue.

The present study also has some limitations. First of all, the participants of the study are limited to 10 Turkish pre-service EFL teachers. In order to get more generalizable results both the number of participants and the total hours of observations should be increased for further research studies.

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