
Echoic and Epistemic Questions by English Teachers in the Classroom

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Abstract

Question has been used as an instructional strategy and has been considered a great teaching tool. The use of questions by teachers in the teaching and learning process accounts for the majority of class time. Thus, this study was conducted in order to investigate type of questions that frequently happened in the classroom by the teachers based on Long and Sato theory. The three English teachers from MTsN 6 Agam were the participants in this research. In this descriptive qualitative study, the researcher conducted an observation for every English teacher. This research showed that comprehension checks (a sub-category of echoic question) were frequently occurred in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. These three English teachers often mentioned that comprehension check questions in order to know whether the students understand or not.

Keywords: Question, Echoic, Epistemic, English Teachers

Introduction

A strong teaching-learning process includes the students as active participants as well as the teachers as the primary sources of information. There will be a fantastic interaction between teachers and their pupils if there is student participation in the learning process in the classroom. Teachers must offer help, which might take the form of questions, in order to create an engaging and participatory learning environment.

One of the key instruments for facilitating the learning process has been deemed to be teacher questions. According to research, asking is only second to lectures in terms of popularity (Cotton, 1988; Gall, 1984) According to reports, the majority of the instructor discussion was spent in question-and-answer sessions (Cotton, 1988). Student attention can be captured and maintained by using teacher questions and answers to gauge comprehension and learning progress. Additionally, when teachers ask students questions, teacher monologues become two-way conversations. According to Long and Sato (1983), questions can encourage student participation and boost their acquisition of the target language.

Seeing the influence of teachers' question in the teaching and learning process, this study was conducted to investigate type of questions (echoic and epistemic questions) that frequently happened in the classroom by the teachers based on Long and Sato (1983) theories.

The use of questions as a teaching approach has been praised for its effectiveness. It was said that Plato and Socrates used questions to create new knowledge and understanding by challenging presumptions and exposing discrepancies (Bernadawski, 2006). There are various uses for teacher questions in the classroom. To capture students' interest, encourage verbal responses, and assess pupils' progress, teachers ask questions. As well as gathering information, assessing students' comprehension, and monitoring their behavior are teachers' questions (Nunan and Lamb, 1996).

Furthermore, Gall (1984) and Richards and Lockhart (1994) mentioned the use of questions:

- Checking students' understanding
- Determining the amount of students' learning

- Clarifying what a student has said
- Eliciting particular structures or vocabulary items
- Providing cues that could lead students to focus on particular content in the lesson
- Stimulating and maintaining students' interest
- Enhancing students' engagement and participation
- Encouraging students to think and promoting the development of thinking skills

According to the findings of a study on teacher questions, the bulk of class time is spent by teachers asking students questions as part of the teaching and learning process. Gall (1984), for example, came to the conclusion that question-and-answer sessions made up roughly 50% of class time, according to Vivekmetakorn and Tamma's (2015) study of some of the findings of many experts who studied instructor questions in education. According to Cotton (1988), who did a document analysis of American teachers' asking practices, teacher inquiries take up between 30 and 55 percent of the class period. According to Chaudron (1988), 20–40% of the class is made up of teacher-related inquiries. Chaudron (1988) mentioned that teacher questions make up about 20 – 40% of the class.

Echoic and epistemic questions were created in 1983 by Long and Sato. The framework separates inquiries into echoic and epistemic questions. Asking for a repetition of a statement or verification that the statement has been understood as intended are both examples of echoic enquiries. They are employed for understanding checks, confirmation checks, and clarification queries. Epistemic inquiries are inquiries that seek knowledge.

Each of them is illustrated below (Long & Sato, 1983):

1. Echoic
 - a. Comprehension checks (e.g., Alright?; OK?; Does anyone understand “polite”?)
 - b. Clarification requests (e.g., What do you mean?; I don't understand; What?)
 - c. Confirmation checks (e.g., Carefully? Did you just say “carefully”?)
2. Epistemic
 - a. Referential (e.g., Why didn't you do your homework?)
 - b. Display (e.g., What's the opposite of “up” in English?)
 - c. Expressive (e.g., It's interesting the different pronunciations we have now, but isn't it?)
 - d. Rhetorical: asked for effect only, no answer expected from listeners, answered by speaker (e.g., Why did I do that? Because I)

Methods

In this research, the researcher conducted qualitative research with the type of research was descriptive qualitative. Qualitative research defines as research to understand a certain condition based on the problem faced. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning of individuals or groups ascribed to a social or human problem. Data was collected in order to describe the questions type the teachers used in the classroom whether echoic or epistemic questions. The participants in this research were the English teachers in MTsN 6 Agam. The researcher conducted the research for three civil servant teachers. The selection of civil servant teachers as the participants of this research was because civil servant teachers had a longer teaching duration, they were expected to have more experience in teaching, and these teachers were also certified as competent teachers in teaching.

The researcher conducted observation that carried out three observations for three English teachers. During the observation process, the researcher saw how the teachers asked the type of questions to the students in the classroom. The researcher used the observation guide and record while observation time. In analyzing the data, researcher used three steps: data condensation, data display and drawing conclusion (Miles et al., 2014).

Results and Discussion

Echoic Questions

Based on Long & Sato (1983), echoic questions are questions that ask for the repetition of an utterance or confirmation that the utterance has been interpreted as intended. They are used for comprehension checks, confirmation checks, and requests for clarification. Based on the data that writer has gotten, it showed that teachers like to check the students' comprehension. There were 29 questions from the three teachers in order to check their students understand or not. The frequent questions were okay? Do you get it? Do you understand? Is that true? Is that correct? and also the teachers asked about the reason why the students choose the answer in doing multiple choice task, for instance, how do you know that? why you choose B?

The next subcategory from echoic questions that mostly occur in the classroom by those three teachers was confirmation. Teachers often confirmed some answers from their students. The teacher here ensured that the words spoken by the student were correct according to what he hears. There were 25 questions from those three teachers in order to check confirmation to their students, for instance, Do you say 'he'?, do you mean 'they'? what?. Sometimes, the teacher used "do you...?" in confirmation; however, they just mentioned the words based on the students' words but with question intonation such as hope? to the school? understanding? dictionary? and so on.

There were 9 questions from the teachers that indicate in clarification. The questions are formed what? sorry, what? what does it mean? Or what do you mean? In this case, the teachers try to clarify the students' responses towards the previous questions. Mostly, teachers asked about the students' intent in saying something. Based on the explanation above, it concluded that teachers use the three of subcategory from echoic questions, comprehension checks, confirmation checks and clarification checks.

Epistemic Questions

Epistemic questions are questions that aim to obtain information (Long & Sato, 1983). It is consisted of referential, display, expressive and rhetorical. Based on the data, no one teacher mentioned referential, expressive and rhetorical questions. They almost used display questions. A display question is a type of question that needs other party to demonstrate on a subject matter when questioner already knows the answers. The display questions that frequently occur in the classroom by those three teachers were based on the dialogues or passage given. For example, What is the expression of hope? When we use the expression of hope? What the purpose? How many people in the dialogue? Who are they? What are they talking about? What's Anwar respond? Where you spend your holiday? Where does the dialogue possibly take place? Who get the first rank? What does Dion hope to Udin?. Based on the observation, there were 26 display questions from the three teachers.

Based on the findings, it showed that comprehension check questions were frequently occurred in the classroom by the teachers. Some experts also discussed about investigating question types EFL teachers. There were research from Fakeye, (2007), Tan (2007), Yang (2010) and Xu (2011). The result of the study reported teachers' dominant use of display questions over comprehension check questions in Nigeria, America, Malaysia, and China.

Conclusion

Question has been used as an instructional strategy and has been considered a great teaching tool. Therefore, the use of questions by teachers in the teaching and learning process accounts for the majority of class time. In asking questions, Long & Sato (1983) divided into two types; echoic questions (comprehension, clarification and confirmation checks) and epistemic questions (referential, display, expressive and rhetorical). After conducting observation in the classroom at MTsN 6 Agam, it showed that comprehension checks were frequently occur in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. These three English teachers often mentioned question in order to know whether the students understand or not.

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