



Questioning Practices in Indonesian English Language Classrooms: An Analysis of Question Types and Student Engagement

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Abstract

This study examines the question types used by Indonesian English language teachers in high school classrooms and their impact on student engagement. The data were derived from two YouTube videos showcasing English language teaching in real classroom contexts. The questions posed by the teachers during the English language lessons were coded according to two criteria: convergent and divergent questions. Student engagement is measured by the number of responses to the teachers' questions. The results reveal that the predominant type of questions used by the teachers during the lessons were convergent questions, which seek specific information or recall from students, while divergent questions, which encourage open-ended and varied responses, were used much less frequently. Furthermore, student engagement remained limited across both question types, with only a few students participating in responding. These findings highlight the prevalence of a traditional instructional approach characterized by convergent questions. The article concludes with some suggestions for utilizing alternative instructional interventions that can promote more interactive questioning practices and potentially enhance student engagement during English language instruction.

Keywords: English language teaching in Indonesia, student engagement, questioning practices, question types

1. INTRODUCTION

English language teaching plays a crucial role in Indonesian educational contexts, where proficiency in English is considered a valuable skill for personal, academic, and professional development (Rasuki, 2021; Sukyadi, 2015). However, it is essential to critically examine the practices employed in Indonesian English language classrooms to ensure effective language learning outcomes. One key aspect that warrants investigation is the types of questions used by teachers during classroom instruction and their impact on student engagement. Understanding the predominant question types and their influence on student engagement can provide valuable insights for English language teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers to enhance effective English language teaching practices and promote interactive classroom instruction that potentially enhance students' proficiency in English (Mackey & Gass, 2015).

The notions of question types and student engagement may be defined in various ways. In this study, the term "question types" specifically refers to the questions posed by the teacher during the instructional process that either have specific correct answers or allow varied responses from students. In the literature, the former is usually referred to as "convergent questions," whereas the latter as "divergent questions" (Tofade et al., 2013, p. 2). On the other hand, student engagement is operationally defined as the number of responses given by students to the questions posed by the teachers. This definition is aligned with Lambert, Philp, and Nakamura (2017).

Although the use of convergent and divergent questions has received considerable attention in educational research (e.g., Voss et al., 2022; Wittmer & Honig, 1991), relatively little has been done to investigate their use in English language teaching contexts. To address this gap, the present study examines the use of these two question types by Indonesian English language teachers in high school classrooms and their potential impact on student engagement. By examining this issue, this study aims to uncover patterns and provide insights into the relative efficacy of current English language teaching practices in fostering student engagement. The findings of this research will potentially inform English language teachers and researchers alike about potential areas that require improvement, where necessary. To this end, the current study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the predominant question types used by Indonesian English language teachers when teaching English to high school students?
2. To what extent does each question type promote student engagement during classroom instruction?

2. METHOD

This study employed an observational method using two YouTube videos that showcased English language teaching by two Indonesian high school English language teachers in real classroom contexts. The videos are publicly available and can be accessed online through the following URLs: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8R_Mj0Ttn4 and <https://youtu.be/xwWLnAgIECw>. The selection of these two videos for this study was based on three reasons. Firstly, they are relevant to the research questions posed in the study. Secondly, they exemplify common practices of English language teaching in Indonesian high schools. Thirdly, they capture natural instructional contexts rather than scripted ones.

For the purpose of data analysis, the two videos were carefully watched. At the same time, the questions posed by the teacher and student responses that occurred during the instruction were identified and transcribed. Subsequently, the questions posed by the teachers were coded as either convergent or divergent questions based on their characteristics, i.e., whether the questions required specific correct answers or allowed varied responses from students.

To address the first research question regarding the predominant type of question used by Indonesian English language teachers, the number of each question type that occurred during the instruction was calculated. The cumulative frequency distribution of the question types was then analyzed to identify noteworthy variations in their occurrences throughout the classroom instruction.

Finally, to answer the second research question concerning the extent to which each type of question promotes student engagement, the student responses to convergent and divergent questions posed by the teachers were examined, and the depth of their responses was explored.

3. RESULTS

3.1 The Predominant Type of Questions Used by Indonesian English Language Teachers in Teaching English to High School Students

The findings of the data analysis revealed that the predominant type of questions used by the two Indonesian English language teachers was convergent questions. As previously defined, convergent questions seek specific information or recall from students and have specific correct answers. In contrast, divergent questions encourage open-ended and varied responses. Table 1 provides a summary of the results of the analysis.

Table 1: Cumulative Frequency of Question Types Used by Indonesian English Teachers during Classroom Instruction

Teacher	Video URLs	Question Types	Frequency	Cumulative frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
1	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8R_Mj0Ttn4	Convergent	12	12	50%	50%
		Divergent	2	14	8.33%	58.33%
2	https://youtu.be/xwWLnAgIECw	Convergent	7	21	29.17%	87.50%
		Divergent	3	24	12.50%	100%

As depicted in Table 1, convergent questions consistently appeared more frequently in both videos. That is, they constituted the predominant type of questions posed by the teachers during English language instruction in the classroom.

3.2 Student Engagement in Responses to the Question Types

In terms of student engagement, the study observed limited student responses regardless of the types of questions used by the teachers. That is, even though the teacher posed divergent questions that allowed varied responses from students, the number of student responses was often minimal, with only a few students participating in answering the questions. This is exemplified in Excerpt 1, taken from one of the videos available at the following URL: <https://youtu.be/xwWLnAgIECw>.

Excerpt 1.

Teacher: What is situation related to the picture number one? [The teacher showed a picture of a man and a woman shaking hands to the students.]

Student 1: Congratulations.

Student 2: Get to know.

Student 3: Apologize.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide insights into the practices of Indonesian English language teachers in high school classrooms regarding the use of question types to promote student engagement. The results indicate that convergent questions were the predominant type used by the observed teachers, while divergent questions were used much less frequently.

The prevalence of convergent questions aligns with a more traditional instructional approach, where the primary focus is on recalling information (Long, 2017). This finding suggests that there is an opportunity to create a more interactive classroom environment that fosters critical thinking and English language use by students during classroom instruction through the use of divergent questions.

It is important to note, however, that student responses remained limited regardless of the question types used by the teachers. As seen in Excerpt 1, for instance, even when divergent questions were posed by the teacher, only a few students participated, and their answers were very brief. This indicates that additional interventions may be necessary to encourage a greater number of students to actively contribute to classroom discussions.

To promote student engagement, teachers may consider incorporating alternative instructional strategies that can encourage collaboration and critical thinking. For example, in the case of teaching descriptive texts as shown in one of the videos, teachers may choose to implement input-based tasks that allow students to participate more actively during classroom instruction. Rasuki (2016) provides some practical examples of how this can be done. Indeed, research has shown that input-based tasks enable teachers to use questioning strategies that promote active student participation while still maintaining control over the instructional process (e.g., Erlam & Ellis, 2019; Shintani, 2012, 2016).

Similarly, in the case of teaching functional language as shown in the other video, the use of communicative tasks might prove to be fruitful in promoting student engagement and providing students with opportunities to practice using the target language in natural communicative contexts (Ellis et al., 2019; Lambert et al., 2017; Long, 2015).

5. CONCLUSION

This study sheds light on the predominant use of convergent questions and limited student engagement in Indonesian high school English language classrooms. The findings highlight the need for incorporating alternative instructional strategies that can enhance student engagement and promote interactive classroom instruction, ultimately leading to a deeper understanding of the lessons and improved English language proficiency.

By recognizing the prevalence of convergent questions and their impact on student engagement, teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers can work together to implement changes that foster a more interactive learning environment. Alternative instructional interventions, such as input-based tasks and communicative tasks, can encourage collaboration, critical thinking, and active student participation. These strategies provide opportunities for students to practice and apply the target language in meaningful ways, enhancing their language proficiency.

Finally, it is crucial for educators to continually reflect on their teaching practices and explore innovative approaches to promote student engagement and effective language learning outcomes. By doing so, English

language teachers in Indonesian classrooms can create a vibrant and stimulating learning environment that nurtures students' language skills and prepares them for personal, academic, and professional success.

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