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A Case Study of Grades 7 And 8 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers' Practices of Questioning

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Abstract

Purpose: This study examines the questioning strategies employed by EFL teachers in secondary education, tracing the historical roots of questioning as a pedagogical tool and assessing its impact on stimulating students' thinking skills. It specifically investigates how classroom questioning in a private school in Karachi aligns with teachers' stated perceptions versus their actual practices.

Methodology: Data were collected from two grade 7 and 8 EFL teachers through classroom observations, document analysis, and semi-structured interviews. The study focused on quantifying the types of questions asked, the repetition of questions, and the wait time provided to students during EFL lessons.

Findings: The findings reveal that 89% of the teachers' questions were centered on knowledge and comprehension, targeting lower-order thinking skills. Additionally, 31% of the questions were repeated throughout the lessons, and the wait time following questions was predominantly between 2 to 3 seconds. These results indicate a discrepancy between the teachers' perceptions of effective questioning and their actual classroom practices, highlighting the need for ongoing professional development.

Originality/value: This study contributes to the field by providing an in-depth analysis of EFL questioning techniques in a secondary educational context in Karachi. It underscores the necessity for teacher training programs that bridge the gap between a theoretical understanding of questioning and its practical application, ultimately aiming to enhance higher-order thinking in the classroom.

Keywords: EFL, questioning strategy, lower-order thinking, classroom observation, professional development.

1. Introduction

Questioning is an integral part of learning about teaching. Questioning is considered the most influential teaching skill (Wangru, 2018). It is one of the essential strategies of the teaching and learning process used to find information and drive quality instruction and critical thinking (Nappi, 2017). Questions are stimulants that activate students' cognitive skills and have functioned as a primary educational tool for centuries (Aydemir & Çiftçi, 2008). Socrates used a series of strategic questions that helped his student [Glaucon] to reflect and think critically (Tienken, Goldberg & DiRocco, 2010). A strong connection exists between asking good questions and effective teaching (Dös et al., 2016). Teachers still use questions to develop productive thinking skills (Tienken, Goldberg & DiRocco, 2009). In this regard, Kerry (2002) stated that, on average, teachers ask 43.6

questions per hour; in an average career, they are likely to ask about 2 million questions. Teachers' questions are based on low-level questions. It only recalls memory (Almeida, 2010).

Research on questioning in classroom teaching reveals that questioning is the strongest tool as it teaches students how to think (Arslan, 2006). Teachers' questions provide students with opportunities to think deeply and critically. In doing so, situations can infer meanings and develop the confidence to articulate their responses (Mitchell, Oslin & Griffin, 2006). Moreover, This, in turn, empowers students and makes them responsible for their learning process, and language classrooms reflect teachers' teaching and learning approaches (Anastasio & Ingram, 2018). Effective teachers ask frequent questions to provoke analysis, reflection, reasoning, and creativity (Tienken, Goldberg & Dirocco, 2010). Saeed et al. (2012) state that questions stimulate thinking rather than inviting prescribed answers. In this regard, the significance of questions in teaching is very important. Moreover, the research reveals that using low order thinking and recall questioning in the classroom encourages recitations and recall. Still, teachers use it anyway because it is viewed as a pedagogical tool to teach a largely textbook-based curriculum (Albergaria-Almeida, 2010). Research conducted in New Jersey shows that over 60,000 questions are being asked in a classroom every year; approximately 12,000 questions motivate students to engage in critical thinking (Nappi, 2017). The study indicates that teachers' questions are based on low-level questions. It only recalls memory (Albergaria-Almeida, 2010). Promoting higher-order questions in the classroom is difficult because it requires much effort, and our teachers are not fully equipped with all these skills. Due to this problem, students are more inclined towards rote memorization and exam-focused learning. According to Bloom's taxonomy, the questions are mostly based on knowledge and comprehension, which prevent students from thinking critically (Santoso, Yuanita & Erman, 2018). Bloom's taxonomy provides a framework to categorize students' learning objectives according to their cognitive levels, from lower to high-order skills. This framework suggests questioning as an assessment and a learning tool to examine and nurture students' levels of cognition – from lower to higher order (as cited in Nappi, 2017). Zhang (2018) conducted a study at Shanxi Normal University, Linfen, China, that effective questions are very important in the classroom context because the effectiveness of classroom teaching and learning mainly depends upon the question encouraging behavior, which supports students to think deeply and logically.

The significance of questioning as a teaching and learning tool inspired me to explore how teachers practice questioning in language classrooms. My reflection on the literature review invited me to ask questions such as: What kind of questions do teachers ask and why, in the context of language classrooms in Pakistan? How do the questions stimulate student learning in language classrooms? Since no research has explored this phenomenon earlier in my context, this study is significant to understanding the experience of teachers about questioning in classrooms. This study is significant as a researcher in discovering new knowledge, i.e., secondary teachers' practices in questioning in the Pakistani context. It would help me to select a topic for my future research. As a teacher, this study is beneficial because it will help me to enhance my knowledge regarding the existing practices of EFL teachers in the local context. It would help me to apply effective questioning practices in a classroom context. It is helpful for teacher education institutes because it would help them to know the existing questioning function in a classroom context. It would be a shift to emphasize effective questioning in their training program to promote effective teaching strategies (high-order questions) among pre-service and in-service teachers.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research questions, objectives, and scope

To explore my research questions, I selected a case study approach to understand practices of grades 7 and 8 secondary teachers (EFL) questioning in a private school. As per my observation and experience, teachers mainly ask lower-order questions. However, given my theoretical position earlier, questioning is a main strategy to develop students' thinking and decision-making skills. Therefore, I

aimed to examine the questioning practices of grades 7 and 8 EFL secondary teachers. The study draws the following main research question:

- What are English as Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers' practices regarding questioning in Grades 7 and 8 in a private school context?

The qualitative research methodology was chosen for the study because it could help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible (Merriam, 1998). According to Maxwell (1996), understanding events and actions helps a researcher gain deep knowledge of an educational process. Qualitative research methodology resides in the interpretive research paradigm, which emphasizes that experiences and practices are understood through the subjective meanings of the participants involved in it). Qualitative methods are used to get answers to questions about experience, meaning, and perspective (Hammarberg, Kirkman, & Lacey, 2016). Following the value of qualitative research as explained above, I used this methodology suitable to research because my study aimed to explore teachers' practices with regard to their questioning in language classrooms. It helps to get detailed perspectives on my study (Anderson, Klamon, Merideth, Witter, Molnar, & Rauch, 2006).

2.2. Case Study Design

In qualitative research, the case study design is opted for because it is used to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved (Merriam, 1998). Zainal (2007) states that it gives a holistic and in-depth explanation of the social and behavioral problems in question. He further explains that it helps researchers to examine data closely in a specific context. It is also helpful because it explains the complexities of real-life situations that cannot be achieved by experimental and/or survey research (Zainal, 2007). It is an approach that helps a researcher explore a phenomenon in the data that serves as a point of interest to the researcher (Zainal, 2007). Yin (2002) defines a case study as "a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between a phenomenon and context are not clear, and the researcher has little control over the phenomenon and context." In my case, the nature of questioning is a phenomenon. I explored the practices of Grades 7 and 8 secondary teachers questioning in a private school.

2.3.Research Site

The study was conducted in a private school in Karachi. This school falls under a middle-class school system due to its fee structure. This school was founded in 2001. It started as a Montessori School, later upgraded to Matric, and registered with the Sindh Education Directorate. Six hundred students and 25 male and female teachers are enrolled and/or affiliated with the school. Each class, from Montessori to Matric, includes 40 students on average. I chose this school for three reasons:

- ✓ Easy access to the school due to my former affiliation with the school
- ✓ Cost and time effectiveness since the school is in my locality
- ✓ Assumptions about teachers' using questioning to promote communication and thinking skills

Hence, as discussed in the next section, a purposive sampling strategy was adopted to select the school.

2.4.Entry Negotiation

The University for the researcher must get approval from the Ethical Review Committee (ERC) to collect data to enter the school. I contacted and obtained permission from the respective school after receiving approval from ERC to conduct the study to fulfill the study requirements. In this regard, research (Maxwell, 1996) stated that the researcher could not enter the research site without obtaining permission and willingness from the participants.

In this regard, permission was taken from the concerned authorities: The Principal and the teachers of Grades 7 and 8. The document consisted of an information sheet and the consent forms for the Principal and Grades 7 and 8 teachers.

The visit schedule was made and shared with the principal and the teachers to determine their availability and feasibility for the interview and class observations.

2.5.Sample and Sampling Procedure

I selected a private secondary school in Karachi. The school selection was based on easy access, willingness to participate in the study, and having teachers as per the criteria. I approached the principal because he is the head of the school and is responsible for academic and managerial matters. I requested the principal to help me identify the relevant teachers to help me in the study. I selected two EFL teachers from Grades 7 and 8. This selection was done through a purposive sampling strategy. It is a type of non-probability sampling. It is an intentional selection of informants based on their ability to elucidate a specific theme, concept, or phenomenon (Robinson, 2014). I gathered data by taking the interviews and conducting observations. (See Table: 1)

Table 1: Research Participants' Profile

S. NO	Name	Qualification	Grade	Gender	Teaching Experience
1	Teacher 1	B.A, B.Ed.	7	Male	8
2	Teacher 2	M.A. English	8	Male	20

The selection of teachers is based on the following criteria:

- Three years of teaching EFL in the school
- Willingness to participate in the research study
- Academic qualification of Master in English and/or professional qualification such as English as a major subject in his or her graduate program studies or in B.Ed.

2.6.Data Collection Methods

The case study research requires collection of multiple sources of evidence: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation and physical artefacts, in order to get an in-depth understanding of the central phenomena, in this case teachers' questioning, within the school context (Yan, 2020). The data for this study were collected through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations since my focus is to examine teachers' practices. Document analysis and data recording were my secondary sources to collect data.

2.6.1. Semi-structured interview

It is the most popular method of data collection in qualitative method (Jamshed, 2014). He further added that it allows a researcher to gather rich and intense data through open-ended questions and further probes and prompts (Jamshed, 2014). Participant will respond the question asked in the interview. It helps to know the responses and information of participants through interviews (Koshay, 2005). I took two face-to-face semi –structured interviews from each individual teacher. The first interview, at the beginning of this research, helped me to understand the teachers' practices about questioning. The second interview: towards the end of data collection period, helped me to gain further data and fill the data gaps, if requires. The observations also provided me further substance to be explored in the second interviews.

The school was selected for the purpose of this study. The school had no female language teacher; therefore, my research participants were two male teachers. I followed all the required ethical principles within the contextual realities.

The duration of each interview was between 30 to 40 minutes. I recorded interviews by using audio tape-recorder. It helped me to concentrate fully on interviewing participants as well to maintain the essence of data received. Interviews were conducted according to the following schedule: (See Table 2)

Table 2: Interview Schedule

Participants	Duration of Interview	Number of interviews
Grade 7 Teacher 1	30 to 40 minutes	2
Grade 8 Teacher 2	30 to 40 minutes	2

After the interviews, the data was transcribed. I listened to the recorded interviews repeatedly to ensure accurate transcription to make final draft of transcript. I sent the final draft of transcript to conform the responses from the participants.

2.6.2. Observations

According to Robson (1998), actions and behaviour of people is the central aspect of any inquiry, a natural and obvious technique to observe them, record it in some way and then describe, analyse and interpret what we have observed.

Darlington and Scott (2002) stated that observation is a very effective way of finding out what people do in a context. I used a tool to record the teachers' questions. The tool had four sections:

a) The nature of questions based on cognitive levels of Bloom's Taxonomy (1958): Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, synthesis, Evaluation and Creation;
b) Frequency of questions such as how many questions and when were they asked i.e. in the beginning of the lesson, middle of the lesson and/or towards the end of the lesson;
c) Teachers handling of responses e.g. wait time, encouragement, probe further, ignore, provide answer him/herself.
d) Purpose of the questions i.e. why did the teacher ask questions in classroom context.

In the study, I took three observations of each teacher. The duration of the observation was approximately 45 minutes each. The observation of schedule is followed (see Table 3)

Table 3: Classroom Observations

Participants	Duration of observation	Number of Observation
Grade 7 Teacher	45 Minutes	3
Grade 8 Teacher	45 Minutes	3

Though my focus of analysis was to examine the questions to assess and/or facilitate cognitive domains of students' learning, I gathered data on all kind of questions that the teachers asked (instrumental/managerial, prob/prompt) to understand the relevance of questioning in student learning.

After each observation, I also did post-observation discussions to understand the purpose of teacher questioning in the classrooms. The schedule of post-observation discussion was following (see Table 4) .

Table 4: Post-observation Discussion

Participants	Duration of discussion	Post observation discussion
Grade 7 Teacher 1	15 to 20 minutes	3
Grade 8 Teacher 2	15 to 20 minutes	3

In addition to keeping record of teachers' questions I also maintained descriptive notes to further understand the context in which the questions were asked and the purpose they served in teaching and learning process**.** According to Glesne (2006) field notes is very helpful to remember the details of teaching and learning mechanics in the classrooms.

2.6.3. Document analysis

Documents are considered as the artifacts of the school. Their analysis is a good way to endorsing observation and interview. According to Gilliam (2000), document analysis strengthens the validity and trustworthiness of the multiple sources of data gathered. I gathered sample of students' work (i.e. homework copies, classroom work, lesson plan, exams papers to gather further details on teachers' written questioning. The analysis of these documents helped me as a researcher to understand the kind of written questions that the teachers ask in classrooms to assess /facilitate the students' learning and their alignment with the expected learning outcomes.

Questioning referred to both verbal and written questions. Overall, the data collection methods to examine teachers' questioning (verbal and written) include classroom observations, the document analysis and interviews with teachers.

2.6.4. Data Analysis

I adopted Creswell's (2005) framework to analyse the data: organizing, sense making and reflecting, breaking into chunks and coding, categorizing codes in micro and macro themes and finally drawing conclusions. The transcribed data was coded and divided in different themes to avoid any confusion. I observed the class and took field notes.

2.6.5. Challenges

Given the time available for this study I could worked with two teachers of a private school. Also, I assumed teachers' understanding of questioning as a strategy to nurture students' thinking. The time allocated for the collection of data was limited to six to eight weeks only. It effected the richness of my data. The schedule of the teachers was very busy because it was the month after the end of the summer vacation. I had to changed my tentative schedule thrice. The findings of the data cannot be generalized because the data provide very little basis for scientific generalization (Yin, 1984). The case study is basically called as microscopic methodology due to limited sampling cases (Yin, 1993). In my case, I had selected one private school and only two participants to conduct the study.

2.6.6. Ethical Consideration

As Thomas (2011) said that it is very important to see that the participants understand what they are agreeing to, who else will get benefit, research methods, privacy and confidentiality. I used a pseudonym instead of real name throughout the study. Consent of the principal and the teachers were taken to handle the ethical issues. I did not disclose the name of the school and the participants. I also assured the participants that result of the study would not cause any harm to them. My study respected the copy right principles. Interviews were conducted within the school timings.

The data collected from the research participants was kept in confidential. The data was accessible only for me (researcher), my supervisor and AKU-ERC (if there is a need). I avoided harm by not disclosing the information which I obtained from the participants and of the participants during interviews. I collected data anonymously and identifiers were removed early while transcribing the data. The data will be disposed soon possibly after completion of my research project. The data stored safely in USB drive of high-quality product to ensure not to lose data from it. I kept back-ups of my master data files together with a separate personal location (cupboard, personal draws etc.) at home.

I ensured intellectual honesty in data collection and analysis. Deficit mode of analysis was avoided. I discussed and analysed the issues rather than making judgmental and evaluative comment on the teachers questioning practices

3. Findings

This section offers analysis of the data gathered from 8 weeks of the research in a private secondary school. The analysis of the data revealed three primary themes: teachers' perspectives on questioning, the nature and purposes of teachers' practices in classrooms, and the strategies employed by teachers in handling students' responses.

3.1.Teachers' Perspective about Questioning

Both the teachers viewed questioning as an ongoing tool of monitoring and diagnosing students' learning in the classrooms. They discussed various purposes of questioning strategy. One purpose of questioning for them was to understand and judge the students' existing learning outcomes, achieved or not achieved to get immediate feedback about their students' learning.

> Question is a tool to see where are the students in learning (Teacher 1/Entry-Int, 12/07/2019).
> The purpose of my questions is to see the knowledge level of students (Teacher 2/2nd-Int, 30/08/2019).
> Questioning is the feedback from learners' side (Teacher 2/1st-Int, 12/07/2019).

Both quotations indicate that monitoring of learning was an integral element of their teaching practice. Additionally, the teachers also use questioning to raise student's attentiveness and participation in the lessons.

> Questioning as tool to develop curiosity and engagement among the students (Teacher 1/First-Int, 12/07/2019).
> Questions help me to take the attention of the learners and to make them alert that questions will be asked (Teacher 1/First-Int, 12/07/2019).
> Questioning as a tool to stimulate learning amongst learners and to know what they learned. (Teacher 2/First-Int, 12/07/2019).

My findings also indicate that the teachers were aware of questioning as a formative assessment technique. They would ask questions to find out learning gaps and confusions, if students had during the lesson so they could address them accordingly.

> Questions are used to enhance the knowledge of the student, test them and to ensure that did they learn something in my class or is there any confusion (Teacher 2/First-Int, 12/07/2019).
> My purpose to ask questions is to diagnose the knowledge of the learner (Teacher 1/Second-Int, 30/08/2019).
> The purpose of questioning is to make them learn. The question is the best tool for me to know did they learn or not? (Teacher 2/First-Int, 12/07/2019).

The findings show that theoretically, the purpose of questioning of the teachers are multiple. However, it is important to notice that the teachers aim to assess learning in the form of knowledge received. None of them discussed questions as a means to provoke high order thinking, increase communication and collaboration in the classrooms (as discussed in Kauchak and Eggen, 1989). Although one teacher mentioned questioning as a way to make students attentive in the lesson but the purpose remained to get the students' attention instead of enhancing intellectual engagement.

The teachers were aware of necessity of English language for students' real life such as getting jobs, as well as pursing with higher education. There was no evidence if the teachers' view questioning as an interactive learning strategy to enable students to communicate and articulate their responses in detail.

Perhaps this is an issue of teachers limited understanding teaching English as a language. Both of they, as indicated they demographics, had academic and professional qualification but none of them explained and/or discussed questioning as a learning strategy. The teachers' practices discussed in the following section further reflect their limited perceptions of questioning.

3.2.Teachers' Questioning in Classrooms (Nature and Purposes)

The findings of my research indicate that the teachers mainly asked knowledge and understanding based questions (as per Bloom Taxonomy, 1951) which demand students' ability to

remember and explain the facts, events and information received from the teaches and or the textbook. The main function of the questions was limited to assess the recall of the existing knowledge and understanding of the topics taught.

My findings indicate that Teacher 1 asked on average 78 questions in three lessons observed; in which 89% = 70 questions assessed the students' knowledge and basic understanding of the topics taught. The remaining questions contained action verbs reflecting the skills of assessing application (as per Bloom Taxonomy) such as 'how the message given in the Neem tree is applicable to your life'. However, the students' same responses to such questions indicated that the teacher had already provided them with prescribed answers to such questions. Hence function of questions remained to assess recall and knowledge. On the other hand, Teacher 2 asked 69 questions during three lessons which I observed. Mainly all 69 questions assessed knowledge and understanding. It means that 100% questions were mainly based on the first two levels of cognitive domains. It is also important to indicate that the duration of each lesson was 45 minutes. Although number of questions asked by each teacher varied the kind of both teachers' questions were same. They only focused on knowledge, understanding and stimulate lower order thinking skill amongst learners.

It is also important to notice that understanding questions encouraged an element of remembering as well since the students would answer the questions in the form of repeating teacher notes received and/or were copied from textbook. For example, the kind of questions the teachers mainly asked are:

1. Who wrote the poem "Abou Ben Adhem"?
2. Who was Abou Ben Adhem?
3. What do you know about the Holy prophet (S.A.W)?
4. When did Shah marry? How did he treat his wife?

The evidence, in terms of students' responses, shows that the questions invited students to share knowledge received from textbook and/or the teachers' explanation provided. The answers required one- or two-words explanations and/or brief statements as given in the textbooks. My review of the documents such as tests and students' written note book also indicate that questions did not invite creative writing skills since the questions focus remained on checking the efficiency of students recall and remembrance of the topics given in the textbook.

It is evident that there was no opportunity provided to students to articulate their comprehension and ideas while responding to teachers' questions as the questions did not demand for them. Mainly the questions require prescribed answers. The questions were only based on the content of the chapter. It was not helping students to improve language skills. It appeared that the teacher mainly used the grammar translation method to teach the language as a subject which mainly emphasized transmission of knowledge and checking their knowledge of rules and mechanics of grammar and therefore the purpose and uses of questioning remained limited. The teachers were paying more attention on the content (text) rather than on language to communicate. It was noticed that the teachers were translating the text into Urdu to deliver only the text to the learner. They were not focusing on four skills of language i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking.

My theoretical stance (as discussed in Wangru, 2018; Nappi, 2017) indicated that questioning is considered as a key strategy to develop students' creativity, critical thinking and ability to express own ideas clearly and concisely. There was no evidence found in teachers' questioning that served any of the above-mentioned purposes. My analysis is that since the teachers had limited approach towards teaching, they were not able to use questioning as an effective learning tool. Perhaps the teachers were not able to design high order thinking questions. My analysis on reading (as discussed in Khan and Inamullah, 2011) investigated the level of questions of teachers using Bloom's Taxonomy in Pakistani

context. The findings of the study showed that most of the questions asked by teachers were knowledge and comprehension-based level. Teachers were designing knowledge-based questions because it is very easy to ask and take very little time to be prepared.

Moreover, the teachers' also lacked ability to ask clear and concise questions to invite discussion for example a teacher asked: 'Is there any actual voice of God? '(Teacher 1/Obs 1/ Q9-10/13 July 2019).

The teachers were asking vague questions perhaps they did not prepare the questions prior. Teachers questions were mainly revolved around the content of the poem due to the questioning; the teachers were only asking factual questions such as, what is the difference between Hear, Hare, Here and Hair? (Teacher 1/Obs 1/ Q9-10/13 July 2019).

The evidence suggests that out of 90 questions 25 questions were asked repetitively by the teacher 1. On average approximately 8 questions were asked repetitively. It means that 28% questions were asked repetitively. Followings are the repeated questions:

1. What is the difference between voice and sound? (Teacher 1/Obs 1/Q5-6, 13/07/2019)
2. What do you think about the shade of the tree? What is the theme? (Teacher 1/Obs 1/Q35-36, 13/07/2019)
3. What is the meaning of LITTLE? (Teacher 1/Obs 2/Q2-3, 18/07/2019)
4. What is the meaning of MIGHTY? (Teacher 1/Obs 2/Q10-11, 18/07/2019)

On the other hand, amongst 69 questions 25 questions were asked repetitively by the teacher 2. On average approximately 8 questions were asked repetitively. It means that 36% questions were asked repetitively.

1. Have you ever seen the tree of Neem? (Teacher 2/Obs 1/Q1-2, 13/07/2019)
2. What do you think about the shade of the tree? (Teacher 2/Obs 1/Q5-6, 13/07/2019)
3. Have you ever seen daffodils? (Teacher 2/Obs 2/Q1-2, 18/07/2019)
4. What is the message of the poem? (Teacher 2/Obs 2/Q17-18, 18/07/2019)

The data shows that the repeated questions of the teachers were not helping students to engage students in learning because these teachers' questions were just consuming the time. The questions were very simple and they are not required to repeat because the questions were cleared when it was asked in first attempt. Few students were raising their hands immediately but instead of taking the responses immediately, the teachers were busy to repeat the questions. In this regard, my analysis of a reading (as indicated in Wangru, 2016) says that there are many purposes to repeat the questions for instance, make sure that all the learners are listening, checking the understanding of learner regarding the questions, encouraging learner to respond, mobilizing the students and giving students more space to think.

There was no evidence found of repeated questions that mobilize the learners because the repeated questions were creating the environment of passive learning.

The encouragement of the learners by repeating questions were missing throughout the data because the repeated questions were making most of the learners exhausted.

The data analysis shows that the repeated questions were not giving more space to think because majority of the questions were lower order questions. The responses were based on facts and figures and given material (textbook).

The data showed that the questions that were questions asked repetitively were also brought paraphrasing:

What is the message of Neem tree? What is the central idea presented in Neem tree? What did you get from this poem?

The teachers said that the purpose of these questions was to simplify the questions to help them in giving responses but it was noticed that these questions did not serve the purpose because limited students responding who were sitting in the front two rows.

The data also showed that there were questions which did not serve or contribute to student learning directly but to ensure students' immediate feedback on auditability of the teachers' lectures and/or students gaining the teachers' input. For example, the following questions were the regular feature of teachers' questions:

'Are you listening to me? Am I audible to everyone? Are you getting me? Is it clear? Did you get the point'? (Teacher 1 /Field Notes/July 2019)

My analysis is that these instrumental questions did not serve any real learning purpose or help the teachers to get real responses since most of the students remained silent in their responses.

The data shows that due to lower order questions, the students were not taking time to think because most of the questions addressed to recall the knowledge and understanding. Most of the questions only provoked the knowledge that is already known by the learner.

It is noticed that the lesson planning of the teachers was not effective because the engagement of the learners was in the least and the level of most of the teachers, questions were low. The data shows that function of the questioning is to provoke mental activity and to prompt high cognitive level, but it was missing in teachers' questions during the classroom observations. The questions were not provoking the thoughts of the students throughout the classes.

My analysis of reading (as indicated in Kauchak and Eggen, 1989) shows that there are many purposes to ask questions, but the fundamental purpose to ask questions is to provoke thinking and mental activity and to prompt high level of cognitive process. The findings show that the teachers ask 159 questions in total. There were 146 questions that were lower order questions. It means that 92% questions were based on lower order questions because they stimulate lower order thinking skills. Most of the questions were based on lower order rather than thought provoking. It is observed that the purpose of the questioning was only to get response rather than to stimulate thought process of learners. The productive interaction between teachers and students was missing throughout the data because the functions of the questions was limited to checking and assessing.

My review of the documents such as test papers and students' written note book also indicate that the purpose questions were limited to assessing, checking, testing and recall the information:

What did the government of Pakistan construct there? (Grade 7/ Exam/ Eng/Question Paper/2019) When and where did she get the education of dentistry? (Grade 7/ Exam/ Eng/Question Paper/2019) What were the three principles on which the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) founded an Islamic society? (Grade 8/ Exam/ Eng/Question Paper/2019) What is meant by Hijra? (Grade 8/ Exam/ Eng/Question Paper/2019)

The findings show that the questions did not fulfil the function of linguistic competence and improvement in imagination because the purpose of teachers' questions was focused on the repeating

content of the topic and /or the answers prescribed by the teachers. The teachers were taking English as a subject rather than a language. The teachers were using lecture-based or didactic strategy: questions based on the learning of content, and fact-based questioning approach: based on factual questions, throughout their teaching in the classroom. It is also observed that thinking-based questioning approach or dialogical approach: based on interaction between teacher and student and provoke thinking, was not used at all in teacher questioning. The data shows that productive and healthy classroom discussion was not observed throughout classroom observations. The teacher questions are followings:

1. What is the meaning of DEEDS? (Teacher 1/Obs 2/Q13, 13/07/2019)
2. What is the form of CLIMB? (Teacher 1/Obs 1/Q22, 13/07/2019)
3. What is the meaning of STEEPLE? (Teacher 1/Obs 1/Q24, 13/07/2019)

The purpose of the teacher is to ask the questions is to check the language vocabulary of the students (Teacher 1/second-Int, 30/08/2019). The evidence shows that the teachers were teaching the language in isolation. The questions did not help learners to improve their listening, writing, reading and speaking throughout the classroom observations.

My analysis on readings shows that teacher's question could play central role in the learning of language (Richard and Lockhart, 1994) and it supports learners to enhance language competence, imagination and to discover new knowledge (Wangru, 2016), if they are used effectively. Distinguishing quality of questions through Bloom taxonomy framework is helpful but its essence could be understood how do teachers use them. Though the teachers asked some questions which could be categorized as higher order thinking questions theoretically but they did not provoke any high order thinking as the focus of teaching and assessment remain on recall of textbook and/or the teachers' given knowledge.

3.3.How Teacher Asked Questions

The evidence shows that the teachers were polite while asking questions and the teachers were audible throughout during teaching in classroom. The audibility and politeness of the teachers created positive effect amongst the students. It was noticed that the students were paying more attention when they found clarity in teachers' questions during teaching in classrooms.

The teachers were asking students most of the questions randomly. The data shows that the teacher 1 asked 40 questions selectively and 50 questions were asked randomly out of 90 questions. On other hand, teacher 2 asked 29 questions selectively and 40 questions were asked randomly out of 69 questions. It was observed that students were showing interest by participation when the teachers asked the questions randomly. The students were much more attentive when the questions were asked randomly as compared to the questions that were asked selectively.

The findings show that the wait time I allotted by the teachers were limited because most of the teachers' questions were limited to lower order questions. Since the questions were mainly factual, the teachers expected immediate answers from their students; there was not any understanding of wait time. The wait time I given by the teachers are followings:

Table 5.
Teachers Summary of Wait Time I

Wait Time (I) Duration	**Number of Questions**
1 second	3
2 seconds	81

3 seconds	75

Based on above data, the wait time given in most of the questions were between 2 to 3 seconds. Higher order questions were missing throughout the classroom observations because the questions allowed students to respond answer in two to three words answers only. The teachers were not aware of the usage of the wait time. They did not know the significance and purpose of the wait time in asking questions in classroom context. The teachers were getting confused when they were asked of wait-time. The teachers' responses are following:

> Well, wait time means to wait for the response of the student (Teacher 1/Second-Int, 30/08/2019).
>
> I think wait time means to give some gap between the teachers' questions and students response (Teacher 1/Second-Int, 30/08/2019).

The findings show that the teachers were only defining wait time literally. They did not say a single word on the purpose and usage of wait time with reference to questioning in classroom context. It means that they were unaware of the usage and importance wait time in asking questions. On the other hand, the research (as indicated in Willen, 1991) explained that the teacher should allow 3 to 5 seconds for wait time I. In order to ask high order questions and at least 3 seconds wait time I should be allotted and it is also stated that for lower order question at least 3 seconds time should be given and for higher order questions at least 5 seconds or more and for complex questions 1-2 minutes wait time I is required before asking for an answer (Nicholl & Tracey, 2006).

The evidence shows that wait time II was missing throughout the classroom observations of the teachers. It was noticed that the teachers were just asking questions to take the response only. They both were most of the time in hurry to take student responses because the questions were closed ended. The questions (Lower Order Questions) do not require more wait time to be given because the questions are required to recall memory and fact. My analysis on the reading (as indicated in Almeida, 2009) also defines wait time I and II that the amount of time given by a teacher to student for reflection after asking a question and before a student responds (wait-time I) and to the pause after a respondent offers a response (wait-time II). The findings show that after taking response, the teachers repeated the response of the student in their own words rather than probing and throwing the response to other students. It was noticed that the teachers used to edit the response of the learner to make the response better.

The findings show that the teachers used to provide answers themselves rather prompting and probing. The teachers were in hurry to get student responses. The students were become passive learners when the answers were given by the teacher. The provision of answers was making students discouraged and demotivated.

The evidence shows that overall, in 53% questions, the answers were provided by the teachers themselves directly. More than half of the classroom teaching was covered by teachers themselves by providing the answers directly. It is observed that when the teachers provided the answers themselves, the level of participation became very low. The students were sitting in the class as passive listeners because their responses were captured by the teachers.

It was also noticed that there was an anxiety when the students were responding the questions because the students were feeling shy and uncomfortable while giving the responses in English language. Most of the students were avoiding their eye contact and laughing nervously. The students were habitual to use Urdu as a medium of instruction and the students were conscious towards the grammar of the language while speaking rather than to communicate. The medium of the instructions in the class was bilingual. As the students were habitual to grammar translation method when the

teachers were using English language to ask questions the students were getting perplexed and the students were taking time to translate the questions in Urdu. The students were also asking questions about the asked questions:

Repeat the questions. What is the meaning of [GET] in the question? What is the English word for [Mutasir Hona]?

3.4.Teachers' Handling Students Responses.

Encouragement. The findings of the data show that teachers were encouraging only to take responses consists on teachers' lower order questions. The evidence shows that both the teachers encouraged students' responses by using positive words and attitude i.e. good, well done, excellent, appreciation even the responses was incorrect, Overall, both the teachers encouraged 44% of the students' responses. It was noticed that the teachers' encouragement did not stimulate their thinking and to ask higher order questions. The encouragement was only limited to taking responses because most of the questions consists of closed ended questions (two- or three-words answers). The closed ended responses did not invite students to think critically and deeply.

The findings show that when the teacher encouraged the students by using positive words and attitude i.e. good, well done, excellent, appreciation even the responses were incorrect, they used to participate more in classroom discussion and trying to give their output. They were eagerly waiting for the turn to give the response of the questions. Throughout observations, the encouragement of the teachers was creating positive environment in the classrooms in terms of giving responses. It is observed when the students were encouraged, they got confident and remained active throughout the class. In this regard, my analysis of reading (James and Baldwin, 1997) indicates that the purpose of encouragement is to give thinking time and also at the same moment without turning the pause to embarrassment and a tension build up and handling of students' responses are significant because students' thinking and learning is not only based on teacher questioning, but also the way teacher handle students' responses (Kira, Komba, Kafanabo, Tilya, 2013, p.74)

The evidence shows that when the teachers were encouraging the students, there was a smile on their faces. The learners were feeling comfortable to participate in classroom discussion and trying to give their input. However, the participation of the students was minimal because the ratio of encouragement was minimal. The classroom environment could be better if the participation were increased. In this regard, research says (as discussed in Sachdeva, 1996) that classroom student participation improves learning environment

3.4.1. Probing

The findings say that probing was used at minimal during classroom observation. Due to the lack of probing questions, healthy classroom discussion was missing totally. The students were mainly invited to lower order questions. The questions were not stimulating their thinking level because most of the questions were based on knowledge and understanding level. It was observed that students were not rethinking on the given responses because there was no evidence of using no probing at all except in three questions. The students were not able to extend their comments and responses. The classroom discussion was in the minimal due to the lack of probing questions. In this regard, the data says that teacher 1 used probing in students' responses in 3 questions out of 90 questions. For example:

T: Have you seen the daffodils? S1: Yes, in the pictures S2: No

Without using and analysing the given responses the teacher moved to another question. It seems that the teacher asked question without any explicit purpose. Perhaps the teacher did not know what role do the probing question play and how to address the students' responses which are not textual/knowledge based.

On the other hand, teacher 2 did not use probing at all throughout 69 questions. It means that overall, in 1.8% questions probing was used. The students higher thinking skills were not stimulated in classroom discussion. The research indicates that probing allows learners to clarify and elaborate their response and helps them to stimulate higher order thinking skills (Nicholl and Tracey, 2006).

3.4.2. Ignored responses

The data shows that the teachers were paying attention to the responses of the students. The responses were prescribed and only the students who were sitting in the front rows they were giving most of the responses. Most of the time, the teachers were paying attention to those students who were sitting in the front rows.

The data shows that teacher 1 ignored students' responses by not responding the student's responses, in 1 question out of 90 questions. On the other hand, teacher 2 did not ignore at all throughout classroom observations. The ignorance of responses was in the least. Due to this, the students were trying to give responses. They were feeling confident in giving responses because they were not ignored at all. It is observed that when the student response was ignored, the student did not participate in giving response further throughout the class.

3.4.3. Prompting

The data shows that the prompting is not practiced during classroom observation. When the students were not giving the response, the teachers were giving answers themselves rather than prompting and probing. Due to the lack of prompting and probing strategy, the students' discussion was at the least and they were relying on the provided answers of the teachers rather than giving their input. In this regard, my analysis on reading says that prompting is used when learners cannot response correctly or do not give response, the teacher helps them by going two to three steps back (Kerry, 1982, p.13).

In 1st interviews, they were both supporting the idea of using prompting and they agreed that they give clues or hints if the response was not given correctly. The followings are the responses of the teachers:

> Well, I give them more time to think and give them clues to come to the point of discussion and make them engaged (Teacher 1/First-Int, 12/07/2019).
>
> I smile and try to engage motivate them, and try to give them some clue to start discussion (Teacher 2/First-Int, 12/07/2019).

The evidence shows that there was a contradiction in the data taken from 1st interviews and the classroom observations. In the 1st interview, the teachers accepted that they practice giving clues and prompting, but it was not practiced by teachers throughout the classroom. Instead of prompting and probing, the teachers were giving or providing the answers themselves. Due to the reason, deep discussion, healthy talk and productive student-teacher interaction was not observed. The focus of the students was revolving around the learning or memorization of the content only because the teachers were just transmitting the knowledge by providing answers.

4. Discussion

In this section, we will analyse and compare the most significant data in response to the research question: What are English as Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers' practices regarding questioning at Grades 7 and 8 in a private school context? Firstly, This section will offers the discussion of the study on the practices of EFL Teachers' regarding questioning at grades 7 and 8 classroom context in a

secondary school of Karachi and then presents the recommendations for schools on the basis of findings of the study, future research planning and conclusion.

The findings of the study showed that the teachers were aware of the importance of teaching language. They were taking English as an international, a global and an official language in Pakistani context. In this regard, research says that English is considered as one of the official languages. Literature also says that it is also an essential requirement for getting any kind of professional job in the context of Pakistan (Rahman, 2005). They were also aware that English language is considered as a Lingua Franca of the age. It was noticed that teachers were aware of the fact that teaching language is a challenging job because they know that the students are coming from different backgrounds and ethnicities.

The teachers were also completely aware of the method of their teaching that they use in classroom context. They used Grammar Translation Method and Direct Method to teach English in language classrooms. The data revealed that the teachers considered questioning as an important tool and integral part of teaching learning process. My analysis on reading says that questioning is considered as the most influential teaching skill (Wangru, 2018). It is an important technique of the teaching and learning process that is used to find out the information, drives quality instructions and critical thinking (Nappi, 2017). The teachers were taking questioning as strategy to ask questions in the classroom. It was noticed that the teachers of ABC school are aware of the importance of questioning in classroom context also they were aware of encouraging to ask strong and effective questions in the classroom. Research indicated that effective teachers asked frequent questions to provoke analysis, reflection, reasoning and creativity (Tienken, Stephanie & Dirocco, 2012). The findings revealed that the teachers were aware of the multiple purpose of the questions in language classrooms. They knew that questioning helps to assess learners, to stimulate the curiosity, create engaging environment. They were also aware of the fact that the learning would be at zero if there were no questions. In this regard, research (as discussed in Wangru, 2016) endorsed the perception of the teachers that there is a vital function of questions in developing language skills that questions serve vital role in classroom and performs various function in EFL classrooms and it works as an input in EFL classes to get comprehensible target language for pupils

The evidence also showed that teachers were aware of multiple strategies of teaching that are used in the classroom: jigsaw reading, group, individual presentation and asking questions. Based on above findings, I would say that the teachers were aware of the importance and significance of English language and asking questioning. The teachers were aware of their teaching method and their teaching strategies in classroom context. It was noticed that in spite of all awareness and knowledge, the classroom practices were different from their perception. The teachers were aware of all the vocabulary relating to teaching and learning process, but they were not trained enough to apply their knowledge and perception into practice. They do not know the philosophy behind teaching and learning.

The findings of the study indicated that the teachers mainly asked lower order questions. These questions were knowledge and understanding based questions (Bloom et.al., 1956) which demanded students' ability to remember and explain the facts, events and information received from the teaches and or the textbook. The teachers' questions did not provoke students thought because the questions responses were based on two to three words questions. Due to the reason, teachers' questions were not engaging students during classroom observations because most of the questions were fact-based rather than thought provoking questions. The data showed that the teachers questions serve mainly limited purpose to check the knowledge. These questions were only stimulated lower order questions because the questions were used to test, memorize and recall the information. There was no evidence to understand how did the teacher use questioning to support or stimulate thinking but the function of the

questions they were asking in class were limited because it was focused to test, check, assess and recall the existing knowledge of the learner.

The findings revealed that the teachers were not using probing and prompting at all in teaching learning process. Due to the reason, the healthy and productive discussion was not found throughout the observations. Their questions did not enhance language skills of learners because the questions were asked isolation which did not the promote speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. The teachers were taking English as a subject rather than as a subject. The focus of the teachers was only the content of the lesson. On the other hand, my analysis of reading indicated that teacher's question plays central role in the learning of language (Richard & Lockhart, 1994) and it supports learners to enhance language competence, imagination and to discover new knowledge (Wangru, 2016). The evidence showed that the teachers were allocated mainly 2 to 3 seconds wait time. The teachers' questions were lower order question because majority of the questions were based on knowledge and understanding level. It was noticed that the teachers were not aware of the usage of the wait time. They did not know the significance and purpose of the wait time in asking questions in classroom context. The findings also showed that majority of the teachers' questions were only answered by the teachers themselves. Due to the reason, the students' thinking was not stimulated and they were not able put their contribution to engage in healthy and productive discussion.

5. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations have been formulated to enhance educational practices within the school environment, improve teacher preparation, and inform national curriculum policy. These recommendations underscore the critical role of continuous professional development (PD) in driving changes in classroom practices, attitudes, and student learning outcomes, as well as the necessity of strengthening the support provided by school management. In addition, the study highlights the importance of revisiting teacher education in English as a Foreign Language to emphasize the development of higher-order questioning techniques, and calls for policy makers to reconsider the curricular framing of English

5.1.For the school

The first thing I would recommend based on the findings that the teachers need continuous professional development to improve the practices of the school because PD supports three major goals. Firstly, it consists of change in classroom practice. Secondly, it is the change of attitudes and beliefs and lastly, its emphasis on the learning outcomes of students (Guskey, 2002). In this regard, PD is highly recommended for the school to make change. It helps teachers to improve their strategies to address the diverse needs of students also improve the practices of classrooms (Khan, 2018). They also need professional development on the teaching of literature. It will help them to improve their perception and practices towards teaching literature at secondary level. The second thing I would recommend based on my observations that the role of school management: especially, the Principal and Academic coordinator is very important in the upliftment of the teachers. It was noticed that the management of the school was very positive and enlightened towards the academic and professional development of their teachers. They were facing problems in the implementation of their perception due to the lack of relevant resources. PD is an important source and will help them and support the school management both academically and professionally.

5.2.For teacher education institute

Teacher education in EFL must emphasis on developing teacher's skills to ask HOT questions and their uses to promote thinking and communication.

5.3.For policy makers

The SLOs in national curriculum must emphasis/reflect on English as a language instead of a subject.

During my research, I found that there is a need of more research on this topic according to the need of the context because there is less research undertaken in Pakistani context. I intent to conduct a study on the similar topic to understand the practices of the teachers on questioning in quantitative paradigm. I also intent to conduct an action research on the topic that how does higher order questions stimulate critical thinking amongst students of the secondary class and amongst the students of higher education.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to explore practices of grades 7 and 8 EFL teachers questioning in a private school, Karachi. The study also helped to explore the practices and challenges regarding questioning faced by the teachers while teaching EFL at a private school in Karachi. The findings of the study showed that what was the perspective and practices of EFL teachers regarding questioning. It helped to explore what kind of questions were being asked and how these questions were being asked at grades 7 and 8 classrooms. Majority of the questions demand the students' ability to recall and recollect the information provided by the teachers and/or textbooks. There was evidence that the teachers provided the students with reasonable time to think and answer; however, the questions did not demand critical and/or higher order thinking. The perception of the teachers was very positive towards the strategy of questioning, but their perceptions did not reflect in their practices. It is interesting to observe that since teachers had conventional understanding of teaching, they could not use the questioning strategy to promote thinking. Neither they perceive questioning as a means to identify students' level of difficulties and helping them to address them constructively. The teachers need a lot of training and continuous professional development regarding teaching EFL at secondary level because they have good and relevant vocabulary to define the things but they are facing challenges to implement their perception in to practice. They need proper guidance and assistance in the practice side. In this regard, the role of Principals and academic coordinator are very important in helping teachers to uplift their professional and academic capacity. The management of the school also need training in the upliftment of their teachers regarding the philosophy behind teaching and learning process.

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