

# Research on the Effectiveness of English Teachers' Classroom Questioning in Secondary School

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## Abstract

Classroom questioning is an important tool for developing students' communicative competence. How to ask questions effectively is the key point for teachers to improve classroom teaching efficiency and carry out effective teaching. In order to address the current situation, the author takes a 12th junior high school English classroom observation and training class as an example and uses classroom video observation to focus on the effectiveness of teachers' questions. The research found that the junior high school English listening and speaking class had the problems of single questioning subject and shallow reference questions. This paper proposes the following improvement strategies: firstly, give full play to students' subjectivity and encourage them to ask questions independently; secondly, clarify the purpose of questions, design questions carefully, and pay attention to the hierarchy and progressiveness of questions.

## Keywords

English Teaching in Secondary School; Classroom Questioning; Effectiveness; Classroom Observation.

## 1. Research Background

At present, English teaching in secondary school in China is mostly taught in large classes, and classroom questioning is one of the most important ways of classroom teacher-student interaction. How to ask questions effectively is the key point for teachers to improve classroom teaching efficiency and carry out effective teaching. At present, there are some common problems in teachers' questioning in secondary school, such as more but lower levels of questions; more questions but less time for waiting and answering; more factual questions but fewer judgmental questions; more questions and answers but fewer follow-up questions (Gao, 2020). The author tries to use classroom observation in secondary school English teaching as a way to conduct a study on how teachers can ask questions effectively and put forward improvement strategies and suggestions on this basis.

## 2. Research Design

In this study, we take a 12th middle school English classroom observation and training class as an example, and adopt the classroom observation method to conduct in-depth observation and analysis from the dimensions of effective questioning, and analyze five aspects: the subject of classroom questioning, the number and types of questions asked by the teacher, the students' seating position and the distribution of questions. In this lesson, the teacher taught the listening and speaking part of Module 8 Unit1 I always like birthday parties in the first book of Grade 7. The target students were 24 students in the first year. The lesson time was 35 minutes. The author repeatedly observed the classroom video, recorded the questions, and transcribed the classroom video into a textual recording.

The research questions in this paper are:

Firstly, Which types of questions do teachers tend to ask in junior high school English classrooms?

Secondly, Is effective questioning related to students' seating position and question distribution?

### 3. Research Findings

#### 3.1. Classroom Questioning Subjects and Question Types

Teachers, as the organizers and implementers of classroom teaching, often dominate the classroom teaching activities. The most common mode of classroom questioning is teacher asking and students answering. As shown in Table 1, the teacher was the main questioner in this lesson, and the students did not ask any questions. In this open class, the teacher and the students were not familiar with each other for the first time, and the students were passive; secondly, the teacher did not set up corresponding teaching activities to encourage the students to ask questions, and the students lacked motivation and enthusiasm to ask questions. Teachers should fully encourage students to ask questions on their own.

In addition, the teacher asked a total of 25 questions in this lesson, namely 12 demonstrative questions and 13 referential questions. Among them, the demonstrative questions are mainly basic questions like what does she/he do? which students can get the answers by looking at the pictures; the referential questions are mainly low-level thinking questions that ask students about their personal birthday experiences and are closely related to their daily lives.

#### 3.2. Question Allocation for Classroom Questioning

According to Hu, Q.Q. et al. (2004), question distribution refers to a questioning technique in which the teacher provides each student equally with the opportunity to answer questions and motivates all students to think together. Question distribution refers to both the distribution of questions in different student seating areas, such as the front, middle, and back rows of the classroom, and the distribution of questions among different types of students.

In terms of the number of times students answered the questions, students voluntarily answered 50 times in this lesson. Three students, W, T, and B, answered the most, with 10, 8, and 6 times respectively, accounting for 22%, 16%, and 12%, i.e., three students contributed to 50% of the student responses in this lesson. Five students, including M and N, did not speak voluntarily in the lesson. This lesson, as an observation lesson, the teacher gave most of the class participation opportunities to the active and high-achieving students, probably for the sake of classroom effectiveness, and paid less attention to the less confident students, which led to an unequal distribution of classroom questions among different types of students. Three students, E, G and L, did not speak voluntarily, but had spoken with other students in the group presentation. This indicates that introverted students can express their views and participate in class with the encouragement and help of their peers. Therefore, teachers should pay attention to and take measures to solve the problem of unbalanced distribution among different types of students.

### 4. Conclusion

Through classroom observation and analysis, we found that the following problems still exist in junior high school English classroom questioning: firstly, the teacher is the only subject of questions in the classroom, and students are passive; secondly, teachers are able to balance the proportion of demonstrative and referential questions, but the content of referential questions designed by teachers is relatively single and shallow; in order to improve the effectiveness of junior high school English teachers' classroom questioning In order to improve the effectiveness of classroom questions, the author gives the following suggestions.

#### 4.1. Give Full Play to Students' Subjectivity and Encourage Them to Ask Questions Independently

Classroom questioning is one of the effective ways of teacher-student interaction, but this interaction cannot only stay in the teacher's one-way questioning, but should be changed from the direction of indoctrination teaching to students' experiential learning, from the past emphasis on students' answers to inspiring students to ask questions, analyze and solve problems. In order for students to be able to ask questions, teachers need to shift from the direction of instilling teaching to the direction of students' experiential learning, from the emphasis on students' answers in the past to inspiring students to ask questions, analyze, and solve problems. In order to enable students to ask questions, teachers need to create various situations in the classroom to guide students to think actively and ask questions to their teachers or peers, so that they can experience the satisfaction and joy of participating in classroom questions and answers.

#### 4.2. Clarify the Purpose of Asking Questions and Design Them Carefully

The purpose of questioning refers to what the teacher wants to achieve by asking questions. A clear questioning purpose is a necessary condition for the success of classroom questioning. The teacher should not only stay in the display questions, but also not completely abandon the textbook to create their own questions. First of all, teachers should pay attention to the balance between the number of demonstrative and referential questions, so that different types of questions can be used in all aspects of classroom teaching. Second, the design of referential questions should be based on students' cognitive development, from easy to difficult, from concrete to abstract, paying attention to hierarchy and progressiveness (Wang, 2012), and appropriately increasing the number of higher-level thinking questions such as analytical, evaluative, and creative.

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