

QUESTIONS: getting them right!

Involving students, promoting discussion, and nailing a point

Rachel Appleby, NYESZE, 2017

1 Think back to a recent class. Try to remember two or three questions you asked your students, and write them in the box below. (e.g. *about an exercise, homework, understanding the grammar or a text, etc. ...*)

1	
2	
3	

2 What was the purpose of your questions?

Did they relate to Language / content (L), or Classroom Management (CM)?

3 To help raise awareness of why we ask certain questions, we can categorize them.

Match the question type on the left with its definition on the right.

Question type	Definition
1 Closed	A requires learners to provide info, or give an opinion; focus on content (not language); the teacher doesn't necessarily know the answer
2 Open	B a question with a <i>yes, no</i> , or one-word answer
3 Display	C a question with various answers possible
4 Referential	D designed to check students' knowledge/comprehension; the teacher already knows the answer

4 Now decide if the questions below are open, closed, display +/- or referential. (Each might be 2 types!)

O C D R

1 Who are your main customers?	✓			✓
2 Read the article: What does the number '5,000' refer to?				
3 We use verbs in the present (simple/continuous) to talk about a future arrangement.				
4 How does your company keep its customers happy?				
5 (<u>Underline</u> the correct collocation) How does your company build customer satisfaction / loyalty / complaints ?				
6 What's the adjective form of 'satisfaction' ?				
7 How does your company build customer loyalty?				
8 How well do you think 'upside down management' could work in your company?				

(Taken from *Business Result*, Intermediate U5)



5 Look back at the questions you wrote down earlier. What sorts of questions are they? (O, C, D, R)

6 Compare notes with a partner. Do you think your questions were appropriate? Think again about the purpose of each one: could you improve any of them? How?

7 Which word is being checked? **customer**, **client** or **consumer**?

(These are concept check questions)

Do you buy something? (yes)
Is it a tangible product? (maybe)
It is a service? (maybe)
Is it something which is suitable for anyone? (probably not)
Is it specifically designed for you? (yes)
Do you have an ongoing relationship with the seller? (yes)
Are you a [...] at the supermarket? (no); ... at a lawyer's? (yes); ... for 1:1 language classes? (yes)

Give me an example of a recent situation when you were a [...].

WAIT TIME – before, and after the answer. Write down two things you'd like to remember:



Something to read on the way home

An [edited] extract from:

Al-Ismaily, S.Z. (2009). 'Teachers' Questions in the English Language Classroom', in *Researching English Language Teaching and Teacher Development in Oman, 183-183*

(I = Interviewer / T = Teacher)

I: What types of questions do you ask?

T: Open questions and closed questions [...]

I: What do you mean by real questions?

T: Questions which are related to them. When I ask these questions I really want to know the answers from them. I mean about their life and their background in order to find a good way to deal with individual learner. Sometimes I ask them not real questions. These questions are about the lesson. For example, closed question: Is this a book? and open question: What can you see in this picture?

I: What do you mean by not real questions?

T: Questions about the lesson which I know their answers, not questions from outside the lesson which I don't know their answers.

I: Why do you ask not-real questions?

T: To check if my learners understand my lesson or not.

I: Do you feel that certain types of questions are better than others?

T: Real and open. Because these questions let learners use the language more. I think they feel that they are outside the classroom. This helps them to say anything even if there are a lot of grammatical mistakes. Also, I can check if they improve their language or not.

References

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