

QUESTIONS: getting them right!

Involving students, promoting discussion, and nailing a point

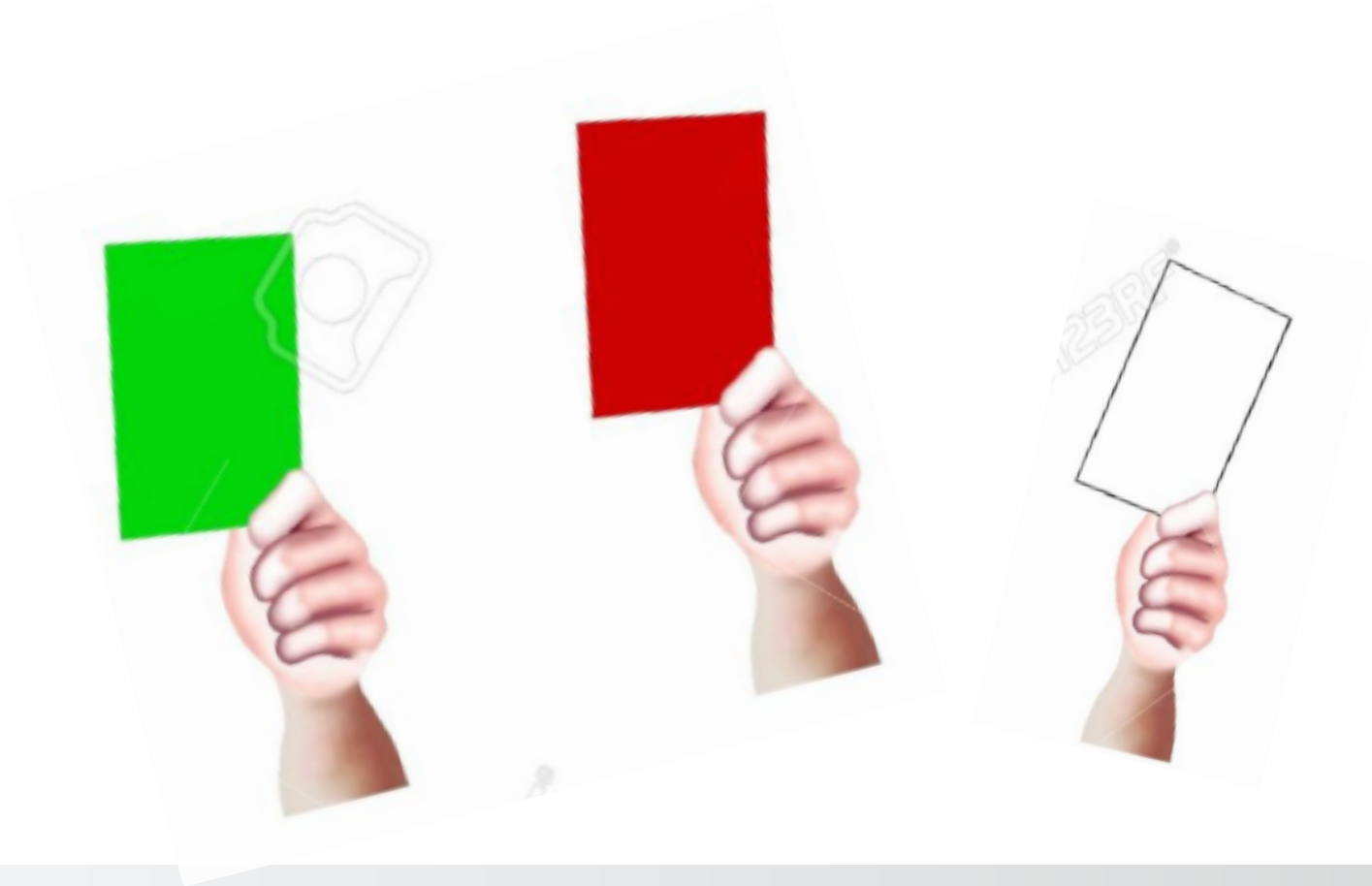
Rachel Appleby

April, 2017

NYESZE, Budapest

Questions for you!

Hands up!



How do you keep up to date ...?

Questions – a matter a life!

Asking a question is
the simplest way of
focusing thinking.



EDWARD DE BONO

Questions

... and kids



Questions

... and adults



Questions

The purpose of questions (2' pairwork)

- **Work in pairs: A asks B the following questions (1')**

1 Do you like your class groups?

2 What do you think is the best way to develop your teaching?

- **Now B asks A the following questions (1')**

3 Do you often go to teacher development workshops?

4 What do you like about your class groups?

Questions

The purpose of questions

- Which question(s) generated the best answers? Why?

1 *Do you like your class groups?*

4 *What do you like about your class groups?*



a question with various answers possible



a question with a *yes*, *no*, or one-word / short phrase answer

Questions

The purpose of questions



- What is each type of question good for?



- give you **facts**
- are **easy** and **quick** to answer
- keep control with the **questioner**



- get **longer** answers
- ask the respondent to **think** and reflect
- can give you **opinions** and feelings
- hand control over to the **respondent**

Questions

In your classroom



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- **Think back to a recent class**

Think of one OPEN and one CLOSED question you asked.

What was the **purpose** of each one? What were you focusing on?

e.g. language, listening/reading comprehension, checking vocabulary, checking grammar rules, getting the students to talk about their hobbies, etc.

Questions in the classroom?!

A large flock of sheep is shown in a green field. A large, semi-transparent red 'X' is overlaid across the center of the image, from the top left to the bottom right and vice versa. The sheep are of various shades of white and cream, and some are looking towards the camera.

AVOID this – with good questions

Questions

Outline

- Why are questions **important** ? in class ? ✓
- What **purpose** do they have? ✓
- **Four types** of question ✓ (2)
- **How long** should we **wait** – before, and after the response?
- How do course books deal with **questions**?
- Some **ideas** for your classes!

Questions

... and teachers

The teacher as “a professional question maker”

Asking questions is “one of the basic ways by which the teacher stimulates student thinking and learning”

Aschner, M. J. (1961). Asking questions to trigger thinking, *NEA Journal*

Why are questions important in class?

Interaction and participation

- The same students: stronger students / quieter students

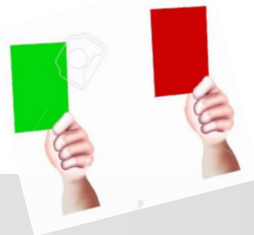
The teacher needs to develop
“the ability to work with the people in the room”

- How?

- Voting system (with paper/online)
- Mini-whiteboards: students write and hold up answers
- Yes/No or True/False cards

ROGER HUNT, IH BARCELONA

ZARINA SUBHAN



Questions

In your classroom – in 3s



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- **A recent class**

1. Work in 3s: share the questions you wrote down.
2. What was the purpose of each one? What were you focusing on? (language, or classroom management)
3. Did you know the answer to any of the questions?

Questions – in the classroom

More on questions

- Questions the teacher **KNOWs** the answer to, or not!

REFERENTIAL

DISPLAY

- require learners to provide **info**, or give an **opinion**; focus on content (not language); the T **doesn't** necessarily **know** the answer
- designed to **check students' knowledge** / comprehension; the teacher **already knows** the answer

Questions – in the classroom

More on questions

- Questions the teacher **KNOWs** the answer to, or not!

REFERENTIAL

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DISPLAY

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Questions in the classroom [*Business Result*]

Categorise the questions: 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 an arrangement for the future.*
- 4 *How does your company keep its customers happy?*
- 5 *How does your company build customer satisfaction / loyalty / complaints ? (Underline the correct collocation)*
- 6 *What changes need to be made to the schedule?*
- 7 *What's the adjective form of 'satisfaction' ?*
- 8 *How does your company build customer loyalty?*

Questions

In your classroom



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- **A recent class**

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

Discuss: Do you think your questions were appropriate? Think again about the **purpose**: could you improve them?

So – which questions are best?!

Questions in your classroom

Questions – purpose – examples!

Closed + Display Qs:

» for language work / checking meaning

e.g.

Open + Referential Qs:

» as a lead-in to a topic / generating interest

» for personalisation / opinion

e.g.

Questions in the classroom

Which word is being checked?*

customer, client or consumer

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)

Could you be [...] at the supermarket? (no); .. at a lawyer's?

(yes); ... having 1:1 language classes? (yes)

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

* “concept check questions”.

Questions in the classroom

All questions are needed!



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Closed + Display Qs:

- » language work /
check meaning



Open + Referential Qs:

- » generate interest
- » personalisation / opinion
- » real communication

Think carefully:

*What sort **information** do
I want from the students?*

*→ What type of question
should I ask?*

Question wait time

Before the answer



- How long? How many seconds?

“

*a teacher waits 1-3 seconds. Thinking time [in L1] actually takes 7-10 seconds, so [for L2] we need to be giving 10-15 seconds **at the very least**.*

ZARINA SUBHAN



- Tolerate silence
- Let sts write down their answers
- Let sts consult in pairs (» builds confidence)

Question wait time

After the answer

- How ?
- How long?
- Accept the first answer?
- Check with other students?
- Double check!
- Get evidence / reasons



“Demand High”

JIM SCRIVENER & ADRIAN UNDERHILL



Outline – Recap so far

- Why are questions **important** in class?
- What **purpose** do they have?
- **Four types** of question
- **How long** should we **wait** (before/after)?
- How do course books deal with **questions**?
- Some **ideas** for your communicative classes!



Course Materials Business Result

Questions – U5: Customers

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- 1 *Who are your main customers?*
- 2 *Read the article: What does the number '5,000' refer to?*
- 3



NEW, 2nd edition!

	Working with words	O	C	D	R
1	Who are your main customers?	/			/
2	How does your company keep its customers happy?	/			/
3	What percentage of your company's business is online?	/			/
4	[quote] How true is it for your type of business?	/			/
5	What is the best title for this article?	/		/	
6	What do these numbers refer to?		/	/	
7	What do you think of the Zappa call centre?	/			/
8	Ex 8: complete Qs, then ask and answer in pairs. (4 Qs)	/			/
9	Tip: Customer, client, or consumer?		/	/	
	Language at work				
1	How busy is your schedule this week, next week, + next month?	/			/
2	Which are the busiest periods for you / your company?	/			/
3	Anita... - What changes need to be made to the schedule?	/		/	
4	Do verbs in bold in the email refer to the present or the future?		/	/	
5	We use verbs in the present ... (<i>simple/continuous</i>) to talk about an arrangement for the future.		/	/	
6	(L) What additional changes need to be made to the schedule?	/		/	
	Practically Speaking				
1	Think of a situation when you had to say 'sorry'. Who was it to?	/			/
2	Why?	/			/
	Business Communication				
1	Who are your company's main suppliers?	/			/
2	What do they supply you with?	/			/
3	(L) What is the main reason for this call?		/	/	
4	(L) What can't Sergio make?		/	/	
5	(L) Do they bring the meeting forward or move it back a day?		/	/	
	Total	15	7	10	12

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Questions used
in *Business
Result 2e*.
Intermediate, U5

SHAPING learning TOGETHER

Business Result

Questions – purpose

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Closed (7) + Display (10) Qs:

» for language work / checking comprehension

Open (15) + Referential (12) Qs:

» as a lead-in to a topic / generating interest

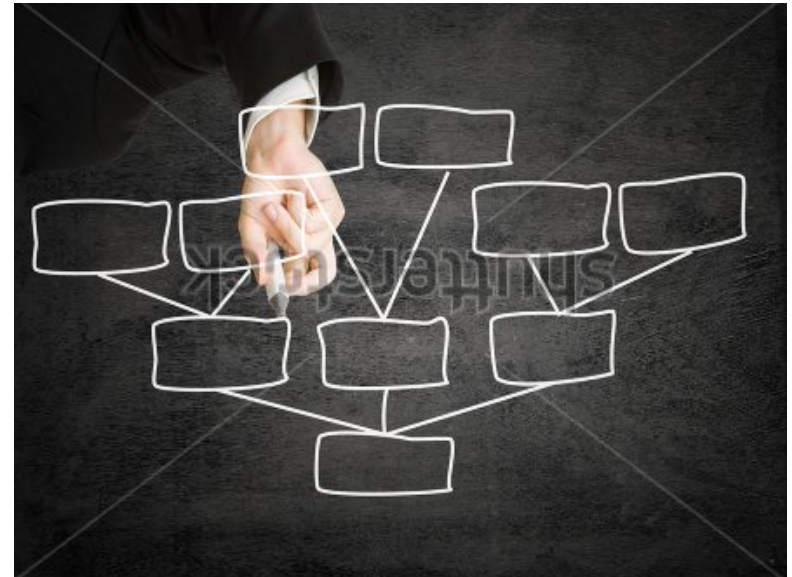
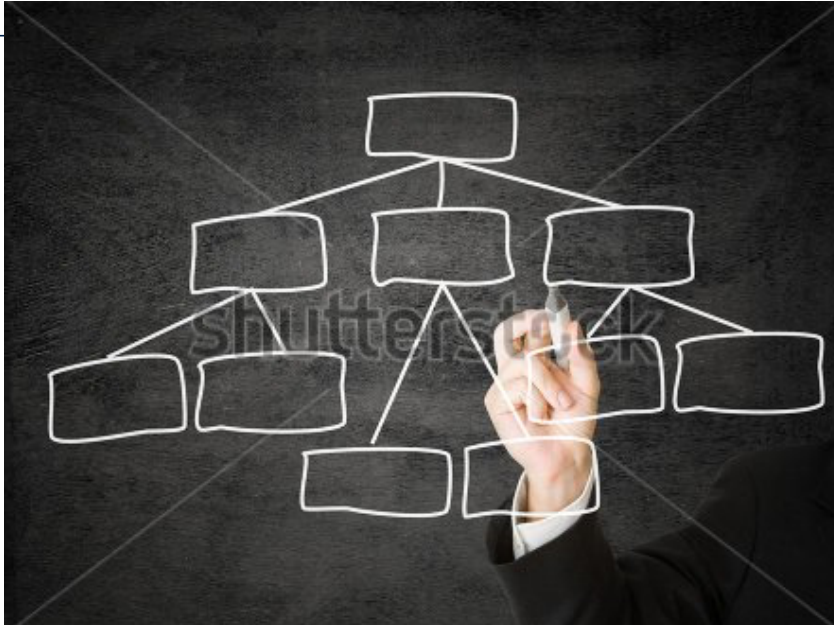
» as a follow-on from a topic

» for personalisation / opinion



Business Result

A company organogram upside down!



Business Result – U5 Customers

Timpson

“The customer’s
always right.”

A **dissatisfied** customer will tell
between 9-15 people about
their experience.

Happy customers who get their
issue resolved tell about 4-6
people about their experience.



Business Result – U5 Customers

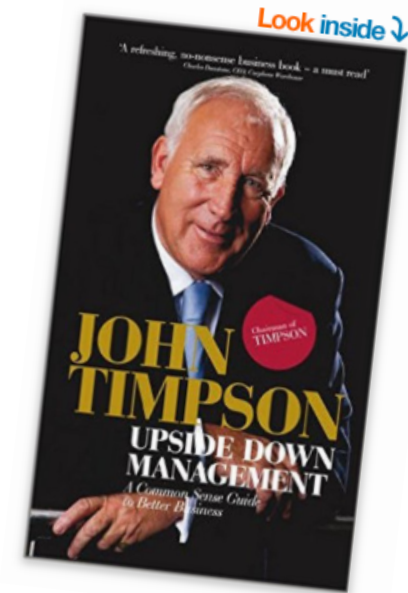
Talking point – Timpson

Upside down management

Timpson is a family business with a £150 million plus turnover. Timpson shops offer a variety of services including shoe repair and key cutting. The secret of the company's success, according to company chairman John Timpson, is to make sure you have 'happy customers' and offer 'great jobs'. To achieve this, the company uses an organizational system called 'upside down management'.

'Upside down management' means that the customers are always at the top and senior management are at the bottom. The role of the managers is to support the frontline staff in the middle, who can then serve the customers. This organogram shows how Timpson works with some of its key principles at each level.

Why do you think 'upside-down management' has been successful at Timpson?



Business Result

Talking point – Timpson Discussion

- 2 Discuss each of the key principles in each level. **Which principles does your company have?** Which other principles do you agree or disagree with? ✓
- 3 Overall, how well do you think 'upside down management' would work in your company?



Business Result 2e. Intermediate
Unit 5 Customers: Talking point

Business Result

Talking point – questions in class?

- What type of questions have you been answering / asking?
(Open, closed, display, referential .. ?)

How effective do you think the questions are?
Why?

» Open / Referential questions
promote real communication

TALKING POINT

Upside down management

Timpson is a family business with a £350 million plus turnover. Timpson shops offer a variety of services including shoe repair and key cutting. The secret of the company's success, according to company chairman John Timpson, is to make sure you have 'happy customers' and offer 'great jobs'. To achieve this, the company uses an organisational system called 'upside down management'.

'Upside down management' means that the customers are always at the top and senior management are at the bottom. The role of the managers is to support the frontline staff in the middle, who can then serve the customers. This organisation shows how Timpson works with some of its key principles at each level.

Customers

- They come first.
- Make them smile.
- Happy customers will advertise your company, so don't spend money on marketing.

Frontline Staff

- Charge customers whatever you like. The price list is only a guide.
- Try new ideas. If they work, tell management. If they don't work, just stop.
- Staff can use one of the company's five holiday homes.
- High-performing staff can receive a weekly 15% bonus.
- You always get an extra day off on your birthday!

Management

- Serve your frontline staff. Don't give them orders.
- Praise frontline staff ten times more than you criticise.
- Avoid meetings. They waste time.
- Get rid of poor-performing staff quickly.

Discussion

- 1 Why do you think 'upside down management' has been successful at Timpson?
- 2 Discuss each of the key principles in each level. Which principles does your company have? Which other principles do you agree or disagree with?
- 3 Overall, how well do you think 'upside down management' could work in your company?

Task

- 1 Work in groups of four. Imagine your company is thinking of introducing 'upside down management'. Divide your group into two pairs.
- 2 When you are ready, work with the other pair again. Take turns to present your arguments for and against and discuss both sides of the arguments. Try to reach a final agreement and choose one of the decisions.

Pair A: Write a list of arguments for introducing 'upside down management' and why you think it will work in your company.

Pair B: Write a list of arguments against introducing 'upside down management' and why you think it won't work in your company.

A: The company should introduce 'upside down management'.

B: The company should use some (but not all) of the ideas from 'upside down management'.

C: The company should not change the current system of management.

3 Present your final decision to the rest of the class and give your reasons.

Business Result 2e. Intermediate
Unit 5 Customers: Talking point

Questions

Recap



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- Use Qs to **involve** your **students** in the learning process
- Know the **purpose** of the Qs
- **Include** a range of all **4 Q types**
- Give **time** – Demand High!
- Enjoy the opportunity to **find out more** about your **sts**, through **effective Qs** and **personalisation**
- Allow conversation, with & between your sts!



NEW, 2nd edition!

Questions

Teachers as “professional question makers”

effective

Asking [^] questions is “one of the basic ways by which the teacher stimulates student thinking and learning”

Aschner, M. J. (1961). Asking questions to trigger thinking, *NEA Journal*

Teachers' questions

References & Resources

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Involving students, promoting discussion, and nailing a point

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