

*[You'll find many very useful observation tasks here. They are as good for student teachers as experienced teachers!
We all need a few reminders every now and then!
Rachel]*

Extract from:

Observation Tasks

A workbook for student teachers

Katalin Somogyi-Tóth

The teacher's questions

BACKGROUND

Questioning is one of the most common techniques used by teachers. In some classrooms over half of class-time is taken up with question-and-answer exchanges. (Gall 1984) For the purposes of examining the role of questions in language teaching, three kinds of questions are distinguished:

Procedural questions [*classroom management questions*] have to do with classroom routines and procedures as well as interaction between people.

Other questions have to do with the content of learning and are classified into two types by Long and Sato (1983):

Display questions are questions that teachers know the answer to and which are designed to elicit or display particular structures or vocabulary. These questions are mostly short and do not engage students in higher-level thinking. Researchers have found that they are much more frequent in ESL classrooms.

Referential questions are genuine questions which teachers do not know the answer to. In real life most questions are referential. Answering referential questions prompts a greater effort on the part of the learner and involves a higher level of thinking.

Asking such type of questions also requires a greater effort on the part of the teacher, who also needs to pay attention to the meaning of the answer given. Unless this happens, there is not much point in asking referential questions in the first place!

[Rachel

NB: Other questions to bear in mind:

Open (divergent) questions are used to encourage many answers, and generate greater student participant.

Closed (convergent) questions typically have only one correct answer. They are often Yes/No (or polar) questions.]

Wait-time

An important dimension of a teacher's questioning skills is *wait-time*. This is the length of time the teacher waits after posing a question and before calling on a student to answer it, or rephrasing the question, or directing it to another student, or giving the answer.

Teachers often use a very short wait-time (only one second on average), which is rarely sufficient to enable students to respond. When wait-time is increased to three or four seconds, the amount of student participation also increases, together with the quality and the average length of the responses.

Task: *Measure the teacher's wait-time and fill in this table.*

Teacher's question	Length of wait-time	Student's response

What was the average wait-time?

Did anything surprise you?

Are there any types of activities where an extended wait-time might not be desirable?

Can wait-time adversely effect the dynamics of a lesson?

Does one factor exclude the other?

Please discuss these points with your mentor [a colleague].

SOURCE

Somogyi-Tóth, K. Observation pack:

https://btk.ppke.hu/uploads/articles/6309/file/observation_task.doc