



Teachers' experiences on the use of questioning strategy in Nepalese ELT classrooms

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Abstract

Using questions in the classroom setting is an age-old practice and has been an influential technique of teaching for centuries. Questions are often used to enhance comprehension and develop critical-thinking skills in students. This technique of teaching stimulates learners to think, learn and act. The study aimed at exploring teachers' beliefs on the use of questioning strategy in the ELT classrooms. The narrative inquiry approach was adopted as a research method for this study. Three secondary level English teachers, purposively selected, from three secondary schools of Kathmandu, Nepal took part in this study. This study employed interview as the method for data collection. The data were described and analyzed descriptively. The study revealed that though the teachers used both divergent and convergent questions in the classrooms; they gave priority to divergent ones. The participants perceived divergent questions important in the ELT classrooms as these questions permit exploration of multiple ideas. Regarding the junctions in which they asked questions, they asked most of the questions in the 'while teaching phase' of the lesson. Teachers asked questions in the classroom for motivation purposes. Teachers used questioning strategies in the classroom as teaching tool to promote comprehension and stimulate critical thinking. Questions also served as a tool to evaluate the students and means to engage them in classrooms activities.

Keywords: Questioning strategy; ELT classroom; Classroom interaction; Convergent; divergent; Focal

1. Introduction

Interaction plays an integral role in language learning process in the classroom setting. Learning takes place when students engage in interaction with others in various communicative contexts. It works as a learning facilitator and a resource for what to learn and how to learn. Questioning is one of the important strategies through which we make the classrooms interactive and make the learning happen. Guest (1985, p. 2) states that "Questioning strategy is one of the important tools to extending students' learning which can help teachers develop their own strategies to enhance the students work and thinking". Questioning is an influential teaching strategy to make our classrooms interactive and engaging. It is a crucial component of any language teaching situation which increases students'

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participation and interest in learning. Questioning strategy plays a significant role in teaching learning activities which boosts up teaching learning process. It is possible to activate and engage learners through questioning. In the learning process, “teachers play a vital role in promoting learners’ higher level thinking skills wherein their questioning strategies can be most influential” (Ocbian & Pura, 2015, p.42). That is to say teachers' questioning techniques help learners to be active and interactive. Interaction can be strengthened better through questioning thereby teaching learning process can be enhanced. Effective teaching takes place when there is interaction between teacher and students. Ibrahim (2012, p.11) mentions:

Classroom interaction means a practice that enhances the development of the two very important language skills which are speaking and listening among the students. This tool helps the students not only to be competent in listening and speaking, but also to think critically and share their views among their peers as well.

There is no denying fact that classroom interaction helps to achieve the objectives of teaching. Kalantari (2017, p.426) states that “one of the influential strategies in creating classroom interaction is questioning technique.” Questions make classroom interaction effective which ultimately help to make teaching learning process successful. Interaction is considered as a central component of communicative competence (Brown, 2000). When a learner interacts with other learners, he/she receives input and produces output. Nunan (1995) stated that language is acquired as learners actively engage and interact with each other to communicate in target language.

Questioning works as a very tool for promoting interaction. Adler (1982, pp. 88-89) stated, “Teachers pose questions to students in order to engage them and elicit deeper-level thinking about the subject under discussion . . . the art of asking questions is one of the basic skills of good teaching”. Good teaching always enhances classroom interaction and student participation, and creates conditions in which learning is possible. Thoughtful questioning in the classrooms help learners become creative, imaginative and smart. Good questions in the classroom enhance students’ critical thinking processes.

According to Nicholl and Tracey (2007, p. 285), "To acquire and develop higher comprehension skill, the lecturer is required to understand questioning, to select the tool appropriately and to use questions that are varied, planned, appropriate and humanely posed." Hence, a teacher, as a facilitator, should have the knowledge and skills of applying good questioning strategy because, as it is already mentioned above, questioning strategy helps learners to achieve higher thinking skill which is essential for higher education. A teacher asks questions in the classroom for many reasons. Gast (2013, p.1) argues that “teachers have asked questions to check what has been learnt and understood, to help them gauge previous learning, increase or decrease the challenge, and assess whether students are ready to move forward and learn new information.” Therefore, it is necessary to ask appropriate questions in ELT classrooms to develop their mental ability. This examines teachers’ beliefs about the importance of questioning strategy, and their real use of questioning in their teaching practice.

Questions perform motivational functions. They are considered to be good stimulants which activate students' cognitive skills and they have functioned as a primary educational tool (Aydemir & Ciftci, 2008 as cited in Dos, Bay, Aslansoy, Tiryaki, Çetin & Duman, 2016, p. 2065). But to stimulate the students' cognitive skills it is extremely necessary for a teacher to possess good questioning skills. Therefore, teachers should ask appropriate questions to develop students' cognitive skills. Otherwise, the specified objective of teaching learning will not be met. Tofade, Elners and Haines (2013, p.8) state that “teachers in the classroom frequently use lower order, recall type questions, and the overuse of this type of question hampers efforts to promote deeper, higher order, critical thinking in students. This statement indicates that teachers should possess skill of asking questions. Many teachers do not possess this skill which in the long run hampers the whole teaching learning process.

1.1. Literature review

The review discusses the role of classroom interaction, questioning as a teaching strategy, the role of questioning in the ELT classrooms, types of questions, the craft of questions, and the classroom context with reference to previous studies on the topic.

1.1.1. Classroom interaction

Dagarin (2016, p.128) defines “classroom interaction as a two-way process between the participants in the learning process.” The teacher influences the learners and vice-versa. Kalantari (2017, p. 425) states that “the term classroom interaction refers to the interaction between the teacher and learners in the classrooms. Thus, classroom interaction is conversation between teacher and learners.” Nunan (1991 as cited in Kalantari 2017, p. 425) stated that “language is acquired because learners actively engage and interact with each other to communicate in target language.” He further mentions that one of the influential strategies in creating classroom interaction is questioning technique. Usually, teachers use questions to evaluate whether students have grasped what they have been taught. Use of questions makes the classroom more democratic and interactive. Both the parties, students and teachers use questions as tools to initiate discussions and questioning activities can provide good opportunities for continued interaction. Thus, for an effective classroom interaction, questioning strategy plays a vital role. It is one of the effective techniques for successful teaching learning.

1.1.1.1. Questioning as a teaching strategy

Questioning is very useful to promote classroom exchanges. Questions are always at heart of classroom discussions. In many ELT classrooms, discussions are primarily generated and maintained by question-and-answer techniques. Only good questions make the classroom discussion lively and meaningful. If a teacher does not use questioning strategy in the classroom, the purpose of communicative competence will be defeated. Questioning is an effective teaching technique which helps students to develop their learning ability and to make classroom teaching fruitful. Ocbian and Pura (2015, p. 43) view “educators believe that effective questioning as teaching method can lead to successful learning of the students in their classes.” This view also considers questioning as an effective teaching strategy that helps to achieve the objectives of teaching learning.

Yang (2006, p. 196) mentions that the teacher's questions can be considered as the most powerful device to lead, extend and control communication in the classroom. Questions also function as a tool to maintain discipline in the classroom. Hence, teachers' questions play a vital role to create interaction between teachers and students that help learners to be active. But to ask question, teachers should have the skills. Long, Blankunberg and Butani (2015, p. 40) state that “questioning is a challenging teaching tool and even for experienced educators.” If teachers rely on memory-based questions, they fail to stimulate deeper thinking on the part of students and can cause disengagement. Tofade, Elners and Haines (2013, p.1) say that “questions have long been used as a teaching tool by teachers and preceptors to assess students' knowledge, promote comprehension, and stimulate critical thinking.” Different kinds of teaching strategies are formulated by different scholars. Questioning strategy helps to enhance the students' learning achievement and improve the entire quality of teaching learning process if questioning strategies are properly used.

1.1.1.2. The role of questioning in the ELT classroom

The use of questioning in the classroom is considered an important aspect of instruction and learning. The effective employment of this strategy helps to accomplish overall educational goals of the entire teaching learning process. Questioning strategies if used properly make classroom interactive, and enrich the quality of instruction.

Asking questions in the classrooms have several benefits which eventually help to upgrade the quality of teaching learning activities. It helps to understand the message when one gets confused. Likewise, it helps students to be active in the classroom. Dos, Bay, Aslansoy, Tiryaki, Cetin and Duman (2016) state that asking questions is one of the most important aspects of teaching, and can be highly effective when used appropriately. They talk more about benefits of asking questions: It motivates students and ensures their active participation, leads them to think and develop their own problem solving skills; helps them store knowledge; improves academic achievement as well as develops metacognitive thinking; and enables students to form critical thinking skills. Therefore, asking question assists students in many ways. A good question makes learners to think and helps them to analyse the things, and develops their critical thinking skills.

Ocbian and Pura (2015, p. 43) state that there are several reasons for using questioning strategies in classrooms. Questions used for the instructional purpose help students to actively engage in classroom discussions, review their previous lessons, and motivate them to continue acquiring new knowledge on their own. Serving in developing students' critical thinking skills is another instructional function of questioning in the classroom.

1.1.1.3. Types of questions

Questions have been classified into different categories. American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education (2013) as cited in Toyfode, Elsner and Haines (2013, p. 2) classified questions into five types:

Convergent: It is a closed type of question which does not offer many options. This encourages narrow and focused answers. For example, do you use questioning strategy in your class?

Divergent: It is an open type of question. It has many responses which permits the exploration of diverse perspectives. For example, how does questioning strategy help to increase the level of understanding among students?

Focal: In this type of question, students must choose or justify a position. For example; Some teachers feel that their job is to teach, not to do research. Do you agree with this idea? Give arguments in favour of your answer.

Brainstorm: It is the type of question that generates a list of ideas or viewpoints. For example, why do people consider English as an international language (EIL)?

Funnel: It is like multiple questions starting broadly and gradually leading to more focused inquiry. For example, what is research in second language learning and teaching? How can you use research as a tool to your increase classroom effectiveness? What are the primary motivations in reading and doing second/foreign language research in your context? What obstacles do you face while doing research?

Generally, questions can be divided into divergent and convergent questions. These questions are asked for different purposes. Gast (2013, p.1) argues that questions are asked to maintain the flow of the learning within the lesson; engage students with the learning; assess what has been learned, and check that what has been learnt is understood and applied; test student memory and comprehension; initiate individual and collaborative thinking in response to new information; seek the views and opinions of pupils; provide an opportunity for pupils to share their opinions/views, seeking responses from their peers; encourage creative thought and imaginative or innovative thinking; foster speculation, hypothesis and idea/opinion forming; create a sense of shared learning and avoid the feel of a 'lecture'; challenge the level of thinking and possibly mark a change to a higher order of thinking; model higher order thinking using examples and building on the responses of students.

Thus, questions serve three functions namely instructional, remedial and motivational.

1.1.1.4. The craft of questions

Harris (2000) viewed that the craft of questioning in the classrooms entails the synchronization of following elements:

Planning: Teachers ask questions at different junctions of a lesson. The teacher decides on the type and levels of questions to use, depending on the lesson. The questions the teacher asks at the end of the lesson will be different from those he or she asks in a class devoted to the introduction to a new topic.

Classroom environment: The teacher should develop a classroom environment in such a way that students actively listen, respond to teachers' questions freely, and work with each other to achieve the mutually designated goals.

Methods: Methods to be used during the presentation of a lesson may include wait time, listening, responding, and reflection of questions and responses.

Reflection: To evaluate and guide improvement in the craft of questioning, teacher should record their performance and use peer review or a personal survey to evaluate their performance and invite peer critique.

1.1.1.5. The classroom context

Zhang (2012 as cited in Rustandi and Mubarak, 2017, p.247) stated that more than 50% of classroom exchanges or patterns are Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF). Thus, in this IRF model, question is asked to the students. Therefore, questions to be asked should be appropriate which could meet objectives of course and develop learners' ability.

The study of Almeida (2010, p. 308) shows that even if teachers ask a huge number of questions in the classroom, the questions posed are consistently of same kind. Teachers ask typically low level of questions. The study of Tofade, Elsner and Haines (2013) shows that teachers in classroom and experiential learning environments frequently use lower-order, recall-type questions, and the overuse of this type of question hampers efforts to promote deeper, higher-order, critical thinking in students (p.8). Floyd (1960 as cited in Hill 2012, p.16) asserts that 93 percent teachers ask questions in the classrooms. The questions they ask are related to memory level thinking. Very few questions stimulate higher level thinking. I have experienced in Nepal that many teachers use closed type of questions in the classrooms.

1.1.1.6. Previous studies

A number of researches have been carried out in the field of questioning strategy in teaching. Some of the related research works are reviewed below:

Farooq (1998) conducted a research on "Analyzing Teachers' Questioning Strategies, Feedback and Learners' Outcomes." The major objective of the research was to observe an English language class employing Ethnographic approach and report the outcomes of the assigned questions. Classroom observation and recordings and transcript were used as tools for data collection. The major findings of the study show that teacher frequently used five types of questions - referential, display questions, comprehension checks, clarification requests and confirmation checks.

Almeida (2010) carried out a research on "Classroom Questioning: Teachers' Perceptions and Practices." The objective of the study was to investigate teachers' use of questioning. Three teachers were selected as a sample of the study. Interview and audio recordings were the tools to collect the data for this study. A two-month course was designed to analyse the practices of questioning strategy. The study found that majority of teachers (91percent) used closed ended questions but later, after being aware of the questioning pattern, their closed questions decreased to 75 percent.

Anderson (2012) conducted a research on "Effects of Questioning Strategies on Students' Inquiry Skills During a Physics Research Project." The major objective of the study was to improve students'

inquiry skills through questioning strategy. Fourteen students were taken as samples of the study. Questionnaire was used to measure students' views regarding understanding of questioning and inquiry skill application. Students' responses were measured using the likert scale. The finding indicated that the use of questioning strategies assisted students in developing inquiry skills while conducting their investigations.

Pham and Hamid (2013) carried out a research on "Beginning EFL Teachers' Beliefs about Quality Questions and their Questioning Practices." The objective of the study was to examine the impact of teacher beliefs on their actual practice in Vietnam and to investigate the relation between teachers' beliefs about quality questions and their questioning behaviors in terms of questioning purposes, content focus, students' cognitive level, wording and syntax. Thirteen EFL teachers were selected as sample population. Qualitative data were collected by means of an open ended questionnaire survey and classroom observation. The findings of the study was that although there was a general congruence between teachers beliefs and practices, there were discrepancies from moderate to substantial gap between what the teachers believed and what they actually did in class.

Farrell and Mom (2015) conducted a research on "Exploring teacher questions through reflective practice." The objective of the study was to explore the relationship between the beliefs and classroom practices regarding teacher questions of four English as a second language (ESL) teachers in a university language school in Canada. Four ESL teachers teaching in an EAP (English for Academic Purposes) language program at Southern Ontario University were the samples of this study. Interview and classroom observation were the methods of data collection for this study. The findings revealed that although for the most part the teachers implemented their classroom questioning practices in congruence with their stated beliefs.

Dos, Bay, Aslansoy, Tiryaki, Cetin and Duman (2016) carried out a research on "An Analysis of Teachers' Questioning Strategies." The main objective of the study was to analyze the questioning strategies of the teachers. One hundred and seventy primary school teachers working in the schools located in the center of Gaziantep Province in Turkey. Semi-structured questionnaire served as the tool for data collection. Data collected through questionnaire were examined via content analysis. Explanatory mixed method design was used to analyze the research problem. The findings of this study revealed that: (1) Teachers asked divergent questions to draw attention and interest (2) Teachers have misunderstanding of divergent and convergent questions (3) Teachers mostly ask questions to entire class than individual students.

2. The Study

The present study explores Nepalese English teachers' beliefs on the use of questioning strategy in the English as a foreign language classroom. In Nepal, most of the teachers use lecture method where questioning strategies are hardly used. I have come across many teachers asking only memory related questions which do not stimulate higher level thinking. This means the questions which help to develop critical thinking are seldom asked. Classroom environment is one of the factors that determine the degree of classroom interaction. Classroom size has become one of the hurdles in many cases. Large class size minimizes the chances of using questions in the classrooms. The present study addressed following questions.

- a. What beliefs do Nepalese English teachers hold on the use of questioning strategy?
- b. What kind of questioning strategies do they use in the English language classrooms?
- c. Why do they use questioning strategy in the English classroom?

3. Method

This study employs a narrative inquiry method to examine the teachers' perspectives on the use questioning strategies in the English classrooms. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), narrative inquiry captures personal and human dimensions of experience over time, and takes account of relationship between individual experience and cultural context. Narrative researchers collect data about people's lives and construct meanings with the help of their experiences. In narrative research designs, researchers describe the lives of individuals, collect and tell stories about people's lives, and write narratives of individual experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). According to Creswell (2016, p. 502) narrative inquiry can be defined as "a distinct form of qualitative research, a narrative typically focuses on studying a single person, gathering data through the collection of stories, reporting individual experiences, and discussing the meaning of those experiences for the individual". Narrative inquiry is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the activities involved in generating and analyzing stories of life experiences (e.g., life histories, narrative interviews, journals, diaries, memoirs, autobiographies, biographies) and reporting that kind of research (Schwandt, 2007, p. 204). Narrative research is the study of the lives of individuals as told in the form of stories. This entails their experiences and discussion of the meanings of those experiences for the individual. Narrative design is form of qualitative research. The Interview guidelines served as the main tool of data collection for this study. The data obtained from interview were analysed and interpreted descriptively.

3.1. *Research participants*

Three secondary level English teachers from Kathmandu district, Nepal were taken as the sample of this study. I purposively visited the school and purposively selected three English teachers. They have been teaching English for ten years now. They shared very similar sociolinguistic characteristics in terms of age, English proficiency, exposure to other languages, and the like. All the speakers were native speakers of Nepali. The participants were purposively selected as this is a narrative inquiry. All the participants were males and their age ranged between 30 and 35. Regarding their academic qualifications, they all have M.Ed. in English education.

3.2. *Research tools*

I used in-depth interviews as research tools to collect the data. Interview was conducted with the three selected English language teachers. The responses they made were recorded. The obtained data were analyzed thematically and descriptively. The interview was based on teachers' beliefs regarding questioning strategy.

4. Results and Discussion

Data obtained from interview were analyzed qualitatively. These data were analyzed and interpreted descriptively. I codified the three respondents as R1, R2 and R3 for this study.

4.1. *Beliefs of teachers on questioning strategy*

To find out teachers' beliefs on questioning strategy, I conducted interview with all the three participants. The focus was on the types of questions, junctions of the lesson in which they ask questions, the number of questions they ask, role of questioning strategy in the classroom setting, students' participation, types of questions students ask and questioning strategy and the learning achievement.

4.2. *Type of questions*

All the teachers said that they used questioning strategy in the classrooms. In response to the question: "What kind of questions do you ask in the classroom?", all the participants responded that they used both the divergent and convergent types of questions but priority was given to divergent ones. They used divergent type of questions more than the convergent ones as these questions increased creativity on the part of students, and also developed problem solving skills and critical thinking ability of the students. In this regard Respondent 1 (R1) stated "I use both the types of questions because both are really important. But I mainly give focus on divergent questions because they develop critical thinking skills in students and promote creativity." From the response of R1, it can be said that questioning strategy helps to develop creativity in students. Respondent 2 (R2) added "Regarding the type of questions, both convergent and divergent questions are asked but it is better to ask divergent questions. Respondent 3 (R3) stated

I use both the types: divergent and convergent in the class while teaching but I give more importance to divergent questions because these types of questions are mostly open-ended and encourage students to come up with diverse perspectives. They permit exploration of multiple ideas. They also enhance students' problem-solving skills and promote their creativity.

From these three teachers' responses, it can be concluded that mostly divergent questions are used in English classes and they are useful for the enhancement of students' creativity, learning, development of problem-solving skills and deeper critical thinking ability. Teachers preferred divergent questions to other types of questions. It was also found that teacher participants did not choose the uses of other types of questions such as focal, brainstorm, funnel or referential.

4.3. *Phase of the lesson in which the teachers ask questions*

In response to the question "When do you ask question?" participants responded that they asked in both the junction of the lessons- while teaching and after teaching. Most of the questions were asked in the 'while teaching' stage of the lessons. In this connection R1 said "I ask question at any time I like. I frequently ask questions in the classroom, and I do not stick to any particular stage or time of the lesson." R2 also responded in a similar vein: "I mostly ask questions in the 'while teaching' stage of the lessons. I also sometimes ask questions before and after teaching stages of the lesson. But I ask very few questions in these stages." The response of R2 indicates that teachers ask questions at any junctions of the lesson they like but in most of the cases they use questioning strategy at the 'while teaching stage' of the lesson. R3 said "I don't think there should be a fixed time for asking question. When the situation demands I ask questions. So I ask questions whenever I like or whenever situation demands for questions."

From the responses made, it can be concluded that teachers use questioning strategy at any time and junctions of the lesson. There is no fixed time and stage in which teachers use questioning strategy in the classrooms. Questions are mostly used at the 'while teaching stage' of the lesson.

4.4. *How many questions do they ask?*

Participants opined that number of questions depends on the length of lesson, nature of the lesson and the students' level of understanding. Regarding the number of questions, R1 said; "I think no teacher counts how many questions they ask in the classrooms. I don't know how many questions I exactly ask in the classroom. Sometimes I ask many questions and sometimes quite a few. I think it depends on type of teaching text." This means teachers ask questions in the classroom but they cannot

say exactly how many questions they ask. The study shows that the number of questions varies from lesson to lesson. R2 said:

I cannot say how many questions I ask while teaching because it depends on how lengthy the lesson is and what type of lesson it is. If the lesson is difficult, then I ask many questions to check whether the students understood or not. If the students do not understand the lesson, then I ask questions. Generally, I ask 15 to 20 questions in a class period.

The response given by R2 suggests that number of questions depends on the length of lesson, type of lesson and the extent the students understand the lesson. R3 responded, "I ask questions at any time. I cannot say how many questions I ask in the class. Sometimes I ask 9/10 questions, sometimes I ask 15/16 questions. It depends on situation." All the teachers agreed that there is no fixed number of questions which can be asked in a class. The number of questions used in a particular class depends on the length of the lesson, the nature of the lesson, understanding level of students.

4.5. *Role of questioning strategy in the classroom setting*

Teachers asked questions for many reasons: to motivate the students, to evaluate the students whether they understood the lesson or not, to give feedback, to develop learning ability and to make students active. Questions serve to develop students' interest in a topic and to motivate students to become involved in the lessons taught. The questions asked support them to construct meanings. Teachers often use questions as a means to evaluate students' preparation or lack thereof. In addition, teachers asked questions to review and summarize the previous lessons and assess the achievement of lesson objectives. Most importantly, teachers used questions to develop critical thinking skills and nurture insights by exposing learners to new or related relationships. The classrooms become livelier when questions are used in the 'while teaching' stage of the lesson. Questioning strategies also elicited students' responses and teachers' reactions to those responses. In this regard, R1 stated:

Generally, I ask questions to evaluate their [students'] understanding regarding the lesson so that I can provide them with feedback. I usually ask questions to check how much has been learnt of what has been taught so that I can employ remedial teaching. I also ask questions to make their doubts clear.

R2 added, "Asking questions in the classroom is very much important because it helps to sharpen students' skills and develop their creativity. I, generally, ask questions to involve them in the classrooms, and to make them active." R3 further reported "I ask questions in the classroom to motivate the students. Sometimes students are not active participants in the classroom. In this situation, I ask questions, and they pay attention to the lesson." Generally, they use questions to assess to what extent they have understood the text so that the remedial lessons can be arranged for them.

These responses indicate that teachers ask question to evaluate their students. Questions serve as a tool to evaluate the students and as a means to engage the students in classrooms activities. From all the responses of teachers, it can be interpreted that teachers ask questions to motivate the students, to make them active and to evaluate the students' understanding.

4.6. *Students' participation*

All the participants said that their students eagerly take part in the classroom activities when questioning strategies are used in the class. They also asked questions to take part in the interactions. But in the response to "how many questions do they ask in the classroom?", they responded that they cannot say how many questions they ask. It depends on the students' level of understanding, their nature (shyness) and type of lesson.

R1 replied, "I cannot say exactly how many questions students ask in the classroom. Sometimes they come up with many questions and sometimes they ask very few questions. Many students in my class feel shy. Shy students do not ask any questions. I often encourage them to ask. Only those active students who are a few in numbers in a class ask questions. R2 replied, "It is very difficult to say how many questions they ask in the classroom. Sometimes they ask a lot of questions and sometimes few." R3 replied in a similar line, "It depends on students. Some students don't ask questions. Generally, I think, they ask 6/7 questions in the classroom but I cannot say exactly. Some students ask questions to take part in the classroom discussions.

The results show that students ask questions in the classroom. The number of the questions depends upon the situations. Teachers can not exactly say how many questions students ask in a class.

4.7. Type of questions asked by students

Students ask different types of questions. The questioning strategy helps to make the classroom interactive. R1 said, "Students ask both the types; divergent and convergent. They ask questions as they want to check their own comprehension level. But sometimes they come up with divergent questions as well." R2 said, "I think students ask divergent questions more than the convergent ones." R3 responded, "As I have experienced, students ask divergent questions in the classroom. If they find anything confusing then they go for divergent ones. The divergent questions require teachers to be more prepared for the lesson to be taught."

4.8. Questioning strategy and the leaning achievement

The participants said that questioning strategy helps students to learn better because it makes them active participants in the classroom. The more students become attentive, the better they learn. Thus, questioning strategy helps them to be more attentive in the classroom. It enhances their deeper critical thinking ability. The teacher participants replied that questioning strategy brings changes in students' learning. It makes students active and interactive. "It also helps them think deeply and critically and I think deeper thinking helps students learn better. So, I believe that questioning strategy brings changes in the learning ability of students", R3 reported.

These responses indicate that questioning strategy brings changes in students' learning achievement because it involves the students in task, and also helps to assess students' progress. The views also support that questioning strategies bring changes in students learning strategy as well. The teachers' questions in the classroom make them creative and analytical. From all the responses of the three teachers it can be concluded that questioning strategy brings changes in students' achievement. It helps students to think critically, makes them active participants in the classrooms. Consequently, it brings changes in students' leaning behavior.

5. Conclusions

One of the most common interaction structures is Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) sequence where teacher asks questions and students respond and the teacher provides feedback. Razaie and Lashkarian (2015, p. 450) write, "In this pattern, the teacher is responsible for carrying out the first (initiation) turn as well as the third (feedback) turn of the exchange. Questioning in the classroom encourages students to engage in the classroom activities and help them recall their previous knowledge and experiences. Good questions ignite students' minds and kindle them well so that they can become active participants in the classroom process. Teachers have been using questions in the

classroom as a teaching tool to assess students' knowledge, promote comprehension, and stimulate critical thinking.

This study investigates teachers' beliefs on the use of questioning strategy in ELT classrooms. All the participants said that they used questioning strategy in the ELT classrooms. Regarding the type of questions, they used both the divergent and convergent questions in the classrooms but priority was given to divergent ones. They used divergent type of questions more than the convergent ones as these questions increased creativity on the part of students. They permitted exploration of multiple ideas, enhanced students' problem-solving skills and promoted their creativity. Although there was no fixed time and stage in which questioning strategy can be used in the classroom, most of the questions were asked in the 'while teaching' stage of the lesson. All the teachers agreed that the number of questions which could be asked in a particular classroom depended on the length of the lesson, nature of lesson and understanding level of students. This study validates Adler's (1982) idea that teachers pose questions to students in order to engage them and elicit deeper-level thinking. They asked questions to motivate the students, to evaluate the students whether they understood the lesson or not, to give feedback, to develop learning ability, and to make students active. Questions served as a tool to develop students' interest in a topic, and to involve them in the classroom activities. In addition, teachers asked questions to review and summarize previous lessons, and assess achievement of lesson objectives. Students also asked questions in the classrooms. The number of the questions they asked depended upon the situations. The participants replied that questioning strategy brings changes in students' learning. It makes them active participants in the classroom which in turn brings fruitful results.

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Appendix I

Interview Guidelines

1. How long have you been teaching?
3. Do you use questioning strategy while teaching English in the classroom?
4. What kind of questions do you ask in the classroom?
5. When do you ask question? At what phase of the lesson do you ask questions?
6. Why do you ask questions in the classroom?
6. Generally, how many questions do you ask in a particular ELT classroom?
7. Do your students ask questions in the classroom?
8. How many questions do they ask in the classroom?
9. What type of questions do the students ask in the classroom?
10. Do you encourage your students to ask questions in the classroom?
12. Do you believe that questioning strategy brings changes in learning achievement of the students? How?