



Questioning in the Saudi EFL University Classroom

Student Perspectives and Teacher Practices

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ABSTRACT

Questioning is perhaps the most common form of discourse between teachers and students in classroom settings, however, research interest in questioning in second/foreign language classrooms has largely applied to the measurement and development of teachers' questioning skills. This focus on the teacher may however obscure the potential importance of student perspectives and practice preference towards questioning in the classroom discourse. Although questioning is a central aspect of any classroom discourse, it is still an under-researched area in the Saudi classroom context. This thesis is an investigation into some practices and perspectives pertaining to the questioning behaviour of teachers and students in a higher education English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom context. Participants included 12 experienced EFL teachers and 341 first-year students at a public university in Medina, Saudi Arabia. The study aimed to investigate student perspectives on questioning that was undertaken in their classes and to identify the functions of teachers' questions and the question modifications (if any) that teachers employ in instances where students do not answer. The study also considered, however not as a main focus of attention, whether there are any gender-related differences or commonalities in the teachers' and students' perspectives and reported classroom questioning practices.

In order to triangulate the sources of the study's data, a mixed method approach for data collection was used. The study was conducted in two phases, one quantitative, using statistical formula; and the other qualitative, using principles of discourse analysis and content analysis. Three methods were utilised in order to obtain data for this study and establish a better understanding of the EFL classroom questioning under consideration. These were namely, questionnaires, video-recorded classroom observation, and stimulated recall and semi-structured interviews. The findings show that, in addition to functioning as elicitation tools, teachers' questions possess different discursive functions, such as the assistance of students' production of fluent L2 talk, the repair of communication breakdown, the invitation students' guesses, and the management of classroom practice. Teachers also employed various question modification techniques to their unanswered questions. The results of this study's discourse analysis, together with those from student surveys and teacher interviews, indicate to a number of implications and contributions as regards EFL classroom discourse and language pedagogy.

Dedicated to my mother.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Explanation
CA	Conversation analysis
DA	Discourse analysis
EFL	English as a foreign language
ELC	English Language Centre (Taibah University)
ELT	English language teaching
ESL	English as a second language
IRE	Initiation-response-evaluation (Mehan, 1979)
IRF	Initiation-response-feedback (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975)
L1	The participants' native language (in this study, it is Arabic)
L2	The foreign language learned/taught (in this study, it is English)
MA	Masters of Arts
MOE	Ministry of Education (Saudi Arabia)
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education (Saudi Arabia)
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
<i>P</i>-value	Probability of obtaining a test statistics, with margin of error ranging from 0.00 to 1.00
QAC	Question-answer-comment (McHoul, 1978)
QI	Questionnaire item
RQ	Research question
SD	Standard deviation
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences (software)
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

In recent years, there has been a growing scholarly interest in the role of interaction in education and, particularly, in language education. According to Chaudron (2000:1):

Traditional concerns with foreign and second language education have been with instructional methodology, curriculum based on needs assessment, and occasionally well-grounded linguistic studies of acquisition. However, in recent years, applied linguists working in the area of education have dramatically expanded the scope of their research to address critical areas of practices and problems in language acquisition and use in classrooms.

Such attention is a consequence, amongst other things, of studies which address the role of verbal discourse in meaning-making by students and its significance for language teaching and learning (Cazden, 2001; Hall and Walsh, 2002). With regard to the variety of studies on the subject of foreign language classroom talk (cf. Chaudron, 1988; Johnson, 1995; Seedhouse, 2004; Hasan, 2006; Walsh, 2006, 2011) and classroom questioning (Farrar, 2002; Almeida, 2012), one area which has not received sufficient ample attention in the Arabic EFL classroom context is that of teacher questioning (Al-Menieei, 2005) which is an important discourse practice used by teachers in classroom pedagogy (Ellis, 1994; Ho, 2006). Certainly, in the language classroom where language learning

is a key goal, teacher questions not only serve as devices to stimulate student thinking, but also provide opportunities for students to practise the target language (Chaudron, 1988:126). In addition, teacher questions can allow greater quantities of target language input to become comprehensible (Ho, 2005). As a result, of the many instructional practices employed in the classroom, questioning can by far be the most common.

Researchers such as Cazden (2001) and Walsh (2006, 2011) view the English as a foreign language (EFL¹ hereafter) classroom as a distinctive communicative context on its own, given that it is where not only classroom teaching and learning, but also where second language acquisition² takes place³. Therefore, it is no surprise that research into questioning, as a major aspect of classroom talk, has not reduced and as Lee (2006, 2008) asserted, more scholarly efforts are desirable. Studies which focus on teacher questions in EFL classroom contexts have, however, focused mainly on the relationship between discrete observable teacher questioning practices (e.g. the use of certain types or levels of questions) and student outcome (e.g. learning or cognitive development) (Dillon, 2007). Researchers (e.g. Long and Sato, 1983; Brock, 1986; Wu, 1993; Thornbury, 1996; Shomoossi, 2004; Ho, 2005; Lee, 2006; and David, 2007) have analysed teachers' use of question types, i.e. referential versus display questions, and (at some level) its role in generating

¹ EFL is an abbreviation for English as a foreign language; a policy associated with non-native speakers of English who study English in a non-native environment, i.e. where most of the population speaks a language other than English. The term is also used with countries, like Saudi Arabia, where English is not used as an official language, but rather a foreign language taught as a school subject and narrowly used or practised outside the classroom, academic settings, or job environment.

² Researchers (e.g. Krashen and Terrell 1983; Littlewood, 1984; Ellis, 1985) argued that students have two different ways of developing skills in a second/foreign language: learning and acquisition. As defined by Abukhattala (2013:128), learning is "a conscious process that focuses the students' attention on the form of the language structure", whereas "acquisition is a process which represents the subconscious activity by which we internalise the new language, putting emphasis on the message [meaning] rather than on the form".

³ In the Saudi context, and perhaps elsewhere, as English is taught as a foreign language, students seem not to find many opportunities to communicate with others in English outside class, and therefore the EFL classroom could be regarded as one of, if not only, the main places for students to practice their English and acquire this language.

learner responses and promoting communicative language use. Other scholars (e.g. Markee, 1995, 2004; Lee, 2006; McCormick, and Donato, 2000; Hsu, 2001; Menegal, 2008; and Chang, 2009) have sought, by means of focusing mainly on the types of questions asked, to determine how teacher questions function in the language classroom with particular focus on scaffolding and creating learning opportunities. Consistent with the aforementioned studies, in a way or another, the current study considers the functions of teachers' questions in an EFL higher education context in Saudi Arabia, whilst taking into account modifications utilised by teachers in their questioning practice(s), and considering students' and teachers' perspectives as regard their classroom questioning.

There are two principal reasons for why this, and perhaps any other, study of classroom questioning is of significance vis-à-vis EFL classrooms. As teacher questions can play an important role in facilitating target language production and promoting learners verbal responses (Chaudron, 1988:118-126), two issues that are considered significant for foreign language learning development; inquiries into classroom questioning can contribute to a better understanding, on the part of researchers as well as practitioners, of how the target language (L2 hereafter) is used and learned through question-answer exchange. According to Johnson (1995:3), "if teachers understand how the dynamics of classroom communication influence L2 students' perceptions of, and participation in, [the] classroom ... they may be better able to monitor and adjust the patterns of classroom communication in order to create an environment that is conducive to both classroom learning and L2 acquisition". Researchers such as Ramirez and Merino (1990), Karabenick and Sharma (1994), and Dillon (2007), reported that, albeit they may be sparse in quantity, student questions (and, possibly, perspectives towards classroom questions,) are of a significant pedagogical and discursive value (see 2.5.3 for further details relating to the functions of classroom questioning). It is duly deemed important to investigate student perspectives and teacher practices in

combination as this can assist in providing a full account of the questioning practice which actually takes place in the language classroom.

Additionally, the present study lies partially within the context of the insights offered by Carlsen (1991) who argued that research into questioning “must acknowledge that the meaning of questions is dependant on their context in a discourse, and that questions may reflect and sustain status differences in the classroom; and recognise these practices” (p. 111). Carlsen also argued that many studies into teachers’ questioning are based on a process–product paradigm, i.e. that which studies the relationship between teacher questioning and student achievement, and proceeded to embark on a new line of research, to which he called, which considers the context of questions as well as responses and reactions to questions in analysing the role of classroom questioning. Focusing on aspects pertaining to the questioning practice(s) undertaken by Saudi teachers and students in an EFL classroom context, the present study aims to investigate four main issues: (i) student perspectives on questioning undertaken in their classes; (ii) functions of teachers’ questions; (iii) question modifications (if any) which teachers employ when students do not answer and (iv) teachers’ related views concerning classroom questioning.

1.2 Rationale for the Study

Asking and answering questions are among the most common human activities, yet it is remarkable how little is known, in a systematic way, about the effect of questions on a respondent.

Dillon (2007:133)

Questioning is a central part of any classroom interaction as, whilst being dependant on question types, it serves many functions (see 2.5.3 and 2.6). To the best of my knowledge, there has been no systematic documentation of its use in Saudi EFL university classroom discourse. Thus, if the argument that the

EFL classroom is a small community with its own rules and language is accepted, it could then be of interest to explore the use of questions in this foreign language classroom milieu. Furthermore, on account of the need for research, as described briefly in the prior section, and in more detail in the next chapter, it is clear that this issue should be subject to further investigation, in particular with regard to EFL classroom questioning.

In addition to the above, in this study, classroom questioning is considered from the perspective of a researcher with prior first-hand experience of it. Throughout the six years (2002-2008) I spent at Taibah University, both as a student and as a teaching assistant, classroom questions were one of the most crucial classroom discourse features as EFL teachers known to, and acquainted with, me appeared to use questions not only to check students' understanding but also to inform mid-term and final assessments⁴. Albeit this particular question function (informing assessments) was not observed in my corpus, it was undoubtedly a practice that triggered my interest in carrying out this research. The reluctance of students to pose questions to their teachers, a situation I observed and which may well be frustrating for teachers in EFL classrooms, is another example of what activated this inquiry.

Additionally, researchers such as Alsughaer (2009) and Gawi (2012) noted that, although Saudi EFL students spend approximately 508 hours learning English at intermediate and secondary schools, they still lack some basic abilities which are necessary for meaningful communication in English when they attend university. It is, therefore, my wish, that this thesis will assist teachers to acquire a somewhat better understanding of this particular practice, in order that they are able to reflect upon their EFL classroom discourse and

⁴ In other words, teachers used classroom questions as a source when putting the questions for the mid-term or final exams. This was noticeable to, and presumably understood or grasped by, students when teachers say statements like: '*hatha muhimm* - this is important' or '*hatha fi elemtihan* - this is going to be in the exam' when referring to certain question-answer practices.

optimise it should the situation necessitates this. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first empirical study in the Saudi higher education context which analyses EFL classroom questioning, and collates various sets of data from the participants in this regard. It is hence hoped that the findings will be valuable for EFL students and teachers in general, and at the Saudi university-level context in particular, as it is based on data relating to students' perspectives and teachers' practices with regard to a central discursive practice (i.e. questioning).

1.3 Significance of the Study

Literature which centres on the EFL classroom milieu shows that a large proportion of teaching and learning time is spent on teacher talk (Chaudron, 1988 and Cazden, 2001). Some of this teacher talk relates to questioning used, for example, to assist learners to improve their learning, practise skills, or use the target language (Wilén, 1982; Dillon, 1988b, 1990, 2007; Holland and Shortall, 1997; Walsh, 2006). This research shows that questions are not only the most often used strategy, but also the most important strategy used by teachers following lecturing 'talking' (Ellis, 1994). In addition, according to Cazden (2001), teachers tend to perceive questioning to be critical to successful participation in the classroom discourse.

Additionally, Schiffrin (1994), amongst other researchers (e.g. Hsu, 2001 and Chang, 2009), argued that by means of question-answer routines, teacher talk can assist the learner to focus his/her attention on syntactic forms, which can, in turn, facilitate the development of their linguistic knowledge of the target language. However, a substantial number of studies and theories regarding teacher questions have focused on teachers' questioning practices, techniques and strategies, in content areas, e.g. mathematics and science (Hamilton and Brady, 1991; Durham, 1997; Mason, 2002), rather than in second and foreign language classrooms (Carlsen, 1991; Hsu, 2001; David, 2007). Likewise, albeit there are many studies into questioning in second/foreign language settings at

school level, e.g. elementary and intermediate (Oteify, 1979; White and Lightbrown, 1984; Wu, 1993; McNeil, 2010), few investigations have addressed questioning in the EFL university classroom (Farahian and Rezaee, 2012). This study has, thus, sought to consider classroom questioning in a Saudi Arabian EFL higher education context (see 1.1 for further details regarding the value of researching classroom questioning).

In addition, in the EFL classroom where teaching and learning as well as second language acquisition take place, teacher questions may be regarded as input tools as asking and answering questions are a form of language use in both communication and cognitive activities (Swain, 1998). Tsui (2001) remarked that, “an important dimension of classroom interaction is the teacher question” (p. 122). It may therefore be assumed that questions should often be comprehensible to students (both in terms of meaning and grammar), not only to enhance the flow of classroom discourse, but also to facilitate students’ interaction with meaningful language. However, a teacher’s question, be it comprehensible or not, may not always receive/generate a response. One reason for this could be that students may not understand, or perhaps simply ‘misinterpret’, the question due to the mismatch or gap between the learners’ language proficiency⁵ and the difficulty of the question (Tsui, 2001). Students could also be too shy to answer. Accordingly, investigating teachers’ question functions and question modifications which occur throughout classroom interaction, as in the current study, is deemed necessary for understanding the discursive picture of this aspect of teacher talk in the Saudi EFL university classroom discourse.

Furthermore, the Saudi educational language classroom context has been seen as a context where more traditional approaches to language teaching and learning are prevalent (Al-Nafisah, *ibid.*). that is, although Saudi EFL students

⁵ Saudi EFL researchers (e.g. Al-Nafisah, 2001; Al-Hazmi, 2003; Jawhar, 2012) have reported that students in Saudi Arabian universities and schools are faced with language difficulties resulting from their limited English proficiency.

could, and may indeed, benefit from various modes of resources in the classroom ranging from pictures, videos, to pair and group activities, they (the students) are expected to rely largely on teacher talk (Jawhar, 2012). In other words, as EFL students deal with and learn the English language, classroom discourse in general, and question-answer exchange in particular, can serve as a linguistic device, environment, medium, and resource to assist student language use and learning. Thus, it may well be worthy of investigation. By and large, the current study into teachers' questions, question modification in observable classroom settings, as well as students' perspectives on classroom questioning, concurs with Cazden (2001) who asserted that the study of classroom discourse "helps uncover use of language as a medium of educational institution communication" (p.1-2). Long (1996:421) also noted that questions and changes in question forms can be "a fruitful topic for research". As a result, in seeking to understand some of the underlying meanings of question-answer exchange in the Saudi EFL university classroom, this study hopes to help elucidate the functions and some uses, and related views, of teachers' questioning in this EFL classroom context.

Previous research findings relating to English language classroom questioning, have been based mainly on only two research methods— either, as a rule, the observation of participants, (Rullan-Millare, 1996; Shomoossi, 2004; David, 2007), or observations and interviews, (Hussin, 2006; Wong, 2010). In addition, the number of participants in this study (n= 341) is larger than that of previous studies into classroom questioning in EFL contexts. Furthermore, by contrast to previous research into classroom questioning in the Arabic EFL context⁶ (e.g. Oteify, 1979 in Egypt; Al-Moamani and Al-Momani, 2009 in Jordan; Al-Khataybeh and Al-Jafreh, 2012 in Jordan) which utilised document analysis and observational checklists, this study utilised survey questionnaires, video recordings of real time classroom interaction and interviews with teachers

⁶ However, it is with no doubt that prior work on teacher questions in Arabic EFL classrooms could enhance our understanding of their categories and relevance to the communicative language classroom.

(both male and female). The data analyses were quantitatively based on the participants' gender, and qualitatively centred on question functions and modifications which derived from the classroom discourse analysis and interview data (see 3.7). Accordingly, the significance of this study is, then, built on methodological as well as contextual gaps in the research into classroom questioning discourse in the Saudi EFL context.

1.4 Context of the Study

Data for this thesis (341 survey questionnaires issued to students, 8 semi-structured interviews with teachers and approximately 8 classroom hours of video recordings carried out with a digital camera) is drawn from EFL classrooms at the English Language Centre (hereafter ELC) of Taibah University⁷ in Medina⁸, western Saudi Arabia (see the country's map in figure 1.1 on the next page). The teachers involved were holders of either an MA or a PhD⁹ in teaching English as a foreign language and/or applied linguistics, and their teaching experience ranged from 4 to 31 years. Every student is expected to have successfully completed at least six years of formal education learning EFL¹⁰ prior to joining the ELC.

English language is an established subject at the study context and, in spite of years of formal EFL learning, ELC students undergo a one-year intensive English language study programme designed to prepare them for their

⁷ Founded in 2003, Taibah University is the largest public university in Medina (western Saudi Arabia). It encompasses twenty-two colleges and an English Language Centre (www.taibahu.edu.sa).

⁸ Sometimes also spelled as Madinah.

⁹ It is worth mentioning here that it is a requirement to teach at the Taibah University ELC, a job applicant must have an MA or a PhD in a relevant EFL field along with some teaching experience.

¹⁰ Albeit this might not always be of the highest quality as reported by Alsughaer (2009) and Gawi (2012) (see 1.2).

disciplines, which are mostly taught following an English-as-a-medium-of-instruction policy. Subsequently, upon completion of this programme, students attend different colleges at Taibah University. Every college offers a Bachelor's degree (across a variety of disciplines, e.g. Arts, ELT, Engineering, Mathematics, Medicine, etc.) and some (i.e. College of Education and College of Computer Sciences), offer a Master's degree.

1.5 Saudi Arabia and its Education System

Saudi Arabia, the focus of this study, is a Middle Eastern independent monarchy situated in the south east of Asia (see figure 1.1 below). It is surrounded by a number of countries; namely, Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Oman and Yemen.



Figure 1.1: Map of Saudi Arabia

Source: (<http://goingabroadtravel.com/saudi.html>)

Geographically, Saudi Arabia is a large country, with an area of 2,240,000 square kilometres, representing almost four-fifths of the Arabian Peninsula. It is classified as the third largest country in the Middle East (Alrasheed, 2000). The country was established in 1932, after King Abdul-Aziz bin Abdul-Rahman al-Saud unified its different regions (Al-Baadi, 1988) and has been ruled continuously by the Royal Family of al-Saud, i.e. King Abdul-Aziz, his sons, and grandsons. The official language in Saudi Arabia is Arabic and this is manifested in the considerable sense of religious and cultural homogeneity¹¹ in the country¹². Arabic is also the language of the Quran (Muslims' Holy Book)¹³ and the language in which the religious and cultural Islamic heritage is expressed, which makes it not only an official language but also a sacred one. It is possible that this may have some influence on the attitudes of the students with regard to foreign languages.

In 2010, the population ¹⁴ of Saudi Arabia was estimated to be approximately 29 million, including around 6.1 million foreign residents. Languages other than Arabic for example, Tagalog and Urdu, are thus spoken in the country (mostly by the large expatriate community) Due to its global spread, English enjoys an increasingly important place as the only recognised foreign language in Saudi Arabia since first being introduced in 1937 (Alam and Khan, 1988; Al-Nafisah, 2001). English has improved its status to become “admired by the Arabs and highly desirable for tuition to children and to be spoken among the educated individuals” (Al-Shurafa, 2010:3), not only in Saudi Arabia, but also in the Arab world. It is also regarded, by the Saudi Government, as a medium for diplomatic relations with the West as well as a tool for importing new technologies into the country (Habbash, 2011). Researchers,

¹¹ As almost the majority of the local population are Arabs and Muslims.

¹² According to Gorrill (2007:1), Saudi Arabia is “rich in Arab and Muslim heritage and [is] characterised by a high-degree of cultural homogeneity”.

¹³ It is also the constitution of the country (Saudi Arabia).

¹⁴ Most Saudis are of Arab origin but some are of mixed origin and have descended from Turks, Iranians, Indonesians, Indians, North Africans, and others.

such as Hutchinson and Waters (1987), stated that English has spread in the Arab world for a number of reasons which are especially relevant to Saudi Arabia at the present time. Firstly, it is the language of the scientific and technical revolution principally driven by the United States of America. Secondly, Western money and knowledge has moved to oil-rich countries, and the language through which such power is propagated is English. With regard to EFL in the educational context, the focus of the current study, English is taught from the sixth grade (the final level of primary school education) until university (see 2.8 for more details on EFL in Saudi Arabia).

As with other neighbouring Arab countries (e.g. Egypt and Jordan), and perhaps other countries in the world, the structure of Saudi Arabia's educational system consists of six major stages (see figure 1.2 below). Although most of these stages illustrated below are beyond the context scope of this research, I believed it would be helpful to provide a brief overview of the Saudi educational system as this would present aspects of the background of the research environment (see Appendix N for a detailed description of the structure of the Saudi education system summarised below).

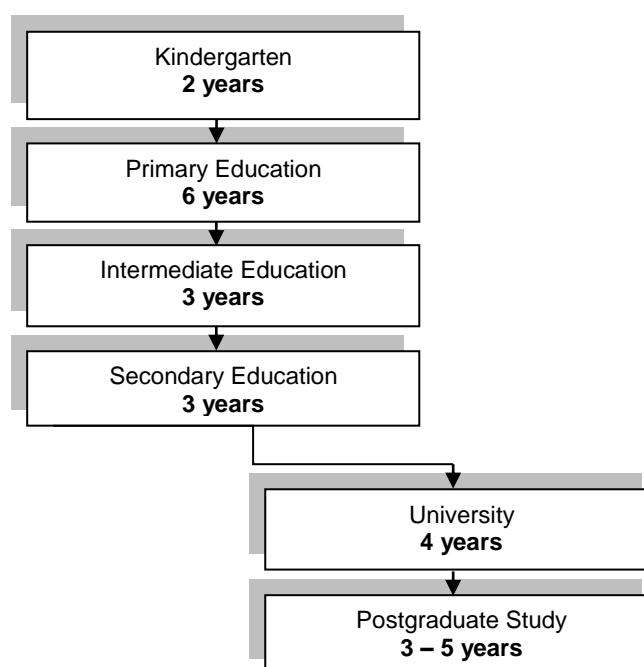


Figure 1.2: Flowchart of the education system in Saudi Arabia

According to Alsumaimer (1999:4), the Saudi education system is highly centralised and all educational policies are subject to government control and supervision. As a result, curricula, syllabi and textbooks are uniform throughout the country. Two governmental bodies govern the education system in Saudi Arabia as a rule. The Ministry of Education (MOE)¹⁵ is responsible for school education from kindergarten to secondary school, with offices throughout the country. The Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE)¹⁶, on the other hand¹⁷, is responsible for the tertiary education sector and proposes higher education policies, sets the educational and scientific research plans and projects, and acts as co-ordinator between the Saudi public and private universities¹⁸. At all stages after kindergarten, education in Saudi Arabia is gender-segregated¹⁹. Male and female students go to separate public and private schools as well as attend separate sections in the universities, whilst studying the same materials. This study hopes to have filled a methodological gap in Saudi Arabian EFL research literature, as due to gender segregation²⁰ in the classroom, studies have tended to either focus on males or females. The study findings will thus contribute to a better understanding of the role gender plays in student and teacher questioning.

Notably, education in Saudi Arabia is free at all levels²¹, which means providing equal educational opportunities for every citizen regardless of his/her

¹⁵ See: <http://www.moe.gov.sa/pages/default.aspx>

¹⁶ See: <http://www.mohe.gov.sa/ar/default.aspx>

¹⁷ Noteworthy, both ministries are mostly in agreement over policies and have quite interrelated cooperation (Alrasheed, 2000).

¹⁸ Noteworthy, rules and policies are the same in both private and public universities.

¹⁹ This is due to religious traditions and social practices.

²⁰ Gender segregation in Saudi Arabia means that men and women are separated physically in the public domain. There are separate places for each gender, which not only applies to their education, but also to their work place. This is very evident as it is in the visible sphere for any person visiting the country. For instance, each university or bank would have a separate branch for women and another for men.

²¹ With the exception of private and international schools.

social and financial status. Such a policy reflects the Saudi Arabian political ideology which regards education as the cornerstone of a prosperous economy (Alrasheed, 2000). The Saudi educational system also mandates that all schools must use the same curriculum and undergo the same examination system, however, excluding primary schools, the assessment system is mostly norm-referenced (whereby standards are set locally), thus passing the examinations in the intermediate schools, secondary schools, and at university is the main and only criterion for students to move from one stage to another. In instances, where a student has failed his/her examinations at the first attempt, another attempt (resit) is permitted. Should the student fail again, he/she will have to repeat the stage year²². Al-Sadan (2001:154) stated that “the regulations and procedures of assessment in Saudi Arabian schools omit any reference to individual or group work”, and also observed that the education system in Saudi Arabia is geared towards examinations that are considered to be the crucial gateway to personal advancement. Thus, teachers and pupils “focus on only one objective: how many pupils will pass?” (Al-Sadan, *ibid.*:154).

Summing up, I have not sought to cover or explain all aspects relating to Saudi Arabia and its education system in a single section. In the above section, there has been an attempt to elucidate as many issues as possible regarding the Saudi context for the reader, with the intention of assisting him/her to comprehend the context of this study, and recommendations and implications which arise from this study.

1.6 Organisation of the Thesis

Following provision of the background to the current study and the highlighting of its context, a brief overview of the way this thesis is organised is now given. The study is presented in six chapters; following the introductory

²² This is evident sometimes, particularly in secondary school and university levels (Al-Sadan, 2001).

chapter, the literature which relates to the topic under consideration is reviewed. This includes a brief summary of how language classroom discourse is researched, and how classroom discourse has been comprehended from different points of view. There is also an overview of some concepts of classroom questioning and relevant research on questioning carried out in language classes is presented. In addition, the relevance of gender to classroom questioning is considered before the chapter concludes with a brief outline of EFL classes in Saudi Arabia.

The research design and methodology of the current study are presented in the third chapter which includes a brief overview of my ontological and epistemological standpoints. Following this, there is some justification of the combination of the qualitative and quantitative research approaches which have been adopted. The third chapter also presents more detailed information about the study participants, procedure, data collection and data analysis, together with how each of the study research questions is answered. The fourth chapter presents results derived from the analysis of quantitative data which was obtained during the first stage of the study. This data is based on the study questionnaires which were issued to investigate the perspectives of Saudi EFL students towards the classroom questioning undertaken in their classes at the target context.

The fifth chapter discusses the study qualitative findings (which arose from the recorded classroom observations and teacher interviews) before a summary of the research findings is drawn up and the research overall outcomes are discussed in light of the study research questions and the relevant literature. In conclusion, in the sixth and final chapter there is a summary of the study key findings, the study contributions, implications, limitations, suggestions for future research and the researcher's concluding remarks.

1.7 Chapter Summary

This first chapter has introduced the present study to the reader by presenting the background, rationale and aim of the study. It has also illustrated the problem of the study and offered a reflection on the significance of the current research. Technical information, such as the description of the location of the study and the structure of the thesis, has also been presented. A review of the literature which relates to the main topic under investigation in this thesis is presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

After introducing the research topic and its contextual background together with the organisation of the thesis in Chapter One, a review of the research literature on the many aspects of classroom questioning discourse relevant to this study is now provided. The current chapter commences with a brief summary of how language classroom research has been undertaken, and how classroom discourse, in particular, has been understood from different theoretical perspectives and methodological orientations. An overview of some concepts of one particular kind of discourse (classroom questioning) is subsequently highlighted, followed by a discussion of relevant research on questioning carried out in language classes. The relevance of gender to classroom questioning is also subject to consideration next. Prior to concluding the chapter, a brief outline of EFL classes in Saudi Arabia is presented.

With regard to how classroom questioning is perceived and practised in an English as a foreign language context, a review of the literature leading to the present study could be viewed as a group of four 'tributaries' flowing into a river. These tributaries are: 1) classroom research, 2) classroom discourse analysis, 3) classroom questioning, and 4) research on classroom questioning in language classrooms. In order to maintain the greatest possible clarity in the discussion, I commence with the more generally applicable of the 'tributaries' and concludes with those most specifically relevant to the current study. The aim is to discuss the valuable contributions as well as the limitations and critiques of various approaches under the aforementioned themes in an attempt to establish the analytical framework for the present study. This will also be discussed and rationalised in more detail in the next chapter.

2.2 Approaches to Classroom Research

In the past four decades or so, an explosion of research and scholarly interest has been witnessed in the field of second and foreign language classroom discourse leading to a respectable amount of knowledge having become available on the subject of students' in addition to that of teachers' interactional strategies (e.g. van Lier, 1988; McCarthy, 1992; Edwards and Westgate, 1994; Seedhouse, 1996; and Walsh *et al.*, 2011) and communication problems (e.g. Tarone, 1980; Labarca and Khanji, 1986; Johnson, 1995; Rababah, 2005; and Nakatani, 2010). This situation has arisen as many researchers, notwithstanding their theoretical perspectives or methodological orientations, believed that most of the L2 learning which takes place in the classroom occurs within contexts of interactions between teachers and students, as opposed to interactions between two or more students, for instance (e.g. van Lier, 1996; Jarvis and Robinson, 1997; Hall and Verplaetse, 2000; Hall and Walsh, 2002).

Chaudron (1988), similar to other researchers, stated that four main traditions shape this research into second language classrooms. These are, namely: a) psychometric studies, which he described as the line of research which follows experimental designs and uses both pre and post-tests, b) ethnographic analysis, which Chaudron identified as the research tradition that offers interpretive analyses of what is happening inside the classroom without tending to be objective or neutral, c) interaction analysis, which in Chaudron's words "focuses on the social meanings inherent in classroom interaction" (p.14) and uses observation instruments or real-time coding systems, and d) discourse analysis, which Chaudron viewed as research that uses analytical observation schemes and "focuses on the linguistic aspects of interaction" (Chaudron, *ibid.*). The current study follows the latter, i.e. discourse analysis, in the analyses of its classroom interaction data and utilises it as a tool to accompany the use of student questionnaires and teacher interviews.

2.3 Research on Classroom Discourse

This study, at its most basic level of analysis, investigates discourse. It is important to define how this fundamental concept is understood theoretically prior to focusing on the specific issue being examined in the study, i.e. the question-answer exchange between teachers and students in a university-level EFL classroom milieu. Discourse can be defined in many different ways and can also be analysed from a variety of perspectives dependant on the underlying theoretical framework which is being used. Accordingly, it is necessary to briefly visit the notion of discourse analysis in the context of formal and applied linguistic research whilst also briefly articulating the way in which it will be understood in this thesis.

Historically, formal linguistic theories, in one way or another, have investigated and defined the properties which make up language. Research carried out by means of formal linguistic approaches (*c.f.* Chomsky, 1988) involves, by and large, breaking down language into constitutive parts (e.g., morphology, syntax and phonology) to analyse how each part functions and how each one contributes to the classification or way in which one language works and/or differs from another. Formal linguistic research, e.g. structural linguistics, may, to a certain extent, divorce language from the context in which it has been used to better understand the linguistic system(s) to which it is bound (Fairclough, 2001). A main objective of this type of analysis, according to Mills (1997), is to analyse the units which constitute a sentence, without considering their functions in the discourse. Thus, “meanings, contexts and interpersonal relationships between interlocutors” are not crucial factors in the analysis (Candlin, 1997:4).

Although analysing linguistic forms or properties of a language has indeed its own merits and scholarly contributions; it provides only half of what constitutes discourse. It is necessary to take into consideration who is producing the discourse (i.e. the speaker) and where it is taking place (i.e. the context). With regard to EFL classrooms, for instance, researchers such as

Walsh (2002:16) believed that teachers' use of language in the classroom is as equally important as the methodology which teachers employ. Discourse analysis has mostly been used in classroom-based research for the investigation of the organisation of talk at the level of individual speakers' turns and how these turns and individual utterances fit within a stretch of discourse to form a coherent conversational transaction. Seedhouse (2004:45) proposed that most previous investigations on L2 classroom interaction have "implicitly or explicitly adopted what is fundamentally a discourse analysis approach".

There have been numerous studies which have focused on specific aspects of classroom interaction such as teacher talk, students' speech, and question-answer exchange between teachers and students. Discourse analysis studies have not only analysed teacher and student talk, but have also investigated individual utterances from longer discursal units. A leading work in language classroom discourse is that of Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) which was initially used in English as a first language and then subsequently in second and foreign language classrooms. In this model, classroom language consists of a mainly three-phase discourse: Initiation, Response and Feedback (IRF) exchanges. The following example from Sinclair and Coulthard (1975:21) illustrates this exchange:

Teacher: Can you tell me why do you eat all that food?	<i>Initiation (I)</i>
Pupil: To keep you strong.	<i>Response (R)</i>
Teacher: To keep you strong. Yes. To keep you strong.	<i>Feedback (F)</i>

For linguists such as Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) and Wells (1993), this model is considered to be a 'used by default' exchange on the part of language teachers in L2 classrooms. Griffin and Cole (1989, cited in Wells, 1993:2), viewed this 'triadic exchange' of classroom discourse as a tool which achieves educational goals, and argued that it offers the language teacher the opportunity to replace incorrect information with that of correct information during the teaching process. Researchers (e.g. Edwards and Westgate, 1994; Johnson, 1995; and Nunan and Bailey, 2009) stated that this 'triadic dialogue' is

considered to be a significant characteristic of classroom discourse, both in content-based and L2 classrooms. In addition, van Lier (1996:149) noted that “[t]here is probably nothing that symbolizes classroom discourse quite as much as this structure, the much noted IRF exchange”.

Classroom discourse has also been classified into a hierarchy of five ranks whereby each rank contains the one immediately below it. The highest rank is lesson, followed by transaction, exchange, move, and finally act. This system of analysis is quite complex in that it attributes each turn to a certain rank then it drops to the immediate lower rank. The aforementioned classification systems have indeed allowed for a systematic study of classroom interactions, and have also facilitated the task of analysing data. However, according to van Lier (1988, 1996), researchers who used these systems seemed rather anxious to apply the classification system to classroom data and, in some instances, did not account for data which did not meet the system requirements.

Commentators such as Schiffrin (1994) have differentiated between two main approaches to classroom discourse analysis: a) the formal approach, whereby discourse is defined as a unit of language beyond the sentence, and b) the functional approach, which defines discourse as language use. The current study has principally adopted the latter approach. In my view, whilst both formal and functional paradigms resemble classroom discourse, nonetheless, both approaches to discourse analysis assist one’s understanding of the formal properties and functional purposes of classroom interaction (Chaudron, 1988), by, for instance, uncovering different types of question strategies (e.g. Tsui, 1985, 1992; Brock, 1986; and Farrar, 2002) and repair strategies (e.g. Jarvis and Robinson, 1997; and Cullen, 2002) with regard to L2 use and L2 learning.

Summing up, discourse analysis, as an outline of the literature clearly shows, is not a methodology or philosophical school that is unified under a common manifesto or creed. It is, however, a group of methodologies which contain as many differences as commonalities, but which share a particular

group of views that are orientated toward the ways in which language (quite broadly defined, i.e. differing from linguistic or grammatical analysis) and society can best be understood. At the basic level, as understood by this thesis, discourse analysis is a group of methodologies which have been developed with the aim of studying recorded discourse, with emphasis being placed on the purpose and effect of the discourse rather than on the content of the discourse, although the latter should not be ignored in analysis (Potter and Wetherell, 1995, and Wood and Kroger, 2000).

2.4 Orientations in Classroom Discourse Research

Given that spoken discourse is comprised of the linguistic elements of a language produced by a speaker, or a group of speakers in a given context the environment (both social and physical) may well affect the manner in which discourse is created and maintained. Research focusing on classroom discourse has yielded insights into a variety of variables which work together to affect the way in which meaning is socially constructed between teachers and students. In general, investigations into the nature of discourse in L2 classrooms have included issues such as anxiety (Young, 1992), students' perceptions of classroom social dynamics (Morris and Tarone, 2003), equality and symmetry in dialogues (van Lier, 1998), student motivation (Clement *et al.*, 1994), pedagogical concerns (Anton, 1999) theoretical perspectives (Mantero, 2006), and assessment techniques (Anton, 1999).

The above-quoted studies are bound together by a basic understanding that language used between teachers and students in a classroom context is, to a large extent²³, fundamentally different when compared to interaction that occurs outside the classroom. That is, language is at the centre of all interactions in the classroom, albeit there are other forms of behaviour in a classroom which may also be relevant, if not the focus. By this, meaning is born out of social interactions between all participants in this context and discourse

²³ Given that there are times when interaction might be less formal, at beginning or end, outside what people might consider 'official' class time.

is essential to the way in which learners build knowledge about the subject being studied (Zuengler and Cole, 2005). According to Hall and Walsh,(2002), in addition, it is largely through classroom discourse that teachers and students establish their roles and relationships within the classroom.

In the context of the L2 classroom, language is both the mode by which teachers and students interact as well as the goal of the learning activity (Swain, 1998). As such, oral interaction in L2 classroom contexts acts not only as a simple tool for the communication of information, but also as a means which involves “complex social, cultural, political, cognitive, and linguistic processes and contexts -all of which are part of the meaning and significance of using language” (Bloome *et al.*, 2005:12). Many of these facets of discourse in the classroom (e.g. social and cognitive aspects) are enacted and realised through interactions between teachers and students. However, the review of existing literature shows that in traditional²⁴ L2 classrooms, as likewise, in L1 classroom contexts, teachers spend a considerable amount of time on the kinds of interactions which develop with, and among, their students in their classes and also make a number of decisions about how discourse unfolds in their classrooms (Cazden, 2001). Accordingly, a considerable level of research has considered how teachers’ decisions, and the activities they implement in the classroom, affect the ways in which discourse in the L2 classroom is created and maintained in a variety of classroom settings (*cf.* McCarthy, 1992).

In a recent study into L2 classroom discourse, Ho (2006), for instance, investigated how the social and cultural aspects inherent in Bruneian society affect the pedagogical decisions made by English as second language (henceforth ESL) teachers. In the course of analysing how ESL teachers interact with their students during whole-class discussions, Ho drew attention to the impact of how Bruneian society conceptualises the role of the typical classroom teacher on classroom talk. In Brunei, ESL teachers are viewed as

²⁴ An example of non-traditional classrooms could be the CALL-based (Computer Assisted Language Learning) L2 classes
(See: http://library.hokusei.ac.jp/bunken/hokusironshu/ronshu/tandai/tan42/tan42_1.pdf).

people who are “all-knowing and whose role in the classroom is to transmit knowledge to students” by means of recitation scripts (e.g. initiation-response-evaluation sequences) whilst rarely allowing students the opportunity “to dialogue with them or with each other in the classroom” (Ho, 2006:106). Ho (ibid.) indicated that classroom oral interactions between teacher and students in these contexts often “reflect the educational values espoused by the larger sociocultural structure in which the class or particular academic institution exists” (p. 216) and that pedagogical decisions made by the ESL teacher as regards oral interactions in the classroom are influenced by the Bruneian educational context in which she was teaching. This study illustrates how oral discourse between teacher and students inside the L2 classroom can be influenced by social and cultural forces at work outside the classroom.

In addition to works such as that of Ho (2006), researchers such as Nassaji and Wells (2000) have considered various other pedagogical concerns which may affect how discourse evolves between teachers and students in the context of L2 classrooms. One area subject recently to considerable attention is that of teacher questions. Teacher questions in the L2 learning context have been researched, in some shape or form, since the 1980s (*cf.* Christenbury and Kelly, 1983; and Brock, 1986 - see 2.6 for further details on research into classroom questioning). A number of investigations have analysed the effects of different kinds of questions including the difference between display and referential questions (Cazden, 2001; Long and Sato, 1983), the function of intonation when using tag questions (Ramírez and Romero, 2005), and information questions and clarification requests (Donato and Brooks, 2004).

Other studies have taken a micro-analytic perspective and made use of micro-level analytical tools such as conversation analysis (CA). CA is a technique which analyses discourse based on transcripts of the interactions between interlocutors subject to the belief that meaning is found within the interaction transcript data itself (Markee, 2000:31).

Heritage (2004:223) stated that:

CA embodies a theory which argues that sequences of actions are a major part of what we mean by context, that the meaning of an action is heavily shaped by the sequence of previous actions from which it emerges, and that social context is a dynamically created thing that is expressed in and through the sequential organization of interaction.

CA is seeking, as ten Have (2007:31) put it, "... to explicate the inherent theories-in-use of members' practices as lived orders, rather than trying to order the world external by applying a set of traditionally available concepts, or invented variations thereof", thus, it is an inductive theoretical approach to investigating classroom discourse. Lazaraton, in 2004, employed CA in a study which aimed to understand an oral exchange between an ESL teacher and one of her students in an intensive English programme classroom in the USA. The researcher analysed a specific section of the transcript from a whole-class discussion and investigated how a non-native ESL teacher, teaching in a university setting, responds to a student's questions. Lazaraton concluded that her application of CA is an example of how this micro-level analytical technique offers the researcher (and reader) a well-researched analysis of discourse with no predetermined ideas or notions about the talk and/or the interlocutors permitted to enter into the analysis.

In sum, my intention was to present an overall account of the valuable contributions the aforementioned approaches, although stemming from different disciplines, have made to our understanding of L2 classroom discourse. When taken together, the approaches and studies presented to date explain some of the complex communicative interactions which take place during language lessons. Nevertheless, in spite of their contributions, there may still be some limitations in this line of research, e.g. data selection and findings generalisation, thus, a more detailed discussion of some of the results yielded through this line of research is given in the pages which follow.. An attempt has also been made

to highlight the typologies and levels of questions which L2 classroom research has presented, prior to an overview of research into questions in ESL, EFL and Arabic EFL contexts.

2.5 Conceptualising Classroom Questions

Research shows that questions are important as a core discourse feature (see 1.1 and 1.2); therefore understanding their function is central to understanding the mechanism of interaction in any given discourse. However, a study of classroom questions, originally motivated by an interest into investigating the processes of human cognitive development²⁵, was transformed into a multidisciplinary research area incorporating different perspectives and different research agendas. This interdisciplinary approach, whilst extending the notion of classroom questions and presenting the area with considerable breadth and width, resulted in the unwitting consequence of creating certain issues over which forming a consensus appears to be difficult. In the pages that follow, relevant research focusing on issues surrounding the definition, identification, and classification of classroom questioning is reviewed. Although some of these issues are beyond the scope of the current study, they are discussed from different perspectives to offer an overview of the field and to also address a body of empirical research that constitutes an important backdrop for research endeavours on classroom questioning.

2.5.1 Defining Classroom Questions

Whilst questions in the classroom context can be directed to various addressees such as individuals, pairs, groups of students, or the entire class (Brown and Wragg, 1993), the term 'question' is generally used without any definition (Tsui, 1992). Tsui noted that the term 'question' has never been

²⁵ One of the earliest examples of questioning is that of the notable Greek philosopher Socrates in Plato's *The Republic*. Socrates used a series of strategic questions to help his student Glaucon come to understand the concept of justice. Socrates purposefully posed a series of questions to help Glaucon reflect and think critically about the subject and eventually come to a new understanding of justice (Paul and Elder, 2006). This way of questioning became known as the Socratic Method (Harrop and Swinson, 2003:51).

clearly defined (ibid.:89) and Harris (1980: 271-272) appeared, likewise, to recognise the complexity of defining questions by drawing attention to the fact that the term ‘question’ is very ambiguous, as it is used widely in different levels of descriptive linguistics such as “syntax, semantics and discourse analysis”. Nevertheless, making a distinction between questions, imperatives and declaratives would offer a clearer understanding of questions. Wu (1993:51), for instance, showed that whilst “Would you speak louder?” is syntactically interrogative, it is functionally a “request”; whereas “Tell me why?”, which is grammatically imperative tries to seek information from the respondent and thus can be considered a question.

According to Dillon (2007), teacher questions are, in the main, explicit “pedagogical devices” utilised to obtain answers (p.135). The central purpose of asking a question is, thus, to receive a response. Young (1992:99) likewise pointed out that the major aim of questions is to obtain information or acquire knowledge of some kind. Whilst it may be expected that questions in people’s day-to-day life concern what the questioner does not know, matters are different in the educational context²⁶ as teachers are expected to know most of the answers relating to the subject of the discussion (Wilén, 1982) and, thus, they may ask about issues they have previous knowledge of (i.e. display questions – Cazden, 2001). Teachers are clearly invested with power, academic knowledge and management authority. Cotton (1988) declared that classroom questions are “instructional cues or stimuli that convey the content elements to be learned and directions for what the students are to do and how they are to do it” (p.12). Albeit that “questions may well go beyond simply providing students with cues to convey content” (Clement and Rea-Ramirez, 2008) (see 5.3), this practice, which is a key aspect of teacher talk or teacher verbal interaction, can be viewed as a tool for moving the teaching and learning environment beyond general conversation towards specific contexts. It is also a central function, one of many, of teacher questions (see 2.5.3 and 5.3).

²⁶ In classrooms, questions often have different functions and not everyone has the right to use them in the same way[s], e.g. ‘why are you late?’ is unlikely to be addressed to a teacher, by a student.

2.5.2 Classifying Classroom Questions

2.5.2.1 Taxonomies of Question Forms

A number of researchers have tried to identify types, functions, characteristics, forms, and even the definitions of questions. One concept proposed by Kearsley (1976) views oral questions as a typology of speech forms, a verbal act intended to “elicit a verbal response” (p. 359). Kearsley’s criteria for distinguishing questions from other speech acts include: a) the presence of a rising tone, b) the inversion of subject and verb, and c) the presence of an interrogative word. In the light of this assumption, Kearsley subdivided questions into either *direct* or *indirect* questions, as illustrated in figure 2.1 below:

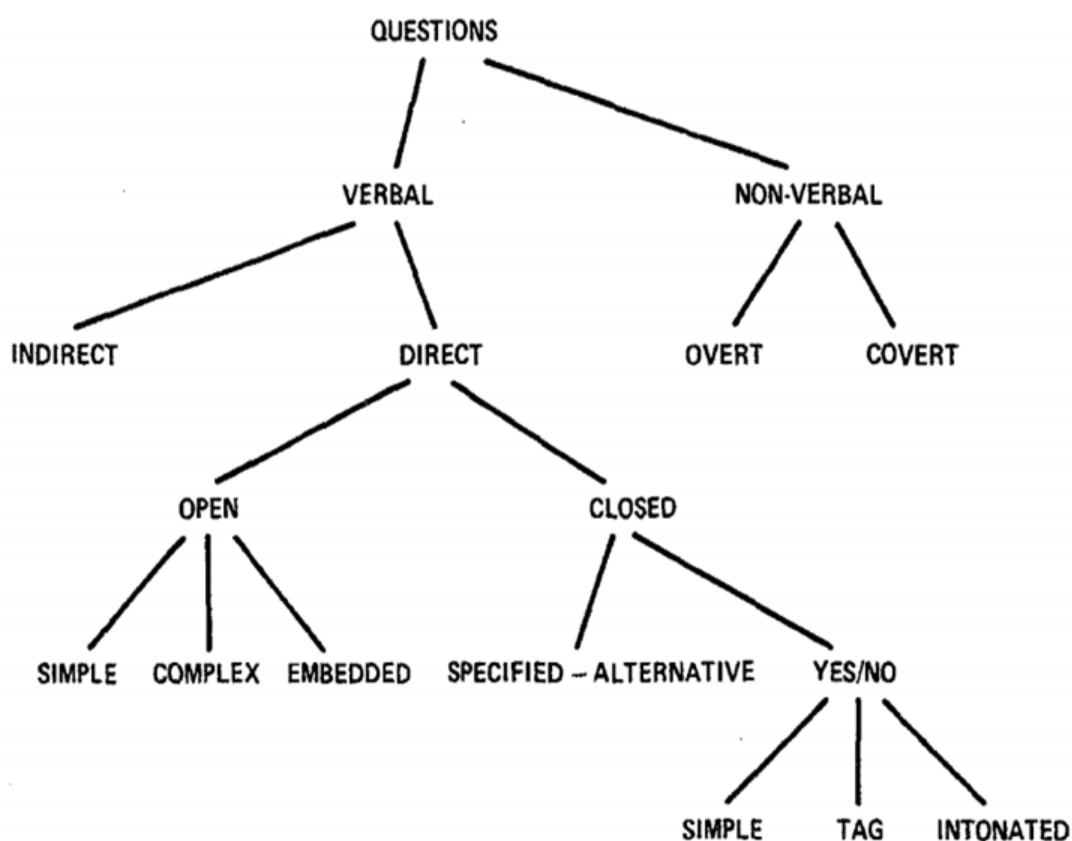


Figure 2.1: Kearsley’s taxonomy of question forms (Kearsley, 1976:357)

Kearsley (ibid.:356) stated that direct questions are sentences with a clear interrogative character²⁷ (e.g. “Why did you do that?”); whilst indirect questions are declaratives which contain an embedded interrogative (e.g. “I wonder where the house is”). In line with Kearsley, researchers (e.g. Robinson and Rackstraw, 1972; Goffman, 1976) point out that this direct-indirect division is applicable equally to answers.

According to Quirk *et al.* (1972, cited in Tsui, 1992), based on syntactic forms, questions are distinguished into (a) yes/no questions which expect either affirmation or negation; (b) questions with interrogative words (wh-question) which seek an open range of replies; and (c) alternative questions which expect at least an option presented in the question. For instance, “Do you know anything about him?” is a yes/no question, whilst “What do you remember about the legend of Robin Hood?” is classified as a wh-question (Wragg and Brown, 2001:37). Likewise, “Do you really mean that the wind will cut through it or do you mean the dart itself cut through the air?” can be viewed as an alternative question (Wragg and Brown, 2001:50).

A further distinction is made in the literature between two question types - open and closed. Whilst open questions tend to contain interrogative words such as ‘who’ and ‘what’, closed questions, on the other hand, are mostly formed by either the inversion of the subject and verb or a rising intonation. For example, “What are muscles for?” and “Where are your muscles?” are open questions whereas “Do you think bird muscles are actually bigger than that?” is a closed question (Wragg and Brown, 2001:25). According to Hargreaves (1984), this method of classification is the most widely used as it provides clear definitions of questions and enhances the reliability of research coding. Table 2.1, on the next page, summarises the common characteristics researchers and commentators attach to open and closed questions which emerged from this study’s literature review.

²⁷ Not only this, but also such direct questions, as Kearsley (ibid.:356) maintained, are generally “indicated in written discourse by the question mark (?), and in verbal discourse by certain intonation patterns”.

Question Form	Synonym	Characteristic/Example
Open-ended	Broad Question	Emphasis on the process by which students arrive at the answers (Hargreaves, 1984). <i>Example: What writing strategies are using in the essay?</i>
	Productive Question	Low-constraint (de Rivera et al., 2005). <i>Example: How would you explain this?</i>
	Divergent Question	Conducive for elaborated and extended answers (de Rivera et al., 2005). <i>Example: Name as many uses as you can think of?</i> Require higher cognitive skills such as reasoning and judgment (Hargreaves, 1984). <i>Example: What do you predict would happen to that driver in the traffic?</i>
Closed-ended	Narrow Question	Emphasis on results and the answers' correctness (Hargreaves, 1984). <i>Example: What pronoun can we use for the photo in the board?</i>
	Unproductive Question	High-constraint (de Rivera et al., 2005). <i>Example: Is this solution correct?</i>
	Convergent Question	Conducive for short, simple responses (Hargreaves, 1984). <i>Example: What other adjectives describing one's personality can you think of?</i> Require lower cognitive skills such as recall of facts (Hargreaves, 1984). <i>Example: What other adjectives can you think of that describe people personalities?</i>

Table 2.1: A summary of the characteristics of open-ended and closed-ended questions

When the influence of the teacher's questioning in creating what they call "interactive learning environment", was considered by Smith and Higgins (2006), they argued that what makes a question open or closed is the teacher's feedback or response to the students' answers to that question, not merely the question form. However, conversely McCormick and Donato (2000) when working within a sociocultural theoretical perspective, proposed that teacher

questions should not take on the role of an elicitation device whereby teachers (who already know the answer to the questions they ask) elicit students' knowledge about the content of the discussion. They suggested by contrast, that teacher questions need to be conceptualised as dynamic discursive tools which are used to build collaboration and scaffold comprehension. Working within the same theoretical paradigm, Hall and Walsh (2002) suggested, for instance, that teachers' questions need not simply elicit a translation of vocabulary, rather that they need to be embedded within a context that allows for students to engage in oral interactions that will encourage them to produce language that will ultimately aid them in their L2 learning.

2.5.2.2 Taxonomies of Question Functions

In addition to syntactic forms, questions could also be considered in more depth based on their functions, as 'function' is complex and the surface meaning is not always the actual meaning. Schiffrin (1994), amongst other commentators, stated that functions can be criteria for differentiating questions, and proposed that questions could function as tools for "information-seeking, information-checking, and clarification" (p. 165).

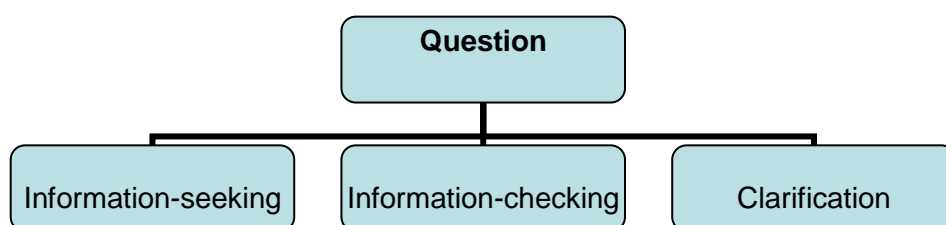


Figure 2.2: Schiffrin's taxonomy of question functions

Information seeking questions, as Schiffrin remarked, are asked as an eliciting tool when the speaker needs information from the respondent. For instance, "What kind of sports did you play as a youngster?" is asked for the purpose of eliciting a response regarding youngsters' sports; information which the questioner wishes to ascertain. Information-checking questions, on the other hand, are used when the speaker intends to check his/her current

perceptions or understanding. Schiffrin (1994) argued that these question types comprise various forms, namely: interrogative sentences, tag questions, statements with added particles at the tag position, particles with rising tones, and a rising tone on the last word of a declarative statement. This type of questions helps “check some aspects of ongoing talk, as with, ‘Right?’”, for instance (Schiffrin, 1994:165). An utterance like “Really?” stated as a response after a prior turn is another example of an information-seeking question. It could also function as ‘surprise’, ‘admiration’, or ‘disbelief’.

In addition, a speaker might ask a question to check the interlocutor’s familiarity with the ongoing topic. For instance, “Do you remember reading about him?” (Schiffrin, *ibid.*:166). This type of question can be viewed as an information-checking question. Clarification questions are asked when the speaker requires clearer details for the ongoing topic. A personal experience of the researcher of this study at a hotel some time ago, is hereby given below as an example of this. I (H) and the receptionist (R) took turns in the following conversation which included asking multiple clarification questions:

H: And my room’s preference is recorded, right?

R: Pardon me?

H: Have you considered my room view preference?

R: Is your room what?

H: I wanted to know the room view and I was wondering if my preference has been considered, you know what I mean?

R: Oh, yes. Your room is with a city view sir.

H: OK thank you.

In an attempt to group questions based on functions, Schiffrin (1994) also asserted that a question (viewed as an utterance) can be analysed as a question or a request or an offer dependant on ‘the illocutionary act’ of that utterance, or what the speaker intends and infers by means of uttering the question. ‘The term illocutionary act’ refers to the actual meaning and purpose of the speaker’s verbalised message. For example, a question may function as giving information, assurance, or a warning (Bonvillain, 1997:92) and Bonvillain

(1997)'s definition, "Can I help you?", which is verbalised mostly in service-providing encounters, is conventionally understood as an offer (Schiffrin, 1994:149). Similarly, "Can you tell me where I might find a catalogue?" communicates an essential condition of request (Schiffrin, 1994:154).

In their review of previous studies on the subject of classroom questioning, Long and Sato (1983) identified two categories under which teacher questions could be analysed; *echoic* and *epistemic* questions. Table 2.2 below summarises the sub- categories of these two question types:

Teacher Questions	
Echoic	Epistemic
Comprehension checks <i>Example: All right?, OK?, Does everyone understand?)</i>	Referential <i>Example: Why didn't you do your homework?)</i>
Clarification requests <i>Example: What do you mean?, What?, I don't understand)</i>	Display <i>Example: What is the opposite of "up" in English?</i>
Confirmation checks <i>Example: S: Carefully T: Carefully?, Did you say "he"?</i>	Expressive <i>Example: It is interesting the different pronunciations we have, isn't it?</i>
	Rhetorical <i>Example: questions asked for effect only, no answer expected from listeners, answered by the speaker. (Why did I do that?)</i>

Table 2.2: Long and Sato's taxonomy of question functions
(Long and Sato, 1983:276)

In a similar vein, Tsui (1992) also determined from a number of studies, that questions can indeed be viewed and classified based on their function. Previous research, e.g. Gall (1970), classified questions into three major types

of questioning: recall, thinking and procedural questions. According to Tsui, more recent research (1992) focused on the interactional functions of questions. He, thus, classified questions into requests and elicitations. With regard to elicitations, which are generally applied in second language classrooms, the questioner expects “a verbal response or any type of response surrogating a verbal response” (Tsui, 1992:102). The question “Which part of the town do you live in?”, for example, invites the addressee to supply a piece of information (Tsui, 1992:102). In terms of questions functioning as requests, Tsui also offered “Don't you think you should please take out the garbage?” as an example (p.101).

At the point where the question addresser(s) and addressee(s) occupy differing positions of power, questions can be possessed of more complicated functions. When a question is initiated by a superordinate to a subordinate, for instance between a parent and child, an employer and employee and from a person perceived as being from a higher class to a counterpart from a lower class, a hidden meaning (e.g. order, superiority enforcement, etc.) may be of importance (Roberts and Forman, 1972). More importantly, teachers whose roles deal with asking questions possess a power that students do not have. This power works to both enable students to learn and constrains the way they are positioned with others (Foucault, 1994). Sinclair and Coulter's (1975) seminal work, and the subsequent works of Mehan (1979) and Cazden (2001), have all illuminated this dominant role of the teacher in discourse patterns in classrooms. They have illustrated that the most common interaction pattern is where the teacher initiates talk usually with a question, the student responds, and the teacher then evaluates the viability of the student response before asking another question.

2.5.2.3 Taxonomies of Question Levels

Another issue regarding use of questions in the classroom is the distinction between higher-level and lower-level questions, as classified in Bloom *et al's* (1956) study. In an effort to understand what kind of questions

have been asked, and how effectively they stimulate student thinking, Bloom *et al.* (1956) generated a question classification system which is often referred to as 'Bloom's Taxonomy'. In this classification system, Bloom *et al.* (1956), as shown in figure 2.3 below and in more detail in table 2.3 on the next page, defined six categories in accordance with a required cognitive process.

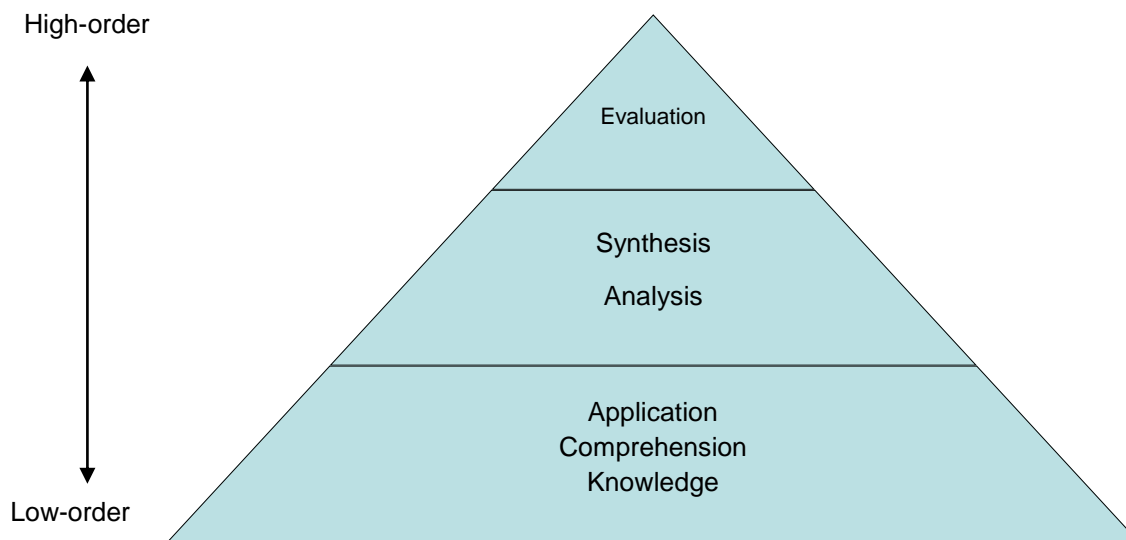


Figure 2.3: Bloom's taxonomy of question levels

Table 2.3, on the next page, presents further details of the six categories of classroom questioning as given by Bloom *et al.* (1956) and as summarised by Gall (1971). These categories are ranked hierarchically from complex (i.e. requiring higher levels of thinking) to simple (the least demanding), based on the type of thinking required.

Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving opinion • Judging the validity of ideas • Judging the merit of problem solution • Judging the quality of art and other products <p><i>Example: Do you think living on one's own is a good or a bad thing?</i></p>
Synthesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solving problems • Making predictions • Producing original communications <p><i>Example: Can you create a new way for doing this?</i></p>
Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying motives or causes • Making inferences • Finding evidence to support generalisations <p><i>Example: What do you see as other possible outcomes?</i></p>
Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying techniques and rules to solve problems <p><i>Example: Do you know another instance where this method could be applied?</i></p>
Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving descriptive • Stating main ideas • Comparing <p><i>Example: Can you provide an example of what you mean?</i></p>
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recalling facts or observations • Recalling definitions <p><i>Example: Which one is true and which one is false?</i></p>

Table 2.3: Categories of Bloom's Taxonomy (Gall *et al.*, 1971:12)

The literature shows that Bloom's Taxonomy has become fundamental to many of the other classification systems. For instance, Sander (1966) developed the following hierarchical question classification (see figure 2.4 on the next page):

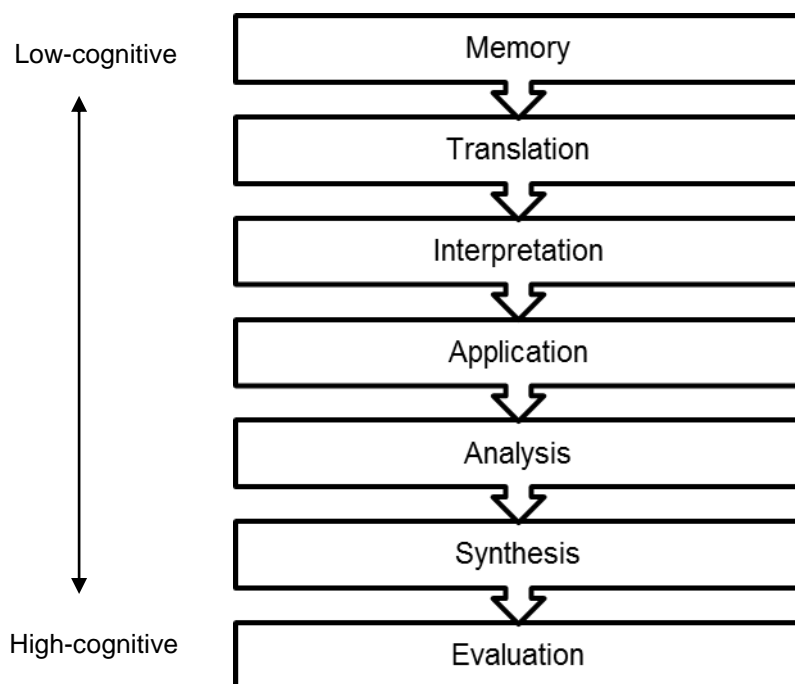


Figure 2.4: Sander's taxonomy of question levels

Sanders (1966) separated the Comprehension level in this classification (as in Bloom's, *ibid.*) into two categories, Translation and Interpretation, to create the above illustrated seven-level taxonomy. Researchers (e.g. Dains, 1986) argued that taxonomies such as that of Sanders are more suited to content-based teaching and learning, e.g. mathematics classes, to stimulate scientific thinking.

The question classification system proposed by Schreiber (1967) is also influenced by Bloom's taxonomy. Most of the categories in this classification (illustrated in figure 2.5 on the next page) are at large based on the cognitive processes required to answer the question. Gall (1970) argued that Schreiber's system, although curriculum-based, is suitable in social science classroom contexts.

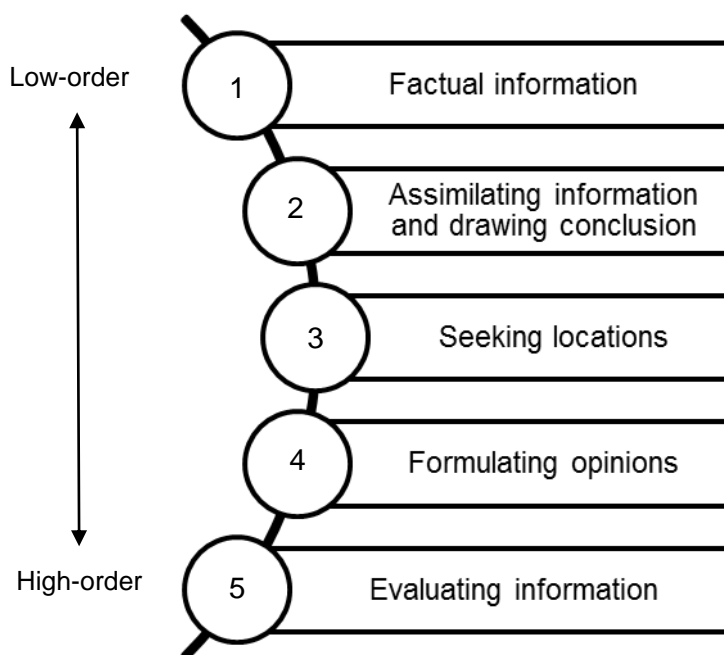


Figure 2.5: Schreiber's taxonomy of question levels

It is clear from the aforementioned question-level taxonomies that lower order questions usually require recall or review of facts. These have been defined in various forms; knowledge, comprehension, and application (Bloom *et al.*, 1956; Gall *et al.*, 1971); memory, translation, and interpretation (Sander, 1966), and factual information, assimilating information, drawing conclusions, and seeking locations (Schreiber, 1967). Higher order questions, on the other hand, necessitate a high level cognitive process, comprising analytical, discovery, and evaluative thinking . They also permit a wider range of responses than lower level questions. Higher order questions were defined as; synthesis, and evaluation (Bloom *et al.*, 1956; Sander, 1966; and Gall, *et al.*, 1971); and formulating opinion and evaluating information (Schreiber, 1967).

Hunkins (1989) determined that lower-level questions include teacher questions which seek to establish the students' knowledge and comprehension. Lower-level questions elicit responses which the students draw from memory, for example, "What explanation does the book give for the economic

depression of 1929?" (Hunkins, 1989:97). By contrast, questions which require the students to present their application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation are viewed as higher-level questions, an example being, "If you were to manage this experiment, what processes would you employ?" (Hunkins, 1989:99).

Although many commentators have apparently accepted Bloom *et al's* (1956) classification, Hunkins (1989) indicated there are still difficulties with this type of classification. He claimed that the problem lies in observation of the students to understand whether they are using high or low level cognitive processes. Dillon (1982:160), amongst other researchers, likewise maintained that research carried out into the relationship between the cognitive level of teachers' questions and the cognitive level of student responses "provides little evidence of cognitive correspondence". He further proceeded to claim that only in education are questions asked in the belief that they will stimulate thought (Dillon, *ibid.*).

Carlsen (1991) argued that the answer to the question "*what are the functions of the human skeleton?*" would be classified as a higher-order question according to most researchers who view classroom questioning as a process-product issue. However, would the same situation apply if the teacher had taught the function of the human skeleton in a previous lesson and had told the students that there would be a test on the topic? Hence, Carlsen (*ibid.*) pointed out that "the content of the question cannot be assessed without reference to a broader linguistic context [in addition to] the knowledge of the speakers" (p.166).

Concurring with Carlsen (*ibid.*), and in pursuit of the argument that to better understand questions in the context of teaching and learning the aims of asking questions should be considered, Walsh and Sattes (2005) declared that question use depends on two purposes – "recitation and discussion" (p.44). Recitation questions, to them, are used mainly for assessing students' knowledge, drill and practice, and test review. They also add that this type of questions requires students to offer correct but short, factual knowledge By

contrast, discussion questions are described by Walsh and Sattes as questions that are generally posed to “encourage students to uncover their ideas, reflect their understanding, and promote communication from diverse angles” (ibid.:44).

A further way to classify classroom question levels is proposed by Christenbury and Kelly (1983) in what they have referred to as the ‘Questioning Circles’. Three intersecting circles (see figure 2.6 below) represent domains of cognition, and rather than presenting a hierarchical approach to classifying question levels, they represent an overlapping (flexible) circular model (McComas and Abraham, 2004).

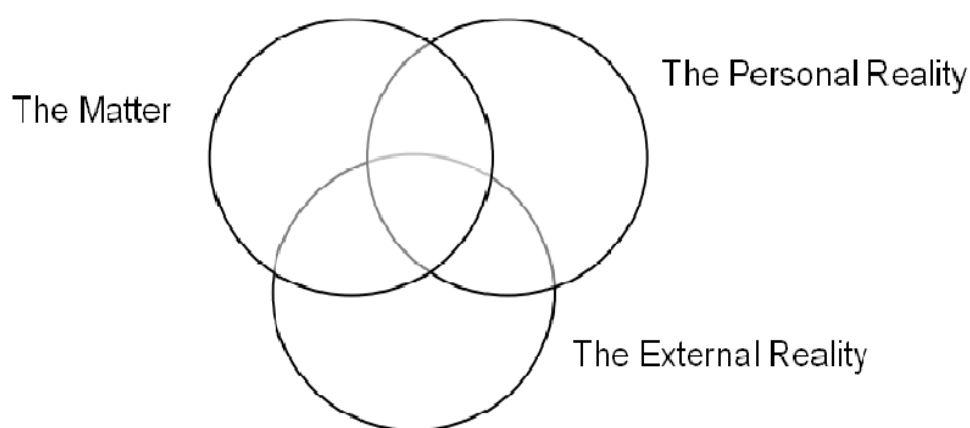


Figure 2.6: Christenbury and Kelly’s Questioning Circles
(McComas and Abraham, 2004:6)

According to Christenbury and Kelly (ibid.), each of the three circles represents a different aspect of reality: “(1) the Matter – the subject of discussion (issue, problem, topic); (2) the Personal Reality – the student’s relationship with the subject, and (3) the External Reality – the broader perspective of the subject”, thus in their model “the most significant questions are higher-order and are developed from areas where the circles overlap” (Christenbury and Kelly, 1983; cited in McComas and Abraham, 2004:6). This model appears to acknowledge students’ perspectives and integrate them into the questioning representation which, in turn, as McComas and Abraham

(2004:1) argued, begins to “introduce a constructivist view towards question generation”. Likewise, in this thesis, students’ perspectives are taken into consideration in the investigation into EFL classroom questioning (see the analyses of these in Chapter 4).

Moreover, questions asked in classroom settings, could also be classified into: a) procedural, b) convergent, and c) divergent questions (Richards and Lockhart, 1994) as shown in the following figure.

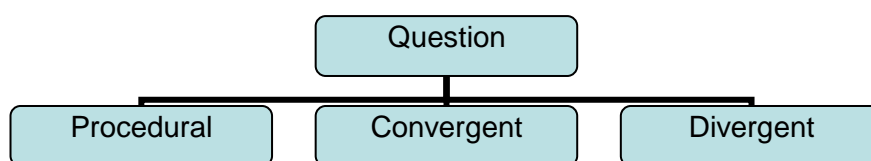


Figure 2.7: Richards and Lockhart’s question taxonomy

Procedural questions relate to classroom procedures and management, not the content of the lesson. As a rule, procedural questions are asked in language classrooms to check the completion of the assignments and to prepare students for a new task such as, “Who is absent today?”, “Why aren't you doing the assignment?” and “How much more time do you need?” (Jitsopa, 1999). Convergent questions encourage responses and focus on the central theme of the current lesson or content (Richards and Lockhart, 1994). Language teachers often ask several convergent questions to help develop oral skills, vocabulary, and grammar. Also, this type of question does not usually require students to engage in higher-level thinking. Examples of convergent questions are: “*what newspapers do you usually read?*”, “*have you ever read English newspapers?*”, and “*what is the headline of this newspaper?*” (Jitsopa, 1999). Divergent questions, by contrast, relate to the lesson whilst encouraging diverse student responses and requiring students to engage in higher-level thinking with their own information (Richards and Rockhart, 1994). Language teachers typically ask divergent questions after asking convergent questions

and obtaining, for example, the following responses: “*why do different newspapers present different news?*”, “*what are the best ways of promoting awareness when you read a newspaper?*”, and “*do you think news can affect our society? Why?*” (Jitsopa, 1999). A critical aspect of such questions, however, is that the demand ‘reason’ can cause problems. ‘Why are we on earth?’, for instance is quite a controversial question.

More specifically, in second and foreign language classroom contexts, a further distinction is made between ‘display’ and ‘referential’ questions (Chaudron, 1988). Display questions (*cf.* known-information questions in Mehan, 1979) are questions that teachers know the answer to but are asked to elicit or display particular structures. For instance, “Last week we were reading ‘Kee Knock Stan’ [title of a story]. What is ‘Kee Knock Stan’? Janice? (Tsui, 1995:18, cited in Tsui, 2001:121). By contrast, referential questions are questions that teachers do not know the answer to and ask the questions with the purposes of seeking information from the students. For instance, “What other advantages do you think you would have, if you were the only child in the family?” (Tsui, 1995:18, cited in Tsui, 2001:121). According to Long and Sato (1983), in naturalistic discourse or everyday conversation beyond the classroom, referential questions are more frequently asked than display questions. By contrast, in language classrooms, display questions outnumber referential questions. As van Lier (1988) pointed out, the dominance of display questions is an attempt to help lower the ‘affective filter’ (Krashen, 1985)²⁸ and its peculiarities are on account of the fact that there is often only a single correct response to display questions and this answer is known in advance of the questions, resulting in a situation whereby the teacher who knows the answer

²⁸ According to Krashen (*ibid.*), the ‘affective filter’, one part of the ‘Input Hypotheses’, is “a mental block that prevents acquirers from fully utilizing the comprehensible input they receive from language acquisition” (p. 3-4). This filter is ‘up’ when the second language learner is unmotivated or concerned about his/her weakness due to, for example, not understanding the message. However, the filter is ‘down’ when the learner “considers himself to be a potential member of the group speaking the target language” (Smith 1982, 1983 cited in Krashen 1985:4). Krashen’s affective filter hypothesis supports using understandable messages with language learners to assist them to interact with meaningful language.

may well be in charge, not only of the answers to the question, but also of establishing their linear coherence.

Mehan (1979:294) observed that the use of display questions, which reflect the one-way flow of information from teachers to students in most classrooms, is responsible for the fact that “conversations in classrooms have unique features, and that the demands of classroom discourse must be kept separate from the demands of everyday discourse”²⁹. Thus, although display questions may be more predominant in teacher talk, referential questions are considered helpful in creating more interactions between the teacher and the students (Tsui, 2001). Linked to this, I concur with Long and Sato (*ibid.*) who declared that, with an increased use of referential questions by teachers, a discourse can be generated which may resemble the normal conversations which students experience beyond the classroom. Walsh (2006), likewise, observed in his Self-Evaluation of Teacher Talk (SETT) framework, that both display and referential questions are significant features of teacher talk.

Summing up, the literature shows that questions can be viewed, and hence classified, from diverse angles - ranging from the structure of the question itself to the range of responses and the questioner's expectations. This is manifested in the multiple approaches to classifying questions which exist in education literature; however, nonetheless, frequently terms for classifying questions as discussed above are used almost interchangeably. This is perhaps due to the fact that teacher questions, in general terms, share similar purposes and functions, in particular as devices to assess students' understanding, maintain the instructional environment, and promote student interaction. Dillon's (1988) comment that “the answer to ‘what are the questions for’ is still too broad” (p. 64) appears acceptable, the reason being, as implied by Dillon, that questions in classrooms may have unlimited forms and functions. The current study has thus been approached from the position of attempting to induce but not impose theory. This perspective aligns with researchers such as

²⁹ Such a line of reasoning, I would argue, represents an important consideration for language teachers.

Hunkins (1989) and Carlsen (1991) who have asserted that questions should not be viewed separate from the context.

2.5.3 Functions of Classroom Questions

Whilst language educators and applied linguists have paid attention to the issue of defining and identifying types of classroom questions, researchers such as van Lier (1988) have argued that the proportion of question types, e.g. display and referential should not receive more attention, rather, the main focus should be on exploring whether or not questions provide input and act as verbal stimuli for the learners. van Lier's comment thus suggests that the roles of questions asked in language classrooms should be based on how and why teachers ask questions as well as how questions benefit student learning. As Lee (2006) argued, regardless of question types, "purposefully asking and helping students learn through questions is pedagogically interesting", and students can experience "interactional development across the sequence" of using the target language (Lee, 2006:700).

Where the focus is on teacher questions in the second language classroom, questions serve as devices to determine what students know, stimulate recall, deepen understanding, enhance imagination, and promote problem solving skills (Wragg and Brown, 2001). Wragg and Brown's reasons for asking questions are linked to those of Ralph (1999) who asserted that teachers' oral questions can: (a) help monitor the learners' acquisition, (b) increase motivation and participation, (c) assess learners' progress, (d) facilitate classroom management, and (e) promote verbal interaction. In addition, in second/foreign language classrooms, questions may help stimulate and maintain the students' interest, elicit particular structures and vocabulary items, clarify what a student has said, and encourage casual verbal exchanges (Richards and Lockhart, 1994).

Mollica (1994) contended that in second and foreign language classrooms, questions which are asked in the L2 are used as tools to encourage students to use the language being learned. In addition, questions help teachers assess

the learner's language ability, review the learned content and skills, and emphasises important points. Mollica's explanation supports what Harrell's (1971) book says on 'The Question as a Technique in Foreign Language Teaching'. Harrell (1971) considered questions to be necessary techniques for enhancing language learners' experiences in communication, and obtaining their involvement in "the reality of using the language" (p.1). Harrell (ibid.) also proposed the use of questions based on learners' language proficiency and situation. Firstly, in the basic level class, questions in the form of incomplete sentences or with a choice were to be asked as a means of emphasising pattern practice or drill. Secondly, in the pre-intermediate and intermediate levels, content-based questions, choice questions, and personal application questions were encouraged. Lastly, in advanced classes, effective questions to help learners develop deeper understanding and full individual potential were to be asked. Lake and Pappamihel (2003) adapted Krashen and Terrell's (1983) four stages of second language development and proposed that yes/no questions are appropriate for learners at the preproduction level, wh-questions with one-word or short answers for early production, and how and why questions for speech emergence and intermediate fluency levels.

Other researchers have analysed the manner in which native speaker (NS) teachers differ from non-native speaker (NNS) teachers as regards the question types they employ in the follow-up moves of the IRF sequence in whole-class discussions and the functions these questions serve in the subsequent student discourse. Consolo (2000) found that NS teachers in an EFL classroom provided more follow-up moves when compared to NNS teachers. Overall, the NS teachers in her study generated more student discussion; however, she also mentioned that several other factors may affect the amount and kind of oral discourse between the teacher and students. Some of these include: the methodology employed, the text or textbook used, the length of the class session (e.g. 50 as opposed to. 75 minutes), the overall goals of the teacher (e.g. reviewing information from a larger lecture format or introducing new material), and the varying proficiency levels of students in the same class (i.e.

catering for a variety of students whose L2 speaking abilities range from beginner level to intermediate).

Whilst questions serve various purposes for teachers (as shown above), they also serve a number of purposes for students. Student question-asking is an essential component of concept formation, problem solving, and verbal learning (Hyman, 1979). The questions asked by students³⁰ assist in demonstrating the organisation or reorganisation of their knowledge (Durham, 1997). Likewise, questions serve as a way for students to acquire information, to clarify an idea, to shape their thoughts, to assess someone else's point of view, and to seek solutions to problems. However, question-asking remains one of the most frequent acts of teachers (Gall, 1970; Orlich *et al.*, 1998) as students continue not to ask many questions (Gall, 1970; Hyman, 1979; Dillon, 1982; Durham, 1997). Graesser and Person (1994) reported that, whilst teachers ask between 30 to 120 questions per hour, students ask only 1.3 to 4.0 questions per hour and the questions posed are typically of a low cognitive level. The lack of students' classroom questions is a general phenomenon across cultures (Graesser and Person, 1994). Good *et al.* (1987:181) concluded from their study of student passivity that the number of questions students ask per 50-minute lessons remains relatively constant across the grade levels. They contended that, whilst the number of procedural question remains relatively constant, students' on-task attention questions decrease and the number of explanation questions increases over time. Dillon (1988b) noted that "those who ask questions [teachers, texts, tests] are not seeking knowledge; those who would seek knowledge [students] do not ask questions" (p.197).

Although scholars share different perspectives regarding questions, asking questions (depending on how they are used) continues to play a significant role in the teaching-learning process. More importantly, on account

³⁰ These, however, might be accompanied by challenges such as, a student's shyness, fear of being wrong, potential risk of undermining teacher's power, etc. The current study addresses such challenges in its survey and classroom observation data.

of the (a) unique relationship between the teacher and students which affects particular classroom discourse sequences, (b) the various methods of asking questions, and (c) the types of questions perceived to of benefit to student learning, teacher questions can be viewed as a necessary topic of research in the educational field, especially in EFL classroom settings. Added to this, when taken together, these studies (although they dealt with classroom questions) contribute also to comprehension of how oral interactions between teachers and students in general are established and maintained or, by contrast, are in some way discouraged. A more detailed illustration of questioning research in language classrooms is presented in the sections that follow.

2.6 Research on Classroom Questioning

It is beyond any doubt that language is a defining characteristic of what it is to be human. Indeed, the trait which exemplifies human cognitive abilities is, as Brown and Wragg (1993) put it, their ability to ask questions. It is difficult to conceive of people communicating without asking questions (Dillon, 1982, 1990, 2007). Thus, and as a direct form of human communication, the use of questions could indeed be a topic of interest to applied linguists, regardless of their theoretical perspectives, analytical approaches or the context of the language under investigation. Pedagogically, this centrality could be attributed to the fact that questioning, be it by a student or a teacher, is believed to focus the attention of both the questioner and the respondent, arouse their curiosity, enhance their involvement, stimulate their imagination and motivate them to seek out new information (Young, 1992). Elliot (1994:183) stated that “if it can be said that the art of teaching rests primarily on any one skill, most educators would agree that it would be questioning”. This is a likely scenario as questioning can help learners develop concepts, develop background knowledge and clarify their reasoning processes (Cazden, 2001).

As noted by Harrop and Swinson (2003), questioning within education has existed for a long time with Socrates questioning (4th BC) being one of the earliest reported uses of questions in an educational setting. Thus, given its long history of use as an educational tool, a considerable amount of research

over the past four decades or so (e.g. Sanders, 1966; Gall, 1970; Dillon, 1982; Klinzing and Klinzing-Eurich, 1987; Carlsen, 1991; Hamilton and Brady, 1991; Newton and Newton; 2000, Sahin *et al.*, 2002; Harrop and Swinson, 2003; and Myhill and Dunkin, 2005) has been concerned with the notion of questioning in classroom settings. It is clear to any reader of L2 classroom literature, that research in this area has taken a number of significant theoretical and methodological turns. These developments have been partly due to the inter-disciplinarity of the work undertaken, together with the diversification of research sites (e.g. Gall and Dillon in USA; Klinzing and Klinzing-Eurich, 1987 in Germany; and Newton and Newton, 2000, and Sahin *et al.*, 2002 in the UK). Accordingly, similar to any other line of research, a variety of findings and conclusions (some possibly in contradiction with others) have been drawn through this line of scholarly inquiry.

When the amount of research conducted on the issue over the years is considered, it is quite apparent that the role of questioning as an instructional tool has not diminished with the passage of time (Newton and Newton; 2000). The rationale behind this, is that it reflects the crucial role of questioning in the teaching-learning processes in the classroom and its importance as a discursive tool in both students' learning and teacher practices in day-to-day life. According to Hargie (2006:133), questioning is the most useful tool available to teachers to enable them to make students recall facts. This finding concurs with Gall (1970:713) who noted the usefulness of classroom questioning for recalling facts, fostering students' thinking, and facilitating classroom procedurals (i.e. fulfilling specific tasks and activities).

The use of both qualitative and quantitative approaches in respect of the collection and analysis of its data thus permits this study to be an addition to the previous work which has been carried out into classroom questioning in the context of the language classroom. In the following sections, specific emphasis is placed on the research into classroom questioning previously carried out in English language classrooms, both where English has been used as a second

or foreign language³¹, and that which was found to be relevant to the present study.

2.6.1 Studies of Classroom Questioning in ESL Contexts

Research into classroom questioning in language classrooms has often been conducted with a focus on teacher questions in ESL settings. These studies have presented some interesting findings in terms of the types and functions of the questions asked by language teachers. In the pages that follow, a number of studies that were found to be relevant to the current thesis are reviewed.

For instance, building on a study of six ESL teachers' questioning behaviour, Long and Sato (1983) compared the questions asked in the classroom with those in real-life situations. Referential questions, as the authors reported were more frequently asked than display questions in naturalistic discourse or everyday conversation beyond the classroom, Long and Sato (1983) extended their analysis and concluded that ESL teachers asked more display than referential questions as they focused on form and accuracy of language use as an indicator of language development. Their conclusion and discussion indicate that the goals which focus on assessing learned linguistic forms shape the use of display questions. In response to Long and Sato's findings and discussion, van Lier (1988) stated that the aim of developing the learners' second language during the early production stages could indeed cause frequent use of display questions.

White and Lightbrown (1984) conducted a longitudinal study on question and answer exchange in four ESL classes in a secondary school in Canada.

³¹ In general terms, in English as a second language (ESL) settings, "English is studied in an environment and culture in which English is spoken"; examples of this include the USA, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and most of Canada. English as a foreign language (EFL), on the other hand, is the term used to describe learning contexts where "English is studied in an environment and culture in which a language other than English is spoken" (McCormick, 1997:18). Examples of this include Saudi Arabia and Egypt where the primary language of communication used by the majority of the local population in the environment outside of the classroom is a language other than English.

The findings were in response to Long and Sato's (1983) study. The teachers in the study used mostly closed type display questions which elicit a specific answer. The findings which arose from these data pointed to the fact that 40% of all teacher questions received no response. Interestingly, this study did not offer any explanation as to the causes of lack of responses from the students, nevertheless it is arguable from other studies (e.g. Shomoossi, 2004), that further possible reasons can indeed be suggested.

In 1986, Brock reported a study that he had carried out to establish whether higher frequencies of referential questions have an effect on adult ESL classroom discourses. An experimental design was followed and the study included four ESL teachers (teaching the same lesson) and 24 students. Two of the teachers (i.e. the treatment group) were provided with training in incorporating referential questions into their classrooms, the other two (the control group) were not provided with any training whatsoever. The study reported that the treatment-group teachers asked significantly more referential questions than the control-group teachers did. It was also indicated that student responses in the treatment-group classes were significantly longer, more syntactically complex and contained more connectives than students in the control group. However, a possible limitation of this study as reported in its 'procedure' section is that the two teachers who received some training had been informed about the purpose of the study before the data was collected. An unexpected bias in the finding may have arisen, as these subjects could have consciously or unconsciously, performed in accordance with the wishes of the researcher, and, thus, the research results were biased to some extent.

Pica and Long (1986) compared the questions asked by 10 ESL teachers with a wide range of teaching experiences who were interacting with non-native speakers in two situations – in classrooms and in informal conversations. As with the previous studies, the findings revealed that the frequency of display questions was higher in the classroom than in informal conversations. Pica and Long's study shares something in common with this research which interviewed 8 experienced EFL teachers in its inclusion of experienced language teachers.

Portin (1993), another discourse analyst, considered the difficulties encountered by Chinese students attending an ESL graduate programme in America. The study focused on the pragmatic problems these students faced with regard to inferencing and schematic framing of classroom questions. A questionnaire which contained questions about the function and perceived frequency of questions was distributed to the students. The study concluded that for learners to ask effective questions, they should move beyond the linguistic form of the question and the consciousness that language is a collection of discrete points. It also called for ESL teachers to familiarise students with the pragmatic use of questions and the sociolinguistic functions questions could serve. It is to be noted that this study, together with other studies reviewed in the next section, reveal that research into Chinese learners has boomed as, arguably, they significantly outnumber any other language group now learning English.

Hsu (2001) undertook a study which aimed to examine classroom questioning within the input-output hypothesis analytical model (Krashen, 1985; Swain, 1998) through the use of a sample of two teachers and twenty-seven adult ESL learners in two college-level classes in America,. The study focused on answering the question as to how teacher and student questions operate as pedagogical and learning tools for second language acquisition and established that teachers' questions served as triggers for extended learner output and assisted learners in problem-solving situations. It was also ascertained that teacher questions scaffold learners' language performance and cognitive development.

In a more recent study, David (2007) investigated the impact of ESL teachers' use of display and referential questions on student interaction at selected Nigerian ESL secondary schools. Using data taken from classroom observations of a total of 20 teachers and 400 students, the study concluded that teachers used display questions (85%) more than referential questions (15%) which were also found to create less classroom interaction. The study then proceeded to recommend that Nigerian ESL teachers should be equipped

with some sort of training to enable them to exploit questioning behaviour which would promote interaction in their classes. A similar recommendation has been put forward by this study, following its data collection and analyses (see 6.3).

Table 2.4 below summarises classroom questioning studies in ESL settings which arise in the literature review. While drawing up this table, I was interested in a number of issues, namely, where the study was undertaken, who was involved in the study, what approaches the authors employed, and what the focus of the study was.

Author/Year	Research Context		Approach/Instrument	Study Sample	Research Focus
	Class type	Country			
White and Lightbrown (1984)	Secondary school	Canada	Longitudinal	4 language classes	Teachers' use of display and referential questions
Brock, C. (1986)	Adult class	USA	Experimental	4 teachers and 24 students	Frequency of teacher question types
Pica and Long (1986)	Secondary school	USA	Quantitative (Observation)	10 teachers	Teacher questioning in the classroom and outside
Portin (1993)	University classes	USA	Quantitative (Questionnaire)	43 professors	Difficulties students face in asking questions
Hsu, W. (2001)	College	USA	Mixed method (Language proficiency tests, interviews and questionnaires)	2 teachers and 27 students	How classroom questions operate as pedagogical tools for second language acquisition
David (2007)	Secondary school	Nigeria	Quantitative (Classroom observation)	10 teachers and 400 students	Teachers' use of display and referential questions
McNeil, L. (2010)	Elementary school	USA	Qualitative (Questionnaires and interviews)	1 teacher and 25 students	Question levels and types.

Table 2.4: Summary of studies examining classroom questioning in ESL settings

With regard to the questions, all of the above studies offered extensive characteristics of the predominant questions ESL teachers tended to ask in ESL settings. It is clear from these studies that ESL teachers tended to ask closed questions with specific answers rather than referential questions. One aspect relating to the importance of these studies is that the findings implicitly and explicitly suggested the furthering of studies on questions in language classroom instruction as these studies presented largely question types rather than the underlying reasons for asking particular types of the questions. By contrast, this study considers the functions of teacher questions served in the EFL classroom.

2.6.2 Studies of Classroom Questioning in EFL Contexts

The literature shows that there is, indeed, a growing body of empirical research available on classroom questioning in EFL classroom contexts which dates back to the early 1990s. The research studies selected for reviewing, as well as in the previous section, have similarities to this study, however, they were conducted in various geographical locations and at different levels of education.

Ekasingh (1992), for instance, investigated the use of teacher questions in EFL classrooms in Thailand. As in the current study, Ekasingh's participants were from a university EFL background. The aim of Ekasingh's study was to determine question patterns and it established that the frequencies and percentages revealed the use of four types of question forms - yes/no questions, questions beginning with question words, questions with intonation, and tag questions. Likewise, the questions asked in our study included display, referential, comprehension, confirmation and clarification checks, and rhetorical questions. As mentioned in 2.5 above, display questions have specific/definite answers whereas referential questions are open to unknown responses from students. In order to probe students' understanding comprehension questions are asked rather than memorisation, whilst confirmation questions require students to confirm what they have said and clarification questions are

designed to let students make their responses clearer. Rhetorical questions are different to other types of question, in being asked for all purposes other than verbal responses which include information. As Burton (1996) stated, an example of rhetorical questions is “*why are you so absent-minded?*” Throughout the instructional process, display questions were found in Ekasingh’s study to outnumber referential questions which were mainly used during opening and closing phases of class activities.

Shomoossi (2004) who observed five EFL classrooms in an Iranian university setting reported that teachers within their role as principal questioners deliberately used display questions (4.4) times more than referential questions. Somewhat surprisingly, comparable to these findings, Wu (1993), in his study of EFL classrooms in Hong Kong, reported that unlike display questions used by teachers, not all referential questions are effective in eliciting learners’ responses. He, hence, called for the employment of further questioning strategies, namely probing and decomposing. In line with Wu (ibid.), Moritoshi (2006) pointed out that students are sometimes unable to answer teachers’ questions on their own initiative and, thus, strategies such as repetition play an important part in facilitating L2 learning, either due to the high volume of sound in the classroom or by providing students with a longer question-processing time.

In 1998, Ghazali carried out a study in Malaysian EFL classrooms with the aim of investigating how teachers design reading-comprehension oral questions and tasks in accordance with Bloom’s taxonomy scale. Utilising a quantitative approach, pre and post-tests as well as a textbook review were made use of in the study for the collation of its data. The study, in line with many research findings on classroom questioning, established that 91.2% of the questions produced during the study pre-test were of a low-order nature. The study subjects attended a workshop which emphasised question and task designing by means of Bloom’s taxonomy. During the post-test stage, the study found that 74.4% of the questions asked were transformed into higher-order inferential forms. The study concludes with a request for Malaysian EFL teachers to

consider changing the cognitive demands of the comprehension questions and tasks they design.

In another study which was aimed at investigating teachers' rationale for adopting certain questioning techniques for the purpose of using its findings to inform teacher education, Hussin (2006) evaluated the questioning practice in Malaysian EFL secondary school classrooms. Evidence used in this study was based on data acquired by means of classroom observations, interviews with both students and teachers, and a document review. The study determined that the majority of questions teachers asked were in the low-level category and that questions based on, and from, sources/materials were not fully utilised. She also found that EFL teachers had a tendency to dominate classroom interaction in their questioning and that teachers' beliefs about their students' needs and abilities rather than their knowledge informed their questioning practice.

Chang (2009) utilised a socio-cultural discourse analysis approach³² (Mercer, 2004) in a research project which investigated the manner in which teacher questioning operated as a pedagogical and learning tool in Taiwanese EFL secondary school classrooms. Four teachers and twelve students were recruited from four different classes. Classroom observation, interviews and questionnaires were utilised to collate the data in the study. The study findings showed that teacher questions served as tools for self-clarification and the mediation of learners' L2 learning and cognitive development. As a result of these findings, the current study was established to investigate the functions of teacher questions in a Saudi EFL context. The study indicated that there is a strong relationship between teachers' pedagogic goals and their decisive use of questions to encourage classroom participation and learning.

Wong (2010) carried out a case study that investigated teachers' use and learners' response to Bloom's (1956) taxonomy of question types in a Hong

³² According to Mercer (2004:137), sociocultural discourse analysis "focuses on the use of language as a social mode of thinking [and] as a tool for teaching-and-learning, constructing knowledge, creating joint understanding and tackling problems collaboratively".

Kong EFL classroom setting. The study utilised classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student interviews for its data collection. The results showed that low-level cognitive questions were more common in comparison with high-level cognitive questions and that of these knowledge-based questions were most frequently used for teaching vocabulary and confirming student understanding. This finding applied, regardless of the lesson's topic or content. High-cognitive questions, on the other hand, were found to be rarely used by the teachers. Other findings arising from this study showed that teachers used questions to manage the classroom. This particular finding was also found in the current study (see 5.3.5).

In a more recent study, Farahian and Rezaee (2012) sought to investigate an EFL teacher's use of question types and the influence this had on classroom interaction. With the aid of an interview with the teacher and the recording of 5 EFL tertiary-level classes, the study established that the number of closed/display and yes/no questions exceeded open/referential questions and that, along with some aforementioned studies this kind of questioning seems to be the norm in language classrooms. The study also revealed that, although the teacher's use of closed questions seemed to be attributed to the students' level of proficiency, the teachers' low level of proficiency and lack of experience also played a considerable role in his questioning practice. The silence of the students and their reluctance to answer questions was also reported.

In another recent study, Meng *et al.* (2012) undertook a study aimed at exploring the types and functions of questions teachers used in a Thai content-based primary school EFL classroom. Qualitatively-oriented, classroom observations and interviews were utilised for the collection of the study's data. The results showed that teacher questions included both referential and display questions, however only display questions were used when undertaking teaching and learning. These questions served specific functions such as information elicitation and understanding checking. It was also established in the study that teachers used question modification strategies only when dealing with questions which did not receive a response, and not to promote classroom

interaction. To summarise, questions are quantitatively significant in EFL classrooms, compared with other forms of discourse. Table 2.5 below summarises classroom questioning studies in EFL settings discussed thus far.

Author/Year	Research Context		Approach/Instrument	Study sample	Research focus
	Class type	Country			
Ekasingh, S. (1992)	Language school	Thailand	Quantitative (Classroom observation)	3 language classes	Teacher questioning patterns
Wu, K. (1993)	Secondary school	Hong Kong	Quantitative (Video-recording)	4 language classes	Students answers and teacher question types
Ghazali, M. (1998)	University classes	Malaysia	Experimental (pre and post-tests, and textbook review)	8 teachers and 100 students	Teachers' use of Bloom's question taxonomy
Shomoossi, N. (2004)	University classes	Iran	Mixed-method (Classroom observation)	5 language classes	Teacher question types and student interaction
Ho, D. (2005)	Upper secondary school	Brunei	(Classroom observation)	3 language classes	Teacher questions during reading comprehension activities
Hussin, H. (2006)	Secondary school	Malaysia	Qualitative (Classroom observation, interviews, and document reviews)	7 teachers and 20 students	Teacher question types, levels and sourcing
Chang, F. (2009)	Secondary school	Taiwan	Mixed-method (Classroom observation, interviews and questionnaires)	4 teacher and 12 students	Teacher questions scaffolding learners' L2
Wong, R. (2010)	University classes	Hong Kong	Quantitative case study (Classroom observation and interviews)		Teachers' application of question taxonomies in the class
Farahian and Rezaee (2012)	University classes	Iran	Quantitative (Questionnaires and interviews)	5 language classes	
Meng <i>et al.</i> (2012)	Primary school	Thailand	Qualitative (Classroom observation and interviews)	1 teacher and 16 students	Types and functions of teacher questions

Table 2.5: Summary of studies examining classroom questioning in EFL settings

The current subsection of the literature review (summarised in table 2.5 above) points to three major conditions: first, teacher questions are part of the instructional process, although it may be difficult to measure their role in teaching and learning given the complex nature of language pedagogy. Second, display questions tend to predominate over referential questions. Third, the functions of asking questions vary. However, none of these studies mentioned above uncovered findings beyond question types and functions, e.g. students' perspectives towards classroom questioning, as is the case in this study.

To conclude, this study has sought to include all three points - EFL teacher questions, techniques teachers use to assist students' responses to questions, and reasons for asking each type of question, in line with van Lier (1988) who argued that "analysis must go beyond simple distinctions such as display and referential questions, yes/no and open-ended questions, and so on ... [...]. Research into questioning in the L2 classroom must carefully examine the purposes and the effects of questions, not only in terms of linguistic production, but also as regards cognitive demands and interactive purpose" (p. 225). Summing up, compared to previous studies on EFL classroom questioning (e.g. Chang, 2009; Farahian and Rezaee, 2012) which jointly used questionnaires and interviews at the end of an experiment, this study has pursued three data collection stages: survey questionnaires at the beginning, a series of classroom observations midway then, subsequently, interviews with the teachers.

2.6.3 Studies of Classroom Questioning in Arabic EFL Contexts

Albeit a relatively rapid increase in scholarly investigations and research endeavours into classroom questioning in ESL and EFL contexts, very little is being undertaken in the Arab context. This is perhaps due to the fact noted by researchers such as Al-Menieei (2005:62) that research which focuses on interaction in EFL classrooms in Saudi Arabia in particular, and in Arab world in general, is 'under-practised'. According to Al-Menieei (ibid.), this dearth of research is a consequence of a number of reasons including the witnessed

change in scholarly interest to issues such as assessment, teaching methodology, and quasi experimental research.

With regards to classroom questioning, studies conducted so far have tackled classroom questions from a quantitatively-oriented empirical perspective, thus it can be argued that that as it is at the centre of classroom discourse, research into classroom questioning should embrace an element of qualitative research. This section of the literature review concerns reviewing research studies that have investigated classroom questioning in Arabic EFL contexts.

In a study which investigated the use of questioning by Egyptian EFL student-teachers, Oteify (1979) appears to have been the first researcher to investigate classroom questioning in EFL contexts in Arabic EFL settings. The study was based on an analysis of 38 tape-recorded EFL lessons and a sample of EFL textbooks collected to locate evidence of the need for improvement of student-teachers' questioning skills and promote a more effective EFL classroom environment. The study concluded that Egyptian student-teachers have encountered various problems with regard to framing and use of L2 questions. The study drew attention to the fact that these issues, together with poor questioning techniques as demonstrated by participants were not tackled in the pre-service programmes the subjects underwent.

In Jordan, Al-Moamani and Al-Momani (2009) investigated the level of questioning skills amongst student-teachers as perceived by their cooperative teachers (i.e. their in-service supervisors), and the effects of a training programme designed to develop the subjects' questioning skills. A classroom observational checklist was used to measure the level of classroom-questioning skills of 95 student-teachers. The results showed that the classroom questioning skills level of the participants (who all came from primary schools) was moderate during their training and that there were no differences between participants with regard to their educational background or gender.

Likewise, Al-Khataybeh and Al-Ja'freh (2012) conducted a study aimed at investigating the levels and types of classroom questions raised by 64 EFL teachers at selected Jordanian primary schools. The results showed that most of the questions teachers asked were within the low level set by Bloom's taxonomy. The results also showed that teachers with greater experience asked questions more frequently than those with less experience.

Qashoa (2013) investigated how EFL teachers at three Emirati secondary school classrooms design questions which can expand students' knowledge and promote creative thinking. The study used classroom observation and audio recordings for the collection of its data and established that teachers rely on certain types of questions, e.g. display and *wh*-questions, more than others. The conclusion stated that teachers need to increase their knowledge about the different types of questions and their roles in classroom interaction, and also make an effort to design and balance their questions in accordance with their students' levels and the lesson objectives.

In 2013, too, Al-sobh *et al.* carried out a study aimed at identifying the levels and types of questions teachers used in an EFL classroom 10th grade setting in Jordan. The study sample consisted of 20 language teachers and their students. Quantitatively-oriented, the study used classroom observation to collect the data. The findings showed that teachers (both males and females) raised three types of questions: *wh*-questions, yes/no questions, and multiple-choice questions. No differences were reported between male and female teachers in the types of questions raised.

The common trait for all the above studies (summarised in table 2.6 on the next page) is that they were mostly quantitative in nature relying on descriptive statistics without investigating the functions teacher questions might serve in the EFL classroom. In addition, some of these studies surveyed teachers but did not include students' perspectives. What also binds the aforementioned studies is the focus on school-level classroom questioning.

Author/Year	Research Context		Approach/Instrument	Study Sample	Research Focus
	Class type	Country			
Oteify, A. (1979)	Elementary school	Egypt	Quantitative (Tape-recording and document analysis)	38 student teachers	Framing and use of English interrogative utterances
Al-Moamani and Al-Momani (2009)	Primary school	Jordan	Quantitative (An observational checklist)	95 student teachers	Level of questioning skills among student-teachers
Al-Khataybeh, M. and Al-Jafreh, I. (2012)	Primary school	Jordan	Quantitative (Observational instruments: stop watch, recorder and an observational checklist)	12 teachers	Question levels and types
Qashoa (2013)	Secondary school	United Arab Emirates	Quantitative (Tape-recorded classroom observation)	3 language classes	Students answers and teacher question types
Al-sobh <i>et al.</i> (2013)	Intermediate school	Jordan	Quantitative (classroom observation)	20 teachers	Levels and types of questions teachers use

Table 2.6: Summary of studies examining classroom questioning in Arabic EFL settings

2.7 Perspectives on Gender and Classroom Questioning

It is clear from the aforementioned studies and scholarly lines of inquiry that indeed students and teachers, although they may not necessarily accept this, form a community (the classroom). This formation process takes place largely through the verbal interaction which includes classroom questioning. The body of evidence surveyed above shows that when asked appropriately as

well as proportionately, classroom questions can contribute to improvements in the classroom discourse and stimulate an interaction-based classroom environment (Christenbury and Kelly, 1983). It should also be borne in mind, that the reported lack of student questioning in some of the studies discussed above indeed indicates to language teachers and educators that questioning in the language classroom could be more encouraged, on account of its value as a tool for generating interaction and engagement, amongst others. However, prior to jumping to this conclusion the following question should be asked: do males and females practice questioning similarly or differently and are there any gender-related differences or similarities in the questioning practice of students and teachers?

Gender has been defined as the ‘social significance of sex’ (Burr, 2003). It refers to the collection of “characteristics and behaviours which come to be differentially associated with and expected of men and women in a particular society, our notions of masculinity and femininity” (Burr, 2003: 11). In contrast to Cameron (1996) who stated that gender is a social construction which should be regarded as “a set of constitutive acts rather than seeing the acts themselves as an outcome of gender” (p. 47), this study argues that gender in the classroom might arise from both. Research has shown that males and females are often found to have different beliefs and behaviour which are assumed to account in part for sex differences (O’Barr and Atkins, 1980). It is worth noting, that the terms ‘gender’ and ‘sex’ are sometimes seen as synonymous.

Tannen (2007) believed that women and men belong to different sociolinguistic subcultures, a difference which is then internalised and reflected in male and female language use. According to Jaffe (1989), this occurs through the process of gender role socialisation whereby females are socialised to display qualities of social interdependence, whilst males are socialised to display independence resulting in different communication patterns. The different socialisation processes of, men and women’s languages are believed

to differ in their verbal and nonverbal qualities (Lakoff, 2004; Tannen, 2007). Tannen (*ibid.*) found that among her native English speaking college students, female students (compared to males) did not interact in whole-class discourse, rather tended to participate more in small group work.

However, with regard to classroom questioning and gender differences, little was found in the current study literature review that specifically addressed this particular aspect of males' and females' speech. Instead, studies which consider classroom discourse may well mention 'gender' but not as a major variable against which classroom questions are measured. Duff (1986) reported in a study carried out to investigate the differences between native and non-native speakers that NNS males asked more questions than NNS females who, however produced longer utterances. Lewis *et al.* (1991:357), however, argued that patterns of male and female speech vary according to the context. In other words, their study showed that oral negotiation between participants was "significantly greater among same gender dyads for female non-native speakers, and about equal in both same and cross gender dyads for NNS males".

To conclude, given that this study had a chance to include both male and female participants, gender-related differences that emerged from the study's questionnaires (Chapter 4) and interviews (Chapter 5) will be alluded to in order to establish if gender has a bearing on participants' reported practices. However, it is worth stressing here that a thorough consideration of student-teacher questioning from a gender perspective is beyond the scope of this thesis. Nonetheless, this study is rare in Saudi Arabian educational research in the sense that it is carried out by a male researchers and included EFL students and teachers of both sexes. Needless to say, on account of the gender-segregation educational system in Saudi Arabia, some logistical difficulties were encountered during this study's research procedure (see 3.6).

2.8 Saudi Arabian EFL Classrooms

Saudi Arabia, like many other non-English speaking countries, uses English as a lingua franca in a number of settings. This is perhaps due to the Government's awareness of its importance, not to mention people who also perceive the need to learn English. It is viewed as a necessity for entering the job market as well as aspiring to become bicultural and hence interact with the rest of the world, English has long been recognised as the most prominent international language (Alam and Khan, 1988). Employers in the Saudi job market normally seek candidates whose English is at a level that meets their needs. In order to obtain, as well as succeed in, a good job the job applicant needs at least minimum English language skills to compete and make satisfactory career progress. Without a doubt, most Saudis in general acknowledge the importance of English in their lives, both inside the country and outside, and also in terms of their own children's future (Habbash, 2011).

However, in the education context, English is taught only as a foreign language. EFL was first introduced to Saudi schools in 1937 (Alam and Khan, 1988; Al-Nafisah, 2001) and to universities in 1966. In state schools, Saudi students have, until recently, been taught English from the first year of their three-year intermediate education until the final year of their three-year secondary education. Due to its centrality in modern communications, English language has been officially introduced in the sixth (last) grade in the elementary level starting from the academic year 2004-2005³³. Hence, as EFL in higher education is the principal component of the current study, students who wish to participate in it will have learnt English for at least six years (see 1.5). In addition, as Habbash (2011) observed, colleges in the majority of Saudi universities are changing their language of instruction from Arabic to English.

³³ Throughout each grade level at school, students are taught English for four periods a week, and each period lasts for 45 minutes (Alshenqeeti, 2009; Jawhar, 2012). Comparable to this, since English was introduced in higher educational contexts in 1977, though this may vary between institutions, students in the first year of university study are taught at least four EFL courses (two courses in every semester), delivered on a weekly basis, i.e. 8 x 1 hour classes per week for 15 weeks in each academic term (Alshenqeeti, 2009).

Notwithstanding this however, researchers such as Syed (2003) reported that Saudi EFL teachers, both at school level and university settings, doubt if their students use English beyond the classroom in any meaningful communication. Therefore, it is not surprising that, as a recent survey conducted in 2005 by the leading Saudi Arabian newspaper 'Al-Jazirah'³⁴ established, approximately 87% of Saudi students leave high school without the English proficiency expected from the public educational system (Hannah, 2006).

Such an alarming fact begs the question: what are the challenges to student EFL learning? Researchers such as Khan (2011) and Syed (2003) reported that these challenges include linguistic barriers, learning styles, motivation and attitude. Khan (2011:243) summarised several learning barriers to Saudi EFL students as "linguistic barrier, motivation of the students and teachers, dedication and commitment, teachers' role and characteristics preparedness, teaching strategies, training and professional development". Motivation to learn the language is deemed the most important. Syed (2003) also added that of the major factors affecting Saudi, as well as the neighbouring Arabian Gulf states³⁵, students' EFL learning is "reliance on rote learning and memorisation and dependence on high stakes testing" (p. 337). Moody (2009:99) stated that the issue relates mainly to the materials and textbooks used in the Arabian Gulf states, including Saudi Arabia, as they "are actually intended for ESL students in the inner circle English speech communities who are integratively motivated either as visiting foreign students or as recently arrived residents who need English to function in their new societies". The question that follows from this is whether the classroom discourse, and hence questioning, is influenced by these issues given that, indeed, language learning and teaching are quite interrelated and apparently "teaching cannot take place unless the target students learn" (Khan, 2011:242).

³⁴ See: <http://www.al-jazirah.com.sa/en/>

³⁵ Arabian Gulf states refer to the states bordering the Arabian Gulf (sometime referred to as the Persian Gulf), namely, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates and Oman, and Yemen. Most of these states are part of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (CCG). See: <http://www.gcc-sg.org/eng/>

Linked to the current study, researchers like Jawhar (2012) and Al-Menieci (2005) have reported that research focusing on interaction in Saudi Arabian EFL classroom is 'under-practised' in Saudi Arabia. This is due to the fact that most of the work that has been carried out within the Saudi EFL context has been mainly associated with problems relating to students' learning, language acquisition, or EFL programmes' evaluation and assessment practices (Jawhar, 2012). No work has apparently been undertaken to explore the different aspects of classroom discourse in Saudi higher education in which discourse analysis and surveys have been combined, nor has EFL classroom questioning been considered. An interesting aspect of this study is that it was conducted throughout a complete semester within a Saudi EFL university classroom setting. In the belief that there is no perfect single methodology, the study combined both qualitative and quantitative approaches to investigate classroom questioning. In conclusion, it is hoped that the description and explanation of the notion of questioning in this chapter (although it illustrates the research topic), permits the belief that research into classroom question-answer exchange is crucial to people's understanding and investigation of classroom discourse.

2.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a review of the literature on the subjects of classroom discourse, teacher talk and classroom questioning. It has also made an attempt to conceptualise classroom questions by addressing the definitions, taxonomies and functions of classroom questions. An overview of the relevance of the speakers' gender to the notion of classroom questioning has also been briefly presented. The chapter has concluded with an account of EFL in the Saudi Arabian classroom context (the milieu of this study), including research calls and major findings. In providing this background information, it is hoped that the scene is set for the introduction of the research design and methodology, which arises in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This third chapter is devoted to the explication of the research design, methodology and procedure that have been pursued in this study. First, an overview of the research design is presented, together with a brief outline of the researcher's ontological and epistemological standpoints and an overview and justification of the mixed-method research methodology which has been adopted. The aim and research questions which guided the present study are then presented, followed by illustration and rationalisation of the data collection instruments utilised. Information regarding the study procedure, including an overview of the study participants, the research context and the ethical considerations, is subsequently provided. This is followed by a description of the data analysis processes which included both quantitative and qualitative analyses. A summary of the chapter, which also includes brief information about the subsequent chapters, is presented in conclusion.

3.2 Research Design

Silva and Leki (2004:7) identified three elements as being the components of a research design in the applied linguistics field. These elements-epistemology (the structure of knowledge), ontology (what we believe constitutes social reality), and methodology (how we proceed to acquire that knowledge) – help to ensure the soundness of the research. In this section of the chapter, the ontological and epistemological perspectives adopted in this study are introduced, and then the methodological approach of the study and its research questions are highlighted.

3.2.1 Ontology and Epistemology

This study was designed based on the research paradigm of “mixed methods”, in combination with the qualitative or quantitative paradigm (Robson, 2002). As Creswell (2009:74) wrote, the paradigm may be best defined as a “worldview”, and it is a “basic set of beliefs or assumptions that guide a researcher’s inquiry”. Thus, by selecting a specific paradigm for research, as well as what Robson (2011:4) referred to as a “research strategy”³⁶, researchers in some way or another make certain assumptions about the nature of the social phenomena and the basis of knowledge (Cohen *et al.*, 2011; Denzin and Lincoln 2012). According to Lundberg and Young (2005:99):

The choice and adequacy of a methodology embodies a variety of assumptions regarding the nature of knowledge and the methods through which that knowledge can be obtained, as well as a set of root assumptions about the nature of the phenomena to be investigated.

The present study was guided by an eclectic philosophical stance, both ontologically and epistemologically. With regard to ontology³⁷ (the philosophical issues about the nature of reality and what can be known about it), the belief in this study is that reality is accessible by means of socially constructed meanings (Richards, 2003; Snape and Spencer, 2003). In other words, what underlies the researcher’s opinion on language and learning is a belief in reality as the intersubjective co-construction of an individual and society, rather than an objective entity ‘out there’, independent of the knower. A philosophical variation called ‘constructivism’³⁸ is thus adhered to in this research thesis. This

³⁶ According to Robson (2011), a research strategy is the broad plan of action of how one intends to go about answering the research questions one has asked.

³⁷ Ontology, in more detail, refers to “the claims or assumptions that a particular approach to social enquiry makes about the nature of social reality - claims about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with each other” (Blaikie, 2007:3).

³⁸ The following two quotes from Richards (2003) comprise, in a few words, the ontological position adopted in this study. According to Richards (*ibid.*: 38-39) constructivism is “a view holding firmly to the position that knowledge and truth are created rather than discovered and that reality is pluralistic”, and that “constructivists seek to understand not the essence of a real world but the richness of a world that is socially determined”.

is apparent from the use of both qualitative and quantitative approaches in an attempt to provide complementary views of the social world.

With regard to the epistemology, i.e. the researcher's perception of how knowledge is understood and acquired in addition to the way it is produced and communicated (Cohen *et al.*, 2011), the standpoint in this study is that of an 'interpretivist' approach, whereby I have described and interpreted a social phenomenon (i.e. classroom questioning at a Saudi EFL university context) as it is. This was carried out by means of various instruments for the collection of data (i.e. questionnaires which allow for the pursuit of social laws that help predict behaviour and grounding claims, and interviews and videoed classroom interaction which permit an element of interpretation of the data), to obtain the participant's views and more meaningful insights into the phenomenon. Cohen *et al.* (2011), amongst other researchers (e.g. Dörnyei, 2007, and Matthews and Ross, 2010), reported that 'interpretivism' attempts to account for the immense complexity of the phenomena in the social sciences, and that its established research conventions and emphasis on the rigour of inquiry have an important bearing on educational research methodology. This duly applies to the present study.

3.2.2 Methodology

With the aim of investigating aspects of the perspective and practice of classroom questioning by students and teachers in an EFL context (see 3.3 for the study specific research questions), this study was guided by the belief that understanding classroom questioning requires a holistic approach to gather broad and insightful data. The study utilised a mixed method research methodology in order to obtain quantitative and qualitative data which elucidated students' perspectives and teachers' practices of classroom questioning. Creswell and Clark (2007:5) defined this kind of research as a:

Research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the data collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases in the research process. As a method, it focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study.

To enhance understanding of a research problem, scholars such as Creswell and Clark (*ibid.*), Dörnyei (2007), and Cohen *et al.* (2011) drew attention to the significance of mixing qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative research, as Dörnyei (2007:24) stated, “involves data collection procedures that result primarily in open-ended, non-numerical data which is then analysed primarily by non-statistical methods. Typical examples: interview research, with the transcribed recordings analysed by qualitative content analysis”. Likewise, this study used classroom observation and teacher interviews from a qualitative perspective and employed content analysis³⁹ to obtain in-depth data of teachers’ practice and related views of classroom questioning. This was achieved by recording student-teacher interaction (see 3.4.2) and eliciting teachers’ views by means of interviews (see 3.4.3). Bogdan and Biklen (2006) listed four characteristics of qualitative research, which apply to this study, and these are namely: collecting words as data, analysing data inductively, being concerned with the process, and obtaining meaning from participants.

Quantitative research includes a number of aspects, one of which is that it “consists of a systematic examination of specific factors and includes numerical information as data” (Craig, 2009:8). In this study, the quantitative approach was utilised to obtain broad data which provided general insights into students’ perspectives on their EFL classroom questioning practices based on their (the

³⁹ Abrahamson (1983:286) suggested that “content analysis can be fruitfully employed to examine virtually any type of communication”.

students') responses to a survey questionnaire. However, the use of a survey could not be the only data source for the needs of this investigation as there was no guarantee that sufficient data would be obtained, therefore, both qualitative and quantitative approaches were utilised in this study (see figure 3.1 next). According to Sale *et al.* (2002:50):

Qualitative and quantitative research methods have grown out of, and still represent, different paradigms. However, the fact that the approaches are incommensurate does not mean that multiple methods cannot be combined in a single study if it is done for complementary purposes. Each method studies different phenomena. The distinction of phenomena in mixed-methods research is crucial and can be clarified by labelling the phenomenon examined by each method.

This application of a mixed-method research design is known as 'methodological triangulation' (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2009). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2012), triangulation is used to cross-check the quality of research and is achieved through the use of multi-method approaches, different sources of data, multiple investigators or different theories or perspectives. Triangulation, as Patton (2002:187) declared, is "an important way to strengthen a study design [through] the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomena". As Busha and Harter (1980, cited in Dörnyei 2007:145) stressed, that "the type of information sought in a particular project guides the application of appropriate research techniques". Of the prominent examples of both qualitative and quantitative methods being successfully used are Smith *et al.*'s (2005) study and further studies given in (2.6) which may stand as other good examples (e.g. Chang, 2009). In their study, Smith *et al.* (*ibid.*) investigated the nature of classroom discourse in Indian classrooms. Different data sources were utilised, namely, classroom observation, questionnaires and interviews. According to the researchers, the multi-method approach is an option that led to greater confidence in their findings.

To summarise, triangulation was used in this study for a number of reasons, including the desire to survey as many EFL students at Taibah University's ELC as possible. To achieve this end, questionnaires were utilised. An additional motive for the use of quantitative data was its potential as a data collection instrument, given its wide use in the study target context. In the Arab world, as observed by Raean (2003) and Al-Hazmi (2007), between 70 and 80 per cent of published research is of a quantitative nature. Second, I wanted to document 'real-time' classroom questioning practice and hence videoed classroom observations were undertaken. This allowed for an element of qualitative research which could establish a better understanding of observed classroom discourse and further the analyses beyond mere numbers and figures. Finally, and in order to listen to teachers' perspectives on the observed and reported questioning practices, a series of interviews were undertaken with a number of experienced EFL teachers.

The aim, throughout, was to enhance the rigour of the present study and remove any bias inherent in the separate data sources as far as possible. This concurs with Creswell (2009) who argued that an advantage of mixed methods research is that it provides divergent views, which can make clear the multiple aspects of a phenomenon⁴⁰. Whether the results converge or diverge, greater validity or falsification of previous assumptions is given, which often provides multiple voices of a social phenomenon under study. Figure 3.1 on the next page illustrates the study's overall research process.

⁴⁰ Research methods, e.g. case study, could serve the needs of a wide and full data collection. However, criteria for the selection of a case or multiple cases were not developed in this study given its holistic approach to a previously unresearched phenomenon, and the lack of any previous primary, holistic relevant research in the Saudi EFL classroom context.

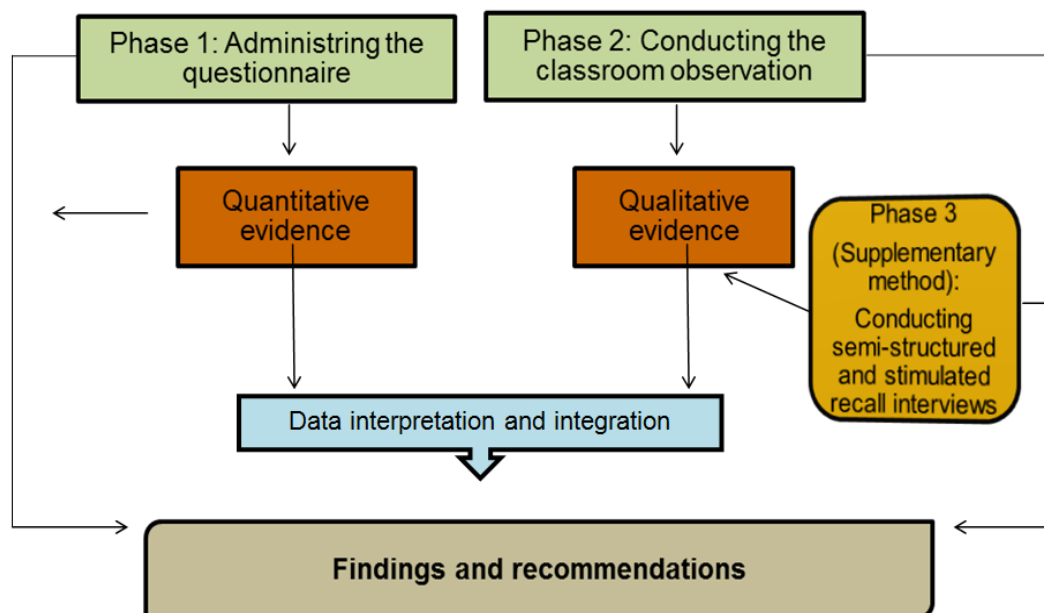


Figure 3.1: Research process of the study

3.3 Research Questions

In order to focus on aspects pertaining to the questioning practice undertaken and perceived by Saudi male and female teachers and students in an EFL classroom context, the study sought to answer three research questions⁴¹. In addition, this study utilised a number of research instruments, the relationship of which to the study's three research questions is illustrated in table 3.1 below.

No.	Research Question	Research Instrument
1	How do the Saudi EFL university students perceive the classroom questioning practice in their classes?	Questionnaires
2	What are some of the functions of teachers' questioning practice in the Saudi EFL university classroom?	Classroom Observation Teacher Interviews
3	What modifications (if any) do Saudi EFL teachers employ in instances where students do not answer?	Classroom Observation Teacher Interviews

Table 3.1: Research questions and instruments to investigate them

⁴¹ It is worth noting that the nature of these questions is exploratory rather than confirmatory. However, they warranted the research paradigm of a mixed method design as described above.

By answering the above questions, it is hoped that this research will offer insights into how teachers and students perceive and practise questions in a Saudi EFL context in a step towards further understanding of classroom discourse in Saudi EFL classrooms. In addition, as the opportunity arose to include females in the study, the relevancy of gender has also been investigated, however not as a main focus of attention, in terms of teachers' and students' perspectives on classroom questioning. A gender-based comparison of teacher questioning practice was not possible due to the observation of male classes only (see 6.5 for an account of the study limitations).

3.4 Research Instruments

Various types of research instruments have been developed over the years for use in data collection. Each instrument is particularly appropriate for answering certain research questions, yielding information of a kind and form which could be most effectively used. Three major data collection tools are commonly suggested for the conduct of educational research namely: surveys, classroom observation and interviews (Punch, 2009:121). According to Munn and Drever (2004), a questionnaire is effective for immediate distribution and obtaining immediate feedback. It provides anonymity for the respondent, offers the possibility of a high return rate, and provides standardised questions. Gillham (2000:46) also considered observation as "the most direct way of obtaining data", whereas, Stake (1995:64) claimed that the interview is "the main road to multiple realities". The three of these research instruments (as discussed in more detail next) have been utilised in this study to answer its RQs and enrich its findings.

3.4.1 Questionnaires for EFL Students

There are various factors which can lead to a researcher choosing questionnaires⁴² for the collection of data from students and teachers, and

⁴² In its most general sense, a questionnaire is as Brown (2001:6) defined, "any written instrument that presents respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from existing ones".

which apply to this study, including: a) questionnaires tend to be more reliable as they are anonymous; b) they encourage greater honesty from respondents; c) they save the researcher's and participants' time and effort (i.e. they are more economical); d) they can be used in both small-scale and large scale case studies (Dörnyei, 2007:101). Cohen *et al.* (2011) stated that questionnaires permit the collection of data from a greater number of people than is generally the case when other research tools are used, e.g. experiments. In the current study, a high degree of information was sought from as many students as possible as the more information obtained, the easier and better it would be to understand the ways in which students perceive how they and their teachers practise questioning in the EFL classroom. Gillham (2000:78) stated that questionnaires "have some value as a way of getting straightforward and fairly accurate information". Likewise, when the same questionnaire is given to all subjects in a study (as in this research study, see Appendix C for a copy of the study questionnaire), the gleaned data tends to be uniform, standard, and objective (McBurney and White, 2009).

Furthermore, the use of questionnaires in second language research is important for the collection of information on phenomena which may not be easily observed, e.g. perspectives. Researchers such as Dörnyei (2007), however, have drawn attention to the fact that questionnaires may have some drawbacks. Berg (2007) pointed out that questionnaires rely on individuals' self-reports of their knowledge, attitudes, or behaviour and, thus, the validity of gleaned information is contingent on the honesty of the respondent. With regards to questionnaire format, Cohen *et al.* (2011) likewise believed that questionnaires could have the following disadvantages: a) if only closed items are used, questionnaires may lack coverage or authenticity; b) if open-ended items alone are used, respondents may feel unwilling to write their responses in full. In order to seek to minimise the above-mentioned drawbacks in this study, questionnaires were utilised as a complementary tool to the observations and interviews undertaken to investigate the Saudi EFL classroom questioning. In addition, questionnaires were distributed differently amongst the targeted participants. They were personally administered by myself for students in male

classes (n= 194) and by a female colleague for students in female classes (n= 147) which helped to increase the return rate. As there were 341 participants in total, the expectation was that the more questionnaires used, the more a higher percentage of truthful answers is obtained.

According to Dörnyei (2007), surveying students in educational and applied linguistic research is of considerable significance as regards the L2 teaching and learning processes. In order to address the lack of coverage and authenticity associated with closed questions, the questionnaires in this study included both closed⁴³ (n= 12) and open-ended items (n= 2) (see Appendix C). A closed-ended Likert-scale⁴⁴ question format⁴⁵ was adopted for the 12 closed questionnaire items. Researchers such as Peterson (2000) and Cohen *et al.* (2011) have pointed out that Likert-scale questionnaires can be helpful for measuring a continuous construct, such as an attitude, opinion or perception, as is the case in this study.

In this study's questionnaire, respondents were asked to express their perspectives on the use of questions in their EFL classes by agreeing or disagreeing with statements on a 5-point/4-point scale: namely, 5-strongly agree, 4-agree, 3-not sure, 2-disagree and 1-strongly disagree. They were also asked to report on the extent of certain questioning behaviour by means of statements: e.g. 4- to a large extent, 3-to a moderate extent, 2-to some extent, and 1-to no extent at all. Bearing in mind that the questionnaire of this study is non-standardised⁴⁶, it was extremely important to achieve certain standards to render it valid and reliable by ensuring it was simple, non-misleading and

⁴³ Such items elicit data that is transformable to numbers and thus can be scored automatically, for instance by means of SPSS or Microsoft Office Excel.

⁴⁴ Named after the notable American educator and psychologist Rensis Likert (1903-1981) who was the first to use this questionnaire design.

⁴⁵ Likert scale questionnaire items are frequently utilised "to elicit opinions rather than facts and are sometimes called 'opinionaires'" (McDonough and McDonough, 1997: 176).

⁴⁶ According to Munn and Drever (2004), standardised questionnaires are those identified through published research, whereas non-standardised questionnaires are those designed, piloted and tested by the researcher.

undemanding in both time and effort. This was achieved by undertaking regular revisions (between May, 2011 and January, 2012; i.e. prior to the data collection) of the study questionnaire as a result of information gleaned from relevant educational research handbooks and references (e.g. Cohen *et al.*, 2011, and Bryman, 2012), and in accordance with the advice given by the researcher's supervisor and other colleagues who were undertaking doctoral and post-doctoral research in applied linguistics. The study's questionnaire proved numerically useful as reflected in the return rate (see Chapter 4 for the questionnaire findings). In addition, the study's questionnaire (together with the teacher interviews) formed baseline data for dealing with the study's focus on student perspectives and teacher practices of questioning in the EFL classroom.

3.4.2 EFL Classroom Observation

Observing participants in a social setting, such as that of the language classroom is a popular method for collecting data in applied linguistic research (Dörnyei, 2007). According to Johnson and Christensen (2004:186), observation involves "the watching of behavioural patterns of people in certain situations to obtain information about the phenomenon of interest". Put another way, Lofland (1971; cited in Patton, 2002:262) declared observation to be a form of qualitative inquiry as in "the circumstances of being in or around an on-going social setting for the purpose of making a qualitative analysis of that setting". Researchers, e.g. Mackay and Gass (2005), Duff (2008), and Richards *et al.* (2011), argued that by means of observation, a researcher can build up descriptions of activities as they occur in their context, and "understand the physical, social/cultural, and linguistic contexts in which language is used, and also collect relevant linguistic and interactional data for later analysis" (Duff, *ibid.*:138).

Given that the classroom is the usual place where most teaching and formal learning takes place, EFL classrooms can indeed be a very fruitful source of observation. Classrooms have been described as exceptionally busy places where a multitude of events occur (Wragg, 2011:2). Researchers who

focus on classroom interaction (be it student-teacher or student-student) can obtain useful information through observation. Coleman and Briggs (2002:174) listed the advantages of using observation in classroom settings as follows:

- 1) It gives direct access and insights into complex social interactions and physical settings.
- 2) If recorded (as in this study), it gives a permanent and systematic record of interactions and physical settings.
- 3) It enriches and supplements data gathered by other techniques (allowing triangulation and, thus, increasing reliability).
- 4) It can be used to address a variety of research questions.

Classroom observations can be of various kinds. Observational schemes may vary dependant on whether they are participant and non-participant observations. In participant observation, the observer (in contrast to this study's observations) regularly takes part in the activities she/he is studying. Non-participant observation, on the other hand, although it might share some of the characteristics⁴⁷ of participant observation, is an approach whereby the observer neither takes part in the activities being studied nor pretends to be a participant in them. When present, the observer watches or records what is going on in the classroom and takes notes (Coleman and Briggs, *ibid.*). Another distinction in classroom observations is whether they are structured or unstructured. With regard to unstructured observations, the emergence of new categories tends to arise from analysis and interpretation, whilst structured observation involves the observer taking note of pre-coded categories of classroom activities or behaviour, and recording when, how often, or for how long these occur. In an attempt to maintain the balanced perspective of an observer, this study employed non-participant and unstructured observations,

⁴⁷ Non-participant observation may form the basis of future participant observations. The same also might apply to unstructured and structured observations respectively.

thus I did not participate in the lessons or interact with the participants at any stage of the lesson.

This study required an element of classroom discourse data which could be sustained by means of a research instrument such as classroom observation which was selected for the following reasons: first, observation is an important method for collecting information about people, as people do not always do what they say they do (Johnson and Christensen 2004:186). Teachers' knowledge is generally reflected in their teaching, and they may find it hard sometimes to articulate their teaching through the use of one approach rather than the other. This helped as regards answering the second and third RQs about the functions of teachers' questioning and the question modifications teachers most employed when questions were not answered during the observed classroom questioning discourse.

3.4.3 Interviews with EFL Teachers

Interviewing is a frequent part of the social life surrounding most of us: we can hear interviews on the radio, watch people interviewed on television, and we ourselves often participate in interviews of various types, either as interviewers or interviewees.

Dörnyei (2007:134)

The usefulness of interviews has long been recognised in the field of applied linguistic research (Briggs, 2007; Mann, 2011). As researchers tend to provide detailed descriptions of individuals and events in their natural settings, interviewing has 'usually' been thought of as a key factor in research design (Weiss, 1994). Kvale (1996) pointed out that, as some phenomena (e.g. philosophies on teaching and learning) are not often directly 'observable', talking to people would be one of the most effective methods for attaining and exploring such constructs. As interviews are interactive, there may well be an opportunity for interviewers to encourage respondents to provide full answers and to probe into any emerging topics. Interviewing is expected to broaden the

scope of understanding an investigated phenomenon, as it is a more naturalistic and less structured data collection tool.

According to Kvale (1983:174) an interview is “a conversation, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the [life-world] of the interviewee” with respect to interpretation of the meanings of the ‘described phenomena’. In a similar vein, Schostak, (2002: 54) declared that an interview is an extendable conversation between partners with the aim of having an ‘in-depth information’ about a certain topic or subject, and through which a phenomenon can be interpreted in terms of the meanings interviewees bring to it. Obtaining such meanings can be undertaken in various ways, of which the one-on-one interview is the most common method (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002; Marshall and Rossman, 2006). Research has shown that three types of interviews are frequently employed in educational research (see table 3.2 below).

Interview Type	Characteristic
Semi-structured interview	This allows depth to be achieved by providing the opportunity on the part of the interviewer, [through following a set agenda], to probe and expand the interviewee's responses (Rubin and Rubin, 2011: 88). This is possibly the most popular format of interviews.
Structured interview	This is mostly organised around a set of predetermined direct questions which require immediate, mostly ‘yes’ or ‘no’ type, responses (Berg, 2007).
Unstructured interview	This is an open situation through which a greater flexibility and freedom is offered to both sides (i.e. interviewers and interviewees), in terms of planning, implementing and organising the interview content and questions (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002:35).

Table 3.2: Characteristics of interview types

An additional type of interview is the ‘stimulated recall’, which according to Gass and Mackay (2005) is a means through which researchers ask participants to recall and report thoughts they had during a certain practice. This recall usually takes place while the participant listens to an audio source or watches a visual source, such as a video clip or similar. The assumption here is

that “the replay will stimulate recall of mental processes occurring during the event in question” (Rose, 1984:23, cited in Gass and Mackay, 2005:14). A main advantage associated with using this type of interview is that it “brings informants a step closer to the moments in which they actually produce action. It gives the chance to listen or view themselves in action, jog memories, and give answers of ‘I did’ instead of ‘I might have’” (Dempsey, 2010:349). In addition, stimulated recall interviews, and semi-structured interviews likewise, impart researchers with the opportunity of asking further explanations from the informants when it is required (Gass and Mackay, 2005).

The issue of when to conduct a stimulated recall interview is of great importance as well. A number of studies (e.g. Mangubahi *et al.*, 2004; Andrews and McNeil, 2005; Gass and Mackay, 2005) advised that the gap between the stimulated recall and the event should be very short, so as to ensure that teachers are able to interpret why certain behaviours took place (while these things are still in their short-term memories). However, immediate stimulated recall may not always be possible considering teachers’ schedules and responsibilities. This was the case in this study⁴⁸ where classroom video-recording took place in March whilst stimulated recall, as well as semi-structured interviews with female teachers, took place in April (both in 2012, see 3.6.2.1). Researchers such as Gatbonton (1999) and Lyle (2003) acknowledged this difficulty. Gatbonton (*ibid.*), for instance, commented that: “ideally, the teacher should have viewed each videotape lesson right after teaching it. But it was often not possible to schedule this because some had teaching commitments in regular programs. For one or two teachers, the delay in viewing time range from a few days to 3 weeks long” (p.37).

By and large, in order to allow for teachers’ further input and involvement in the study, eight interviews have been carried out. On the continuum of structured-unstructured interviews, four of these interviews (with female

⁴⁸ My plan was that the stimulated recall takes place at the end of the instruction day on which the video recording was carried out as the teachers determined an alternative time and location for the interview.

teachers) were of a semi-structured type. Berg (2007) and Creswell (2009), amongst other commentators, pointed out that this interview type works on the basis of a pre-determined question schedule, that assist in covering all relevant areas (i.e. research questions), yet, at the same time, encouraging the participants to offer their thoughts and opinions rather than simply selecting pre-planned, fixed responses decided upon by the researcher. The interview questions were mainly two-fold; structured and open-ended questions. The structured questions (e.g. Interview Q.1: *Do you use questions in your EFL class?*) aimed to help participants stay focused on the issue under consideration; whereas the open-ended questions (e.g. Interview Q.4: *What sort of questions do you normally use?*, and Interview Q5: *In general, how would you describe your students' asking and answering behaviour?*) were used to allow interviewees the freedom to express themselves more comprehensively.

The interviews with male teachers (n=4) whose classes were recorded were of 'stimulated recall' focus. Used as part of this study's method triangulation, the purpose of these interviews was to elicit participants' introspective comments on aspects of the questioning practices observed in their videoed classes with particular focus on the functions of, and modifications to, teacher questions. My hope was that teachers' comments would help explain questioning events which may not be fully interpretable by means of transcripts or video-recordings merely. A sample of the questions I asked during these interviews⁴⁹, while playing the videos to the participating teachers (n=4), was as follows: "Can you recall your thoughts when you asked that question?", "Why did you ask that particular question?", "What did the students' response tell you?", "What was your rationale for focusing on this particular topic?". In addition, subsequent probing was iterative and aligned to the teacher's responses.

⁴⁹ The interviews ranged from 17 to 20 minutes.

An important step towards developing the questions in the interviews, or what Gillham (2000) referred to as ‘trailing the interview questions’, was carried out. As a result of this, and following discussion with the researcher’s supervisor and a number of Saudi EFL teachers pursuing postgraduate studies in the UK (during the pilot study, see 3.6.1), nine interview questions (out of 24 interview questions drafted previously) were selected (see Appendix I). To conclude, and prior to discussing the context of this study (see 3.5), it is worth noting that decisions on selecting interviews, as well as the above-mentioned data collection instruments, in this study can be justified based on two major issues: (a) the conformity of the instruments and the study agenda in general, and (b) the practicality and the suitability of these instruments in the field of second language teaching and learning in particular.

3.5 Research Context

3.5.1 Research Participants

Yaremko *et al.* (1986:177) defined the population of a research study as “the entire collection or set of objects, people or events of interest in a particular context”. The target population of this study was Saudi male and female teachers and first-year students at the English Language Centre (ELC) at Taibah University, a newly founded⁵⁰ university located in Medina in the western region of Saudi Arabia (see figure 3.2 below). This context was one of the initiators and motives for this study, especially on account of my experience as an EFL student and subsequently as a teacher assistant at Taibah University. In addition, upon completion of this research project, I will return to teaching at Taibah University’s ELC, hence carrying out a study there has given me insights into the students and the classroom discourse in this EFL context which hopefully will be helpful in my future career.

⁵⁰ Taibah University was established in 2003 (see www.taibahu.edu.sa).



Figure 3.2: Map of Saudi Arabia (highlighting the location of the current research)

Source: http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Medina,_Saudi_Arabia_locator_map.png

In addition to the above, my familiarity with the place and the people facilitated my work as a researcher, allowing me, for instance, to find a suitable room to carry out the teacher interview sessions, find participants, gain classroom access, and obtain permission to video record the classes (see 3.5.4 for further details on my specific role as a researcher). Commentators such as Stake (1995:4) recommended that “if we can, we need to pick cases which are easy to get to and hospitable to our inquiry”.

The participants in the present study were, at the time of the data collection, first-year students who were chosen as this academic year group offered the greatest number of students in one academic year, and where it is possible that more interactive classroom questioning discourse may occur since students are in a transitional stage between school and university learning. Furthermore, they were in their second term of an intensive general English language programme which is a basic requirement that enables them to enter

the second year (and choose their majors – e.g. business, education, engineering, medical sciences, etc.), thus they are supposed to acquire a fairly good amount of English linguistic knowledge.

The total number of students involved in this study was 341 (194 males and 147 females), aged between 18 and 20, who all volunteered to take part in this study. These students joined the ELC from different parts of Saudi Arabia where they all received a similar education, and most of them were expected to have shared similar cultural backgrounds (see 1.5 and 2.8). However, it is possible that the students' level of proficiency in English may well differ in spite of the fact that they have all been through the same schooling system and studied the same syllabus. In addition to the students, twelve experienced EFL teachers (8 males and 4 females) also voluntarily took part in the study interviews.

3.5.2 Gaining Access to the Research Context

According to McKay (2006:27), if you anticipate a research project will involve learners and teachers in a particular setting, “you should make initial contact with key administrators as soon as possible in order to get permission to work there”. Likewise, in this study, certain permissions had to be obtained in order to gain access to students and venues. These permissions, which were coordinated by the Saudi Cultural Attaché in the UK, were obtained from the Director of the ELC, and the Vice-Dean for Academic Affairs at Taibah University (see Appendices K, L and M for samples of these permission approval letters). Upon receipt of these, it was necessary to obtain informed consent from the students and teachers involved in the study. This consent is normally obtained, as Heath *et al.* (2010) stated, “by providing participants with an information sheet about the research and then, they are asked to sign a form confirming their permission and participation” (p.17). Consent forms containing all must-be-known information about the study data collection together with information about the research (e.g. what the participants were expected to do) were prepared, translated into Arabic, and together with the original English text, given to each participant group (students and teachers) (see Appendices A, F

and H). This complied, as far as possible, with the recommendations of scholars such as Mackey and Gass (2005:31) who advised that the researcher “is responsible for ensuring participant comprehension”.

3.5.3 Research Ethical Considerations

Ethical concerns should be at the forefront of any research project and should continue through the write-up and dissemination stages.

Wellington (2000:3)

As this study involved the participation of students and teachers through the data sources used, a set of ethical considerations had to be taken into consideration. In addition to steps described in 3.5.2 above, research ethics guidelines provided by Newcastle University⁵¹ and the British Association of Applied Linguistics⁵² were consulted and the following steps have been given a high priority in the course of the conduct of this study:

- Participating students and teachers were offered appropriate guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity (see appendices A, F, and H). Throughout the data sets in the subsequent chapters of this thesis, teachers were referred to with symbols such as ‘T’, ‘MT-1’, ‘FT-2’, or ‘EFL-C 1’s T’. Likewise, students were referred to as ‘S1’, ‘SS’, ‘a male student’, or ‘a female student’. Frankfort-Nachmias (1992, cited in Cohen *et al.*, 2011:64) emphasised “the need for confidentiality of participants’ identities, and that any violations of this should be made with the agreement of the participants” (p.64).
- Approval to carry out the research was obtained. I first obtained a letter from my research supervisor confirming that I would collect data over a given period of time (see Appendix K). This letter was sent to the Saudi

⁵¹ Available at: http://www.ncl.ac.uk/hss/internal/research/ethics/ethics_staff_pgr.htm

⁵² See: http://www.baal.org.uk/dox/goodpractice_full.pdf

Cultural Attaché in the UK and he thus provided me with a letter addressed to Taibah University stating that I needed to collect data for my PhD research and was asking for access facilitations. I was also granted project approval to carry out my research from the concerned committee at Newcastle University and this, in turn, was approved by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies (sample letters of approval are offered in Appendices K, L and M).

- Teachers were offered a joint ownership of the classroom recordings and informed that, should they wish, a copy of the video recordings and transcripts of their classes would be sent to them.

3.5.4 Researcher's Role

The role of the researcher and his/her relationship with the research design are very important factors in qualitative research (Gillham, 2000). Parts of this thesis were dependent on qualitative analyses of teacher interviews and recorded classroom observations (see Chapter 5). My role as a researcher in this study revolved between an insider's perspective and an outsider's one (Duranti, 1997). According to Campbell *et al.* (2004) and Robson (2011), insiders often understand the significance of what is happening as they are, to a certain extent, familiar with the context. As I was born and bred there, Saudi Arabia gave me an insider's perspective, and the ability to investigate with a native eye. I was investigating a classroom discourse phenomenon in an educational system in which I was involved. An advantage of this was that participating teachers may have felt more able to express their views freely, as they appeared to view me as a fellow teacher. It also offered me further insight into students' perspectives, as I was once a student at Taibah University. This was particularly important as regards interpreting the research data. Nevertheless, a non-judgmental stance towards what emerged was necessary, and I duly adapted and limited my role during the data collection process to that of a mostly non-participant observer. An effort was made to avoid researcher bias by including all willing participants (n= 341) in the study questionnaires.

However, there may have been some disadvantages to being an insider. As I was familiar with the people and the system, I may have unintentionally overlooked some data, which could have been of importance to the research, on the grounds that they were too obvious to be worth mentioning. Moreover, I may have been, unknowingly, prejudiced, since I had a pre-conception of the country's educational system having studied and taught there, however, this was not inherently a problem for my study. As an interpretivist, I appreciate that the same thing may be perceived differently by different people, whose views may be influenced by contextual factors, such as era and culture (Moses and Knutsen, 2007). These features apply to my research, and to other social science research. Through being accurate and rigorous in my research procedures, any ethical bias was striven to be avoided. In addition, albeit that I had been a staff member at Taibah University (prior to the carrying out of this research), I had not met the subjects before. This and the fact that I am a researcher at Newcastle University may have placed me in some way in the position of an outsider. Interestingly, however, both the students and teachers involved were very hospitable and enthusiastic to participate in the study. Furthermore, the teachers may have felt at ease at some stages of the data collection, expressing concern at the ELC's teaching policy, particularly with regard to the use of English as a medium of instruction and the assessment-focused teaching, of which male teachers disagreed.

3.6 Research Procedure

3.6.1 *The Pilot Study*

Prior to actual data collection, a pilot study was carried out to anticipate possible deterrents to procedure, collection, and analysis of the data. According to Murray (2009:49-50), a pilot study "provides an opportunity for researchers to test and refine their methods and procedures for data collection and analysis ... [and to] save a lot of time and energy by alerting us to the potential problems that can be worked out before we begin the actual study". The pilot study was conducted between mid-November, 2011 and early-January, 2012 and was carried out both in the UK and Saudi Arabia. A total number of 6 Saudi EFL

teachers (4 in the UK and 2 in Saudi Arabia) agreed to take part in a pilot interview. Unlike the two participants who were in-service EFL teachers at Taibah University, the UK subjects were pursuing postgraduate studies in TESOL and applied linguistics at Newcastle University. They were originally teachers of EFL at various Saudi Arabian universities and colleges, and had all been studying in the UK for periods ranging from 3 months to 1 year. With regard to academic background and educational level, these participants resembled, to a large extent, the target population in the main study.

Initial data from the pilot study carried out in the UK⁵³ was gathered in November and December 2011 where the interview data collection instrument was used. The four participants were interviewed in a quiet room at Newcastle University Robinson Library and interviews lasted respectively for approximately 20 minutes. Feedback from the pilot interviews revealed that all interview questions were clear, and the interview length was acceptable to the participants. The other part of the pilot study data was gathered in January 2012 (i.e. during the first semester of the academic year at Taibah University's ELC) with two EFL teachers and their students in two classes (n= 38). A preliminary version of the questionnaire (see Appendix E) was distributed to the students and they were encouraged to complete the survey as thoroughly as they could, and were also informed that the questionnaires were anonymous. The participants' responses were then examined to determine 'bias, ambiguity or vagueness'. A number of good suggestions were made by the subjects, and these were incorporated into the content of the actual survey questionnaire (see Appendix C). For instance, students suggested that questionnaire answers (i.e. the Likert-scale options) should include time expressions, e.g. often, sometimes, never, etc., instead of only agreement expressions, e.g. agree, disagree, not sure, etc. Participants also suggested the inclusion of items that ask about oral

⁵³ I felt that because this stage of the pilot study was carried out in the UK, identifying a representative sample of EFL students was somewhat difficult, due to the fact that the students would be studying in UK language schools, a context which is dissimilar to that of this study and that they were very likely to be exposed to different teaching styles and approaches to those in their country of origin. Thus, the student participation in the pilot study was retained until embarking on the research context in Medina, Saudi Arabia.

interaction and students' English proficiency with relation to classroom questioning in the questionnaire.

3.6.2 The Main Study

3.6.2.1 Field Work Trip

This field trip was undertaken during the period of January 21st until April 20th, 2012 (see Appendix L) to collect data needed for this research study. This time of the year was believed to be an ideal time to collect data from a Saudi Arabian higher education institution like Taibah University as at this time, the second semester commences and continues without any vacations or study breaks. There are usually vacations such as Ramadan, Eid and Hajj⁵⁴, which interrupt the first semester (starting in early September every year), resulting in irregular attendance of students. Upon arriving in the study context, I informed the head of the ELC of my arrival and asked for his assistance to facilitate meetings with the EFL teachers whose classes were to be observed. This was an individual meeting (i.e. one-to-one discussion) in which I provided these teachers with more information about the purpose of the study and the methods by which data collection would be carried out, and obtained their consent and agreement to take part in the study. In addition, teachers were provided with a four to six week rotation timetable from which they could choose a suitable time for the observation session.

3.6.2.2 Sampling Procedure

In order to achieve as many reliable and valid results as possible for my study, I decided to include the entire intake of the first year of the ELC as a representative sample of EFL students at Taibah University. Although a full complement of students was not achieved as only 341 out of the 500 students at the ELC took part in the completion of the study questionnaires, the number was still considerably high. According to Borg and Gall (1983:257), "the larger

⁵⁴ Ramadan (the ninth month in the Islamic calendar and which Muslims fast during daylight hours), Eid (an Islamic festival which follows Ramadan and occurs once again in the twelfth month in the Islamic calendar), and Hajj (the month where Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca takes place) are all national holidays in Saudi Arabia.

the sample, the more likely is its mean and standard deviation to be representative of the population mean and standard deviation". All first-year male classes at Taibah University's ELC (n= 14) were visited .The purpose of the research was explained to the students and volunteers were requested. Figure 3.2 below illustrates the sampling of the current study.

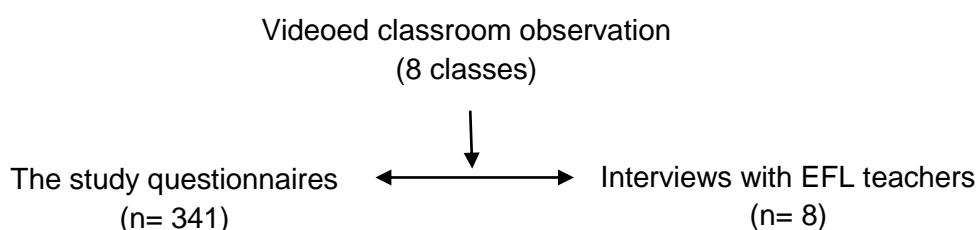


Figure 3.2: Sampling scheme of the study

3.6.2.3 Use of Videos

When conducting classroom observation, it is essential that actual classroom discourse data be recorded and transcribed (Brown and Rodgers, 2002; McKay, 2006). In this study, classroom lessons were video-recorded as videos, according to McKay (ibid.), provide a more 'objective record' of classroom events. In addition, electronic data-collection tools, e.g. video-recorders, can allow researchers to view, analyse, and re-analyse the data from multiple perspectives at a later date. Mackey and Gass (2005) declared that "over time and repeated observations, the researcher can gain a deeper and more multi-layered understanding of the participants and their context" (p.176). Therefore, and after nearly six weeks of visiting Taibah University's ELC, I commenced videotaping the whole class interactions⁵⁵. I rotated between

⁵⁵ To avoid wasting time and facing practical difficulties, teachers were informed in advance about the need for video recordings, and they agreed to make preparations for this. Besides, all participants were asked to be as spontaneous as they could and to act naturally during lesson video recordings.

classes (see 5.2) and days so most of the interactions amongst the study participants could be documented on a regular and even basis.

Several researchers have recommended that recording equipment, such as video cameras should be left in classrooms for a long enough period prior to actual recording in order that students grow accustomed to them (Allwright and Bailey, 1991; Swann, 1992). With the permission of the ELC Director, the camera was left not running in the class for approximately one hour before recording took place. The camera was not, however, placed in full view of the students in the classroom in the hope that it became quickly forgotten, in line with the warning put forward by Tilstone (1998: 49) that “a frequently underestimated problem is the reaction of some students to the presence of the recording equipment”. In addition, as a rule, I entered the classroom ten minutes before the start of the lesson I was going to record. This short time allowed me to chat with the teachers, turn on the camera and film the class from when the students arrived. During the initial conversation with the teachers, they usually informed me of the lesson’s topic, activities and materials.

During the observation, the teacher and students were engaged in their ordinary teaching and learning activities whilst I sat quietly in the front corner of the classroom, where the camera was placed most of the time. Although the camera was focused on the teacher, it was set at a wide angle in order to video-record the entire class (see a sample video snapshot of an observed lesson in figure 3.3 on the next page). In addition, a small wireless microphone was attached to the teachers to better capture their voices. A digital audio-recorder was also placed under the teacher’s table, together with a wired microphone for the purpose of recording the voices of all class participants. These logistics proved useful in establishing an audible classroom data set which has subsequently been analysed to answer the study RQs, particularly with regards to teacher question functions and modifications.



Figure 3.3: An illustrative video snapshot from one of the observed classes

3.6.2.4 Transcribing the Data

Once classroom discourse and interview data were collected, it was essential to organise them into a manageable, analysable source of information (Mackey and Gass, 2005). To accomplish this task, the first step was to transform oral data into written transcripts. Transana 2.4® software⁵⁶ was used for this purpose (*cf.* Dicks *et al.*, 2005, and Paulus *et al.*, 2013). In accordance with established research and transcription conventions (Atkinson and Heritage, 1984; and Schiffrin, 1994), the recorded classroom discourse data were transcribed with a focus on the features that were relevant to the study's second and third RQs (i.e. question functions and question modifications). The symbols that were used for the transcription are presented at the end of this thesis (see Appendix G). In addition to this data, all of the audio-recorded interviews were manually transcribed ad verbatim using the following codes for the transcripts (T = teacher, and I: interviewer). Line numbering was used for both sets of transcripts.

⁵⁶ *Transana* is a software package designed to facilitate the transcription, management and analysis of digital video and/or audio data. It also allows researchers to see the audio/video waves whilst creating the transcriptions and navigate the data for analysis purposes. See: www.transana.org

3.7 Data Analysis Procedures

Having highlighted the data collection procedures and sources used in this study, it is now necessary to elucidate how the data was analysed to answer the research questions posed in this study. The analysis performed in this study has, in general terms, abided by the issue of 'fitness for purpose' (Cohen *et al.*, 2011) in the sense that deciding the purposes for undertaking the research have determined the kind of analysis performed on the data. Initially, analyses of the quantitative data (i.e. that of the study questionnaire) were carried out electronically by means of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software. Following this, analyses of the qualitative data (i.e. transcripts from both classroom discourse data and teacher interviews) were carried out both by means of Transana software and manually. According to Richards (2003), qualitative data analysis is "neither a distinct stage nor a discrete process; it is something that is happening, in one form or another, throughout the whole research process" (p. 268). This applied to the current study where data analysis occurred throughout the research. Specific details of the study data set analyses are presented next.

3.7.1 Analysis of Questionnaire Data

Student responses to the questionnaire were coded by assigning a numerical value to each answer⁵⁷ whilst being entered into an SPSS⁵⁸ file, and were then exposed to different statistical procedures. These included both descriptive statistics, e.g. means⁵⁹, standard deviations, and cross tabulations, to determine the frequency and percentages of agreement and disagreement amongst the participants with regard to the various issues raised in the

⁵⁷ For instance (strongly disagree=1, disagree=2, not sure=3, agree=4, strongly agree=5).

⁵⁸ The SPSS software was chosen for this study analysis as it enabled more options (e.g. t-test) for the manipulation of the data than another package, e.g. MS Excel.

⁵⁹ Means were used in this study to measure the averages of participant responses and to discriminate between the two groups of participants and hence provide a ground for the statistical significance test between male and female students.

questionnaire - and inferential statistics⁶⁰ (particularly the independent sample *t*-test⁶¹) which helped to establish the statistically-significant differences, if any, between the male and female students involved in terms of their perspectives on the EFL classroom questioning. According to Punch (2009:128), the benefits of using statistical analysis are to keep the researcher close to the data and to understand the distribution of each variable across the survey respondents. After the analysis of questionnaires by means of SPSS, data was presented in tabular form together with interpretations and discussions of the gleaned results.

In addition to the quantitative analysis of the questionnaire findings, all written comments made by the students were reviewed. These had been initiated by the inclusion of a 'Comments' section below each of the 12 closed items together with the 2 open-ended ones included at the end of the questionnaire (see Appendix C). The comments made in the first set of questionnaire items have varied in number (e.g. from 60 to 10 or no comments on other questions). As a result, they were used in the next chapter as indicators rather than proofs. In other words, they were included to complement the statistical data. Figure 3.4 below summarises the analysis procedure for the questionnaire data, the findings of which are presented in the next chapter.

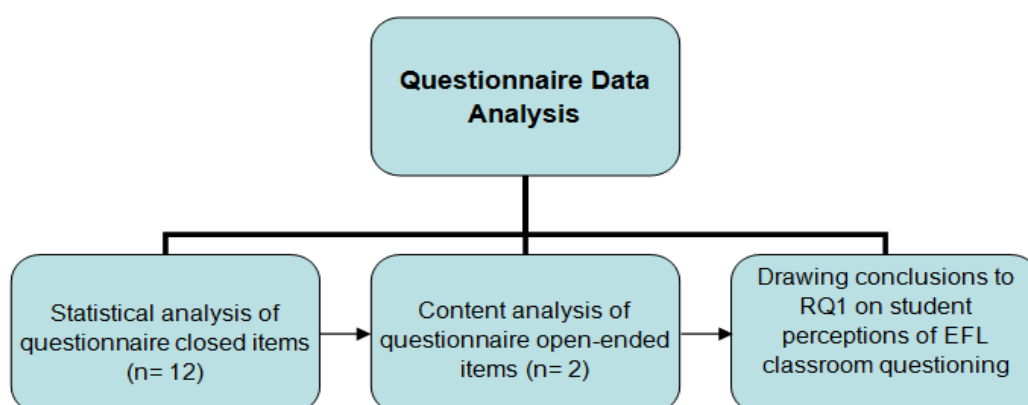


Figure 3.4: Overall procedure for analysing the study questionnaire data

⁶⁰ Inferential statistics are techniques which deal with probability. Generally, there are two types of inferential statistics: parametric statistics using interval/ratio data and non-parametric statistics using ordinal (ranked) or nominal data (Morgan *et al.*, 2012). As I was interested in determining whether male and female students differ in some responses, I used the independent sample *t*-test: a non-parametric statistical technique.

⁶¹ Here, the significance level was set at .05.

3.7.2 Analysis of Observation Data

Eight classes of transcripts were created in all and data from the observed classes (total= 7.83 hours) were videotaped and then transcribed in full. Following a line-by-line reading of the full transcripts, instances of teacher and student questions were then identified. To allow for the analysis of the turns regarding teacher and student questions and question modifications, the relevant videotaped utterances were then extracted. The analysis of these transcript excerpts was restricted to 'exchanges' as a unit of analysis. In all exchange sequences (n= 26) analysed in Chapter 5, each question together with its preceding and subsequent talk was drawn from the original transcript to form an excerpt.

Analysis of transcripts at the level of exchange⁶² (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975, 1992) draws on concepts of discourse analysis to characterise classroom talk as shown in research studies by scholars such as Kumpulainen and Wray (2002). They suggested that, rather than focusing on single utterances, chains of utterances and longer exchanges should be analysed in order to understand the meanings developed through them. In sum, by analysing the functions and modifications of classroom questioning at the level of discourse, I abided by what Carlsen (1991) called the sociolinguistic context of the EFL lesson, and Cazden (2001) named 'features of pedagogic discourse'.

3.7.3 Analysis of Interview Data

Once the study interviews (n= 8) were transcribed and transcripts were uploaded to a computer file, the textual data, together with the audio recordings, was reviewed several times. The interviewees' responses to each interview question were subsequently grouped together to create themes for the analysis

⁶² Sinclair and Coulthard (1992) identified two types of exchange in classroom discourse; boundary exchanges and teaching exchanges. "Boundary exchanges signal the transition from one section of the lesson to the next and are initiated by the teacher, whereas teaching exchanges are where questions are asked and answered, and feedback given on answers" (p.7). The latter, more specifically in the form of question-answer-comment sequences (McHoul, 1978) guided the analyses of this study (see 5.2, 5.3 and 5.6).

and discussion. This process of content analysis is referred to in manuals of qualitative research as ‘data coding’ which Lockyer (2004:137-138) defined as “a systematic way in which to condense extensive data sets into smaller analysable units through the creation of categories and concepts derived from the data”. This was roughly based on counting frequencies of teacher’s representative views, identified by the force of these views. The categories created to code data can be determined ahead of time, or can arise from familiarity with new data (Freankel and Wallen, 2003). Both techniques were adopted for coding the data associated with the current study interviews. Accordingly, each extract/excerpt of interviewee responses was given a theme, which was named in relation to a specific issue that correlated with the interview questions (see table 3.4 below).

Theme No	Description
Theme 1:	Question purpose
Theme 2:	Questioning frequency
Theme 3:	Question type
Theme 4:	Students’ asking
Theme 5:	Students’ responding
Theme 6:	L1 and questioning

Table 3.4: Themes from the interview data

In order to ensure the reliability of these themes, this final set of themes was analysed to verify the extent of their representation of the transcribed data. In addition, an experienced colleague at Newcastle University was asked to code two of the eight interviews (male / female teachers) and his themes were compared with those of the researcher. After some meetings held between them, agreement was reached on the operational definition of themes, and thus the themes provided in table 3.4 above were used. Figure 3.5 on the next page summarises the overall procedure utilised for the interview data analysis in this study.

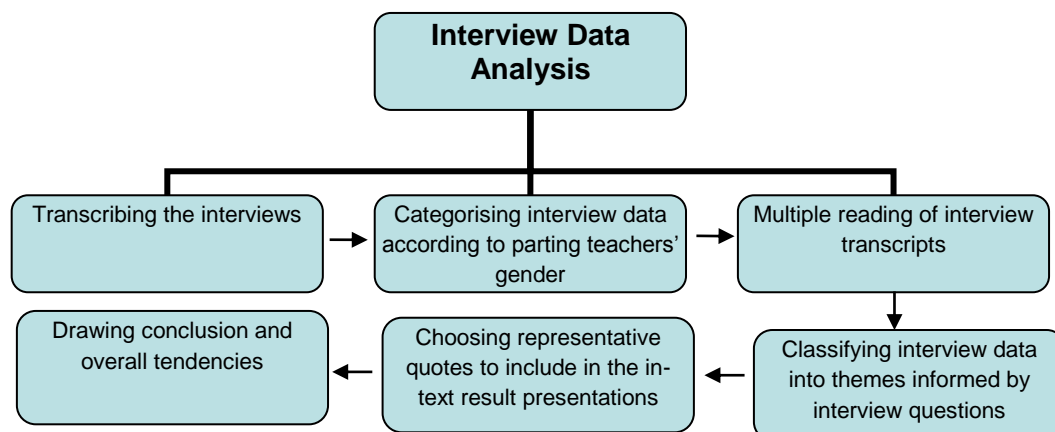


Figure 3.5: Overall procedure for analysing the study interview data

As already established, the interviews were designed to supplement and present an in-depth insight into the findings of the questionnaires and classroom observation data, thus questions (see Appendix I) were designed to elicit responses which could be compared with, and interpreted alongside, issues arising from these sources. In addition, relevant extracts⁶³ from the interview transcripts were incorporated in the analysis to substantiate the points and highlight the themes (Bryman, 2012). Together with the data coding, this practice allowed for the identification of commonalities and differences within the participants' reported viewpoints.

3.7.4 Validity and Reliability Considerations

According to Patton (2002), validity and reliability are two core issues which should be of concern to every researcher during the design, analysis and evaluation of a study. In this section, I describe how appropriate measures of validity⁶⁴ and reliability are in relation to my study and how far I have tried to ensure that the research process, instruments and results met these measures.

⁶³ According to Barbour and Schostak (2006), quotations of the interviewees' accounts provide powerful description and allow the reader to understand the presented interpretations and explanations clearly.

⁶⁴ Validity, in relation to a research instrument, is defined by Fox (1969:367) as "the extent to which the procedure actually accomplishes what it seeks to accomplish or measures what it seeks to measure".

The use of multi-method data collection was perceived as being important for ensuring validity, enabling me to minimise any possible limitations of using one method and to achieve broader and better results (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). In addition, to establish the validity of this study's instruments, a pilot study was undertaken (see 3.5). In line with researchers, such as Seedhouse (2004) and Creese (2005), this study has followed two procedures to secure internal validity. First, attention was given to an emic perspective, whereby participants had the opportunity to share and clarify their viewpoints through surveys and during interviews which apply as data. Second, participants' behaviour was the focus rather than existing theories, and thus research was carried out in an inductive manner. To account for external validity, I followed Merriam's (1998) suggestion that the primary strategy is the provision of full, detailed descriptions so that anyone interested in transferability has a solid framework for comparison.

With regards to reliability, researchers such as Bogdan and Biklen (2006) argued that authenticity and credibility of the data is a core issue. This study employed non-participant observation to ensure classroom discourse data was collected in a relaxed setting, and ensured interviews were carried out in a calm and friendly atmosphere whereby participants' convenience was a priority. In addition, and prior to the data analyses, a rough draft of each of the four semi-structured interviews was provided to the participating teachers in order to ensure their perspectives were appropriately represented. Yin (2013:30) argued that a general method of considering reliability in qualitative inquiries is "to make as many steps as operational as possible and to conduct research as if someone was always looking over your shoulder", thus multiple sources of data were used to present multiple layers of reality adequately.

3.7.5 Answering the Research Questions

Having considered the processes of data analysis in the current study, how each research question will be answered is now presented. A summary of the data sources which were drawn upon to answer each research question

and an indication of how they were to be interpreted is provided in table 3.5 below.

Research Question	Data Source	How the question will be answered?
How do the Saudi EFL university students perceive the classroom questioning practice in their classes?	Student Questionnaires	Student responses to the questionnaire are analysed to provide both a means of making judgements about the value of questioning practice to them, and begin to identify aspects of gender-related differences amongst the respondents in relation to their perspectives on classroom questioning.
What are some of the functions of teachers' questioning practice in the Saudi EFL university classroom?	Classroom Observation Teacher Interviews	Transcripts of classroom discourse across the observed lessons are used to seek questioning patterns. Following this, question-answer-comment sequences are identified and characterised by the question function, and discussed accordingly. Interviewee teachers' related views are also discussed in this part of the thesis.
What modifications (if any) do Saudi EFL teachers employ in instances where students do not answer?	Classroom Observation Teacher Interviews	Questioning extracts in the observed lessons are analysed to see how the teachers observed discursively overcome instances when students do not answer. Data from the study's interviews are also alluded to in order to shed light on some observed practices or for comparison as well as triangulation purposes.

Table 3.5: An overview of the process of answering the study RQs

3.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has comprised a discussion of some issues that relate to the process of data collection and analysis. It has delineated the methodological journey undertaken during this research and presented an overall account of the data collection approach used in this study. The mixed-method approach chosen was justified and the study instruments and procedure were highlighted. An overview of the data analysis was drawn together with an account of the validity and reliability of the study and a brief outline of the process of answering the study research questions. The study findings (both quantitative and qualitative) are given in the next two chapters (Chapters 4 and 5) respectively. The conclusion to this study is presented in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION I

Students' Perspectives on Classroom Questioning

4.1 Introduction

Having discussed the research design and methodology of this study in the previous chapter, attention now shifts toward the presentation and discussion of the study findings which have emerged from the data, both in this and the next chapter. This fourth chapter is devoted to the results derived from the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data which was obtained during the first phase of the study (see figure 3.1 in 3.2.2 for the study's overall research process). This data is based on the study's questionnaire administered to explore the perspectives of Saudi EFL first-year students at Taibah University's ELC with regard to classroom questioning undertaken in their classes. SPSS was used to analyse the gathered numerical data (see illustration in figure 4.1 below).

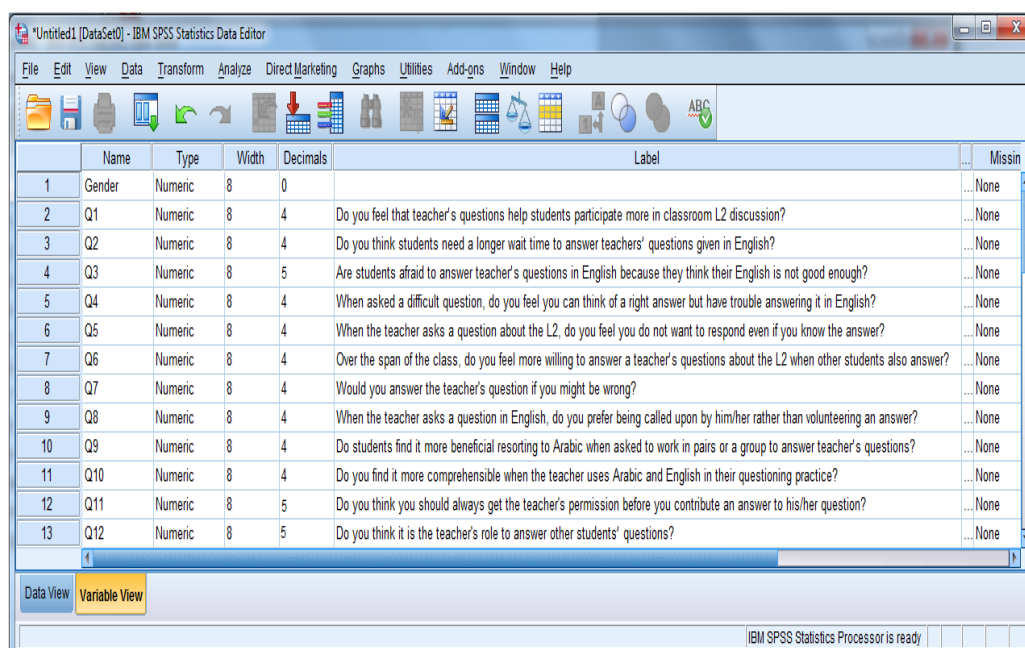


Figure 4.1: SPSS workspace used in this study

The questionnaire data presented in this chapter aims to answer the first research question of this study: *RQ1) How do the Saudi EFL university students perceive the classroom questioning practice in their classes?* In addition, the interpretation of the results reviewed throughout this chapter aims to offer greater comprehension of the questioning practice which occurred amongst a large group of students in Saudi EFL university classrooms. A consideration of the classroom 'actual practice' data and related teachers' ideas is presented in the next chapter.

4.2 Rationale for Statistical Analyses

According to Wray and Bloomer (2006:255-256)⁶⁵, the areas of linguistics research that require statistical analysis are those where there is variability:

Any type of linguistic study that does not need to measure variability, that is, differences in people's linguistic behaviour or in the patterns of the language itself, does not need to use statistics directly. However, as soon as we focus on variability there is a role for statistics in a surprising large range of areas.

Questions by both students and teachers, as regards their gender, concern measuring variability⁶⁶ and differences in use and perception. Statistics can therefore play a central role as a methodological tool to help ascertain, in a quantitative as well as qualitative manner, the discursive picture projected by the study. With the aid of tables, figures and graphs, this chapter bases its quantitative analyses on the accumulated frequencies (descriptive statistics) and t-test results (inferential statistics) which were obtained by means of SPSS, version 20.0.0⁶⁷.

⁶⁵ A fair point particularly that Wray and Bloomer here seem to refer to 'measure' as a form of quantification.

⁶⁶ Of note, variability can be a qualitative issue as well.

⁶⁷ Further information about SPSS including download can be found at: <http://www-01.ibm.com/software/uk/analytics/spss/>

4.3 Questionnaire Response Rate and Respondent Distribution

A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed to the EFL students at the English Language Centre (ELC) of Taibah University in Saudi Arabia, to elicit their views about their and their teachers' classroom questioning practices. The recruitment goal⁶⁸ of 500 questionnaire respondents was not met. A total of 500 participants were issued with the questionnaire, of whom, 341 completed the questionnaire, with a 68% return ratio as shown in table 4.1 below. According to Gillham (2000), Weisberg (2005), and Field (2009), amongst other researchers, a response rate which is "over 50%" is regarded as a good response in educational research.

Group	Questionnaire		
	Distribution	Return	Percentage of Return (within participant group)
EFL students (males)	250	194	78%
EFL students (female)	250	147	59%
Total	500	341	68%

Table 4.1: Questionnaire distribution and return

As shown above, respondents were divided into males (n= 194) and females (n= 147). It is worth noting that when the 341 participants in the study were asked, in the biodata section of the survey (see Appendix C for a copy of the study questionnaire), to report on their knowledge of languages other than English, 99.6% reported having no such knowledge. The remaining 0.4% was for two female students who stated that they studied Urdu at home and at school overseas. Regardless of its contradiction to the researcher's expectations, the obtained percentage was pleasing as it reflected that the respondents based their responses on their first-hand experience of a foreign language, i.e. the EFL at university level.

⁶⁸ The aim was to include the whole intake of the Taibah University's ELC at the time of data collection in order to increase the validity of the study's quantitative data.

4.4 Questionnaire Scale Consistency

In addition to this study's reliability checks which have been outlined previously (see 3.7.4), a consistency test was performed with regard to the closed-ended questionnaire items ($n= 12$). This reliability check was undertaken using Cronbach's Alpha reliability test. In this test, as Cronk (2012:101) stated, "... reliability coefficients close to 1.00 are very good", and "numbers close to 0.00 represent poor internal consistency". As illustrated in table 4.2 below, the Cronbach's Alpha value of the questionnaire instrument used in this study appeared acceptable showing [$\alpha = 0.703$].

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardised Items	No. of Items
.695	.703	12

Table 4.2: Cronbach's Alpha statistics

In addition to the above, the study's questionnaire underwent a pilot study (see 3.6.1 for more details) before it was actually used (see Appendices C and E for the actual and the piloted questionnaire versions).

4.5 Students' Viewpoints (Descriptive Statistics)

First, it is helpful to look at the descriptive statistics for the questionnaire closed items ($n= 12$) as shown in table 4.3 on the next page. Descriptive statistics, as Mann (2010:3) defined, is the discipline of quantitatively describing the main features of a collection of information. According to Mann (ibid.), descriptive statistics aim to summarise a sample, rather than use the data to learn about the population that the sample of data is thought to represent, as is the case with inferential statistics (see 4.6 next). Common measures used in descriptive statistics, which this study refers to, are means and standard deviations, which measure tendency and variability within a data set (Field, 2009).

No.	Questionnaire Item	Response (in %)*	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Do you feel that teacher's questions help students participate more in classroom L2 discussion?	79.8	4.18	.866
2	Do you think students need a longer wait time to answer teachers' questions given in English?	86.6	4.36	.850
3	Are students afraid to answer teacher's questions in English because they think their English is not good enough?	74.2	4.43	.850
4	When asked a difficult question, do you feel you can think of a right answer but have trouble answering it in English?	74.2	4.03	1.099
5	When the teacher asks a question about the L2, do you feel you do not want to respond even if you know the answer?	58.3	3.83	1.189
6	Over the span of the class, do you feel more willing to answer a teacher's questions about the L2 when other students also answer?	76.6	3.73	1.121
7	Would you answer the teacher's question if you might be wrong?	50.7	3.66	1.061
8	When the teacher asks a question in English, do you prefer being called upon by him/her rather than volunteering an answer?	58.1	3.40	1.110
9	Do students find it more beneficial resorting to Arabic when asked to work in pairs or a group to answer teacher's questions?	86.6	3.62	1.208
10	Do you find it more comprehensible when the teacher uses Arabic and English in their questioning practice?	57.8	2.81	1.381
11	Do you think you should always get the teacher's permission before you contribute an answer to his/her question?	61.2	4.08	1.036
12	Do you think it is the teacher's role to answer other students' questions?	76.6	4.05	.892

* The total of the percentages of responses of those who endorsed the higher frequency or agreement statement.

Table 4.3: Summary of descriptive statistics of student responses to questionnaire items (n= 12)

The above table shows that the range for the means is from 2.81 to 4.43 and the standard deviations from .850 to 1.381, which indicates the variability in the obtained data. According to the descriptive statistics of students responses to the first questionnaire items (QI hereafter), more than two thirds of the Saudi EFL students reported that teachers' questions helped them in their participation in L2 classroom discussions (QI1). This finding is supported by comments some of the students made on this QI. These comments (n= 34), in

addition to comments quoted in this section and in 4.6, were elicited from the section dedicated to voluntary comments below each QI⁶⁹. Translated⁷⁰ into English from Arabic and then transcribed, representative quotes were integrated into this data analysis and discussion. Indicating the aforementioned positive trend (QI 1), a male student whose level is beginner (as is the case with most observed male students who were all aged between 18 and 20, see 3.5), for instance, wrote: “Teachers’ questions are most of the time helpful because some information is interesting for me. Also, the most helpful thing was that I usually learn new things in question-answer routines”. This opinion was supported by another male student who wrote: “To me, it is really important paying attention to teachers’ questions as these help us know when and how to respond”. A representative view of female participants was given by a female student who said: “In the case of questions asked in class, you can see that these can sometimes be few. However, when used - they can be very helpful to us”. An interesting pedagogical implication could possibly be drawn from this comment in the sense that it indicates to EFL female teachers that students believed in the helpfulness of teacher questions yet considered they were being used in a limited fashion.

Whilst it could be expected that students would generally respond positively to the above QI, the reason being that students may either have been compliant for reasons, if true, related to student-teacher power relations, or simply had expressed a genuine belief that questioning is useful⁷¹. In addition, this finding is of interest when the relatively low level of English proficiency of the students is taken into consideration. It also supports data derived from the recorded classroom discourse (presented in the next chapter) in that male

⁶⁹ By contrast, comments discussed in section 4.7, later in this chapter, were elicited through the questionnaire’s open-ended items (QI 13 and 14).

⁷⁰ The translation was conducted by me and was subsequently checked by a qualified colleague working as an EFL teacher in Taibah University. Noteworthy, in my translation I used, for instance, the term ‘Suaal’ which is translated into ‘question’, i.e. an explicit pedagogical device utilised to obtain answers, as this thesis used (see 2.5) and avoided terms such as ‘istinbat’ or ‘istikhrāj’ which are translated as ‘elicitation’ and ‘interrogation’.

⁷¹ According to McDonough and Shaw (1995:271-273), evidence tends to suggest that the questions a teacher asks in the classrooms can be extremely important in helping learners to develop their competence in the language.

teacher questions (as observed in the videoed EFL classes) appeared to serve a number of discursive functions (see 5.3), such as inviting students' guesses which could be held to be classroom participation. Furthermore, this finding is in line with some opinions expressed by teachers when interviewed. MT-4, an experienced male EFL teacher (referred to as EFL-C 8's T in the classroom discourse corpus, see 5.3 and 5.6), for instance, said in a stimulated recall interview: "Questions have a symbolic value. I sometimes use them to send a clear message to my students that they are expected to be active participants in the ongoing interaction". Therefore, it is possible to suggest that male students who responded to this QI (65.5%, 127 out of 194) may have been accustomed to MT-4's opinion and thus tended to perceive the helpfulness of teachers' questions positively.

This finding also lends some support to the results of Suk-a-nake *et al.*'s (2003) study of Thai EFL students' questioning practice, whereby low-proficiency EFL students reported that teachers' questions improve their abilities to participate in classroom discussions. However, much could also depend on how the questions were asked and what forms were used, as well as how questions and questioning was perceived, which is what this study has sought to establish. The finding reported here also mirrored McNeil's (2010) findings that L2 proficiency plays an important role in how language learners ask questions and respond to them in their L2 classes (p. 83). In addition, educational research into classroom participation and student involvement in content-based settings has shown that teacher questions are an effective strategy to promote students' engagement (*cf.* Pennell, 2000; Feldberg, 1999).

As is indicated in table 4.4 above, students endorsed concerns or challenges which could influence their responding behaviour such as the wait-time that teachers allocate, their (the students', that is) perceived lack of English proficiency, attitudes towards teachers' nomination practices, and perceptions of the teacher's role in the classroom questioning discourse. They believed these to be responsible for prompting students' answers and the way

they handle questions being asked in the classroom discourse, as illustrated by the accumulated means of QIs 2, 3, 4, 6, 11 and 12 in figure 4.2 below.

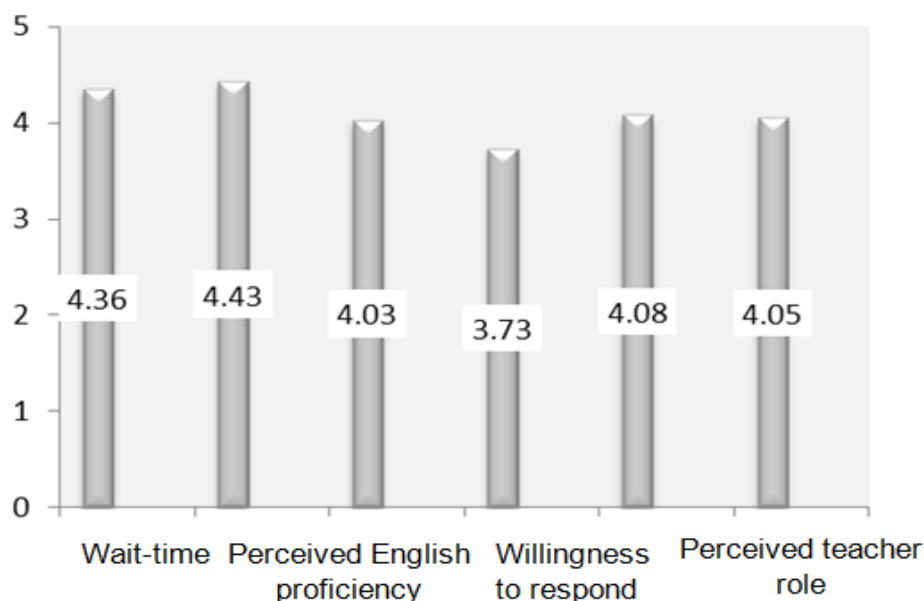


Figure 4.2: Means of student responses to QIs 2, 3, 4, 6, 11 and 12

The results in the above figure show an overwhelming agreement amongst the surveyed students (“Q12: Do you think students need a longer wait time to answer teachers’ questions given in English?” - 86.6%, see table 4.4 above) in terms of the need for a longer wait-time⁷² when responding to teachers’ L2 questions. Albeit the fact that this finding was not rationalised by the students as shown by the absence of their comments on this QI⁷³, it is very revealing and should raise awareness amongst our Saudi EFL teachers that inadequately-allocated wait-time, in the eyes of the vast majority of the students, may represent a challenge for the questioning discourse, particularly on the students’ part. In addition, it implies that questions that concerned L2 knowledge were more difficult to answer correctly due to the limited wait-time

⁷² Wait-time, as Cazden (2001) defined, is the interval between the end of a teacher question and the start of a student response.

⁷³ It is possible that students did not comment because they perhaps had no suggestions to put forward with regards to a ‘desired’ wait-time. It is also possible that students may have believed that a comment on this QI would require them to mention discourse details and features which they were unable to recall at the moment of filling in the questionnaire.

given by their teachers which reinforces the suggestion and observation (of male EFL classes) that the proficiency level of students involved in this study was that of beginner. The above finding is also consistent with recent research (e.g. Chang, 2009) in which it was reported that wait-time in EFL classes (Taiwanese in Chang's study) influences students' verbal participation and can sometimes negatively affect students' verbal productivity. In addition, in his study of EFL beginner learners in an Iranian EFL context, Shamoossi (2004) concluded that an imbalanced wait-time could result in simple or no answers from students whose confidence to respond may gradually decline. Likewise, Hu (2004) found in his study of university-level EFL classrooms in China that teachers self-answered up to 38.9% of the total questions asked. In this regard, the extension of wait-time given could allow teachers an opportunity to maximise their students' participation opportunities.

Researchers such as Tsui (1996), Cameron (1997), and Walsh (2006) stated that it is necessary for language teachers⁷⁴ to extend wait-time in their classroom questioning discourse to help elaborate students' verbal outcomes. According to Cazden (2001:50), an increased wait-time can lead to "more profound changes" in students' language use as well as students' attitudes and expectations. In a similar vein, Waring (2009:818) added that wait-time can provide learners with space in which they can actively take part in classroom discourse, and thus secure "repair-driven negotiations" (van Lier and Matsuo, 2000:267). In addition, Richards *et al.* (1992, cited in Gabrielatos, 1997) argued that "increasing wait-time both before calling on a student and after a student's initial response, [i.e. before the teacher comments on the response] often increases the length of the students' responses, increases the number of questions asked by students, and increases student involvement in learning" (original emphasis, p.4).

⁷⁴ However this may well depend on desired pedagogic goals. According to Allwright (1984:159), effective language classroom pedagogy has one of its roots in successful management of the interaction.

To conclude, from my experience as an EFL teacher, and in line with concerns put forward by some of the interviewed teachers, dilemmas can arise for teachers. That is, a too long wait-time⁷⁵ (i.e. 10+ seconds) may make the classroom atmosphere somewhat awkward, yet at the same time a too short wait-time (i.e. less than 1 second) may prevent students from answering. Feng (2013) reported that wait-time in EFL classes is usually from three to five seconds; however this study's videoed discourse data revealed that teachers roughly used an average wait-time of two to seven seconds (see for instance excerpt 6 in 5.3). Notwithstanding this, however, I believe that what matters is the judicious implementation of wait-time more than quantification of its duration, albeit the importance of the latter. In addition, wait-time depends on the ongoing discourse, i.e. the types of questions asked, level of students, frequency of student questions and answers, and the number of unsolicited responses.

Whilst it may be expected that some of these could appear normal in a foreign language setting, further concerns were expressed by the students. More than half of the surveyed students (74.2% in response to "Q13: Are students afraid to answer teacher's questions in English because they think their English is not good enough?", and "Q14: When asked a difficult question, do you feel you can think of a right answer but have trouble answering it in English?", respectively), regarded their lack of proficiency in English and difficulty in articulating responses in English as being challenging to their responding behaviour. This finding could be further explained in the light of student comments (n= 25) on these two QIs. Commenting students agreed that given greater mastery of English skills⁷⁶, they could answer teachers' L2 questions at a higher level. Illustrating this, one of the male students wrote what appeared to be a sophisticated, yet representative, comment:

⁷⁵ It is worth stressing that 'wait-time' referred to here is that in question-answer routines in whole classroom interaction and not that in task or group work discourse which can have a different function and be subject to different quantification.

⁷⁶ This suggests confidence as well as a certain standard aspired for by students.

Sometimes, the teacher focuses his talk on the English language rules using only English. This abandons me sometimes from answering as I feel that I am not involved in the on-going discussion. Therefore, the teacher should simplify their language and speak slowly so all students can have the opportunity to ask more and to improve their questioning. Otherwise, not every student will answer.

There are a number of noteworthy points in this quote. First, as regards this student, whose level appears to be that of beginner as his above-quoted comment implies, code-switching to Arabic could be helpful to students like him who felt prevented from answering when only English was used. This suggests that this student, and perhaps other students at the ELC, is not fully accustomed to, or prepared for, an L2-only classroom discourse. Second, the situation referred to by this student (which I did not observe over the course of my classroom observation visits) could indicate that some teachers may not be attentive to students' L2 proficiency level with regard to their language use. Expressing a similar attitude, another female student wrote: "To me, questioning cannot be separated from L2 knowledge offered in the class. If the student acquires the input given, I am sure she will ask and participate more".

This finding suggests that students were at beginner or intermediate level, which they regarded as a factor influencing the quantity, and perhaps quality, of their talk. Furthermore, it demonstrates that students may well have understood teachers' L2 questions but had insufficient L2 proficiency to be able to answer, or perhaps did not answer or understand teachers' questions due to their level of English proficiency. Whilst this may well require further investigation before conclusions can be drawn, the above finding is informative as it offers EFL teachers further insights into students' L2 level and that students' L1 (Arabic) is desired for use in question-answer routines (see figure 4.10). The above results into students' L2 level and L1 use preference parallel the findings of Hsu (2001) in his study of ESL classroom questioning in an American college context. By means of surveys, Hsu established that students' level of English proficiency had an influence on their questioning, both with regard to asking and answering, in terms of question types and frequency. In addition, Wintergerst (1994, cited

in Chang, 2009:136) asserted that learners' language proficiency influences the amount of student talk in class. Furthermore, this finding might also represent a 'confidence' issue amongst the students that may have been based/shaped by teachers' expectations or by members of the society's expectations. According to Lahlali (2003), what happens in the classroom could mimic behaviour in the wider society. Therefore, society's influence may extend to the EFL classroom and vice versa.

In addition to the above, 76.6% of the respondents (Q16, table 4.5 above) reported that they often felt more willing to answer teachers' L2 questions when their classmates also answered. Whilst students did not offer comments on this QI that could have presented elucidations for such statistics, this high rate of agreement may well indicate to our Saudi EFL teachers that the more they involve students (by means of asking questions), the more the discourse will progress as they (the students) would engage further in the question-answer exchanges.

Further endorsements were also noted in students' Likert-scale responses to QIs 11 and 12 in which more than half of respondents (61.2% and 76.6% respectively) reported that they should obtain their teacher's permission before answering his/her questions and that they believed in the teacher's role as being responsible for handling questions asked throughout the classroom discourse. Comments made by the students on these two QIs (n= 34, 24 females and 10 males) indicated a gender-related difference, in that male students who commented, stated that there is no need to seek a teacher's permission, i.e. 'the go-ahead signal', before responding to his questions. In explanation of this view, a male student, for instance, said: "We are university students and I think we and our teacher construct the discussion together. So, why do I have to get his permission? I think I should just ask whenever I need to".

Female students, however, appeared to be more compliant. They held different opinions and their disagreement was manifested in this female

student's comment that "yes, we should get the teacher's permission to talk in the class. This is respect". It is possible that religious or social effects on the local pedagogy at large which call for teachers to be respected, as referred to by this student, may have shaped this comment. A form of this respect, as Lahlali (2003) by means of teacher interviews and critical discourse analysis within Moroccan classrooms determined, is by total submission to their authority. Likewise, in his study of English language students' autonomy at a Malaysian university context, Othman (2009:113) reported that "students are brought up with the idea that the teacher knows best and they should always do things his or her way". Interestingly, the above finding begs the question, which is beyond the scope of this research, "Are females more obedient, or felt they should be?" To fully understand such issues, it is however necessary to view them from the context of Saudi cultural norms, not merely Western ones, and in terms of equality and segregation in the Saudi education context.

The above finding, albeit accepted with caution as I have not had the chance to observe female classes, are of interest in terms of gender-related differences in classroom interaction. If accepted, this finding may be somewhat worrying as it suggests that those who are not given permission to answer (although it could be argued that some of these students may take this as 'an excuse' not to respond) will be silent, and this silence, as Lozano (2009, cited in Méndez and García, 2012) argued, could affect dynamics such as student involvement, contributions and language use (see a discourse analytic account of silence in 5.6). In addition, although this would depend on the kinds of questions asked, these findings could shed light on some of the 'holding-back' attitudes (revealed throughout the above analyses) which students possess with regard to answering and asking classroom questions.

4.6 Students' Viewpoints (Inferential Statistics)

A further finding which is of significance in terms of the above statistics emerges from an inferential statistics analysis of the generated statistics. The

questionnaire respondent groups met the conditions for using the t-test in the sense that students varied according to their gender (males/females) and both groups were sufficiently large > 30 to provide data with normal distributions (Cresswell, 2009; Rovai *et al.*, 2012). According to Cronk (2012), the purpose of using a t-test analysis is “to determine whether the means of two groups of scores differ to a statistically significant degree” (p.89). In other words, the t-test is utilised when two separate sets of samples are obtained from the two populations being compared, for instance males and females, as in this study. In general, the t-test examines whether the mean values of two samples differ on account of a grouping variable, e.g. gender (Rovai *et al.*, 2012)

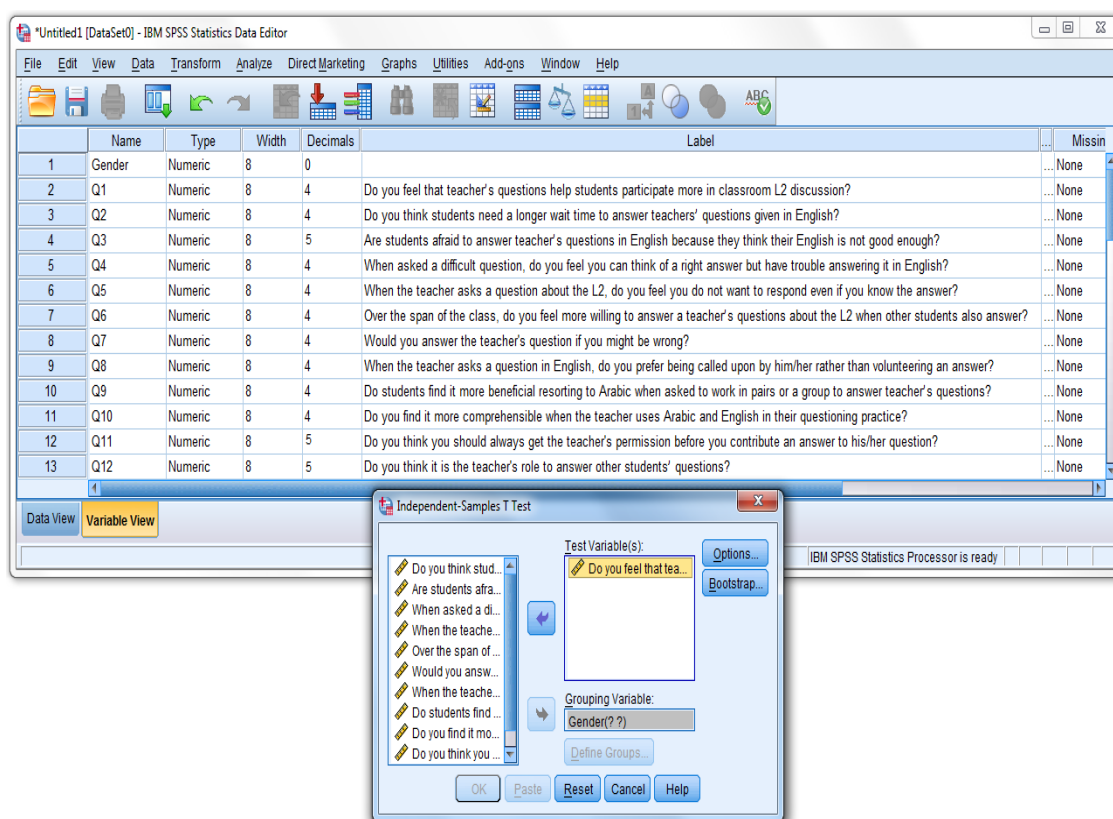


Figure 4.3: SPSS workspace showing the required statistical test

According to Mann (2010:3-4), “a major portion of statistics deals with making decisions, predictions, inferences, and forecasts about populations based on results obtained from samples”. Results generated through this study’s t-test revealed that differences between the mean scores of both male and female students at the 0.05 alpha level were significant ($p \geq .05$) on four QIs

(see table 4.4 below). There were no statistically significant differences⁷⁷ between males and females with regard to responses to the remaining QIs.

No	Questionnaire Item	Male (n= 194)		Female (n= 147)		F. Ratio	T. Sig <i>P</i>
		Mean	Std. Error	Mean	Std. Error		
1	Do you feel that teacher's questions help students participate more in classroom L2 discussion?	4.21	.809	3.94	.960	.764	.005*
7	Would you answer the teacher's question if you might be wrong?	3.38	1.275	3.65	1.145	6.161	.043*
10	Do you find it more comprehensible when the teacher uses Arabic and English in their questioning practice?	2.90	1.318	2.40	1.317	.030	.001*
11	Do you think you should always get the teacher's permission before you contribute an answer to his/her question?	3.44	1.047	3.73	1.082	.017	.011*

* *P-value* considered statistically significant

Table 4.4: Statistical significance differences found

With regards to QI1, as the mean of male students (4.21) was higher than that of female students (3.94), it could be concluded⁷⁸ from a statistical point of view that male students, more so than females, found the teachers' questions to be a means of helping them participate more in the classroom discussion, and that this difference was due to the gender of the participants ($p= 005$). To demonstrate this finding further, figure 4.4 below presents the percentage of endorsement to this QI within student groups (males and females).

⁷⁷ According to Coolidge (2012:36), statistical significance is the probability that an effect is not due to chance alone.

⁷⁸ Albeit with caution as reasons for this difference could have been affected by non-student variables.

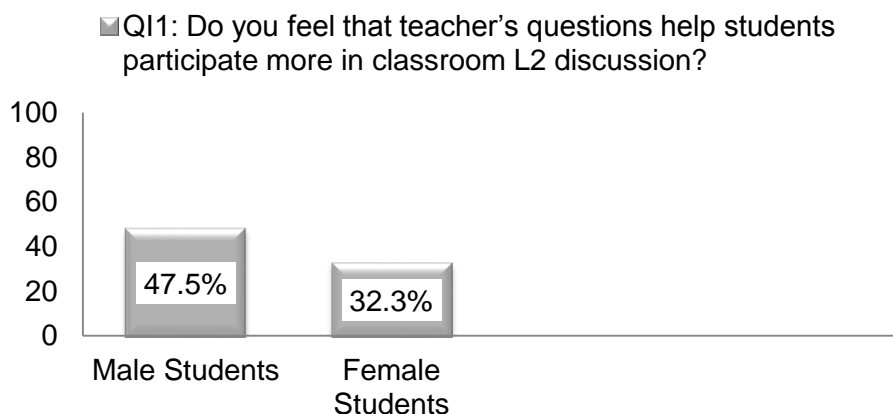


Figure 4.4: Percentage breakdown of students' endorsements on QI1

This finding parallels the comments on this QI discussed in 4.5 above which supported this gendered variance. Furthermore, data from videoed classroom discourse, discussed in the next chapter, supported this result in the sense that questions were used in these classes principally to try to encourage students 'to participate more in classroom L2 discussions' (see 5.3 and 5.6).

The difference in the mean scores revealed through running the independent sample t-test for QI7 was also of interest. The results revealed that female students scored a higher mean (3.65) than male students who scored a mean of (3.38). This result ($p = .043$) indicates that this difference is gender-related, and thus again it could cautiously be said that female students, more so than male students, tended not to respond to their teachers' questions if they believed their answers may be incorrect. Figure 4.5 on the next page presents a percentage breakdown of student responses to this QI.

Would you answer the teacher's question if you might be wrong?

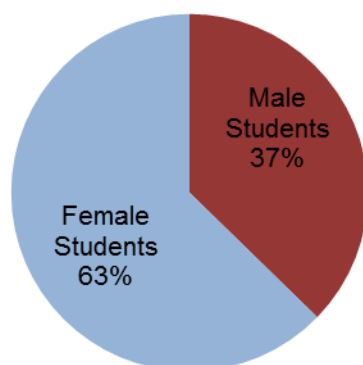


Figure 4.5: Percentage breakdown of students' endorsements on Q17

This result regarding students' unwillingness to respond in case they may be wrong differs from research reported by Booth and Nolen (2012), and Warrington and Younger (2001) who argued that students in single-gender classes were more willing to ask questions and contribute to oral discussions. However, regardless of its gender-based variation, this result lends strong support to the findings of researchers such as Horwitz (1986, 1987); Young (1991), Tsui (1996), Hilleson (1996) and Donald (2010), who established that one of the inhabitant factors to students discourse in the language classroom is a 'fear of making mistakes'. In addition, Donald (ibid.) added that students' fear of being corrected is also amongst the factors influencing students' willingness to participate in the ESL classroom discourse. Some of these researchers (e.g. Tsui, 1996) have argued that this 'fear' is a cause of foreign language learning anxiety for many language students. In line with this, Kang (2005) reported that one of the variables which influences second language students' willingness to interact is what he referred to as 'the communicative anxiety' which, according to Kang (ibid.) and Young (1990), stems from reasons which include the fear of being wrong as well as that of peer pressure. In addition, this reported fear of making mistakes may result in students keeping a distance from the classroom discourse as a whole, not only with regard to answering teachers' questions.

The t-test output demonstrated in table 4.4, also suggests that males are more welcoming to their teachers' use of Arabic in the EFL class as it makes their questions more comprehensible to them (Q110). In this QI data (which is the highest in terms of statistical significance, $p= 001$), the male students' mean was (3.73) whereas for the female students it was (3.44) - the percentages being (36.6%) and (21.4%) respectively (see figure 4.6 below).

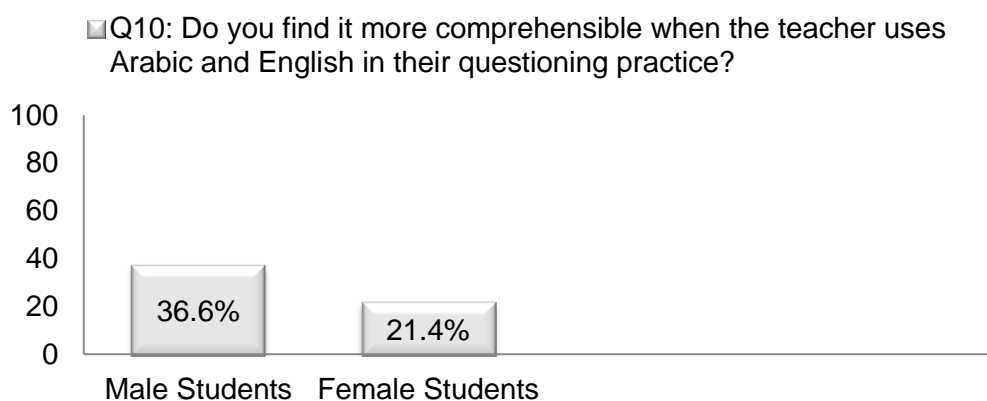


Figure 4.6: Percentage breakdown of students' endorsements on Q110

Students' responses to Q110 above clearly present a discrepancy. In their comments on this QI ($n= 21$, all males), students 'praised' their teachers' use of Arabic in classroom question-answer routines. A male student, for instance wrote: "My English learning before was always aided by switching to Arabic and therefore I view it as a handy and useful discourse tool". Another male student likewise declared: "When I interact with my teacher or classmates I find using Arabic both useful and inescapable". By and large, students' views here implied a tendency to view the L1 as an aid to facilitate their understanding and use of L2; nevertheless they appeared to support the teachers' use of L1 more than they did with regard to their own L1 use.

In addition, female students' opinions (i.e. those who reported not finding teacher's resource to L1 a useful questioning practice) could be explained through the results which derive from the study's semi-structured interview data

where the four female teachers interviewed expressed complete disagreement with the notion of code-switching to Arabic in their EFL classes. Three female teachers (i.e. FT-2, FT-3 and FT-4, see table 5.2, next chapter) for instance stated that one of the reasons they do not use students' L1 is that students ("will not take the classroom discourse seriously", FT-3's interview). When asked about this issue, a different female teacher (i.e. FT-1), stated that if she uses Arabic, students would become more dependent on this discourse and "I may end up using Arabic in every question I ask", and hence "students might not take my EFL instruction as serious". She also proceeded to generalise her opinion by saying "There are many teachers here who believe that it is not good for teachers to use the students' first language when they are teaching a second. This is because the students will base their ideas about the second language and its rules on their first language". By contrast, classroom questioning excerpts (analysed in the next chapter) within observed male EFL classes contained a number of instances where Arabic was employed in the classroom questioning discourse (see for instance excerpt 1, next chapter). This was also in line with the interviewed male teachers' perspectives as manifested in MT-2's words "Code-switching is essential to reinforce Students' L2 understanding. I use L1 because I have noticed that students sometimes misunderstand what I am saying".

A possible reason for this divergence in the EFL teachers' reported practice is that code-switching instances in teachers' questioning discourse which were observed in male classes may well fall into what Ferguson (2003) referred to as 'code-switching for curriculum access'⁷⁹. Accordingly, with regard to interviewed teachers who were apparently opposed to using L1 in their questioning practice, code-switching for curriculum access as well as other functions and features of code-switching to Arabic may not be used in their classes. If this is the case, this finding may be part of a stated or mutually-understood policy in the female section of Taibah University. Atkinson

⁷⁹ This could also be because the focus of the current research was teacher questioning rather than other discourse features of teacher talk, thus a full account of code-switching is beyond the scope of this study.

(1987:247) put forward the opinion that “to ignore the mother tongue in the monolingual classroom is almost certainly to teach with less than maximum efficiency”. In sum, however, the findings revealed in this QI show that the overall attitude to using students’ L1 (Arabic) in the classroom discourse seems to be in line with what Atkinson (ibid.), for example, suggested in the sense that students would like their teachers to use their mother-tongue in an English language classroom context. However, this aspect of classroom discourse calls for further investigation to obtain understanding of how students prefer their L1 to be used in teaching EFL to them.

Of significance too, were the t-test results revealed concerning Q111 ($p = .011$) which showed a mean score of (3.73) for female students, and (3.44) for males (see table 4.5 above). This therefore makes the difference significance turn towards females, and it could be concluded that female students believed, more than males, that they should always be prompted by their teacher before they answered.

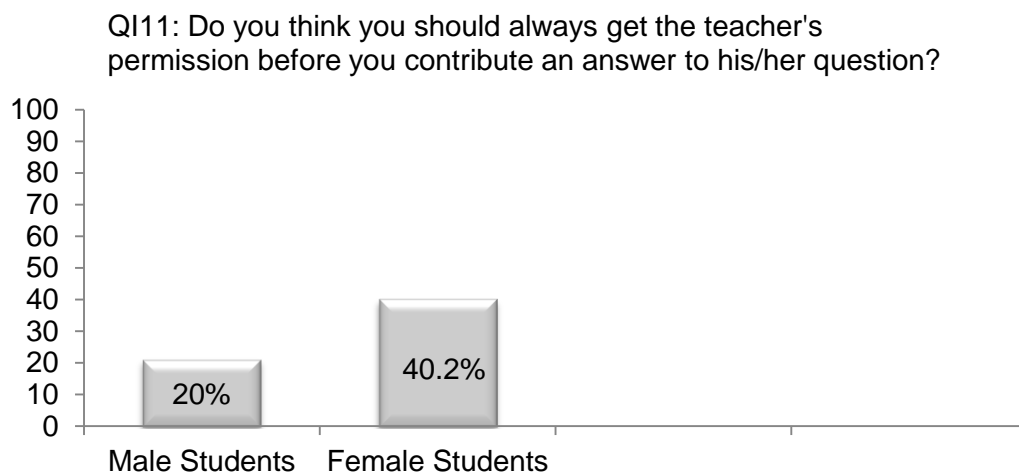


Figure 4.7: Percentage breakdown of students’ endorsement on Q111

This finding could also be explained through two statistical results. First, 40.2% of the students responding to the Likert scale of Q111 (all females) agreed that they should always be granted the teacher’s permission to talk

before they offered an answer compared with 20% of males (figure 4.7). Second, only 2 of the 24 female students who commented on this question agreed that there is no need to ask for a teacher's permission to answer. The remaining 22, however, as reflected in a female student's comments were of the opinion, as a female participant put it, that "we should get the teacher's permission to talk in the class".

The above result, particularly on the part of male students (those who did not agree to this QI, 35%) appeared to reveal a discrepancy between students and teachers in terms of classroom discourse, in that seeking teachers' permission was present in most of the observed classes (see excerpt 2, next chapter). Students were observed repeating words like 'teacher ... teacher' or perhaps using the Arabic equivalent 'ustad ... ustad' to seek their teachers' agreement for them to respond to his questions. This finding, though may well have been used as a respectful address form, could reflect the teacher's authority, as perceived by these students, to accept or reject their answers. It could also indicate a hierarchy of address forms within the Saudi classroom that, with possible variation and restriction, could be indicative of authority and status.

However, notwithstanding its statistical gender-related variation, this finding concurred with research findings into EFL classroom questioning (e.g. Wu, 1991; Liu and Littlewood, 1997; and Chang, 2009) whereby it was noted that EFL students were likely to wait to be called upon before answering. It also indicated an unstated rule in the Saudi EFL classroom, particularly that of the females, which students followed: "You should not answer teachers' questions voluntarily; instead, wait until prompted to do so". In his observation of Moroccan classroom discourse, Lahlali (2003:120) concluded that, to a great extent, "the students' role was to remain silent, as the teacher provided no prompt for them to speak". This clearly contradicted with what (Berry, 1981) was calling for. To Berry (*ibid.*), classroom questions demand answers, even if the teacher controls who is permitted to provide that answer. However, Lahlali (*ibid.*:120) argued that allowing students to answer even if not prompted to do so is "a challenge to the teacher's authority and role" within the Moroccan

classroom. The above finding, however, encourages the question: “Does permission need to be shown to be granted, or can it be assumed?” and “Does the permission seeking depend on the type of question being asked, or how questions are asked?”. Furthermore, a question which could follow from the above QI results, as well as the aforementioned gender differences, is: “How much do the findings reflect gender roles in the students’ background cultures? If true, how much do the findings reflect power rather than gender?” These, together with further issues arising from this study’s data analyses (see 6.6), may well be an avenue of research that is worthy of pursuit within the Saudi EFL milieu.

4.7 Students’ Viewpoints (Questionnaire Open-ended Items)

Having delineated the results which were revealed through the 12 questionnaire closed items, the questionnaire open-ended items (n= 2) should now be considered. Thus, this section of the current chapter on the study questionnaire findings is devoted to the responses given by students to the two open-ended questions at the end of the questionnaire (see Appendix C). These questions were:

- QI13: What do you think about keeping one’s questions to themselves rather than asking in class, particularly if these are in English?
- QI14: Lastly, what would be your overall perspective of the classroom questioning practice in your classroom?

As in the previous sections of the current chapter, representative data excerpts are quoted in this section to clarify the meanings intended by the participants. As stated previously, the first open-ended item in this part of the study’s questionnaire (QI13 above) asked students to share their perspectives on their (un)willingness to ask their teacher a question, in particular if they have to undertake this in L2 (English). Students’ responses to this QI varied. In

order to analyse how they responded, all of the students' answers (n= 60 out of the 341 participants, 19 males and 41 females) were translated from Arabic into English⁸⁰ and then transcribed. After reading through these responses, they were coded into the following three themes: a) skill-based factors, b) interaction-based factors, and 3) L2 knowledge-based factors. These themes, which emerged from the data by means of content analysis (see 3.7), represent the dominant views expressed by students of both genders. They are outlined next together with representative quotes from student responses.

1. Skill- based lack of questioning

A total of 13 comments (2 by male students, and 11 by females) made by the respondents revolved around the issue of having what students referred to as 'skills for asking questions'. For instance, one of the female students wrote: "To me, asking questions is a skill and I believe all students need to know this skill". Subject to wider elaboration, this student then proceeded further to claim that those who keep questions to themselves instead of asking the teacher "do not have this skill". Illustrating this widely-held sentiment (questioning as a skill) amongst female students regarding this 13th QI, a different female student defensively wrote: "The teacher should provide me and my classmates with the skills of asking questions and making use of her questions. She should help me first to develop this skill, before she blames me for not asking". It is pedagogically interesting how this student attributed responsibility to teachers, and if accepted by teachers, this finding could have a number of implications, with regard to, for instance, to what extent students are involved in classroom teaching and learning decision-making, etc. Comments made by male students here were respectively, "I cannot become an active questioner in one

⁸⁰ Given that the questionnaire was translated into Arabic (see Appendices C and D for the questionnaire's English and Arabic versions respectively).

day. The teacher should train all students on skills for asking question”, “If a student fails to ask in the class, or keep his question to himself, the teacher should teach him how to ask and make the most out of classroom questioning”. These comments concurred with the argument put forward by Vogler (2005:99) that good questions in the classroom do not just happen. Verbal questioning, according to Vogler (ibid.) is a skill and like any skill, it must be learned and practised before it is mastered.

2. Discourse-based lack of questioning

The majority of student responses to this open-ended QI (n= 39 comments, 4 from male students and 35 from females) linked the lack of questioning on the part of some students to the ongoing classroom discourse, particularly in terms of two main discourse phenomena: a) teachers’ organisation of question turns, and b) the topic of discussion. The former was manifested in the comments made by the male students, one of whom summarised this view by writing: “Sometimes, the teacher focuses his talk and questions on the first and middle rows in the class and this abandons me and maybe other students from asking as I felt that I was not involved in the ongoing discussion”⁸¹. The latter, however, was stressed in female students’ comments, for instance one writing that “for classes with no interesting topic, some students including myself might remain silent” In a similar way, another student indicated that she participated in classroom questioning discourse because “I feel I have interesting things to say and I like to see if others have the same ideas as I do”. This

⁸¹ This comment seems counter-intuitive and may possibly incorporate a ‘hidden’ meaning. That is, this student could have been seen as not very responsive or teachers only ask nearby students or the ones they think are eager to respond. However, it should trigger variation in student seating in a way that helps fostering student-teacher, as well as student-student, interaction.

concurred with Aubrey's (2010) assertion that making the lesson topic interesting and more relevant to students can positively enhance students' willingness to interact.

3. L2 Knowledge- based lack of questioning

The remaining comments (n=8, 2 females and 6 males) made on this 13th QI were linked to students' L2 knowledge. For instance, a female student once again wrote: "To me, questioning cannot be separated from L2 knowledge offered in the class. If the student acquires the input given, I am sure she will ask and participate more". Reinforcing this, another female student added: "When not understanding or having the L2 background, students would simply not ask". The six male students who commented also expressed L2-based concerns by writing comments such as "yes, if the student doesn't have good L2 knowledge, he will probably keep the question to himself", and "I think it is not good for a student to keep a question to himself, but sometimes with the level of L2 discussed you got to excuse him". This finding reinforces the statistical results reported on QIs 3 and 4 (see 4.5) whereby male students, more than females, regarded lack of L2 knowledge as an inhabiting factor as regards their responding behaviour.

The following figure summarises the students' endorsements in terms of the themes identified in this questionnaire item.

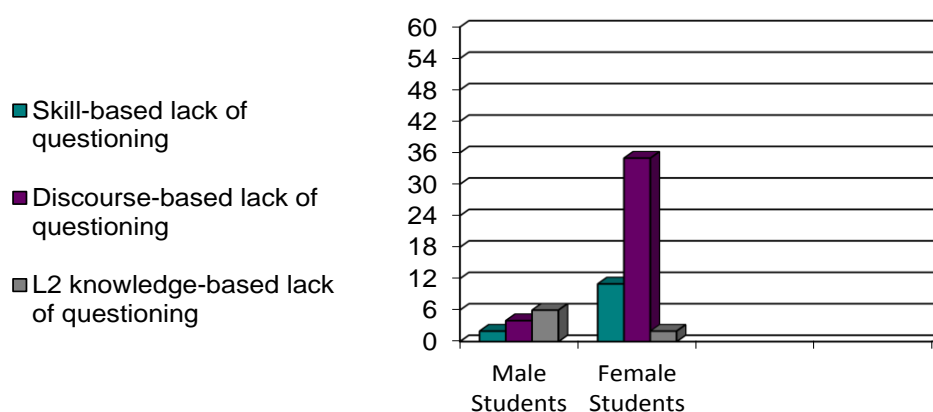


Figure 4.8: Summary of students' comments on Q13

Overall, the findings of this first open-ended QI suggested that female students were more concerned with features of classroom discourse and developing questioning as a 'skill' to which training is required, whereas male students were more concerned with L2 knowledge and teachers' use of L2 (e.g. "Teachers should simplify their language so all students can have the opportunity for more involvement": a male student's comment).

The second open-ended questionnaire item served as a wrap-up question to the whole questionnaire: (Q14: Lastly, what would be your overall perspective of the classroom questioning practice in your classroom?). It was hoped that this question would make the students feel, in some manner or another, a sense of 'ownership' of the classroom questioning discourse undertaken in the realm of their EFL classes and that it would provide them with a platform to share their ideas on this discursive feature. According to Norton and Toohey (2011), the more roles we have in determining our learning, the more we want to engage. It is of note that the main thrust of the students' comments (n= 34, 7 from males and 27 by female students) on this QI related to seeking to improve and increase questioning as manifested in the following three themes:

1. Teachers' revisions of taught L2 input

18 comments (15 males and 3 females) were linked to the importance of integrating revision of taught L2 input in classroom discourse as, according to the students, it improves classroom questioning. One of the male students expressed his opinion that: "In revision classes most students engage more in question-answer routines. So if the number of such classes is increased, the classroom questioning will definitely improve and never fade". In addition, a female student wrote: "At the end of some classes when the teacher does a quick review or wrap-up to the class, many students ask and answer". According to Menegale (2008), teachers' lesson plans "should give more space to students, providing them with more opportunities to answer questions which extend their thinking and which encourage them to increase their contributions" (p.108). Therefore, if this finding is accepted and adopted by our EFL teachers when planning their lessons, (revising taught L2 input constantly) would, according to the students, improve classroom questioning discourse. However, from a teacher's point of view, it could be assumed that this might be sometimes difficult given some constraints teachers may have to deal with, e.g. class time, curriculum, and other issues.

2. Allocating an official time to question-answer exchange

Comments including this theme were made exclusively by female students (n= 9). Students here called for, what some teachers or policy makers might find difficult, allowing an 'official' time slot in each EFL class for question-answer exchanges. One can assume that most female EFL teachers in the ELC and other EFL contexts worldwide would ask questions in their classrooms, this demand put forward by the students was striking. In adopting the position of an 'outsider' towards the data collected here, I indeed aim at a later point in the future to bring this matter to the attention of the ELC's quarterly-held professional

development seminars. The students, as represented by this female student's comment, were of the opinion that "the class time is one hour, so why not 10 minutes of this time be officially designated for asking and answering student questions". The remaining eight students also made comments such as "the class should have formal time for questioning. This will help us in future language use and in the exams⁸² as well". As with the findings of the previous open-ended QI (QI13), female students, unlike males, were more concerned with features of classroom discourse, e.g. the practice of questioning, than with L2 knowledge (see no. 1 above). Interestingly, this finding raises the question: "Could questioning as a function of speech be taught explicitly?", an issue that could present a plausible area for experimental investigation.

3. Using activities to promote students' questioning

Although only seven students made comments (4 males and 3 females), pedagogically interesting views came to the fore. Whilst some suggested activities suggested may or may not be practical from a teacher's point of view, the comments made were interesting and thus worthwhile. For instance, a female student suggested that "if teachers give question prompt cards especially for vocabulary learning, the class will be more fun and question-answer turns will be more effective". Another female student declared: "Though it seems suitable for younger learners, I think question cards are really good resources for students to question things more. We had them in high school and it was really helpful". One of the male students also wrote that "with simple activities and prompts, students will answer with complete sentences".

Figure 4.9 on the next page provides a summarised illustration of students' comments on this questionnaire item.

⁸² This was also observed by the researcher prior to the undertaking of this study (see 1.2).

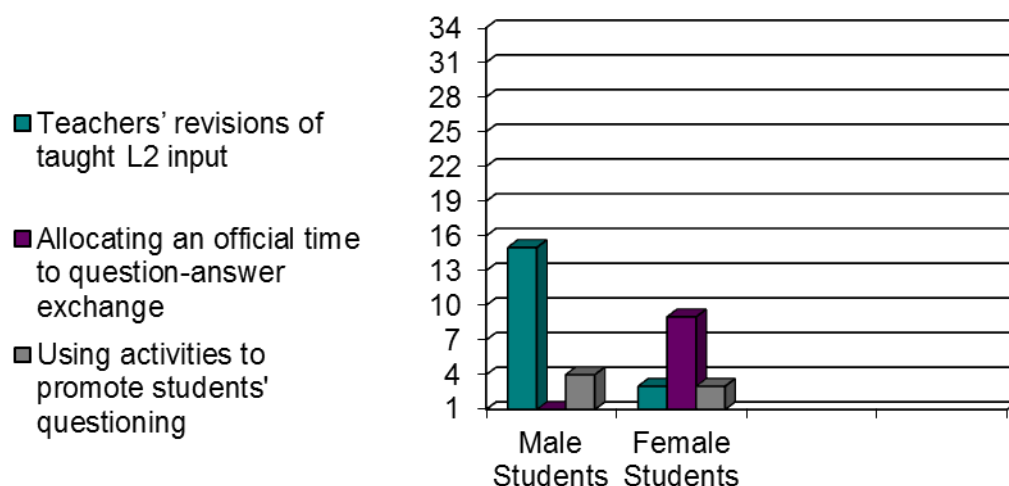


Figure 4.9: Summary of student comments on Q14

The above issues (i.e. comments made on Q13 and Q14) may have been put forward because the study questionnaire had, in essence, raised the issue of classroom questioning, or perhaps the issues were already in the minds of students. Regardless of this factor, students' comments offered diverse opinions on a major discourse feature (questioning) and are worthy of closer consideration by teachers and researchers, as students' comments included inhibiting as well as motivating factors with regard to classroom questioning (see table 4.5 below).

Motivating Factors	Inhibiting Factors
Teachers' revisions of taught L2 input	Skill- based lack of questioning
Allocating an official time to question-answer exchange	Discourse-based absence of questioning
Using activities to promote students' questioning	L2 Knowledge- based lack of questioning

Table 4.5: Factors affecting students' classroom questioning

To summarise, as reflected in their responses (both closed and open-ended) to the study questionnaire, our EFL students perceived the questions in

their L2 classroom to be important, however they appeared to require or lack certain abilities relating to classroom questioning. Thus, with their teachers' collaboration (through exposure to the art of questioning), students could indeed better understand and use questions in the EFL classroom. These efforts may also lead to improvements in students' L2 use, if not creating further opportunities to L2 learning. According to Mason (2000:249), "the style and nature of questions encountered by students strongly influences the sense that they make of the subject matter". In addition, researchers (e.g. Muijs and Reynolds, 2005; and Vogler, 2005) declared that teacher questioning can "have a positive impact on student learning and most teachers should be aware that verbal questioning can facilitate student learning" (Vogler, *ibid.*:99).

4.8 Summary of Questionnaire Findings

As previously established, the questionnaire data presented in this chapter had two main objectives. First, to answer the study's first research question: *RQ1) How do the Saudi EFL university students perceive classroom questioning practices in their classes?* Second, to help provide a basis for understanding the observed classroom discourse, taking into account also some teachers' ideas which emerged from the study interviews⁸³. There are a number of important conclusions that can be drawn from these findings. The results show that both male and female students strongly agreed or agreed with nine of the twelve statements (see table 4.3, in 4.5) on classroom questioning as follows:

1. Both male and female students agreed on the helpfulness of teacher questions in L2 classroom discussions. This may be because teachers' questions in the language classroom could perhaps offer a 'worldview' to students (Cazden, 2001:72).
2. Eighty-six percent of both student participant groups (male and female) considered the wait-time used by teachers in the

⁸³ Particularly if what students answered is what they think, not what they feel they ought to think; a major concern for educational researchers, including myself, who utilised questionnaire.

classroom discourse to be an obstacle in their classroom questioning.

3. A further criticism for the EFL classroom questioning was the issue of 'students' perceived lack of proficiency'; a view held by more than two thirds of male and female students involved.
4. In addition, slightly over half of the student respondents of both genders (58.1%) reported that their preference was to be called upon by their teacher rather than volunteering an answer when engaged in L2 questioning turns. This finding is interesting as it could suggest the significance of 'peer pressure' between students when it comes to L2 use in particular (see 4.5 above).
5. In line with this, 76.6% of male and female students reported that they often felt more willing to answer teachers' L2 questions when their classmates also answered throughout the span of the class.
6. In addition, nearly two thirds of the participants (68%) felt more comfortable resorting to Arabic when answering teachers' questions.

To summarise, figure 4.10 on the next page presents the major issues, EFL teacher questioning practice should consider, as perceived by the questionnaire respondents. Here, my focus was on laying down the main issues derived from student answers upon which there was consensus in the form of a concept map⁸⁴.

⁸⁴ According to Cañas and Novak (2009:1), concept maps are “graphical tools for organizing and representing knowledge. They include concepts, usually enclosed in circles or boxes of some type”.

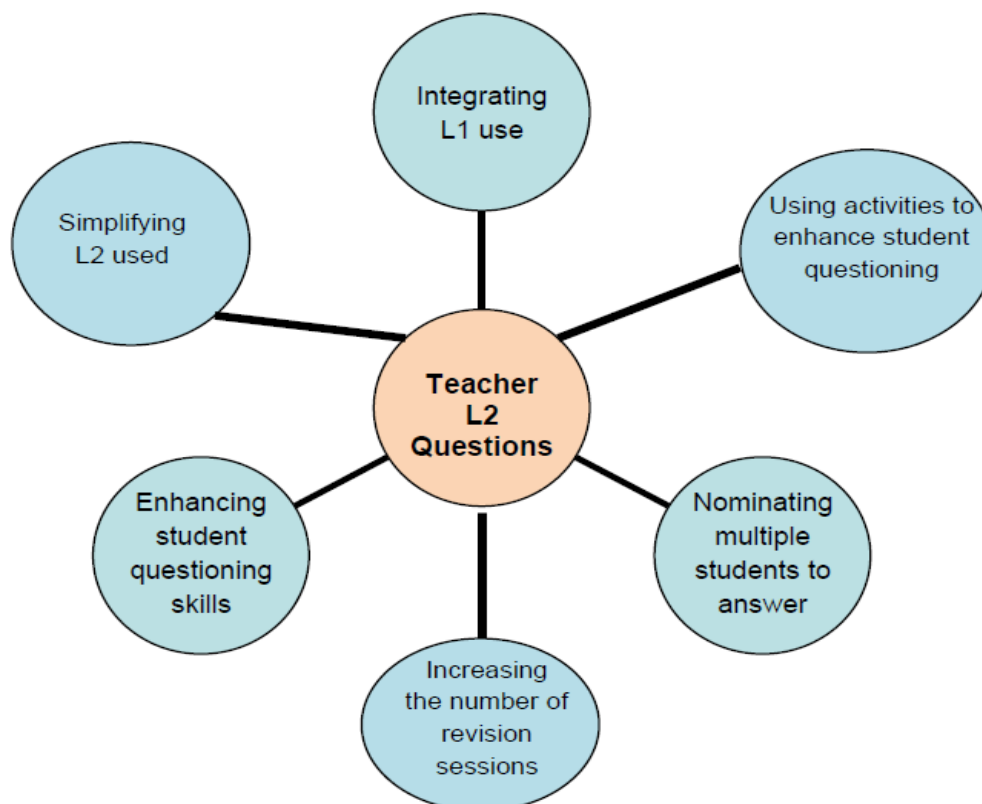


Figure 4.10: Concept map of teacher questions, as desired by the surveyed students

4.9 Chapter Summary

The research design of this study was composed of multiple methods carried out on different data sources: quantitative and qualitative analyses of data collected by questionnaires for the EFL students, non-participant observation of various lessons at the Taibah University's ELC, and interviews with individual teachers in the study context. The previous sections and subsections in the current chapter have presented the findings which have emerged from the analysis of the study's questionnaire. In the next chapter, the study's qualitative findings which emerged from the observed 'real-time' classroom discourse data and my interviews with the EFL teachers will be set out. I will subsequently present an overall synthesis of the study findings before concluding the study and presenting an account of the implications, limitations, and recommendations in the final chapter.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION II

Teachers' Practices of Classroom Questioning

5.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter, in which the questionnaire findings were discussed, has addressed the study's first RQ on students' perspectives on classroom questioning practice together with some insights into the gender-related differences amongst the participating students' responses. The other two RQs of the present study (RQ2: What are some of the functions of teachers' questioning practice in the Saudi EFL university classroom? and RQ3: What modifications (if any) do Saudi EFL teachers employ in instances where students do not answer?) are considered qualitatively as part of this study's triangulation (see 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 for a detailed account of the study methodology and procedure). The reason I opted for this approach⁸⁵ instead of one based on statistics and numerical data, as in Chapter 4 for instance, was that I sought to provide a wider perspective that could help exploring and explaining aspects of observed teachers' practice of classroom questioning. This however is not meant to imply that figures and numbers are not useful in this type of analyses. They can be used, as the case in this chapter, as bases for comparing and interpreting some of the gleaned results.

5.2 Overview of Observed Classes and Teachers Interviewed

As previously mentioned, a total number of approximately 8 hours of EFL classroom interaction were video-recorded (see the rationale behind this in

⁸⁵ It is worth mentioning that discourse analysis and statistical analysis data are uneasy partners in an analytic enterprise as the two orientations to analysis derive from very different perspectives particularly on the role of the analyst and the kinds of assumptions that can be made with respect to the data. However, both types of data have been used in this study in a complementary manner to support and cross reference the findings.

3.6.2.3) from 8 male EFL classes at Taibah University's ELC which were taught by 8 different EFL teachers. Here, the aim had been to have a range of ordinary lessons, i.e. lessons which have not been planned just to be filmed⁸⁶, on record. Therefore, lessons from the three EFL class types available at the ELC were observed (see table 5.1 below).

No	Class Type	Class Duration	Notes		
			No. of Students	Video-taped and Transcribed	Teacher interviewed
1	Grammar-based	60 min	25	√	×
2	Grammar-based	55 min	24	√	×
3	Grammar-based	60 min	20	√	√
4	Communication-based	60 min	22	√	√
5	Communication-based	60 min	23	√	√
6	Communication-based	60 min	26	√	×
7	Reading-based	55 min	27	√	×
8	Reading-based	60 min	28	√	√
Total (in hours)		7.83			

Table 5.1: Summary of the focus of lessons observed

It is worth noting that as part of the Saudi Arabian EFL university programme policy and specifications, classes at the ELC are officially designated into three categories which are labelled by the ELC's Curriculum Committee: grammar-based, communication-based, and reading-based. This classification reflects the focus of the classroom and aligns with the specified agenda which is uniform within the Taibah University's ELC. In my view, it is necessary for researchers to provide an overview of the pedagogic context of a particular classroom discourse before analyses are carried out (see 3.5 for an account of the context of this study). This is in line with Malamah-Thomas (1987) who stressed that it is "important to know what is to be taught and learned in any lesson and not only what kind of interaction takes place" (p.26). Teachers who participated in the study were native speakers of Arabic, as were the students. At the time of data collection (2012), the participating teachers, both

⁸⁶ As might be the case in experimental research designs.

males (n= 8) and females (n= 4), formed two thirds of the teaching staff for the second semester of 2012 at the EFL programme in Taibah University's ELC. Students in the observed classes were all aged between 18 and 20 at the time of the observations and were all seated in rows facing the teacher (see figure 5.1 below) in what might be described as a 'traditional' classroom layout (Cazden, 2001). In addition, the front of the class had a podium teachers use to put their materials, and there was a desk and a chair for the teacher. In the classes observed (which took place at times amid 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on days from Sunday through to Thursday⁸⁷), it was noted that students tend to come before the teacher and sit silently or, to a limited extent, engage in common chit chat before the teacher comes in. The textbooks used (at the time of data collection) varied within the observed EFL classes including *The Good Grammar* (Swan and Walter, 2001), *Step by Step* series (Blanton, 2007) and *New Headway Plus: Beginner Student's Book* (Soars *et al.*, 2011), all of which are designed for elementary to lower intermediate students of English (see sample texts in Appendix N).

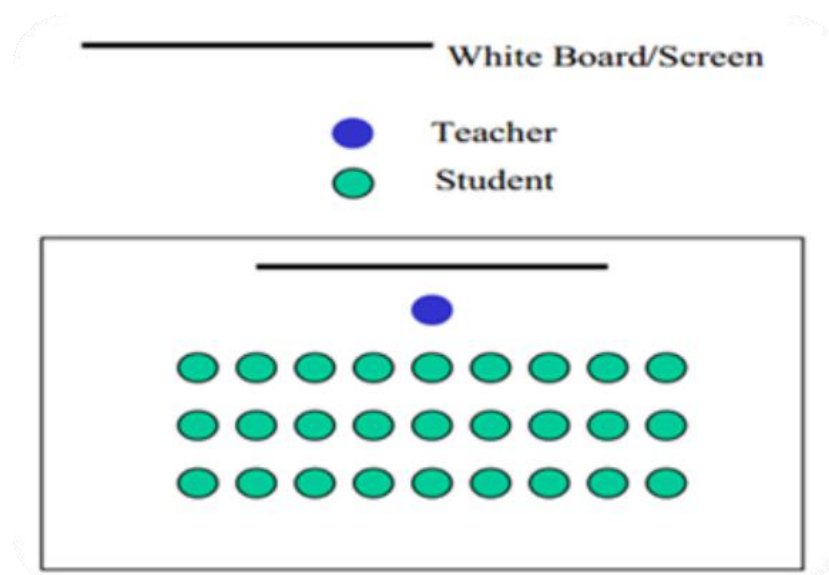


Figure 5.1: Overview of seating arrangements in the observed classes

⁸⁷ The work and school week has a different beginning and end in Saudi Arabia and most Muslim countries (e.g. Bahrain, Egypt, Lybia and United Arab Emirates). It begins on Sunday and ends on Thursday. Friday and Saturday are the weekend.

Following the transcription of the data using Transana 2.4® software, an inductive approach to data analysis was utilised. By this, and in order to process the observation data, I first did a repeated line-by-line reading of the full transcripts, and then identified instances of teachers' questions. These, in the general sense, included utterances which could be classified syntactically or functionally as requests or directives uttered with the expectation of a response or an action on the part of the hearer. However, this study has not necessarily been able to cover all the asked questions given that questioning, as this study understands, is a complex interactional activity which can be established in a variety of ways (see 2.5.1 for an account of defining classroom questions in the literature).

Based on their position in the context of classroom discourse, data excerpts which include question-answer-comment (QAC hereafter) sequences (McHoul, 1978) have been considered in this chapter in order to demonstrate the immediate effect/function of teacher questions and note any modifications which the teachers may have employed. This consideration of the QAC sequence did not rely solely on an isolated consideration of the type of question or on the triggered response, rather it was an attempt to capture the operation of questions within the QAC exchange in order to allow for the attribution of question functions and identification of question modifications. This concurs with researchers such as Schegloff (1978, 2010) who considered this as "a tangible part of what we might expect to be available to us as understanding of questions as a category of action" (Schegloff, 1978:85). When selecting data excerpts to be included in the pages that follow, in addition to ensuring that a representative range of practices (i.e. different uses of classroom questions) were represented based on the discourse analysis carried out, a representative set of QAC sequences from the observed eight classes was added to provide some evidence that the questioning practices observed were not unique to individual teachers or students, at least not within the present data set.

An additional source of data utilised in this chapter was that of interviews which were utilised to gather teachers' views of certain classroom questioning

practices. A total number of eight experienced EFL teachers (4 males and 4 females) were interviewed over a period of four weeks in April, 2012, and the interviews ranged in length from 15 to 20 minutes each. The table on the next page shows the distribution of the study interviewees.

No	Participant	Teaching Experience	Interview Length (in minutes)	Class Observed	Interview Type
1	MT-1 (EFL-C 3)	8 years	20	√	SR
2	MT-2 (EFL-C 4)	11 years	20	√	SR
3	MT-3 (EFL-C 5)	7 years	19	√	SR
4	MT-4 (EFL-C 8)	12 years	17	√	SR
5	FT-1	10 years	20	x	SSI
6	FT-2	16 years	15	x	SSI
7	FT-3	4 years	18	x	SSI
8	FT-4	31 years	17	x	SSI

<MT> Male teacher <FT> Female teacher <EFL-C> English as a foreign language classroom
 <SR> Stimulated recall <SSI> Semi-structured interview

Table 5.2: Overview of the study interviews and participating teachers

As can be seen in table 5.2 above, the interviews with male teachers (n=4), on the one hand, were based on stimulated recall. This type of interview, as Lyle (2003:861) defined it, is “an introspection procedure in which ‘normally’ videotaped passages of behaviour are replayed to individuals to stimulate recall of their concurrent activity”. In order to gain their perspectives, the participating teachers were asked to watch parts of the lesson referred to in this chapter and to comment on the unfolding discourse. These interview sessions were carried out at teachers’ offices and the videoed sessions were watched on computers provided by the ELC for this particular research purpose. On the other hand, my interviews with female teachers (n=4) were of a semi-structured nature and were aimed to obtain these teachers’ general perceptions of their classroom questioning practice. My role as an interviewer was to facilitate by staying focused on a specific topic (e.g. purposes for asking questions, types of questions asked, etc.) whilst at the same time allowing teachers more freedom regarding the type of answers given (see the interview questions in Appendix I).

Overall, the rationale behind using semi-structured interviews, over stimulated recalls, with these teachers was twofold: a) as the opportunity did not arise to observe female teachers due to religious and cultural difficulties, stimulated recall was not possible, and b) that I wanted to elicit as much information as possible from these teachers, and hence 'semi-structured' interview type was utilised (see 3.4.3 for a detailed account of the interviews with the EFL teachers). According to Bryman (2012), in semi-structured interviews, the researcher is free to probe areas of interest and pursue the main concerns and issues identified by the research participant. In addition, in this type of interviews, as argued by Yates (2004), interviewees are capable of expressing answers in their own words, without the restrictions associated with structured interviews.

After undertaking a manual transcription of the audio-recorded interview data, I first read the transcripts and then utilised a content analysis procedure (see 3.7) to identify relevant views to include in this chapter. This was roughly based on counting frequencies of teacher's representative views (identified by the force of these views). In addition, and in compliance with the standard practice in qualitative research (Mann, 2011), representative comments are quoted in this chapter to clarify the meaning intended by participants. By this, several teachers were cited where their ideas were presented in their own words⁸⁸ to cast light on their reported practices. It is worth noting however that whilst much can be gained from interview data, this type of data is used in this chapter in a supplementary manner due to lack of space. Data used in this chapter mainly derives from the video-recorded classroom observations to describe and interpret teachers' actual classroom practice with reference to interviewees' views in order to shed light on some observed practices or for comparison as well as triangulation purposes.

⁸⁸ It is important to acknowledge that all interviewee teachers were offered the chance to choose between Arabic and English as a language for the interview. However, they all agreed to undertake the interviews in English. The fact that teachers chose English is interesting and can have significance to our findings. For instance, female teachers' preference to be interviewed in English can partly accord with their 'L2-only' reported discourse. In other words, these teachers have expressed complete opposition to the use of L1 in the EFL classroom (see 4.6).

5.3 Functions of Teachers' Questions

According to Kuttner and Threlkeld (2008), “discourse analysis is based on the understanding that there is much more going on when people communicate than simply the transfer of information”. Classroom questions⁸⁹, as Sanders (1966) stated, “have always been the stock-in-trade of teachers”. French and Maclure (1979:1) considered that asking and answering questions on the part of teachers “constitutes one of the central mechanisms of classroom interaction”. In addition, Walsh (2006:7) declared that “typically, classroom discourse is dominated by question and answer routines, with teachers asking most of the questions as one of the principal ways in which they control the discourse”. In this study, teachers' questions were apparent throughout the class time being observed and were varied in terms of the functions they served. The functions identified and discussed throughout this study's data (see figure 5.4 for an illustration) were checked by two qualified colleagues. These functions, however, are by no means the only possible functions of teachers' questions in the data; rather, they are the most prevalent ones. In what follows, questioning extracts (some of which are combined with images as an attempt to further clarify what was taking place) from my classroom discourse data are presented and then deconstructed them to further explain the functions of teacher questions in the observed classes (n= 8). Whilst they are beyond the scope of this study, question forms are referred to throughout the analyses in an attempt to shed light on the functions discussed. This is in line with Brown and Wragg (2001) and Cotton (2003), amongst others, who argued that question forms are important for a better understanding of question functions.

5.3.1 Asking Questions to Encourage Student Talk

Throughout the observed classrooms, it was evident that teachers' questions served various functions as argued in the pages that follow. Of these, teachers' questions served as a tool for encouraging student talk. Excerpt 1 on

⁸⁹ The findings of the present research showed that both students and teachers ask questions in EFL classes. However, teachers asked twice as many questions as their students.

the next page, which comes from a verbatim transcript of two successive QAC sequences which took place in the middle of a grammar-based lesson in EFL Class 1 (hereafter EFL-C 1), exemplifies this function. Twenty-five students, whose L2 proficiency level as well as that of other observed classes' students is roughly 'beginner' as the textbooks used, and the study data and findings demonstrate, attended this class and the class time was approximately 60 minutes. As with the other classes in my corpus, the materials used in this class included varied modes, e.g. PowerPoint slides, students' books and the whiteboard. After explaining the English grammar of singular and plural nouns (e.g. car, cars, child, children, etc.) and of demonstrative pronouns (e.g. this, that, these, those, etc.) using audio visual aids, the teacher (or T as henceforth referred to in this chapter) initiated the following discourse:

Excerpt (1)

- 41 T: Okay so is the car singular or plural?
 42 Who can tell me?
 43 S1: It is singular
 44 T: Excellent. The car is singular ((Points to the screen))



- 45 T: ((Plays the PowerPoint slide which shows pronouns studied)) Amm .. so with the car which
 46 one do we use? This or these?



- 47 S2: Teacher teacher
 48 T: Ali go /'answer'
 49 S2: This. This is a car
 50 T: Yeah

As can be ascertained from the above excerpt, T's main concern was to elicit grammatically correct⁹⁰ responses from the learners, i.e. what Abdesslem (1993) referred to as 'focus on form'⁹¹. The corresponding talk confirms this in a number of ways. T commences with the discourse marker 'okay' indicating that there is a goal-oriented planning process taking place in his mind. According to Redeker (1991:1168), discourse markers (which are also labelled as discourse operators) are "words or phrases that are uttered with the primary function of bringing to the listener's attention a particular kind of linkage of the upcoming utterance with the immediate discourse context". The aforementioned function of the discourse marker 'okay' is manifested in T's next utterances which included two closed questions directed towards the entire class. The first of the questions (line 41) is an either-or one (or what Long (1981) referred to as 'forced-choice questions') which can be answered with the binary choice of 'yes' or 'no'⁹², thus making the responder's (i.e. the student's) task easier by simply replying in the affirmative or the negative (Houtkoop-Steenstra and Antaki, 1997). It is to be noted, however, that T's display question ("Is the car singular or plural?", line 41) centred around checking students' understanding which places it go amongst the low-order questions (see Bloom's taxonomy in 2.5.2.3). Met with no answer, this T's question is immediately followed by a whole-class closed question ("Who can tell me?", line 42). It is clear that this follow-up question was not intended as a question to be answered in the affirmative or negative, but rather as a suggestion that T is looking for an answer to his originally-asked question (line 41).

By responding in line 44 ("Excellent. The car is singular"), T has positively acknowledged S1's response (line 43) before moving on and initiating a related QAC sequence. This QAC, which was pedagogically based upon the previous discourse, is initiated by T uttering ("So with the car which one do we use? This or these?", line 46). Notice T's use of the interrogative word 'which' in this

⁹⁰ It is worth noting that regardless of the actual correctness of the response, in this study a response is correct if the teacher indicates it is; conversely, a response is incorrect if the teacher refers to it as being incorrect regardless if that is, in reality, the case.

⁹¹ According to Abdesslem (ibid.), in 'focus on form' contexts, "both teachers and students talk about linguistic rules and/or make sure that particular rules are followed" (p.222).

⁹² For yes/no interrogatives, the standard expected answers are "yes" or "no" (Raymond, 2006:119).

question in what could make a responding student's task easier by means of the limitedness of possible responses. In addition, T's question (line 46) can meet two pedagogical purposes; (a) to make a request to follow a procedure (Levinson, 1992:92), or (b) to make explicit a selected part of the knowledge that T assumed students have or had. In response to this either-or question, S2 (a peer student) bids for an answer ("Teacher teacher", line 46). Prompted by T in L1 ("gol" the Arabic equivalent of "answer", line 48), S2 provides an answer (line 49) to which T offers an agreeing response with the acknowledgment marker 'yeah' (Walsh *et al.*, 2011:17). It is worth noting here that, typical to other observed classes, the L1 both T and students used in this class (*c.f.* line 48, excerpt 1 above) is that of the 'vernacular' Arabic variety⁹³. To conclude, if the agenda of EFL-C 1's T at this stage in the lesson was to check comprehension, then his use of the closed question variety is appropriate and may well accord with his pedagogic goal⁹⁴. If, however, his aim was to promote class discussion, which may not have been the case given the class grammar-based focus, a different type of questioning strategy (e.g. using more open, referential questions) would have, from a discourse expansion perspective, been more helpful⁹⁵. However, the above excerpt demonstrates the function of 'encouraging student talk' in T's question use.

A similar pattern of teachers' questions functioning to encourage student talk is exemplified in excerpt 2 below. This excerpt is a QAC sequence which took place at the beginning of a communication-based lesson in EFL-C 5. Twenty-three beginner students attended this class and the lesson duration

⁹³ Researchers, such as Bassiouney (2009) and Mejdell (2006), made a distinction between two general varieties of Arabic. First is the 'Standard Arabic'⁹³, the language of Qur'an, which is used mainly in books, governmental forms, prayers etc. Second is the 'Vernacular Arabic' is used in daily face-to face conversations and is normally heard on television and is becoming the language of instruction at school contexts.

⁹⁴ Further illuminative insights into EFL-C's T may have been achieved if he was available for interview.

⁹⁵ Kerry (1998:7) offered the following distinction: "an open question permits a range of responses, but a closed question implies that the teacher has a predetermined correct answer in mind".

was approximately 60 minutes. Whilst waiting for few more students to arrive, T initiated the following discourse:

Excerpt (2)

- 21 T: ((Points at nearby buildings through the window))
 22 Where would you choose to live guys?
 23 maybe in this villa ((A building that was visible to SS))
 24 S1: Uh
 25 T: ((Addresses S1)) Do you want to live over there?
 26 S1: You mean the white villa teacher
 27 T: Yes Ahmad
 28 S1: It is very good
 29 *Ya Lait Ya Ustadh* 'I wish teacher'
 30 T: ((Smiles)) So do I
 31 I like to live in a similar place
 32 S2: ((Raising his hand)) Teacher teacher ...
 33 T: Yes Khaled
 34 S2: I live in a similar building
 35 SS: Hhh
 36 T: *Shabab* 'guys' shh 'quiet'
 37 So where about in Medina?
 38 S2: *Aziziah* ((A nearby district))
 39 T: Do you like living there?
 40 S2: Yes teacher it is quiet and close to many markets and
 41 shops
 42 T: And? ↑
 43 S2: Mmm
 44 the football stadium and the airport
 45 T: Nice
 46 Lucky you Khaled

In this excerpt, T initiates the exchange with a closed question ("Where would you choose to live guys?", line 22) which should prompt students to share their personal reaction to living in luxurious residences neighbouring the ELC campus, and which could be seen through the classroom windows. Whilst the aforementioned question may well be 'open' in the sense that one could choose anywhere, e.g. 'a desert island', it is considered here as 'closed' given that T's pointing imply that the choice is restricted to a building of some kind (i.e. the villa T has pointed to). Barnes *et al.* (1969, cited in Cazden, 2001:95) referred to this type of questions (i.e. questions that are open in form but demonstrably closed in function) as 'pseudo-open questions'. Interestingly, T's

question (in line 22) included the use of the auxiliary verb in the conditional form 'would' which may well soften T's request and reduce the face threatening act a teacher's question may possess. Following the lack of an immediate response, possibly due to the fact that students were still busy opening their books, T elaborates ("Maybe in this villa", line 23). Directing the question to S1 who seemed interested in providing an answer or perhaps wanted a further explanation (*cf.*⁹⁶ the interjection⁹⁷ "Uh", line 24); T rephrases his originally-asked closed question to be more direct ("Do you want to live over there?", line 25).

The questions T asked in the above excerpt (lines 22, 25, 37 and 39) can create interactional space which students could fill by giving personal responses. T's questions have also encouraged student talk (*c.f.* S1, lines 25-26; and S2, lines 32, 34 and 38) who volunteered to contribute to the ongoing QAC sequence. Furthermore, with his utterance in line 42, T actually does not provide an evaluation of feedback, but asks for further elaboration using a connector with a rising intonation ("And↑", line 42) which prompts S2 to further elaborate on his original answer (line 38). This move, as noted in lines 42-43, has elicited additional responses from S2. Pedagogically, this is positive as T appears to be stretching the discourse by exploiting opportunities for further student talk. Furthermore, the turns between lines 32 and 33, on the part of the student, parallel the numerical findings which came to the fore in the questionnaires (see 4.5), whereby 61.2% believed that it was necessary to obtain their teacher's prompt prior to answering his/her questions.

Interestingly, it was established in the stimulated recall session following the class that T in EFL-C 5 made a strong connection between his question use and the students' oral production. According to EFL-C 5's T, "the main reason for asking questions is to make the students interact with the teacher. I want to

⁹⁶ 'Cf.' and 'see' are used interchangeably in this thesis.

⁹⁷ Interjections, e.g. *uah*, *shh*, are short utterances that usually express emotions and are generally capable of standing alone in discourse (Ameka, 1992:108). Interjections can also be placed before or after an utterance.

hear students speaking and with the use of questions I want to encourage them to speak". When shown the video recording of his class, T elucidated his position stating that from his experience, topics such as places of residence and neighbourhoods normally attract students' talk. What EFL-C 5's T appears to be suggesting here is that the topic of the discussion is significant in terms of students' willingness to interact. This duly accords with this teacher's practice in the above excerpt where he points to a nearby building. There was also evidence for this in student comments (n=39) in the questionnaire open-ended items (see 4.7).

As a further example from the study's corpus (which highlights the function of teacher questions in encouraging student talk), I offer the following exchange excerpted from a reading-based class (EFL-C 7). This fifty-five minute class was attended by 27 students whose level of English was that of beginner. In excerpt 3 below and prior to the beginning of the lesson, T engaged with one of the students in the following discourse:

Excerpt (3)

- 67 T: ((Gazes at S1)) So you have twin brothers studying at the
68 university here, is that true?
69 S1: Yes teacher sometimes we the three comes to the
70 university together
71 T: Yeah you see it is kind of fun isn't it?
72 S1: I feel more attached to xxx not Ali
73 T: Are they easy to tell apart?
74 S1: What?
75 T: Do they look the same?
76 S1: No one is big
77 SS: Hhh
78 T: *Shabab* 'guys' please
79 T: Can you say that again Saad?
80 S1: Yes I mean one is bigger than the other.
81 T: I see

The discourse in excerpt 3 here is initiated with a prefacing discourse marker 'so' which indicated that "the course of action being launched does not contingently emerge from the immediately prior talk or other features of context"

(Bolden, 2009:977). This was evident in T's subsequent talk ("You have twin brothers studying at the university here, is that true?", lines 67-68). 'So' in classroom discourse may also follow on from a previously mentioned topic. However, this was not the case in this observed discourse. The amount of questions T poses (lines 68, 71, 73 75 and 79) to keep the discussion moving and on track is clear and relevant from this excerpt. Interestingly, whilst the topic launched in this QAC sequence may not appear at the surface to be directly related to the content of this grammar-based lesson (which included the grammar of direct and indirect speech), it contained various question uses. That is, here T uses a tag question (lines 71) and then closed-ended questions (lines 67, 73, 75 and 79). The tag question T poses at line 71 can achieve three purposes. First, it allocates S1 a turn in the current QAC sequence. Second, it effectively allots him the interactional space to continue or develop the topic should he wish to do so. It is, in this respect, much closer in nature to casual conversation given that it provides the counterpart (S1 here) the opportunity to produce a longer turn. Third, it seeks confirmation of T's suggested opinion ("It is kind of fun isn't it?", line 71) which makes the question rhetorical. It is interesting to note that S1's linguistically-inaccurate utterance ("We the three comes to the university together", lines 69-70) was ignored by T as he is clearly focusing on fluency over accuracy. This practice concurs with what Firth (1996) referred to as the 'let it pass' principle whereby errors which do not cause a problem for understanding are ignored. It was also of interest to observe⁹⁸ that, in this class (EFL-C 7), student errors went unrepaired and that the teacher's slot in the QAC exchange was generally limited to a content-based feedback or that of a personal reaction, e.g. criticism or praise.

Note too that S1's turn in line 74 in the above excerpt was limited to the single interjection 'what' which required T to reformulate what he had just said. Aligning to this student's expectation and allowing for the promotion of 'negotiation for meaning' (Long, 1996), T reformulates his original question ("Do they look the same?", line 75). This practice on the part of T can also account

⁹⁸ It could have been of interest if this teacher's rationale behind this was heard. However, this was not possible given that this teacher was not available for an interview.

as a question modification technique (see 5.6 for a detailed account of teachers' question modification practices). In sum, student responses in the above excerpt (e.g. lines 74 and 80) show the encouragement of student talk by means of the teacher's questions. In addition, T's questions at the beginning of the above QAC sequence (lines 67-68) convey his knowledge of S1's immediate family background. Whilst it could be argued that students in EFL, and perhaps other classroom contexts, may not wish to discuss personal information in front of the class, S1 did not appear to find it offensive or in breach of his privacy. A possible explanation is that in settings where students share the same L1, and may well have known each other, the classroom could encompass a sense of community or that of a 'family atmosphere' within students in their learning environment. To conclude, the set of examples discussed thus far in this section reveal that teachers' questioning functions by encouraging student talk. Yet, considering the context of the QAC exchanges illustrated, it is possible to suggest that in the beginning of our EFL lessons, regardless of their focus, teachers' questions can encourage student talk.

5.3.2 Asking Questions to Assist Students to Fluent L2 Talk

In addition to encouraging student talk, teachers' questions also served to help learners produce a more target-like (L1-speaker type) talk. In addition to asking questions to get responses, as was basically the case in each observed class, EFL teacher's questions also served as a technique to help learners produce or correct an L2 answer. The following set of examples (excerpts 4-6) which have been extracted from our Saudi EFL classroom data clarify this further.

Excerpt (4)

- 52 T: Okay now we will look at grammar use in Unit nine. As far
53 as you know guys phrasal verbs consist of ↑?
54 S1: A verb
55 T: And

-
- 56 S1: Two verb and particle ...
 57 T: Urm
 58 No ((pauses and gazes at the class)) do we say two verb?
 59 S2: Teacher, teacher
 60 T: Yes Khaled
 61 S2: It is two verbs not two verb
 62 T: Good Khaled
 63 But is this what a phrasal verb consists of?
 64 S3: verb and particle
 65 T: Good Hani
 66 S3: It consists of a verb and a particle
 67 T: Good. Can you give an example?
 68 S3: Yes teacher
 69 Ali showed up suddenly
 70 T: *Mumtaz* ↑ 'Excellent'

The above excerpt illustrates a QAC sequence which took place during the first half of a grammar-based lesson in EFL-C 3. In line 53 of the above excerpt, T initiates the QAC exchange with an incomplete elicitation ("Phrasal verbs consist of?") uttered with a rising intonation perhaps to ask for students' immediate answers. It is clear here that T aims to elicit the class's display of knowledge in the shape of completing his utterance, a practice that also places T in a firm position to confirm or correct these displays. The closed question T asks ("Do we say two verb?", line 57) can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, T's question here could be viewed as a device that pushes for students' language production towards greater L2 accuracy. Researchers, such as Nystrand and Gamoran (1991), referred to this type of questions as 'an uptake question' which incorporates the student's response into the teacher's question so as to move the student(s) towards some goal. On the other hand, being directed to the entire class, if this question was asked rhetorically, it could send a message to the rest of the class that accurate L2 talk is significant for classroom discourse. That is, whilst no one would perhaps have had a problem understanding⁹⁹ S1's utterance (in line 56), it was apparently not accepted by T albeit it is not entirely wrong. While gazing at the class as a whole, T interrupts S1's response and asked ("Do we say two verb?", line 58). In doing so, T marks S1's turn as problematic as reflected in his turn as well as the trouble-relevant

⁹⁹ Particularly if they understand 'verb' and 'particle'.

pause of 2 seconds in line 58, and is clearly hoping for more from other students.

It is clear here however that T prioritises 'form' over 'content' in S1's turn. In his turn (line 57), T utters "urm" which students, who may well know T's style and thus could gather that it is a means of saying 'it is partly correct'. However, with the completion of his turn (line 58), T appears to regain power over the discourse through what Markee (1995) called a counter-question. According to Markee (ibid.:583), counter-questions are "interactions in which teachers, in order to regain control of the classroom agenda, insert counter question turns between the question and answer turns of question-answer-comment sequences (QAC)". Although it may well have altered the interaction from being learner-centred to teacher-fronted (Markee, ibid.), T's counter-question in the above excerpt (line 58) has allowed him to continue the QAC sequence as appropriate. Arguably, T here saves S1's face by reformulating this inaccuracy as a group problem (*c.f.* line 58, "Do we say two verb?"). It is interesting to note here that T instead of saying 'it is wrong', he implies to S1 as well as the class that there is another way of saying this utterance, without asserting the answer is wrong. As in line 59, another student (S2) was apparently motivated and hence wanted to provide the correct L2 structure ("Teacher, teacher") and is prompted by T to respond ("Yes Khaled", line 60). According to Walsh (2006:31), "using one learner's contribution to help the rest of the class focus on a particular language form or meaning is likely to maintain the flow of the interaction".

It is worth noting that, although I am not specifically looking at learning¹⁰⁰, students' discursive engagement, as the case with S2 here, is a desired outcome for teachers. Furthermore, S2's response (line 61) not only was

¹⁰⁰ It is not my intention to address how teacher questioning practices directly lead to or hinder language learning in classroom interactions. The focus here is on analysing teachers' discursive practices as regards questioning in whole-class discourse and uncovering the reasons for their uses, which may or may not illustrate *opportunities* for language learning in the discourse. However, this is not to be meant that questions cannot have learning benefits. Researchers, such as Hsu (2001) and Qashoa (2013), have reported that teacher's questions in English language classroom contexts have a number of pedagogical benefits, of which is the stimulation of students' thought.

accurate in terms of L2 grammar and rules but also reflects this student's alignment with T's pedagogical focus in this particular QAC exchange. Following this, T goes back to the point raised initially by asking ("But is this what a phrasal verb consists of?", line 62) which is then responded to correctly (S3, lines 68-69). It is interesting to note here that without being asked by T to do so, S3 self-corrects his response. Consider the two outputs: ("Verb and particle", line 64) and ("It consists of a verb and a particle", line 66). This self-correction may have triggered T to further the discourse after he praises S3's contribution ("Good. Can you give an example?", line 67). This question clearly shows that T, as well as most teachers in the EFL classroom discourse, is in a position of control as the person who has access to the required information. T's question here is met with a correct response from S3 (line 68) to which T provides an L1 positive evaluation ("Mumtaz" which means "excellent" in English). Uttered in a rising intonation (line 70), this use of Arabic may well suggest the reinforcement of T's positive comment on S3's contributions to the QAC thus far and that he (T) wishes to be clear to the class that he is offering praise.

The data also showed further examples where the teacher's questions served to assist students' L2 production (see excerpt 5 below). This excerpt is taken from halfway through a 60-min communication-based lesson (EFL-C 4) which was attended by twenty two students. The following QAC sequences took place during a grammar activity T and the students were engaged in.

Excerpt (5)

- 86 T: Okay *shabab* 'guys', what does personality mean?
 87 Ha. What does personality mean? It means ... ((pause))
 88 S1: *Shakhsia* 'personality'
 89 T: Yes *Shakhsia* 'personality' or *Shakhsiat* 'personalities'
 90 But actually I want the meaning not translation Ayman 'S1's name'
 91 S2: Teacher
 92 T: Yes Ahmad
 93 S2: people action
 94 T: Again? ↑
 95 S2: I mean how people act or react to the people dealing with
 96 Good

97 T: Personality has to do with people behaviour differences

The above excerpt illustrates very clearly that T places considerable importance on the learning of new vocabulary (*personality* in this case). Following two open questions (lines 86-87) directed towards the entire class, and which included the use of the word 'shabab' the Arabic equivalent of 'guys' presumably to stimulate responses, T withholds completion of his turn by using an elicitation strategy, common within this study's corpus (see for instance excerpt 4 above), called 'designedly incomplete utterance' (Koshik, 2002; Sert and Walsh 2013) in the Question slot of the QAC sequence. According to Margutti (2010:317), teachers intentionally produce incomplete utterances as a means to elicit missing information from students as well as to prompt responses to an unanswered question. Arguably, however, a possible weakness of this approach is that it implies that there is a particular answer and that T has this, unless he/she explicitly states that there is more than one possibility to an asked question.

In addition, in this excerpt, the pause in line 87 functioned as an implicit request for completion and reflects T's expectations of an immediate response from the students. Despite the fact that T clearly stated that his questions were not aimed at a literal translation of the word 'personality' (line 90), the demanding nature of his question (line 86-87) could suggest that he was hoping for an answer in Arabic. Here, T's utterance at line 90 included the discourse marker 'actually' which, according to Lenk (1998:160), "expresses that the following information will be slightly different from the expected normal course of conversation". The unexpected information here is that T was not asking for translation but rather for a definition. At this point of time, S2 offers his own definition of the word 'personality' ("people action", line 93). Using the discourse marker 'again' with a rising intonation, T in line 94 implies to Ahmad (S2) that a more target-like answer was required. S2's response (line 95) was, following

this, praised and then rebroadcasted (without altering its gist) to the class by T (lines 96-97).

At a later stage of the same lesson in EFL-C 4, T engaged in a QAC sequence with one of the students in what reflects the function of teacher questions to assist students' L2 talk (see excerpt 6 next).

Excerpt (6)

- 121 T: A bossy man is the man who likes to give orders
 122 Do this do not do that Take this take that and so on
 123 *yaani* 'it means' *Mutaamer* 'bossy'
 124 *Wadhih?* ↑ 'clear?' ((Pauses and gazes at the class))
 125 T: ((Addresses S1 and shifts his gaze towards him)) Okay Talal?
 126 S1: *Naam Wadhih* 'yes it is clear'
 127 T: Good
 128 S1: Can you give me an example?
 129 Manager very bossy
 130 T: Manager very bossy ((Pauses and gazes at the class))
 131 S1: No no ↑ teacher
 132 I mean managers are very bossy
 133 T: Yeah
 134 they can be but not all of them I guess
 135 Good Talal

In excerpt 6 above, T initiates the QAC discourse with an extended turn¹⁰¹ (lines 121–125) to introduce the adjective 'bossy' by first explaining it (lines 121-122), translating it into Arabic (line 123), and finally addressing the class (see the comprehension check¹⁰² in line 124) as well as a particular student to ensure the word is understood (line 125). T's closed question (line 128) is met with a grammatically incorrect response from S1, and thus T repeats it as asking S1 to self-correct his response. S1 as in line 132 successfully produces L2 talk which T positively evaluates (lines 134-135). Interestingly, throughout

¹⁰¹ In classroom discourse, a teacher's or a student's extended turn is that of more than one clause (Walsh, 2006).

¹⁰² According to Dalton-Puffer (2007:119), comprehension checks "are phrases uttered to ensure whether one's interlocutor understands what one has said".

this excerpt, there is evidence of extended wait-time, pauses of two seconds whereby T waited for a response from students (lines 124 and 130). This use of wait-time by T above concurred with preferences expressed by 86.6% of the surveyed students (n=341) on the helpfulness of teachers' wait-time to their talk in QAC routines (see 4.5). Note too, the mutual gaze between T and the class (lines 124 and 130), and likewise by T in EFL-C 3 (line 58, excerpt 4), which appears to have an explicit communicative function which students are seemingly aware of. Of the possible functions of this gaze, on the part of T, is the regulating of the flow of conversation, the monitoring of feedback given (Knapp and Hall, 2006), and the encouragement of reciprocity within the class (Mortensen 2009). Regardless of its direction, the observed use of teachers' gaze, within our corpus, is interesting as it demonstrates how teachers incorporate non-verbal resources into the flow of the discourse.

The focus of EFL-C 4's T on vocabulary as noted in excerpts 5 and 6 above has also been mentioned in the interview data. Commenting on the significance of vocabulary to his questioning practice, this teacher remarked that the questions he asks often allow him "to enhance vocabulary items taught". When asked to elaborate, he added: "I view questions as tools that help me know whether students understand what has been taught or not, and to know what students already know or do not know about vocabulary items I am about to teach". This, together with his belief in using the L1, bear out his practice exemplified in the above two excerpts and observed at varied stages of EFL-C 4. In short, the questioning pattern illustrated in excerpts 4-6 above shows that, notwithstanding the fact teachers control the agenda and they have created the opportunity for a 'negotiation', this sort of teacher-student discourse may well be beneficial for student foreign language development. As Wells (1981:115) argued in this respect, "the sort of interaction that will be beneficial for [the student's] development ... is that which gives due weight to the contribution of both parties, and emphasises mutuality and reciprocity in the meanings that are constructed and negotiated through talk".

A further note to make about EFL-C 4 is that students were frequently asked by T to demonstrate their understanding of taught input through, for instance, answering questions about the text (mostly display¹⁰³ in nature) or by means of English-Arabic or Arabic-English translation. When asked about this and the use of translation in QAC sequences in his class, EFL-C 4's T explained his position as follows: "Reference to Arabic in the classroom discourse is a technique that is suitable to students' level and would further the chances students answer my questions". He subsequently declared that using Arabic alongside English, as he believed, "could maximise students' understanding of the content of the lesson". This view of using students' L1 has been advocated by researchers, such as Cole (1998) and Moore (2002). According to Cole (ibid.), a teacher can exploit students' L1 to increase their understanding of L2. In addition, Eldridge (1996) argued that messages in classroom code-switching are "reinforced, emphasized, or clarified where the message has already been transmitted in one code, but not understood" (p.306). To conclude, it is of interest to note that the abovementioned views of EFL-C 4's T accorded with the quantitative data (see 4.7) in the sense that over half of the participating students (n=341) reported the helpfulness of teacher's questions as well as teachers' use of the L1 in the questioning discourse (79.8% and 57.8% respectively).

5.3.3 Asking Questions to Repair Communication Breakdowns

Besides their functions mentioned thus far, teachers' questions appeared to serve to resolve communication breakdowns¹⁰⁴ as illustrated in excerpts 7 and 8 next.

¹⁰³ Display questions, also called known-information questions, refer to those where the questioner already knows the answers (Mehan, 1979).

¹⁰⁴ Liebscher and Dailey-O'Cain (2003) defined communication breakdown, within classroom discourse, as a situation in which the goal or intent of the behaviour is not understood or is misunderstood by the communication partner and, thus, is not followed by a desired outcome within a reasonable length of time.

Excerpt (7)

- 101 S1: Erm
 102 Can you explain about the uh adjective?
 103 T: What? Which adjective Omar?
 104 S1: You know adjective
 105 T: Do I know adjective?
 106 S1: Yes.
 107 T: What do you mean do I know the adjective? *Ish Qasdak?* 'what
 108 do you mean?'
 109 S1: Yes adjective. *Kilmat* 'the word' adjective
 110 T: Well erm an adjective is a describing word
 111 Do you understand Omar?
 112 S1: Yes teacher hhh I remember it now
 113 T: Okay guys who can give me an example for adjectives?
 114 SS: Teacher ... teacher
 115 T: Yes Ahmed
 116 S2: Smart or beautiful
 117 S3: Hardworking

During the above interaction, a communication problem arose apparently over the technical definition of the word *adjective* initiated by S1. The use of this word acts as a trigger for subsequent negotiation. What is noticeable in the above excerpt which is again taken from halfway through EFL-C 4 is that it is student-initiated. Interestingly, and as Waring (2009) considered, student-initiated discourse can create speaking opportunities for fellow students (*cf.* lines 114-117 above). It can also reflect students' concerns and thus it may well be the case that S1 here was not the only student who did not know this linguistic item. The source of the trouble in the above QAC exchange resides in the question that S1 is asking about the definition of the word 'adjective' (line 102) which seemed ambiguous to him. It is also possible that this student's question was triggered by T's frequent use of adjectives at this stage of the lesson (*cf.* excerpts 5 and 6).

In order to be able to understand S1's question, T negotiates with S1 what was meant via a series of clarification-seeking questions (lines 103, 105, and 107-108), each of them follows an utterance by the same student (S1). The question T repeatedly asks in lines 107-108 ("What do you mean?") is an attempt to clarify for himself what S1 is saying, it can also however compel S1 to think a little further and perhaps reformulate his question (which he later does,

c.f. line 109). It is of interest to note that it is very likely here that T may have deliberately pretended not to understand S1's utterances so as to further the discourse to benefit the class or (from a rhetorical perspective) convey meaning messages to the rest of the students about the ongoing discussion as was evident in the question T directs to the entire class ("Okay guys who can give me an example for adjectives?", line 113). Researchers such as, Cazden (2001) and Duckworth (1981), refer to this type of questions (line 113) as 'metacognitive questions'. According to Cazden (ibid.:92), metacognitive questions are used to "call the learners' attention to their own thinking and their own knowledge". S1's turn (line 109) illustrates the resolve of the discourse. That is, on S1's part this turn marks an attempt to clarify and repeat the point he raised in line 102, whereas on T's part this turn represents a channel through which he (the teacher) could hear more clearly what was being said to him. Walsh (2006:82) explained that "getting learners to really say what they mean, to clarify and express themselves as carefully as possible is arguably as important as allowing them sufficient interactional space". However, teachers may well need to be aware of students' level to be able to undertake this efficiently.

Of interest here is that the communication breakdown repair in the above excerpt was not achieved solely by T or S1. Instead, it was achieved, arguably, by the joint effort on the part of both of them to maintain communication, through what Tarone (1981) referred to as 'the negotiation of an agreement on meaning'. The kind of negotiation discourse (lines 102-109) has also been defined by Pica (1994:494) as the "restructuring of interaction that occurs when learners and interlocutors anticipate, perceive, or experience difficulties in message comprehensibility". Of significance to the subsequent QAC routine (lines 111-112) was T's use of the discourse marker 'well'. According to Walsh *et al.* (2011), 'well' has a number of functions in classroom discourse, one of which is an indication of some sort of hesitation. It can also give the speaker more thinking time. Here, it serves this purpose on T's part as manifested in his comprehension check direct question directed to S1 ("Do you understand Omar?", line 111).

When asked during an interview about his practice (illustrated above), EFL-C 4's T said that as regards the use of questions to repair communication breakdowns, "it depends on the situation. Lots of time I will understand them but I know that was incomprehensible. The problem is that other students in the class may not understand. So I would pretend I do not understand it or I will ask them to spell it so we could write on the board, or explain it in another way. And some of that is acting, because sometimes I do understand it, maybe not right away, but still, they need practise explaining themselves". Thus, EFL-C 4's T appears to have a clear pedagogical purpose to push students to express themselves more clearly. To conclude, the resolution of a communication breakdown, in fact, could be viewed as a joint enterprise in which students and teachers act on each other's verbal contributions in order to achieve mutual comprehension.

Excerpt 8 below presents another instance whereby teacher's questions functioned as tools for repairing communication breakdown. This excerpt is taken from a longer teacher-student dialogue at the beginning of EFL-C 5 about the best neighbourhoods to live in within the city of Medina.

Excerpt (8)

- 61 T: Why is it not good to live in Hijrah? I do not know it so tell me
62 S1: *Ghalia* 'expensive'
63 T: Do you mean the rents?
64 S1: No teacher *Ghalia Ghalia* 'expensive' 'expensive'
65 T: I do not understand you Hamad
66 In what sense is Hijrah expensive? I love to know
67 S1: Price and grocery teacher
68 T: Mmm
69 So you mean the living expenses, right?
70 S1: Yes exactly
71 T: Do you live there Hamad?
72 S1: No
73 T: Alright

In this discourse which followed a previous contribution from S1 that “Hijrah is not good to live in”, T asks S1 to share his ideas on Hijrah (a newly-built estate in Medina) with him and perhaps the whole class. With the use of a why-question, T here is asking to either initiate a longer response from S1 or to establish S1’s opinion on the estate under discussion (*cf.* line 61, “Why is it not good to live in Hijrah?”). This type of questions found in T’s utterance (line 61) can also be classified as ‘reasoning’ (Dalton-Puffer, 2007)¹⁰⁵ in the sense that it requires the respondent (S1) to think and give an opinion, which can sometimes be challenging to foreign language students. This QAC exchange however suggests that S1, as the addressee of T’s question (in line 61), was more aware of the background situation discussed than T who is acknowledged a ‘deficit’ in his own knowledge, perhaps in order to stimulate more student talk, on this particular issue (“I do not know it so tell me”, line 61). Notwithstanding this, however, the emphasis in the above teacher-initiated QAC exchange is apparently on the exchange of ‘genuine’ or ‘authentic’ information, and hence in this sense T’s question (line 61) achieves a ‘referential’ interactional function.

The mixed-code communication broke down, or perhaps a need for clarification as to what was being conversed thus far arose, however, between turns (at lines 62-63). Here, S1 constantly uses the term ‘expensive’ both in English and Arabic (lines 62 and 64) which T does not appear to understand why this estate may be ‘expensive’ (lines 63 and 65). A resolution of the discourse was achieved after T’s solicits following S1’s utterance in line 67 (“Price and grocery teacher”). S1’s response is faced with a leading counter question on the part of T (“So you mean the living expenses, right?”, line 69). Following S1’s response (line 71), T initiated another QAC which was based on the previous discourse and which aimed to further the discussion even if a closed question was used (line 71). Given the nature of T’s question (closed), S1’s response in line 72 was limited to the negative response token ‘no’. However, this response was surprisingly abrupt as it was assumed (by the researcher) that S1 would provide a follow-up to his negative response (for

¹⁰⁵ Such questions, as Dalton-Puffer (*ibid.*) argued, are characteristically introduced by *if* or *why*. (p.104, emphasis in source).

instance by saying: No, I live in Saih¹⁰⁶). The discourse in the above excerpt is then brought to a close with the discourse marker 'alright' which brought the conversation to a halt.

It is clear from excerpts 7 and 8 that the teacher on both occasions interpreted learners' output as language- rather than content-oriented; and thus breakdown occurred on account of the fact that either the students were lost (excerpt 7) or that the teacher had misunderstood (excerpt 8), which resulted in students being pushed to use alternative means to get across their messages precisely. Besides, researchers such as Oduol (1987) distinguished between "covert communication breakdown" and "overt communication breakdown". The former happens when students give wrong responses to a teacher's question due to misunderstanding. The latter happens when teachers' questions fail to stimulate any verbal response from the class, and is met instead with silence (Oduol, *ibid.*:117). Both scenarios, in which teacher's questions appeared to play a resolving role, have been observed in our data. The 'covert' breakdown is evident in the excerpts discussed thus far, whilst the 'overt' breakdown is seen in excerpts (19-22) presented later in this chapter (see 5.6). To conclude, it is interesting to note, as the above two excerpts show, how understanding both in L2 (excerpt 7) and L1 (excerpt 8) can be achieved by means of teachers' questions, in particular, when both the teacher and the students modify and restructure their discourse for clarification of each other's input and checking of their own productions. According to Cook (2008:15), in order to make interaction useful, breakdowns while conversing should be resolved continuously. To achieve this end, teachers' questioning (as manifested above) can play an important role (Long 1996: 418).

5.3.4 Asking Questions to Invite Students' Guesses

This is a further function teachers' questions served as evident in the recorded data. Excerpt 9 below demonstrates a QAC exchange that took place

¹⁰⁶ A suburb of Medina.

at the beginning of EFL-C 8 which was attended by 24 beginner students and where the focus of the lesson was on reading comprehension. In this excerpt, and instead of telling the topic of the reading text directly, T engaged in the following discourse:

Excerpt (9)

- 11 T: Alright I want you to close your books
 12 Okay today we will travel too far
 13 Mmm where do you think we are going?
 14 It is a country
 15 Come on
 16 Where do you think we are going?



- 17 SS: ((Raising hands)) Teacher teacher



- 18 T: Yes Hamed
 19 Where?
 20 S1: America
 21 T: America em ...
 22 S2: Indonesia teacher
 23 S3: I think it is Malaysia
 24 S4: Egypt
 25 S5: maybe France
 26 T: No no all of these are a long way to go
 27 I do not know if we can make it there before *Dhuhur*
 28 'noon prayer'
 29 SS: Hhh
 30 S6: Teacher Oman
 31 T: Good Ahmad
 32 Did you open the book?
 33 S6: ((Smiles)) no teacher
 34 T: Good good

This excerpt, in which chances are clearly given to many students to talk (*c.f.* lines 20 and 22-25), captures a QAC exchange that took place shortly after the students were seated at the beginning of a reading-based lesson. In this excerpt, T initiates the exchange through the use of the discourse marker 'alright' (line 11) which signals the introduction of a new topic. He then proceeds to instruct the students that they should not to open their books and provides the class with information ("Today we will travel too far", line 12) that helped in making his subsequent question (line 13, and repeated in line 16) triggers various responses. It is obvious here that T's statement ("We will travel too far", line 12) is not meant literally, but rather used in a rhetorical, imaginative or metaphorical, sense to refer to a forthcoming reading activity and warm students up for the topic. Directed to the entire class, the open-ended question T asks ("Where do you think are we going?", line 13) is used not only as a transition signal to the topic of the lesson's reading (Oman, a neighbouring Arab country) but also as a stimulus for student guesses. It also allows students freedom, considering that the reading passage is new to the students, in the sense that the answer to T's question could be anywhere. Students (see line 17 and the accompanying snapshot) were interested in answering and holding the floor by raising their hands in unison at the same time. This also shows that students are following and monitoring T's talk.

This hand-raising action, typically used in this class and other classes in this study's corpus, apparently suggest a student's wish to take a turn (whether in the form of an answer to the asked question as in this excerpt, or simply to contribute a comment). It is worth noting in this regard that researchers such as McHoul (1978) had problematised this practice and argued whether it could be considered to constitute self-selection or not. To McHoul (*ibid.*), "it might be best to treat hand-raising analogously with the picking up of a telephone receiver by one called on the telephone, that is in terms of summons-answer techniques" (p.201). Similarly, as evident in the data (e.g. excerpt 9), this thesis viewed this practice as a self-selection practice, yet acknowledged, in line with students' reported perspectives in this study's questionnaire, that it could also

be a form of respect address (see 4.7). Furthermore, in settings where it is required by teachers and/or institutions, students' hand-raising may well hence be practised to satisfy this purpose.

T thenceforth nominates S1 and poses an interrogative wh-question ("Yes Hamed. Where?", lines 18-19). Following S1's bid and bids of S2, S3, S4 and S5 (which were all turned down by T, *cf.* lines 24-25), S6 guesses correctly ("Teacher Oman", line 30) which T positively evaluates (line 31). Interestingly, if triggered by T's questions, this involvement by the students (lines 22-26 and 30) concurred with Kerry's (1998) statement that "the first hurdle which has to be crossed by the would-be classroom questioner ... is to establish a culture of learning in which students expect to be actively involved and to make a positive contribution" (p.14). Of interest, in this instance, instead of T regaining the floor after each student's turn by means of a question or a comment as evident in other QAC sequences in this chapter, the sequence of turns (lines 22-26) was: T-S2-S3-S4-S5-T. This practice was evidently accepted by students as an invitation to supply guesses albeit they (students) may not be able to articulate them. Through providing their guesses in the above excerpt, S2, S3, S4 and S5 showed that (a) they were paying attention to the teacher's talk, (b) they knew what the teacher is talking about, and (c) they were willing to take part in the activity underway, a practice that reflected these students' motivation.

A further point to make about the above excerpt as a whole is that it represented what Seedhouse (1996) referred to as 'guided discovery'. By means of this, teachers give prompts or ask display questions as was evident in the above excerpt which are presumed to guide the students towards an understanding of what would happen in the following context. T's rationale for this was that the students would be more motivated if they felt interactively involved. A disadvantage of such a discourse, however, is that in some cases it could take relatively longer to achieve the objective of transmitting information compared with a solo QAC sequence. Interestingly, T's practice above (excerpt

9) correlated closely with his stated beliefs about classroom questioning. In my stimulated recall interview with him, EFL-C 8's T declared that he used questions for different purposes "making the students aware of what is going to be taught, eliciting their ideas and predicting about this", and "encouraging student discussions" (in line with all teachers interviewed). Of interest too is that when asked about students' hand-raising as an observed classroom tradition at the study context (*cf.* the image accompanying lines 17-18, excerpt 9 above), EFL-C 8's T stated that neither he nor the policy of Taibah University's ELC required this. He then proceeded to argue that it is an important form of classroom active participation which every class should encompass "regardless of students knowing the answer or not". These comments suggest that this teacher's, and perhaps other teachers in this study, thoughtfulness about their classroom questioning. In addition, considering his views (quoted above) and his practice (exemplified in excerpt 9), it is apparent that EFL-C 8's T applies the aforementioned call put forward by Kerry (1998:14).

A further use of questions as a tool for inviting students' guesses is noted in Excerpt 10 on the next page.

Excerpt (10)

71 T: ((Reads a line from the e-textbook on his laptop))



72 Will air a good show that I know
 73 ((Looks at S1)) Hashim what do you think the good show would be?...
 74 S1: Document
 75 T: Say again
 76 S1: Documentary teacher
 77 SS: xxx Hhh
 78 T: Maybe
 79 ((Continues reading)) It is in Discovery Channel
 80 What do you think it is about?
 81 Discovery Channel ? ((Gazes at a group of students including S2))
 82 S2: Animals
 83 T: Good but not necessarily
 84 ((Addresses S2)) Do you know why?
 85 S3: Teacher
 86 T: Yes Ghazi
 87 S3: Nature life
 88 T: because it can be about animals or other stuff
 89 Excellent Ghazi

This excerpt is taken from a reading comprehension task at the first half of the communication-based lesson in EFL-C 6 (no. of students = 26). In this task, the class focused on a text on the subject of TV shows, which accompanied by pictures. In the above dialogue, T initiates the QAC exchange with an open-ended information-seeking question (“Hashim what do you think the good show would be?”, line 73) addressed to S1 (Hashim) with whom he establishes reciprocity through mutual gaze (Sert, 2013). It was also noted here that T may well have wanted S1 to respond immediately even as T speaks, and he does so (see T’s uncompleted turn in line 73). Although T’s question is met with a response from S1, this response is not accepted as T responds (“Say again”,

line 75) which either aimed to elicit S1's self-correction or perhaps suggest that T does not hear S1's response. It is then that S1 changes his utterance (from *Document* in line 74, to *Documentary* in line 76) however this is not the answer T expects. It is worth noting here that with a lot of noise in the classroom at this moment, it was not clear to the researcher what triggered the students' laughter (line 77). In line 80, T reformulates his question again, but this time he gives a clue ("It is in Discovery Channel", line 79).

Having been selected as the next speaker to give a second pair part to T's question, S2 duly gives a response (line 81). Although T does not reject S2's contribution, there is evidence to believe that he did not accept this answer as a completely correct one. This was reflected in T's turn ("Good but not necessarily", line 83) whilst adopting a personal epistemic stance¹⁰⁷ ("I think", line 83). Following this, T initiated a related QAC with S2 by addressing a closed question (line 84) to him. It was surprising however that T did not wait for S2 (whom he addressed, *c.f.* line 84) to respond; rather, he accepts a response bid from a different student (S3, line 85). From a critical discourse perspective, S3's utterance (albeit that he seeks T's prompt to respond, *c.f.* line 85) is what commentators such as Erickson (1996) referred to as 'turn sharks'; a term used to describe interlocutors that cut off others before they finish thereby truncating another's agency. Accepted by T, S3's response is subsequently praised by him ("Excellent Ghazi", line 89).

At a later stage, and after assigning students to read sentences and paragraphs out loud later in the class, T was observed asking metacognitive questions such as "Who can tell us what this can be?", "Have you any guesses on this?", and "What is the reason behind this you think?" in an apparently guess-inviting manner. Addressed to his EFL students as a whole or individually, these questions as observed in this study helped increasing students' interactional involvement in the sharing of their guesses and ideas,

¹⁰⁷ As defined by Biber and Finegan (1989), stance in discourse is "the lexical and grammatical expression of attitudes, feelings, judgements, or commitment concerning the propositional content of a message" (p.124).

even if at little length. This finding partly accords with the advice given by Kerry (1998:16) to teachers that “students should not be given everything”; instead lesson units “should be made like episodes in films” as a way of awakening curiosity amongst students and encouraging them to seek and find answers. It is argued duly that this practice can be of significant pedagogic importance particularly with beginner students.

5.3.5 Asking Questions to Manage Classroom Practices

A further typical function of teachers’ questions in the observed classes was that of classroom management (see excerpts 11-13 next). According to Abdesslem (1993:229) ‘classroom management’ interaction takes place when “most moves are similar in all lessons and [where] students and teacher operate within a narrow range of language, much of which is formulaic” (Abdesslem, *ibid.*). QACs that represent the ‘classroom management’ shown next were, as Goffman (1974) put it, “directed towards some off-lesson concerns”, e.g. to discipline a student, to attend to late comers, or to gain and focus students’ attention. It is important to mention here that students in such situations may not be given ‘much interactional space’ (Walsh, 2006) to express personal meaning or to develop topics on their own. However, even if they do, teachers may well claim their institutional authority over the topic and shift the discourse to perhaps what they perceive as appropriate to their pedagogical agenda. Consider, for instance, the following excerpt:

Excerpt (11)

51 T: ((Looks at S1)) Majed ?



52 Are you with us?

53 S1: Huh

54 T: What do we have next? ↑

55 S1: Occupations and uniforms

56 No ((Pauses and looks at the class))

57 S2: Countries and cities

58 T: Excellent Ameer

59 Majed *rakkiz law samaht* 'focus please'

60 *Tiqdar?* 'Can you?'

61 S1: Yes teacher sorry

In this excerpt which is taken from the first half of a reading-based lesson at EFL-C 8, it could be ascertained that T's communication purpose, though in an enquiring manner as the rising intonation in line 54 may suggest, was to attend to S1's disengagement. Here, T is clearly in control of the QAC which he initiates with a direct closed question ("Are you with us?", line 52). Notwithstanding this, some may argue that this question (line 52) can also reflect T's care that students in his class are attentive and thus he is utilising this manner of checking (*cf.* T's question in line 52). With this question, and the preceding gaze at S1, T also appears to seek confirmation that S1 is actually listening, as well as, a response from S1 to the question asked.

While S1 may still not understand or hear T's question or perhaps is still thinking of an answer ("Huh", line 53), T upgrades his previous utterance with a

more explicit question (“What do we have next?”, line 54). Clearly, S1’s response to this question in line 55 was not deemed acceptable by T who responds with the negative token ‘no’. According to Seedhouse (2004:170-173), one of the functions of teachers’ ‘no’ as part of question-answer adjacency pairs is to point at trouble in the procedure rather than at the students’ linguistic knowledge. In conjunction with his gaze at the class, T’s 3-second pause (line 55) in this turn indicate a request by him for other students to offer responses which convey what he wanted Majed (S1) to know. S2 duly nominates himself here and responds with the exact title of the reading passage to be studied next (“Countries and cities”, line 57). Here, T does not only accept S2’s utterance and praise his contribution but also directs his talk to S1 with a brief mixed-code turn that includes another rhetorical question in line 60 (“Tiqdar?” the Arabic equivalent of “Can you?”). T’s use of Arabic in this turn (line 59- 60) was clearly aimed at reinforcing his command (line 59) and rhetorical question (line 60) as a sort of admonishment that was grasped by S1 who apologetically replies (“Yes teacher sorry”, line 61).

Interestingly, the viewpoint of T in EFL-C 8 heard in the stimulated recall interview accorded with his practice. That is, when asked to comment on his practice in the above excerpt, he said: “Classroom questions can have a symbolic value. I sometimes use them to send a clear message to my students that they are expected to be active participants in the ongoing interaction”. Asked to elaborate, he added that he believed that this practice allowed him “to estimate how much a class understands” through their involvement in the discourse and enabled him “to pitch lessons at an appropriate level”. However, it is worth noting here however (from an EFL teacher’s viewpoint) that the teacher’s estimation of a class’s level of understanding by means of ‘classroom management’-oriented questions may not always be achievable because students might sometimes not answer or engage in a question-answer routine even if they know the answer. Evidence for this argument derives from students’ responses to the questionnaire (questionnaire item no. 5 in particular, see 4.5). 58.3% reported that when the teacher asked metalinguistic questions, they felt that they do not wish to respond even if they knew the answer.

A further example was a brief QAC exchange which took place in a grammar-based lesson at EFL-C 2 which was attended by twenty-four students whose level was relatively beginner. The materials used in this class were both the textbook (see Appendix N for a sample text from this textbook) and exercises displayed in a PowerPoint presentation. The following exchange took place at the very beginning of this lesson and it included questions that served the function of ‘classroom practice management’.

Excerpt (12)

- 4 T: Okay ↑
5 ((Pauses)) now let us start our lesson today
6 ((Looks at his copy of the textbook))
7 Open your books at page thirty okay?
8 Are you ready?
9 SS: Yes
10 T: Today we will practise the grammar of direct and indirect speech

In this excerpt, T initiates the discourse with the discourse marker ‘okay’ which, similar to the function ‘alright’ and ‘well’ could serve, contextualised the subsequent talk that some kind of planning is required (*cf.* line 6, “Open your books at page thirty”). After a positive acknowledgment marker from the students (“Yes”, line 9), T resumes by explicitly stating his agenda with the use of metalanguage¹⁰⁸ (“Today we will practise the grammar of direct and indirect speech”, line 10). Shortly after the discourse in excerpt 12 above, T initiated another ‘classroom management-oriented’ QAC sequence which was aimed at ensuring that students had picked up the required textbook (see excerpt 13 below).

Excerpt (13)

- 18 T: Make sure you have the right book
19 What book do you have?

¹⁰⁸ I.e. talk about the formal aspects of L2.

- 20 ((Points at S1 who is selected randomly)) What book do you
 21 have Adel?
 22 What title do you have on this book?
 23 S1: Step by step
 24 T: Oh
 25 What do you mean step by step? It is grammar practice today
 26 S1: uhm ↑ I have it here teacher ((Searches for the book))
 27 Yeah, yeah
 28 This is it teacher
 29 The Good Grammar
 30 T: Good Adel
 31 Okay everybody
 32 Can we start?
 33 SS: Yes ↑

Here, T initiates the discourse with the procedural statement (“Make sure you have the right book”, line 18). He then directs a wh-question at the entire class (“What book do you have?”, line 19) to which no answer was offered. These turns (lines 18-19) represent an introductory stage, or what Seedhouse (2004) referred to as ‘procedural context’. According to Seedhouse (ibid.:124), procedural context is where “the teacher’s aim is to set something up, instruct or establish a procedure for work in progress”. Right after this, T moves on to pose two questions to S1 about the book he brought to class. The information S1’s response included (i.e. the name of a textbook different to that required for the class) is met with T’s change-of-state token ‘oh’ (Heritage, 1984)¹⁰⁹ in line 24 which clearly indicates T’s surprise, and perhaps disappointment, or his intent to signal a required change in S1’s in-progress course of action as reflected in the clarification-seeking question he immediately poses (*c.f.* line 24, “What do you mean step by step?”). Notably, ‘oh’ is more commonly used, as in the excerpt above, when the information provided does not correspond to a speaker’s (T in this case) prior expectations (Schiffrin, 1987:90). Evidently, S1 understands and commences searching for the required lesson book. Prior to informing T that he possesses the book (lines 25-28), S1’s initiates his response with a rising intonation the discourse marker ‘uhm’ which is commonly

¹⁰⁹ According to Heritage (1987:99), ‘Oh’ is a discourse marker which is used “to propose that its producer has undergone some kind of change in his or her locally current state of knowledge, orientation or awareness”.

used to explicitly delay a response (Schegloff, 2010) or to display the need for more processing time on the part of the utterer. With a positive acknowledgment of S1's response, T concludes his turn (lines 30-32) with a rhetorical question for which a response was not necessarily required. The students, however, here simultaneously uttered the acknowledgment marker 'yes' with a rising intonation. It is worth noting at this point that the opening interaction in excerpt 11 above was similar, in its procedural mode, to the other lessons in this study's corpus as regards teacher's questioning practice.

A similar pattern of questioning whereby teacher's questions serve classroom management purposes can also occur in different stages of a lesson. For instance, halfway through a communication-based lesson in EFL-C 6, T initiated the following QAC exchange:

Excerpt (14)

- 134 T: Okay *shabab* 'guys'
135 now it is time for the homework
136 What TV shows have you documented? How many?
137 S1: ((Raises his hand)) Teacher
138 T: Yes Emad
139 S1: I do not have
140 T: What? ↑
142 S1: I do not have the information
143 T: You mean for the homework ((Pauses))
144 urm well that is your problem
145 I said this last week and your friends have done it, right?
146 Anyone else who did not do the homework?
147 SS: No
148 T: Okay

This excerpt is an example of teacher's questions used for classroom management purposes. Here, T initiates the discourse with two direct questions addressed to the class as a whole (line 136). S1 in line 137 bids to hold the floor and is prompted by T with the backchannel 'yes' which, according to Gramley and Patzold (1992:227), indicates active listening on the part of the hearer. 'Yes' in T's turn here, and in similar cases within data presented throughout this chapter, reflects T's prompt to S1 to hold the floor. S1's turn

which was incomplete (“I do not have”, line 139) is met with T’s single interjection ‘what’ in line 140. T’s turn here can be interpreted in two ways; first, it indicated to S1 that he was required to reformulate what he had just said; second, it reflected T’s surprise particularly if the accompanying upward intonation is taken into consideration. S1 duly reformulates his response (“I do not have the information”, line 142) and makes it explicit that he has not done the homework. With his fairly long turn (lines 143-146) which included two successive questions (both of a closed nature), T’s authority over the discourse is exhibited. T also makes it clear, if not in a confrontational manner, that S1’s situation was not desirable (*cf.* line 144, “Urm well that is your problem”). At line 148, T closes the ongoing discourse with the discourse marker ‘okay’. According to Merritt (1984), of the functions ‘okay’ serves, is to signify that the speaker “suggests the termination of the phase that has just proceeded” (p.144), as well as a shift to a new topic.

5.3.6 Asking Questions to Elicit Responses in Informal Conversation

Apart from procedural matters, on few occasions (see table 5.3 for a numerical account of the functions of teacher question in the data), teachers’ questions served to elicit student responses in informal conversations. As suggested by two teachers in this study (i.e. FT-2 and FT-3, two female interviewee teachers), teacher questions are potential elements not only for teaching but also for presenting students with an opportunity to use the L2. Although teachers, such as EFL-C 1’s T (see figure 5.2 on the next page), had lesson plans which specified the objectives and content outline; talking about real-life, everyday topics were evident in our EFL classrooms¹¹⁰. It is worth highlighting before I proceed that it is not meant to imply here that EFL teachers are ought to retain lesson objectives and agenda and not engage in casual talks. As a researcher, I was surprised by this finding which contradicted discourse analytic studies in the Arab world (e.g. Lahlali, 2003) who described a more regimented classroom atmosphere.

¹¹⁰ This can make the class more real and more connected to daily life

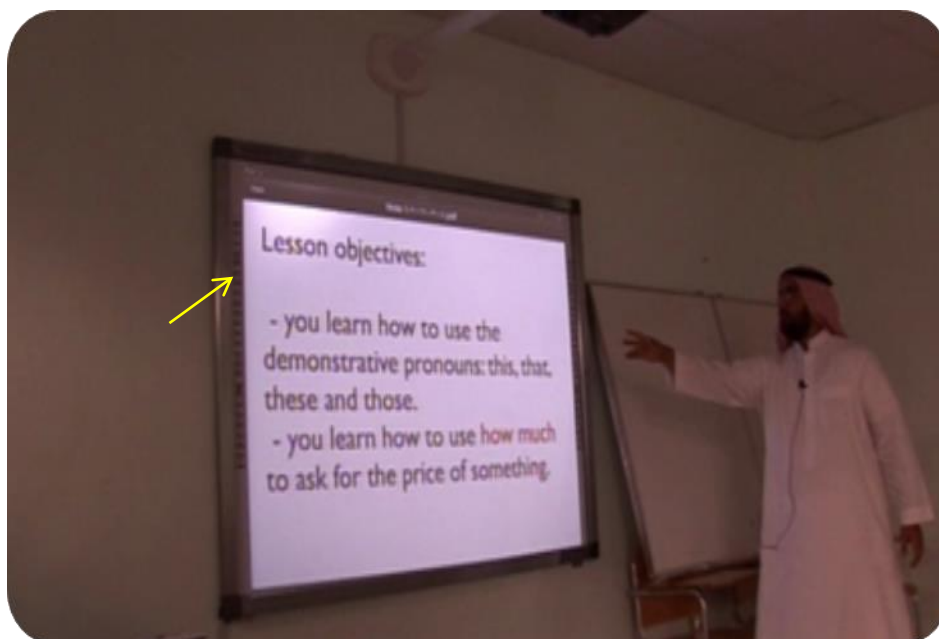


Figure 5.2: An illustrative video snapshot of EFL-C 1

Researchers, e.g. Willis (1981:11), associate informal interaction with 'open' and 'less teacher-centred' discourse, albeit that the teacher has always the right to bring this sort of discourse to a close. Accordingly, it could be said that the sort of informal talk that occurs in the EFL classroom is similar, but not identical, to that which takes place outside the classroom, e.g. amongst friends. Within my corpus, questions in this type of informal talk (which took place at various stages of observed classes) were classified to be 'informal' based on their topic and did not appear to require specific or 'correct' answers within the QAC routine. For instance, whilst involved with his students in discussions about renting properties and other residence-related talks during the first half of a communication-based lesson in EFL-C 5, T initiated the following QAC exchange:

Excerpt (15)

- 91 T: Is it common for young adults in our culture to live by
92 themselves?
93 S1: No
94 T: Why?
95 S1: Because it is not in our culture
96 T: Why it is not in our culture?
97 S2: Something wrong could happen
98 T: What do you mean something wrong could happen?
99 S3: Maybe you commit bad things
100 S4: The family lives together
101 T: Alright
102 So it is not common
103 Some people do but not many
104 S2: Exactly

Here, T marks the beginning of the QAC discourse with a series of open-ended questions (*cf.* lines 91-92 and 94) which aimed to elicit elaborate answers from the students. The subject addressed in the asking and answering sequences appeared like casual, everyday conversation which could occur anywhere, not simply within EFL classrooms. The students' involvement in the ongoing interaction commenced with S1's response ("No", line 93) to which T responds with the question word 'why' which is commonly used to obtain an explanation or a reason. S1 here aligns with T's request and responds with a collective response ("Because it is not in our culture", line 95) which was not provide a sufficiently convincing reason for T (see T's counter question in line 96). A peer student (S2) becomes involved in the discourse and provides a further response (*cf.* line 97, "something wrong could happen"). Once again, T uses questions and poses this time an explicit information-seeking question ("What do you mean something wrong could happen?", line 98). It surprised the researcher that S2 did not comment further, rather two other students (S3 and S4) made contributions. With the use of the discourse marker 'alright' in line 101, T draws together what students have expressed thus far (lines 102-103), a practice that reflects his acknowledgment of the answers provided in addition to his intention to bring the ongoing discourse to a conclusion. It is interesting here to see S2 returns to the ongoing interaction, albeit with a limited answer, as

seen in line 104. In sum, T's questions in this excerpt clearly functioned to elicit students' responses in an informal conversation.

The following excerpt presents another example of asking questions while carrying out informal conversations within the EFL classroom. The sixteenth excerpt is a segment of a QAC exchange that occurred at the closing phase of a grammar-based lesson in EFL-C 1.

Excerpt (16)

- 231 T: During Eid al-Fitr break you had a week off where did you go?
232 What did you do?
233 S1: Teacher I went to Yanbu for the beach
234 T: I see
235 S1: What did you do up there?
236 Sport
237 T: Great what kind?
238 S1: Swimming and volleyball
239 T: Alright ((Smiles))

In the above excerpt, T initiates the QAC exchange with a referential question where the answer is not known to him. This type of elicitation questions, according to Brock (1986), is commonly directed at students' lives outside of the classroom (e.g. excerpt 16). Albeit it may well be argued to be 'intrusive', this teachers' interest in students' lives beyond the class may well be positive in terms of teacher-student interpersonal relations. In addition, in this sort of discourse, it could be claimed that the teacher is not the knowledge-holder and that respondents (S1 here) are given the opportunity to determine what to say and how much to talk. Also, it takes the focus off language and, thus, students are likely to be less conscious of making errors. In addition, as shown in the above excerpt, referential questions (*cf.* "Where did you go?" and "What did you do?", lines 231-232 respectively) could be associated with what Tharp and Gallimore (1991) referred to as 'the instructional conversation'. Tharp and Gallimore (*ibid.*) defined this discourse as "a dialogue between teacher and learners in which the teacher listens carefully to grasp the learners' communicative intent and tailors the dialogue to meet the emerging understanding of the learners" (p.1). Self-selecting himself, S1 responds to T's

questions by stating that he went to Yanbu (a nearby coastal city) during this national holiday (Eid al-Fitr¹¹¹). Of interest to our analyses, the above QAC exchange accorded with what van Lier (1988) referred to as the ‘less topic-orientation’ discourse which is typical of everyday conversation provided that it allows further freedom for self-expression. Typical to the class above, it was also observed in other classes in this study’s corpus (e.g. EFL-C 7), that EFL teachers, at various lesson stages, engaged in casual-topic QAC exchanges through which teachers expressed a genuine interest in eliciting responses and information from students. Topics here included for instance sport, income, and social relations. To conclude this set of examples, asking questions for the purpose of carrying out informal conversations is another function of teacher questions in our EFL classes. By and large, the aforementioned examples (excerpts 15-16) are pedagogically positive given they may well achieve a part of ‘bonding’ and ‘building rapport’ between students and teachers which can create a conducive learning atmosphere in the classroom. In addition, researchers such as Fisher (1993) and Pan (2006) have argued for the benefit of teacher-student informal talk in students’ learning, by for instance aiding student creativeness (Pan, *ibid.*). Kerry (2002:76) also added that “teachers who make themselves available for conversations with students, about anything and everything, have already prepared the ground for learning through questioning”.

5.3.7 Asking Questions to Display Humour

The data from the observed classes revealed teacher’s questions to fulfil a range of functions, not only in the academic sense of communicating curricular content (illustrated in sections 5.3.1-5.3.4), but also in terms of classroom social practice. That is, reducing the level of formality of the discourse, humorous¹¹² QAC exchanges between teachers and students were evident. Take, for

¹¹¹ Eid al-Fitr is a religious holiday celebrated by Muslims around the world. It marks the end of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of down-to-sunset fasting. The holiday of Eid lasts for one day and Muslims are not permitted to fast this day.

¹¹² Humour is referred to in this study as the tendency of particular talk to provoke laughter and amusement within classroom interactants.

instance, the following excerpt which arose halfway through a reading-based lesson in EFL-C 7. Here, T engaged with S1 in the following discourse:

Excerpt (17)

- 171 T: ((Points at S1)) Obadah what is the difference between locally
 172 and nationally?
 173 S1: *Ma Aarif* 'I do not know'
 174 T: Come on
 175 Obadah knows everything, doesn't he?
 176 Hhh
 177 S1: Hhh
 178 Here is locally
 179 T: ((Smiles)) You mean in Medina?
 180 S1: Yes teacher
 181 T: Good
 182 ((Smiles)) and nationally?
 183 S1: Like Jeddah or Dammam ((two major cities in Saudi Arabia))
 184 T: Very good Obadah thank you
 185 Okay let us now move on

In this excerpt, T initiates the QAC exchange with a direct open question addressed to S1 (Obadah). This question was based on a reading-activity in which the class was engaged. The topic of this reading was on the subject of making friends and it involved the character moving to a new country. S1 here responds in L1 with a 'claim of insufficient knowledge' (Sert and Walsh, 2013) (*cf.* "Ma Aarif" the Arabic equivalent of "I don't know", line 173). Researchers, such as Jakobsson and Ryden (2010), reported that EFL students may refer to their L1 to represent misunderstanding of the information they received in the L2. In addition, according to Kärkkäinen (2003, cited in Sert and Walsh, *ibid.*:544), 'I don't know' is one of the most frequent epistemic stance marker used in classroom discourse. However, students may also implicitly display this through lack of response, rather than actually saying 'I don't know' (see 5.6). T's subsequent teasing utterance ("Come on, Obadah knows everything, doesn't he?", line 175) displays the onset of humour in this excerpt given that the tag question he ends his utterance with. Two possible interpretations can be drawn here: a) T is certain that S1 knows the answer to his question and thus is denying his previous claim of insufficient knowledge of the difference between

the two adverbs 'locally' and 'nationally' (line 173); b) T wants to push S1 towards a contribution and his efforts at humour may have been meant to reduce embarrassment, however he may well, unintentionally, have put S1 under some sort of discomfort in being at the centre of the discourse at that moment. It is worth highlighting, at this juncture, that having only videoed one lesson from EFL-C 7, it was not possible for the researcher to establish the possible relationship between S1 and T in this class.

Both T and S1 (lines 176 and 177 respectively) were laughing after T and S1's QAC exchange; a practice that, even if not intentional, appears positive. This laughter may have been caused by the teacher-initiated QAC exchange. As in other interactions excerpted from his class (see for example excerpt 3 in which T expressed his knowledge of a student's immediate family background) EFL-C 7's T, who appeared to have a good rapport with his students, tended to engage in casual conversations in his class and thus humour is a possible outcome. It can duly be argued (based on the observation of this EFL classroom) that, on the part of T, 'casual talk' tends to be linked with 'humour'. This teacher's practice, which could be argued that it still includes T's control over the discourse, is apparently lessening T's authoritative role as reflected in his humorously-toned questions (*c.f.* lines 179 and 182). In addition, it also corresponds with Simonds's (2001) claim that such teacher practice can create an environment of approachability and warmth that may well progress a shared discourse, which applies to instances of this within my corpus. This is evident in S1's responses (lines 178, 180, and 183). In addition, S1's laughter in line 177 could convey two possible functions; a) it concurs with T's previous talk and laughter; b) it signals that S1's previous claim of insufficient knowledge was not meant seriously or that he now recognises his ability to comprehend T's question and thus offers a response (*cf.* line 178). Prior to closing the exchange in line 185, T positively acknowledges S1's answers and thanks him (line 184).

A further example of teacher's use of questions to display humour comes from EFL-C 1. Approaching the end of the grammar-based lesson in this class, T initiated the following:

Excerpt (18)

203 T: Okay
204 ((Smiles)) Do you want another exercise?
205 SS: No no ↑
206 T: Come on you are not in a hurry, are you?
207 SS: Hhh ↑

In this brief excerpt, when a couple of students have just completed a grammar-based task on the use of 'plural and singular nouns' after which they can leave prior to the end of the class, T asks a question which displayed the humorous function of his slot in the QAC exchange. It is apparent; given his humorously-toned utterance and bearing in mind the fact that the remainder of class time was less than 5 minutes that T (*c.f.* line 204, "Do you want another exercise?") does not seek a confirmation from the students, rather it appears that this question is being used rhetorically as further emphasised by T's follow-up tag question ("Come on, you are not in a hurry, are you?", line 206). Students also seem aware of the rhetorical use of T's questions as their turns suggest, both in their rising-intonated repeated negative token 'no' (line 205) and the loud laughter (line 207).

5.4 Summary of Observed Teachers' Questioning Functions

Based on the foregoing discussion, the functions of our EFL teachers' questions may generally be classified into two broad categories (see figure 5.3 on the next page). I developed these categories based on a review of classroom discourse research (e.g. Ferguson, 2003; Seedhouse, 2004; and Walsh, 2006), together with my data. The first group is what I refer to as 'the managerial and interpersonal function' questions and this includes the following sub-functions: a) classroom management, b) eliciting responses in informal conversation, and c) displaying humour. Second, are the questions which I consider as having an 'evaluative and discursive function' and which included questions that served to a) encourage students to talk, b) assist students to fluent L2 talk, c) repair communication breakdown, and d) invite students' guesses.

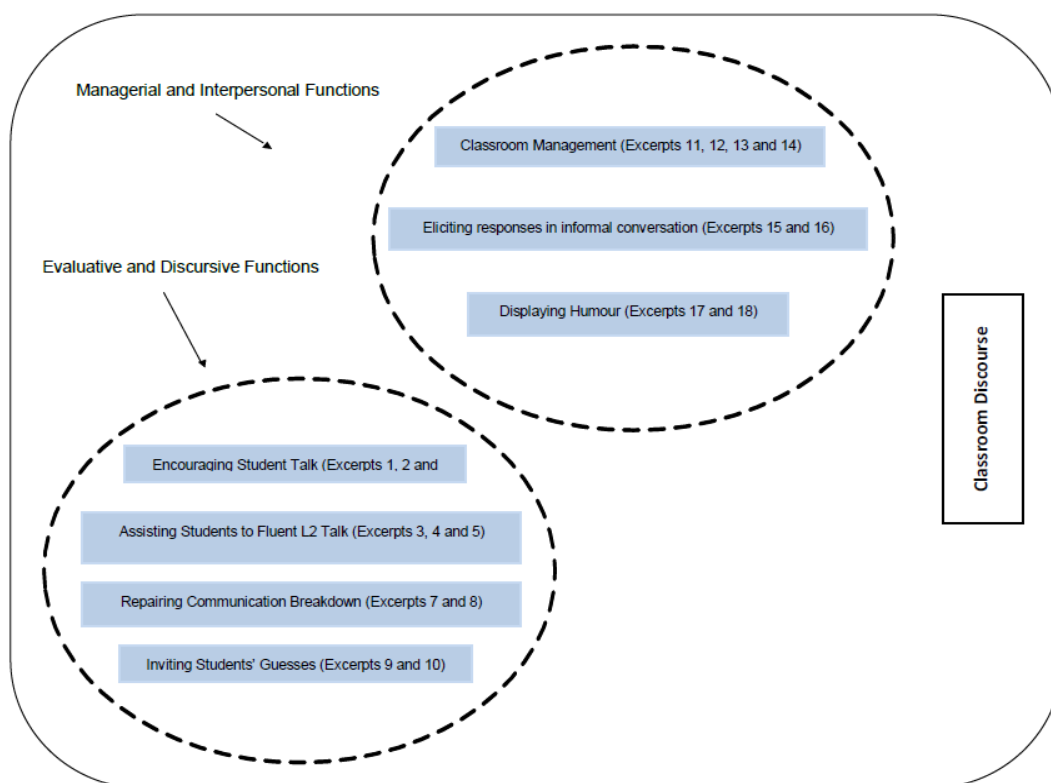


Figure 5.3: Observed functions of male teacher classroom questions

A numerical account, carried out manually, of the functions of teachers' questions in the data (summarised in figure 5.3 above) gives the following figures:

Function of Teacher Question	Observed Frequency
Encouraging student talk	41
Assisting students to fluent L2 talk	36
Repairing communication breakdowns	25
Inviting students' guesses	23
Managing classroom practices	19
Eliciting responses in informal conversations	12
Displaying humour	10
Total	166

Table 5.3: Frequency of teachers' question functions

The above table shows that the function of asking questions ‘to encourage student talk’ and ‘to assist students to fluent L2 talk’ are most frequent in the observed classes at the ELC. Added together, both functions (41 and 36 respectively) form approximately half of the total of all the functions (46.3%). Table 5.3 also shows that there is no substantial difference in frequency as regards teachers’ use of questions ‘to repair communication breakdowns’ or ‘to invite students’ guesses’ (23 and 25 of the total functions respectively). By contrast, the total obtained for the functions which come under the (managerial and interpersonal category), namely, ‘managing classroom practices’, ‘eliciting responses in informal conversation’, and ‘displaying humour’, was 41 (i.e. 24.7% of the total for all the functions), which is far smaller than the total obtained for the three functions mentioned above. Two conclusions can be drawn from these brief statistics. First, they indicate a greater significance attached to the evaluative and discursive functions of teachers’ questions in the study setting. Second, they suggest that with the greater emphasis placed on the evaluative and discursive functions of teachers’ questions, our EFL teachers may have hoped to enhance students’ L2 knowledge, particularly in terms of language rules and forms, over other discourse features.

5.5 Further Perspectives on Teacher’s Questioning Practices (Female Teachers’ Interview Data)

Having considered the functions our EFL teachers’ questions served, this section considers some relevant female teachers’ perspectives as regards the functions of their questioning, given that this study, as previously mentioned, had the opportunity to include female teachers (n=4) in its interview sessions. Prior to proceeding with the presentation of the findings from this particular data set (i.e. female teachers’ interview data), it is to be noted that I opted for quantitative accounts of teachers’ viewpoints the reason being as already established in (5.1) is the lack of space and the complementary utilisation of this particular data.

As to their purposes for asking questions in the classroom, a content analysis¹¹³ of the female teacher interview data yielded the following four functions: maintaining student alertness, increasing student curiosity, getting students to interact, and evaluating student knowledge and understanding. Table 5.4 below presents the number of teachers who mentioned utterances falling within each of the categories.

	No.	1	2	3	4
Teacher Question Function	Description	Maintaining student alertness	Increasing student curiosity	Getting students to interact	Evaluating student knowledge and understanding level
EFL Teacher		FT-1 FT-2 FT-3 FT-4	FT-1 FT-3	FT-1 FT-2 FT-3 FT-4	FT-1 FT-2 FT-3

< FT > Female teacher

Table 5.4: Summary of female teacher interviewees' reported question functions

As can be seen from this table, the teachers mentioned 'maintaining student alertness' as one of their question roles. In addition, all of the teachers mentioned the role of 'getting students to interact'. These two reported functions are similar in a sense to the observed male teacher question functions (managing classroom practices, *c.f.* 5.3.5) and (encouraging student talk, *c.f.* 5.3.1). To illustrate this, FT-4 (an experienced female teacher), for instance stated that she believed that "although students should always ask us teachers and we should ask them too, questions should also be used to keep a discipline or manage classroom procedures". In a similar vein, FT-2 added that questioning is "an important tool for managing the classroom" as it "helps to bring students into the discourse and keep them alert". With regard to the use of questions to get students to interact, a representative view derives from FT-

¹¹³ See 3.7 for a detailed account of the analysis procedure.

3's comment. For this teacher, a main reason for asking questions in the class was to "make the students interact" with the teacher using questions of various forms and for different purposes. Asked to provide examples, she went on and added: "I ask my students about anything really. I ask about the subject, homework, why a student is being late or absent and so on so forth". Agreeing with FT-3 as well as the other interviewee female teachers, FT-1 interestingly stated: "I use questioning to get to know my students more by listening to their opinions". Albeit that it could be argued that this function may not be always achievable if we consider the genre of questions and the level of students who answer these questions and the fact that in some circumstances, the students themselves are not willing to talk (see the descriptive statistics of our student questionnaire findings in 4.5), showing curiosity about student, on the part of FT-1, is an interesting sign of caring.

In addition to the above, and as shown in table 5.3, two of the female interviewee teachers (i.e. FT-1 and FT-3) viewed their questions as a tool for 'increasing student curiosity'. This differed from the eight male teachers' whose classes were observed in the sense that it was noted that one of the prevailing functions of a teacher's questions was to invite student guesses (see 5.3.4), a practice which is likely to increase 'student curiosity' as female teachers put it. The last function (no.4 in table 5.4) was referred to by three of the four female teachers interviewed. A typical comment illustrating this reported question function comes from FT-3 who stated that she used questions to "know whether students understand what has been taught", and as "tools to know what students already know or do not know about something that the teacher is about to teach". It could, however, be argued that this function may not always be achievable if we consider that there may well be other factors which preclude students from engaging in questioning routines, e.g. students' perceived lack of L2 proficiency or fear of making mistakes (see numerical evidence in 4.5). To conclude, an interesting follow-up to this study would be one which observes female teachers' classroom discourse and investigates how teacher questions achieve these, or other, ends (see 6.6 for an account of the study suggestions for future research).

Furthermore, the female interview data also suggested that the four teachers involved had a shared awareness¹¹⁴ of the question varieties: ‘open’ and ‘closed’, and reported using them varyingly. For instance, in a response to the interview question¹¹⁵ (What sort of questions do you normally use?), three teachers (i.e. FT-1, FT-3, and FT-4) reported using both closed and open questions (similar to male teachers observed, see excerpts in 5.3) and linked this to the pedagogic goal, lesson agenda, and class time stating that these are the factors which decide if a certain question form is more or less appropriate in their classes. Representative to this view, FT-4, for instance, stated: “Well, it depends on the class I am teaching. I normally teach reading so most of the time me and the students are engaged in tasks and reading activities. Therefore, I use closed questions more. If I am teaching for example a communication-based lesson, I would definitely be asking more open questions”. This comment suggests that FT-4 adopts a literary approach in the sense that she looks for literal understanding of text rather than interpretation of meaning [which would demand more of students’ reasoning].

In addition, FT-2 added: “Well, when I have more time available in the middle of the lesson I use open-ended questions to get students think through issues, whereas at the beginning or wrap-up lesson phases I would probably use closed and shorter questions only”. Asked to elaborate, she added that closed questions help her more at the beginning of the lesson “to work up to where students are” and at the end “to see what they have learnt before I get to some sort of conclusion”. This view indeed suggests that FT-2 is thoughtful about her questioning practice as reflected in her reported judicious use of closed and open questions. It is clear here that questions, whether open or closed, have different functions and convey different meanings. In addition, the link made about a possible relationship between the lesson structure and types

¹¹⁴ It was not however possible, in this study, to establish that other teachers at Taibah University’s ELC (i.e. those who did not take part in the present research, n=8) had or had not this awareness.

¹¹⁵ It is worth acknowledging that this interview question is broad. However, it was hoped with this question that teachers’ responses would coincide with their actual priorities, approximately in terms of rank order, and thus there may well be a possibility for a plenty of views to emerge.

of questions as emerged from this teacher's responses concurs with findings reported in the literature. For instance, Hussin (2006) and Chang (2009) reported that EFL teachers tend to deliberately use different question types at various phases of the lesson.

With regard to female teachers' question types discussed in this part of the interview, FT-2 had a slightly different opinion. For her, "with asking so many questions each day, it is easy for one form of questions to become habitual". When asked to elaborate, she added: "I personally for example use closed and display questions all the time. In my opinion, they feel safest because they can keep the discourse moving compared to open questions which my students find uneasy". This comment illustrates the value of closed questions as this female teacher perceived and may well have indicated something about the level of her students (beginner) as suggested by her comment on the difficulty of open questions for them. Table 5.5 below summarises the interviewed female teachers' reported use of question types.

Teacher	Questions Used	
	Open	Closed
FT-1	√	√
FT-2	×	√
FT-3	√	√
FT-4	√	√

Table 5.5: Summary of female teacher interviewees' reported use of question types

To conclude, from the limited data presented here, the experiences of the teachers participating in this study as voiced in the teacher interviews indicate that there is room for an 'effective use of questioning' (Nunn, 1999) within the EFL classrooms at Taibah University's ELC given the teachers' awareness (male and female teachers) and practice (male teachers) of varied question forms and functions. According to Gabrielatos (1997:1), effectiveness in classroom questioning can be improved by a combination of the following interrelated factors: a) "teachers' awareness of the types of questions they are

asking” and b) “teachers’ awareness of the function of their questions”. This effectiveness has duly a potential within our context given the participating teachers (both male and female) have reflected this in some manner or another.

5.6 Teachers’ Modifications to Unanswered Questions

Thus far, our analyses of EFL teacher classroom practices and reported beliefs as regards classroom questioning have mainly focused on the functions teachers’ questions served throughout the classroom discourse. However, it was not surprising to note in this study’s observations that teachers’ questions, of varied forms, sometimes failed to elicit responses. This silence, as Varonis and Gass (1985:76) remarked upon, frequently acts as an indicator that a non-understanding has arisen during interaction. Walsh (2006:53) also added that silence in classroom discourse “may indicate uncertainty or confusion”. Silence could also be traced back to students’ anxiety about the roles and responsibilities in the classroom discourse or the fear of making mistakes (see 4.7 for numerical evidence). Furthermore, silence may also be a result of other causes, e.g. students’ inertia or tiredness. Researchers, e.g. Harumi, (1999); Kwan, (2000); and Dumteeb (2009), reported that EFL students generally use silence when they have a problem with how to express themselves and are thinking of how to respond.

A thorough investigation of the observed male classroom data in my study revealed that upon instances of non-response, varied modification strategies were deployed by observed teachers (see sections 5.6.1-5.6.3 next). This is similar to findings reported in recent classroom discourse research (*c.f.* Hosoda and Aline, 2013) where it was established that when the selected participant (student) does not respond to a question, the party who asked (i.e. the teacher) tends to pursue the response in various ways. In line with Long (1987), Ellis (1994:583) maintained that these modifications, which show the distinction between classroom language and that of the street, reflect “the special

characteristics of classroom settings - in particular the need to maintain orderly communication”, and are common in two-way classroom interaction exchange.

5.6.1 Modifying an Unanswered Question at the Word or Sentence Level

Of the modifications teachers used in my data, the most frequent modification (see table 5.4) was that of modifying the original question at the word or sentence level through repetition and/or paraphrasing. This was a prevalent teacher practice, within my corpus, regardless of the class pedagogic focus (e.g. grammar, reading, etc.), and it interestingly demonstrates teachers' ability to adapt to circumstances within the classroom discourse. Consider, for example, the following excerpt which comes from the second half of a reading-oriented lesson in EFL-C 7:

Excerpt (19)

241 T: Okay now number five
 242 ((looks at a timetable shown on the board))
 243 Tom has Art then History True ↑ or false ↑?
 244 SS: ((Silence))
 245 T: Tom has Art then he has History
 246 True ↑ or false ↑?
 247 S1: Erm True
 248 S2: Teacher true
 249 T: Good
 250 ((Points to the table on the board)) because first this is Art and
 251 then this is History

The discourse in this excerpt took place whilst T and his students were engaged in a short in-class 'specialised' activity which considers reading and interpreting course timetables. Here, T initiates the discourse with the transition discourse marker 'okay now' which according to Walsh (2006) functions to obtain students' attention as well as progressing to another activity, as in this excerpt and similar to functions 'okay', 'alright', and 'well' served. The utterance T directs towards the entire class ("Okay now number five", line 241) communicates a message to the class to do the fifth point in the ongoing activity (interpreting course timetables). In line 243, T gives his own

interpretation of Tom's timetable and follows this up with an upwardly-articulated either-or question ("True ↑ or false? ↑", line 243). By this, T may well be expecting an unidentified student, or perhaps the entire class, to answer. The fact that students (see the gap of silence¹¹⁶ at line 244) do not bid for answers, together with their gazes at T and the timetable shown on the board might have made T realise that his previous turn did not make sense. According to Egbert *et al.* (2004:183), silence builds up "interactional pressure" on the teacher "to do something" to end it. Thus, after T's initial question fails to receive a response, he uses an exact verbatim repetition of the same question ("True ↑ or false?"↑, line 246) which succeeds in eliciting a response from the students (S1, line 247 - and S2, line 248). These responses are positively evaluated by T ("Good", line 249) who, using the board as a visual aid, explains why 'true' was the correct choice (lines 249-250) by initiating his turn with a logical connector 'because' followed by information from Tom's timetable ("First this is Art and then this is History", lines 250-251).

A similar question modification pattern example appeared in the first part of a communication-based lesson in EFL-C 5 (see excerpt 20 below). This excerpt demonstrates how the repetition of an entire question is successfully utilised by T as a way of eliciting a response from the students:

Excerpt (20)

- 51 T: So how many times have you moved Khaled?
 52 S1: No
 53 T: What do you mean no?
 54 How many times have you moved? I asked
 55 S1: You mean change house teacher
 56 T: Yes moving home
 57 S1: Two times
 58 T: Okay I see
 59 S1: I was living in Quba and now I live in Aziziza

¹¹⁶ In this study, a gap refers to "silence after a completion point" whilst a pause refers to silence *within* a turn (Sacks *et al.*, 1974:715).

Prior to this excerpt, T and S1 were engaged in a discussion about a residence location in Medina (see excerpt 2 in 5.3 above). In this excerpt, T directs a closed question (line 51) to S1 to elicit information on how many times he moved home. As shown in line 52, S1's slot in the ongoing QAC is limited to the negative response token 'no'. Looking at his turn, it is unclear at this point whether S1 has never moved home or is simply displaying that he is lacking access to the relevant knowledge that the teacher is seeking in line 51. With his open question ("What do you mean no?", line 53), T however seems not to assent to S1's answer or is perhaps indicating surprise towards his response. Thus, T repeats the entire question once again and reinforces it with the statement ("I asked", line 54). We notice that by repeating the same question, T is urging S1 to generate the right answer. It could also suggest that T may have thought that his question (line 51) is sufficiently comprehensible and thus it does not need rephrasing. As seen in S1's turn (lines 55-57), he commences to make sense of S1's question and thus offers a response. Interestingly, S1's responses are then followed by further talk, that may well have been prompted by T's utterance ("Okay I see", line 58) linked to the same topic (*c.f.* line 59).

Another frequent modification strategy found in this study's corpus was the rewording or paraphrasing of a teacher's unanswered question; a practice that suggests teachers think this sort of question modification is required for reasons of comprehensibility. The occurrences of this modification strategy were evident when teachers made changes but maintained the meanings of the questions (see excerpt 21 below).

Excerpt (21)

104 T: Now we can summarise the story of David and Sarah
 105 At the beginning of the story, what was the problem?
 106 SS: ((silence)) (5.0)
 107 T: *Shabab* ↑ 'guys'
 108 What was the difficulty do you think?
 109 S1: Yes Teacher
 110 T: *Ha* 'go ahead' Tariq
 111 S1: Making good friends
 112 erm difficult

113 T: Good Tariq ↑
114 The difficulty of making good friends

This excerpt derives from an activity that took place halfway through a reading-based lesson at EFL-C 7 whereby T and his students were engaged in a read-together-story summarisation activity. The excerpt is initiated by T using the transitional marker ‘now’ (line 104) which functions, as in this excerpt, to focus students’ attention as well as to indicate the beginning or end of a lesson stage (Walsh, 2006). Following this, in the same line, T communicates to the class that it was time to summarise the story of the reading text. This is perhaps to proceed to the next reading passage. The QAC exchange itself is opened, as with many other instances in my corpus, with a closed wh-question directed towards the entire class. Met with a 5-second silence which indicates that students are not ready to respond or that they are passing the floor, T’s question is duly paraphrased in two ways: a) with the replacement of ‘problem’ by ‘difficulty’, and b) with the inclusion of the phrase ‘do you think’ (see line 108) prior to which T, similar to EFL-C 4’s T (*cf.* excerpt 5), utters the address form ‘shabab’ the Arabic equivalent of ‘guys’ with a rising intonation to stimulate responses.

The above question modification is significant for our analyses in many ways. Compare, for instance, these alternative ways of asking the same question: (“At the beginning of the story, what was the problem?”, line 105), and (“What was the difficulty do you think?”, line 108). The first question, which is indeed typical to QAC discourse within my corpus, is more direct and more likely to be face-threatening as it implies the existence of one correct response. The second question, however, is arguably less face-threatening and manifests a successful way of question modification in view of the fact that it offers the option ‘do you think’ (Lakoff, 2004). Clark and Graves (2005:572) described this practice (i.e. question paraphrasing) as a process of eliciting discourse through

“moment-to-moment verbal scaffolding”¹¹⁷. Once an answer is given over the course of lines 111-112, T provides an immediate, explicit positive evaluation with an emphasis on the word ‘good’, before he rebroadcasts the offered response (“The difficulty of making good friends”, line 114). This reformulation of S1’s utterance by T (in line 114) represents what researchers such as Long (1998) and Markee (2000) referred to as ‘corrective recast’. According to Long (ibid.), “corrective recasts are responses which incidentally reformulate all or part of a learner’s utterance, thus providing relevant morphosyntactic information that was obligatory but was either missing or wrongly supplied in the learner’s rendition, while retaining its central meaning” (p.358). Lyster (1998) also added that teachers sometimes use recasts to treat errors in learners’ utterances as a form of ‘implicit’ corrective feedback. Of interest to our analyses too, Lynch (1996) amongst other scholars (e.g. Tardif, 1994), identified teachers’ reformulation of a learner’s utterance as an effective feature of teacher interaction modification practices.

The next QAC exchange, an excerpt from the transcription of EFL-C 1, presented a further example of teachers’ question modification practices. Once students were seated at the beginning of the class, T engaged in the following discourse with a student who was absent in a previous class:

Excerpt (22)

- 11 T: ((Looks at S1)) okay Ammar
 12 you were absent yesterday, right?
 13 S1: ((No response))
 14 T: Erm you were absent yesterday ↑
 15 absent
 16 You were not here yesterday? Right?
 17 S1: ((Nods his head)) yes teacher
 18 T: Alright. No more absence Ammar
 19 S1: ((Nods his head again)) *Tayyeb* ‘okay’

The above excerpt is initiated with T looking at S1 and asking him a display question about his absence. It is clear from the structure of T’s turn in

¹¹⁷ According to Walsh (2006:120), “the term scaffolding describes the ways in which teachers provide learners with linguistic ‘props’ to help self-expression”.

line 12 that he was aware that S1 was absent, however he may have wished to engage him more in the ongoing interaction (note the use of S1's name in line 11). In the subsequent turn, S1's silence in line 12 could be interpreted in two ways. First, it may well indicate that S1 does not have a reasonable excuse for his absence. Second, it signals to T that he does not perhaps understand the question (asked in line 12) on account of the troublesome lexical item 'absent' in T's turn as can be seen next. T then proceeds to clarify his initial elicitation by repeating it first with a rising intonation, then extracting the word 'absent' from the original utterance to make it more salient, and eventually paraphrasing his question ("You were not here yesterday? Right?", line 15). Here, T rewords the original question by using 'not here' to substitute 'absent' presumably as the former would be more understandable to S1. This practice has also successfully ensured (*c.f.* the subsequent talk – line 17) that the potential for further confusion on the part of S1 is terminated. In addition, the head nodding of S1 (lines 17 and 19) which was in a downward motion, together with his utterances, suggest that he is displaying his understanding of the ongoing interaction from different perspectives.

The above findings on teachers' question modifications at the word or sentence level is in line with that of McHoul (1990) and Mercer (1995) who described this practice as "cued elicitation" (Mercer, *ibid.*:26) and argued that through the rewording of a question in a certain way, teachers can "lead students to correct answers by 'small steps'" (McHoul, *ibid.*:355). In other words, this teacher's question modification is indeed a way of getting a student response whilst also ensuring that the topic does not go cold. In addition, teachers' practices in the four excerpts illustrated above corroborated the findings of Long and Sato (1983), Tardif (1994) and Lynch (1996) who declared that the expansion of teachers' questions is frequently used in language teachers' discourse modifications.

5.6.2 Modifying an Unanswered Question through Student Nomination Practices

This is a further technique associated with teachers' question modification which involved an alternation in students' nomination practices. In other words, as the data shows, whilst students sometimes nominated themselves to offer an answer (see excerpt 2 for instance), the majority of questions asked at the observed EFL classes were generally addressed to the whole class rather than to individual student(s). A reconsideration of teacher's nomination practice has been found significant to the ongoing discourse in recent classroom discourse studies (e.g. Hosoda and Aline, 2013) in the sense that with their names being called, students may well realise their roles as the assigned agents since having been provided with a turn allocation, and thus may henceforth hold the floor¹¹⁸. In my data, this practice which was typical of the eight observed classes was successful in breaking students' silence and eliciting a student response. Consider, for instance, the following excerpt which comes from half-way through a reading-based lesson at EFL-C 8:

Excerpt (23)

- 121 T: I need it now
 122 Who can give me an indirect question?
 123 SS: ((Silence)) (4.0)
 124 Yalla 'come on'
 125 ((Gazes at S1)) Hasan
 126 Can you give me an indirect question?
 127 S1: Erm
 128 Do you know what time the bank closes?
 129 T: Good Hasan
 130 Do you know what time the bank closes?
 131 Yeah
 132 Okay let us move on now ((Looks at the screen))

¹¹⁸ However, this practice may not always achieve its end successfully. That is, articulating students' names does not necessarily mean that they will give an answer, and hence this may leave such students embarrassed if they do not respond, or if they do but are wrong.

It is obvious from T's turn in lines (121-122) in the above excerpt that he explicitly exercises his power as reflected in his slot of the QAC directed towards the entire class ("I need it now. Who can give me an indirect question?"). However, following a 4-second silence lapse¹¹⁹ during which there was no self-selection on the part of the students, T duly uses an 'individual nomination' (Mehan, 1979) at lines 125-126 to bring Hasan into the interaction. The problem of not obtaining a response (line 123) was resolved by calling 'Hasan'¹²⁰. Closely examined, this modification technique elicited a response without inserting a syntactic intervention into the teacher's original question. Observe, for instance, T's question in line 122 which was addressed to the entire class ("Who can give me an indirect question?"), and then consider his question addressed to S1 ("Can you give me an indirect question?", line 126).

In addition, articulating a student's name to answer or to encourage him to respond to a question or attempt an answer proved effective in this questioning episode. The orientation towards this nomination technique was revealed not only through recorded classroom data but also in students' reported perspectives as regards teachers' classroom questioning (see 4.3). In response to questionnaire item no. 6 ("Over the span of the class, do you feel more willing to answer a teacher's questions about the L2 when other students also answer?"), 76.6% of the 341 participating students (both male and female) agreed.

A concluding point to make about the above excerpt is that in the stimulated recall interview when I asked the teacher of EFL-C 8 about the rationale behind his partial focus¹²¹ in the above QAC excerpt on a purely grammatical issue as the lesson's focus was on reading. He reported that what

¹¹⁹ A lapse is defined as an extended silence which lasts 3 seconds or more (McLaughlin and Code, 1982:301).

¹²⁰ This could make 'Hasan' significant in some ways.

¹²¹ This is given that students need first to understand question, then know what an 'indirect question' is, and lastly be able to provide one. Therefore, the focus is partly on a grammar knowledge issue whilst also requiring other kinds of knowledge as well.

triggered his focus on grammar is when certain grammatical features surface in the discourse that he thought would need elucidation. He also added that he was aware that his students had been taught the grammar of 'direct and indirect questions' at another ELC class, and that he wanted, by means of questions, to draw on students' prior knowledge. If this proved evident in other classes within my corpus, it could count in my analyses as a function of teachers' questions. It is, however, informative for further research to establish if and how EFL teachers use students' knowledge as a resource in their questioning practices.

Articulating students' names was also evident in the middle of EFL-C 6 when T identified a particular student to answer a question to which the students had not offered a response. The following excerpt, in which this beginner class was working on a story summarisation activity, illustrates when and how T assigned which student to answer his question:

Excerpt (24)

101	T:	What happened then?
102	SS:	((Silence))
103	T:	<i>Meen</i> 'who'?
104		Tell me what happened then?
105		Fadi ↑ Ali ↑
106	SS:	((Some raise their hands and look at T)) Teacher teacher
107	T:	Come on Fadi tell me what happened?
108	S1:	Then David moved to a new place
109	T:	Good
110		Alright

In the above extract, T attempts to elicit responses from the students, however once again there is only silence on the part of the class. In his elicitation, T uses four stages/parts to the question with a shift in form and length each time. He first uses an open wh-question (line 101), then as it is faced with students' silence, he uses 'Meen' the Arabic equivalent of the English question word 'who' perhaps to stimulate student contributions by further cueing them that he is asking for someone to respond. Following this, T also uses another question ("Tell me what happened then?", line 104). To break

the silence, T is also extending his turn here with articulating the names of some students randomly¹²² (line 105). It is apparent at this point that T is hoping for a quick response from the students. With hand-raising and looking at T, students in line 105 bid for answers. Here, T selects S1 'Fadi' to respond and further cue him, perhaps to lessen the face-threatening of his asked question, with the utterance ("tell me what happened?", line 107). According to Cazden (2001), a feature of the L2 classroom milieu is that teachers control who may participate and when. S1's response (line 107) is then positively evaluated by T who at this point marks the close of the ongoing QAC with the use of the discourse marker 'alright'.

5.6.3 Modifying an Unanswered Question through Question Reframing

The third, and final, aspect of teachers' question modifications which could be derived from the discourse analysis of this study's corpus is the use of reframing to a teacher's unanswered question. This modification technique was evident in observed teachers' practices in the form of statements with a "personal contribution" (Wood, 1992) were used to modify an unanswered question. According to Wood (ibid.), through this kind of statement the teacher shares his interpretation of a student's response to which the student has the option to accept or reject with a space for elaboration rather than briefly answering a posed question. The following excerpt from EFL-C 4 exemplifies this discourse:

Excerpt (25)

151	T:	Say it communicative
152	SS:	communicative
		((Lines omitted – T practises the pronunciation of 'communicative' with SS two more times))
153	S1:	((Raises his hand)) Teacher
154		What does it mean?

¹²² Or perhaps deliberately if T is picking up students who may be able to answer; an aspect of the classroom discourse the researcher could not establish particularly with the unavailability of EFL-C 6's T for an interview.

-
- 155 T: ((T looks at other SS)) *shabab* 'guys' What does it mean?
 156 Anyone knows?
 157 If someone is communicative I think he or she can
 158 communicate
 159 S2: Erm ↑
 170 Is it that someone is easy to talk to?
 171 T: ((Nods his head)) Yeah
 172 Very good Abady *shokran* 'thank you'

Taking place at the middle of this communication-based lesson, T and his students are reviewing a list of vocabulary words. In this excerpt, the class were considering 'communicative' a term which the above QAC exchange is centred around. Although S1 is evidently addressing his question (line 154) to T, he changes his eye gaze and body position towards another row of students in the hope that one of them might offer a response ("Shabab 'guys' What does it mean? Anyone knows?", line 155). Subsequent to two successive bid invitations used by T (lines 156-157), he then modifies these unanswered questions into the form of a personal contribution statement ("If someone is communicative I think he or she can communicate", line 158) to perhaps express an opinion or simply guide the students, in a structural manner, towards the answer whilst not directly providing an answer nor another question. Following this, S2 bids for an answer and makes a contribution in the form of a tag question ("Is it that someone is easy to talk to?", line 170) with which T concurs and provides the token 'yeah' and does head nodding, two resources commonly undertaken to show agreement with the teller's stance (Stivers, 2008:47). In addition, by means of the statement uttered in line 158, T clearly reduces the confrontational effects the question might have and engaged the students (*cf.* S2, line 159-160) in the discussion allowing for an extension of his utterance in line 158.

In the next excerpt which comes from halfway through a grammar-based lesson at EFL-C 2, a similar pattern of teacher's question modification is evident. Here, the students were divided into groups and were practising (with the help of the teacher) the structure 'Do you have?' for conversing about a schedule. Prior to the beginning of this activity, T stressed that students should speak

loudly and reiterated that they could only choose from two grammatical forms for answering this question ('yes, I do' or 'no, I do not'). At the beginning of this activity, T noted that one of the answers a student has uttered during group work is different from the structure under practice to the class is now reviewing the answers:

Excerpt (26)

- 93 S1: Do you have IT skills with Mr Adnan?
94 S2: Yes I have got



- 95 T: *Lahtha shabab* 'one second guys'
96 Say again
97 ((Both S1 and S2 look at T))
98 S1: Do you have IT skills with Mr Adnan?
99 S2: Yes
100 T: Yes I have got or yes
101 SS: ((Silence))
102 T: I think it is none of them
103 S3: ((Raises his hand)) Teacher
104 Yes I do
105 T: Good Hussein
106 S2: ((Nods his head))
107 Okay let us move on

In this excerpt, the QAC exchange is student-initiated apparently in accordance with the ongoing activity. After correctly producing the question form studied (line 93) on the part of S1, S2's response (line 94) was not in line with the grammatical pattern T had already presented. The trouble source in S2's response is the absence of the auxiliary verb, sometimes also referred to

as 'helping verb' or 'helper verb', 'do'¹²³ as well as the production of a different grammatical structure to that practised (*c.f.* line 94, "Yes I have got"). As T halts the students' discourse ("*Lahtha shabab* 'one second guys'", line 95), both S1 and S2 shift their eye gaze towards T who was then producing a procedural turn ("Say again", line 96). Here, S1 produces his slot correctly once again but S2, who seemed cautious about his output, utters the affirmative 'yes'. Here, T directs his talk to the class and repeats both of S1's responses ("Yes I have got or yes", line 100), however his turn is faced with student silence. He then uses the question modification strategy discussed in this section and utters ("I think it is none of them", line 102). In response, S3 self-selects himself by means of hand-raising and produces the correct grammatical structure ("Yes I do", line 104). After S2 nods in confirmation, the excerpt culminates with T moving the activity forward ("Okay let us move on", line 107). A further point to make about the above excerpt is that whilst the activity under consideration might look quite mechanical, it was not possible to establish if it reflected T's pedagogical purpose given that this teacher was not available for an interview.

5.7 Summary of Teachers' Question Modifications

It has been documented thus far, that the discursive practice of question modifications is utilised when addressing students' idiosyncratic discourse as reflected in silence (excerpts 19-25) or misplaced/incorrect output (excerpt 26). Examples such as the excerpts above clearly show that question modification following a teacher's unanswered question can take different forms (see figure 5.4 on the next page) which all serve, as revealed through our EFL classroom data, as a kind of post-explanation or expansion of the teacher's original question.

¹²³ Auxiliary verbs, e.g. 'do' and 'does', can also become main verbs once used in isolation.

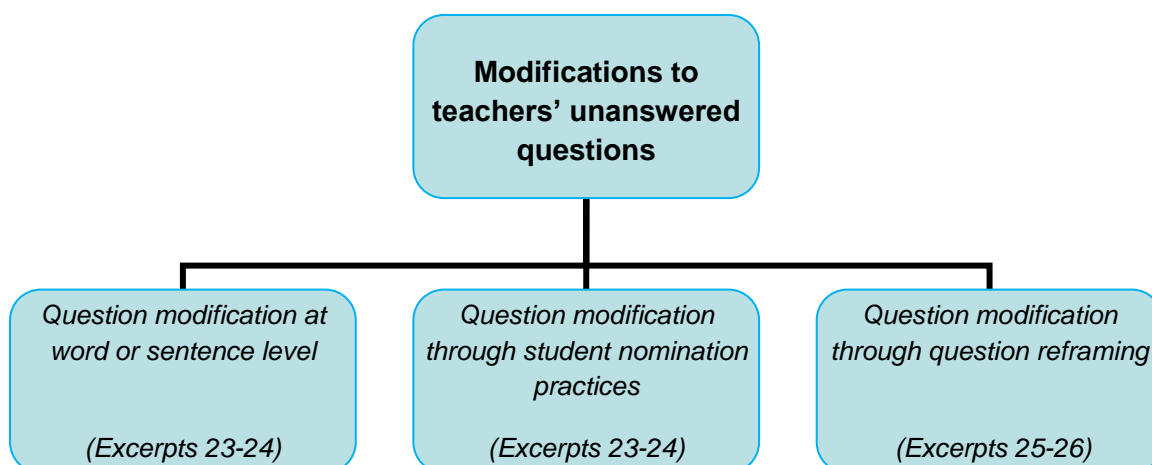


Figure 5.4: Modifications to teachers' questions

Table 5.6 below presents a quantitative account of the teachers' question modifications discussed thus far.

Teachers' Modifications to Unanswered Questions	Observed Frequency
Modifying an unanswered question at the word or sentence level	29
Modifying an unanswered question through student nomination practices	23
Modifying an unanswered question through question reframing	16
Total	68

Table 5.6: Frequency of teachers' question modifications

The above table shows that, overall, teachers' modification of unanswered questions at the word or sentence level was the most frequently occurring question modification in the observed EFL classroom discourse, with a total of 29 occurrences (42.6% of the total modification frequencies). This is followed in popularity by 'teachers' nomination practices', with a total of 23 occurrences, and 'teachers' reframing of unanswered questions', comprising a total of 16 occurrences. These quantifications suggest, in so far as generalisations can be made at all

here with such relatively small figures, that: a) a greater significance is attached to modifying an unanswered question at the word or sentence level, a practice (if deployed deliberately) would align with our EFL students' L2 proficiency level, or b) this question modification technique may promote accuracy of form over content, a common practice priority observed within the current study's corpus (*c.f.* excerpt 1).

The modifications presented and discussed thus far show that the observed teachers had, to an extent, skilfully used different kinds of exchange structures in their lessons (Cazden, 2001; Dillon, 1988). It was, however, interesting to determine in the stimulated recall interviews that this practice had emerged spontaneously, or perhaps as an outcome of teachers' experience given that teachers with the passage of time can learn or acquire such skills, on account of teachers' report on unconsciously using these alternatives. If this was not the case (i.e. if question modifications observed were used deliberately to bring about intended learning outcomes), the real value to learning can be estimated and the potential for them becoming interactional strategies may well be feasible.

By contrast to our male teachers, it was interesting to note in their interviews that the four participating female teachers were of the opinion illustrated by FT-2's comment: "Sometimes, I get few or no responses from the students. I do not want to leave the question hanging, so I repeat the question or simplify it to get students to answer". Another interesting opinion was also expressed by FT-3 who said: "I harp on the fact that students are here to learn; therefore when one of my questions is not answered I immediately shift to the class and build on the answers given". As stipulated throughout her interview, FT-3 reported further on the importance of promoting the student voice in classroom interaction and added that "students and the teacher are equally important to the construction of interaction".

By and large, the question modifications identified thus far (either through observed male classroom discourse or through reported female teachers'

practices) could be viewed as ‘scaffolding’ discourse interventions which teachers apparently used (or reported using) to help students engage in the discourse. This aligns with the assertions made by researchers, such as McCormick and Donato (2000) and Hall and Walsh (2002), for the need for using teacher questions as dynamic discursive tools in order to build collaboration and scaffold comprehension through engaging students in the discourse. By this, the image that emerges is that teachers and students, although roles differ, are sharers in the construction of classroom discourse. The above findings on teachers’ question modifications are congruent with results reported by discourse analysts, such as Hsu (2001) and Verplaetse (2000), that teacher questioning functions as a form of scaffolded assistance that helps smooth the flow of the discourse in the foreign language classroom and scaffolding learners’ language performance. This, however, raises the argument that soliciting student answers via teachers’ questioning should not be viewed as an end in itself, rather as a means to an end through which teachers’ pedagogical support helps create language learning opportunities.

Walsh (2006) aptly put forward the following questions which indeed constitute an interesting follow-up to the current research: a) are some types of modifications more conducive to learning than others?, and b) do some types of modification hinder students’ comprehension? (p.14). In addition, revealing the different modifications of teachers’ questions thus far may well have implications for the concept of L2 ‘Classroom Interactional Competence’ developed by Walsh (2006, 2011), particularly vis-à-vis the observed effect of teachers’ talk on students’ participation in the classroom discourse milieu. According to Walsh (ibid.:131) “the ability to ask questions, to refine and adjust those questions and to clarify for learners is central to the notion of Classroom Interactional Competence”¹²⁴ (see 6.4 for a detailed account of this study’s implications).

¹²⁴ This notion, referred to by Walsh (ibid.) as ‘CIC’, “recognises that there are many factors that combine to produce interaction which is conducive to learning” (Walsh, 2006:130). These factors are (a) maximising interactional space; (b) shaping learner contributions (seeking clarification, scaffolding, modelling, or repairing learner input); (c) effective use of eliciting; (d) instructional idiolect (i.e. a teacher’s speech habits); and (e) interactional awareness.

5.8 Chapter Summary

In summary, the above-discussed data documented a range of ways by which EFL teachers at Taibah University's ELC practises classroom questioning in their classes, and how teachers view or explain these. In terms of their discursive features, questions could indeed serve a multitude of functions. Researchers (e.g. König and Siemund, 2007) claimed that questions are primarily concerned with obtaining or evaluating learners' L2 knowledge, perhaps as a means to enhance this knowledge further. Whilst this was noted in this study's corpus (see for instance 5.3.2 and 5.3.3 above), questions within my data set were also concerned with other kinds of classroom interactional actions (e.g. inviting student guesses, managing classroom practices, etc.). In general, considering the different functions of teachers' questioning as illustrated in this chapter, one is indeed led to wonder about the complex nature classroom questions could present. This is clearly because in asking a question, EFL teachers may well not only obtain information or communicate an experience or an event, but also impose their influence or that of the students on the ongoing discourse. This led me to seek to capture closely the functions of, and modifications to, teachers' questions as much as the data permitted. This study duly asserts that it may well not be sufficient to look at the structure or type of question merely (*cf.* Shomoossi, 2004; Farahian and Rezaee, 2012; Al-sobh *et al.*, 2013); instead, it can be more helpful if a research study inquires how the question, as it is or modified, functions within the stream of classroom discourse, as was the case in the current study.

To conclude, although questioning forms only one part of what is contained under the umbrella of EFL learning and teaching processes, it is indeed (according to the data) a widely used and influential discourse feature in the EFL classroom. Also, teachers' questions, as recorded in the present study, have an influence on the classroom discourse as manifested in the questioning functions and question modification documented. One can duly accept Hunkins's (1995:4) call for "[a] shift from viewing questions as devices by which one evaluates the specifics of learning to conceptualizing questions as a means

of actively processing, thinking about, and using information productively”. Lastly, having collated students’ perspectives of classroom questioning (Chapter 4), as well as observing the classrooms where this questioning discourse was undertaken and considering teachers’ related views (this chapter), this study hopes to have established an understanding of the notion of questioning within the Saudi EFL classroom discourse.

A summary of this study’s key findings, together with an account of the study’s limitations, implications and proposals for future research endeavours are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This is the final chapter of the current study. In the two previous chapters (i.e. Chapters 4 and 5), the findings of the present study were discussed from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives respectively. To begin with, in this closing chapter, a brief summary of the study and its key findings is presented. Then, an overview of the contributions and implications of the present research is depicted. Following this, the study limitations and its suggestions for future research are discussed. This chapter concludes with the researcher's overall reflection on the study.

6.2 Summary of the Study

This section gives a rough overview of the previous chapters in order for the reader to gain a general understanding of the whole thesis and what has been presented thus far. The aim of the study was to bring about an understanding of aspects pertaining to classroom questioning practice as perceived and undertaken by Saudi male and female students and teachers in an EFL university-classroom context. To accomplish this, the study set out to explore tentative answers to the following questions: 1) How do the Saudi EFL university students perceive the classroom questioning practice in their classes?; 2) What are some of the functions of teachers' questioning practice in the Saudi EFL university classroom?; and 3) What modifications (if any) do Saudi EFL teachers employ in instances where students do not answer?

Following the review of the relevant literature and the description of the study's methodology and context, this study commenced by examining the perceptions held by Saudi EFL students at Taibah University's ELC towards some aspects of their and their teachers' classroom questioning. With the intention of obtaining a broad spectrum of students' views, the study involved as large a sample as possible. A considerable number of respondents (n= 341, 147 females and 194 males) took part in this phase of the study. This data is based on the study's questionnaire (see a copy in Appendix C). SPSS was used to analyse the numerical data gathered (see 4.1).

One of the significant findings which emerged from this data is that most male and female students surveyed asserted their belief in the communicative potential of teachers' questions in the EFL classroom. The quote (cited in 4.5) of a male student's comment demonstrated this belief: "Teachers' questions are most of the time helpful because some information is interesting for me. Also, the most helpful thing is that I usually learn new things in question-answer routines". However, participating students had endorsed concerns or challenges that might influence their responding behaviour such as the wait-time teachers allocate, their perceived lack of English proficiency, attitudes towards teachers' nomination practices, and perception of the teacher's role in the questioning practice as being responsible for prompting students' answers and handling questions asked throughout the classroom discourse (see numerical accounts in 4.5 and 4.7). Similar findings, albeit research data collection instruments may vary, were established by researchers (e.g. Hu, 2004; Shamoossi, 2004; Chang, 2009; McNeil, 2010). According to these researchers, EFL students' level of L2 proficiency tends to play an important role in how they ask, and respond to, questions in the L2 classroom discourse, the wait-time in EFL classroom discourse is significant to students' verbal participation and, if utilised injudiciously, it can negatively affect students' verbal productivity. At this stage, I believe that the issue of to what extent the aforementioned student concerns are put into practice by the teachers at the ELC arises. To resolve this issue, questioning strategies used by teachers in this study (either reported or observed) could come into force. However, if the issue remains unresolved, the

student concerns quoted above should be put forward for close consideration in the professional development seminars held quarterly in the study target context. According to Johnson (1995:3), “if teachers understand how the dynamics of classroom communication influence L2 students’ perceptions of, and participation in, classroom activities they may be better able to monitor and adjust the patterns of classroom communication in order to create an environment that is conducive to both classroom learning and L2 acquisition”.

Furthermore, the surveyed students had varied perceptions that were statistically significant in terms of students’ gender. T-test inferential statistics showed that male students were more satisfied than females with the helpfulness of their teachers’ questions in classroom L2 discussion. In addition, t-test results revealed that male students, more so than females, expressed more endorsements on teachers’ use of Arabic in the classroom questioning routines. These findings interestingly matched teachers’ practices in the observed male classes (n=8) whereby teachers’ questions served a number of functions (see 5.3) and Arabic was used, to achieve a variety of functions, in teachers’ questioning practices (see for instance excerpt 5). Further inferential statistics have shown that female students tended, more so than their male peers, not to respond to their teachers’ questions when believing their answers may be incorrect. This result lends strong support to the findings of researchers, such as Horwitz (1986, 1987); Young (1991); Tsui (1996); and Hilleson (1996), which established that one of the inhabitant factors to students discourse in the language classroom is a ‘fear of making mistakes’. However, considering the percentage of students (50%) endorsing this issue, this study stresses that our female EFL teachers should address this concern and perhaps further encourage student talk by, for instance, establishing in them positive attitudes toward speaking errors. For instance, teachers can explicitly inform students that making errors whilst speaking in class is acceptable not only because ‘everyone makes mistakes’, but also because this is part of the experience of learning a foreign language. Statistical significance tests revealed through the t-test showed that female students believed, more than males, that they should always be prompted by their teacher before they answered. This finding

concur with research findings into EFL classroom questioning (e.g. Wu, 1991; Liu and Littlewood, 1997; and Chang, 2009) whereby it was noted that EFL students tended to wait to be called upon before answering. It also indicates an unstated rule in the Saudi EFL classroom, particularly that of the females, which students appear to follow: “You should not answer teachers’ questions voluntarily; instead, wait until prompted to do so”. To conclude, I believe that in spite of the statistical-significance variances within students’ reported perspectives or the coherence of these with teachers’ practices, what matters is that these student perceptions are taken into consideration if teachers’ classroom questioning practices are to be more appropriate to meet students’ needs and preferences.

The second phase of this study concerned the investigation of teachers’ practices, and related views, of classroom questioning. As decades of research by Dillon (1984, 1990, 2007), Cazden (2001), Walsh (2002, 2006, 2011), and others have demonstrated, extensive use of teachers’ questioning characterises almost any classroom setting. The EFL classes in this study were no different as teachers’ questioning was indeed a prevalent move in each classroom’s discourse (see 5.3 and 5.6). The current study has also identified, by means of discourse analysis of teacher-student turns at the exchange level, a set of functions of teacher questions, some of which concur with previous research, was identified. For instance, questions in the current study’s discourse data were asked to encourage student talk (see 5.3.1), repair communication breakdown (see 5.3.3) and invite students’ guesses (see 5.3.4). Researchers, such as Walsh and Sattes (2005) and Rullan-Millare (1996), concluded that in addition to verbally assessing students’ learning and L2 knowledge, teacher questions invite students to participate in verbal interchange. Recent research (e.g. Dalton-Puffer, 2007) has also reported that teacher questions function in signalling and/or preventing communication breakdowns, and thus creating opportunities for L2 learning (*cf.* Long, 1996). Added to this, and in accordance with Dunphy and Dunphy (2003), questions asked within our data set fall into the two question categories which Dunphy and Dunphy drew attention to; “questions that assess and questions that assist”

(ibid.:52). Broadly, these two question functions were evident within the current study's corpus (see for instance excerpts 5 and 8 in 5.3 for both functions respectively). Other teacher question functions were also discussed over the course of this study (see sections 5.3.1 to 5.3.7).

In addition to the above, the findings of the current study on teachers' question modifications (see 5.5) parallel what Cummins (2000:72) referred to as "contextual support". According to Cummins (ibid.:72-73), the external dimension of contextual support includes input that facilitates learners' comprehension or the language that is "easier to understand". The aforementioned findings also meet Hammonds's (2001) assertion that English language learners need meaningful support, regardless of channels of communication. This support, as this study argues, has been provided, at least partly, by means of teachers' use of question modifications (see excerpts 19-26). In addition, the above findings show a strong connection with Kleifgen (1988). In his study of English language students, Kleifgen (ibid.) concluded that students' and teachers' failure to communicate was resolved with language modification techniques. Furthermore, these findings support Cazden's (2001) conclusion from French and McClure's (1981) study (cited in Cazden, 2001:110), that teachers deal with two strategies concerning questioning, pre-formulating and re-formulating. Whilst pre-formulating relates to prefacing the question by giving leading information to orient the students to the core question, re-formulation involves easing and simplifying the original question after it has been uttered. Both strategies were evident in the questioning practices of the Saudi EFL teachers in this study used (see 5.5.). To summarise, this study argues that modifying the teacher questions will naturally improve the interactivity between students and teachers. According to Myhill (2003:368) interactive teaching is not "simply about participation and response levels [...] it is about engaging learners in learning and thinking".

The study also revealed further interesting findings within its interview data in the sense that the kind of opinions that our EFL teachers expressed were strikingly similar. Of particular significance were: (1) the high number of

instances during the interviews whereby teachers (both male and female) spontaneously referred to questioning and the progress of classroom discourse as being interdependent; (2) the range of functions that these teachers attributed to their classroom questioning; and (3) the modifications to unanswered questions during the classroom interaction which were considered by female teachers as undeniably helpful and as necessary aspects of classroom discourse. However, it is worth noting that whilst in most observed male classes, teachers' stated beliefs vis-à-vis classroom discourse concurred with their practices, the establishment of this coherence (if it exists) within female participants was not possible as their classes were not observed (see an account of the study limitations in 6.5). However, the examination of coherence between teachers' views and practices is beyond the scope of the current study¹²⁵ which has adopted an approach that views the two as complementary sources of information leading to a more balanced view of question-asking occurrences in the Saudi EFL classrooms.

A further interesting finding that emerged from the study interviews is that, despite being observed as an inevitable discursive action in our male classes, the use of students' L1 in classroom question-answer routines was not considered appropriate by female teacher interviewees involved (see representative quotes in 4.6). This finding, which should be the subject of future research within Taibah University's ELC to examine its underlying reasons, contradicts previous EFL classroom research. Ramos (2005), for instance, examined teachers' opinions on communicating with English language learners in their native language and reported that teachers supported using students' L1 to promote the classroom discourse. In other words, these teachers believed that students' L1 serve as a "cushion that facilitated the process of communication and language learning" (Ramos, *ibid.*:423). Furthermore, Taha (2013) reported, in a study of Syrian EFL students, that using students' L1 (Arabic) was perceived by teachers as a useful pedagogic tool achieving a

¹²⁵ This is not meant to imply that investigating the harmony (if any) between what teachers say they do or believe and what they actually do in the language classroom discourse is not important. Instead, it presents a very promising area of investigation (*cf.* Borg 2003; Li and Walsh, 2011) and it is indeed one of this study's suggestions for further research (see 6.6).

number of functions, e.g. dealing with procedural troubles and a lack of responses in English. Cook (2007:399) also argued that learners who are forbidden to use their first language are “disempowered, infantilised, frustrated, deprived of their identity and knowledge”. Therefore, in order that the participating female teachers do not shoulder such responsibility, and perhaps enhance the classroom discourse by making use of the learners’ linguistic and cultural backgrounds and meet their students’ perceptions on the importance of L1 use (see 4.5), it is necessary to strike a correct balance between the two languages. This could be undertaken by, for example, welcoming students’ responses in their language of choice and then judiciously increasing the English ‘injection’. Atkinson (1987:244) referred to this practice as “the judicious’ use of L1”.

6.3 Contributions of the Study

As established in its first two chapters, this study was prompted by the paucity of research into classroom questioning in Saudi EFL classes. The main idea was to explore the students’ views and teachers’ practices, and related views, on an aspect of classroom discourse which (as the data suggested) they intuitively knew about, but which they rarely reflected upon or discussed. In addition, this study was carried out in an area of scarce research, and where issues of access are very complicated due to cultural and social restrictions, especially on females of this society (see 1.5 and 6.5). Although it does not claim to be comprehensive, the present study attempted, by integrating multiple methods, to study various aspects of this discursive practice (questioning) in order to gain a deeper understanding of both how it is perceived and practised. Therefore, this study contributes to the field of theory and pedagogy in many ways.

An important contribution made by this study is the methodology used. A multi-method research approach, including questionnaires, video-recorded observation supplemented by stimulated recall interviews, and semi-structured interviews, was used in our context for the first time. This also distinguishes the

present study from most of those cited in this thesis, e.g. Hussin (2006); Meng *et al.* (2010); and Qashua (2013), none of which have used all the tools employed in this study. This analytical approach thus contributes to the field of methodology and provides researchers who have data similar to mine with easy-to-apply analytical tools. It could also be argued that the use of triangulation in this study's research design strengthens the conclusions of the study. By means of videoed classroom observation, it was possible to account for teachers' questioning functions and modifications to unanswered questions. Through stimulated recall, it was possible to explore some intentions behind the teachers' actions in the classroom that may have not been discovered from classroom observation even with the use of video recording. Using questionnaires, it was possible to establish students' perceptions and practice preferences vis-à-vis teachers' questioning (which may not be gleaned through classroom observation). Lastly, and through semi-structured interviews, aspects of the female teachers' perceptions were explored. Accordingly, this study is a contribution to the body of research that has been carried out to investigate questioning in a classroom context and the debates currently ranging in theoretical and empirical research concerning the nature and role of this fundamental discursive tool in the EFL classroom discourse milieu. Overall, the current study also contributes to the growing belief, by being one more voice amongst the many in favour of, teachers' questions as a helpful device in the EFL classroom discourse (*c.f.* Carlsen, 1991; Chaudron, 1988; Cazden, 2001; Wragg and Brown, 2001; Shomoossi, 2004; and Meng *et al.*, 2012).

In addition, previous studies of classroom questioning in similar EFL contexts in the Arab world (see a summary in table 2.6) have amply focused, in a quantitative manner, on question levels and types without investigating the functions teacher questions could serve in the EFL classroom. Also, some of these studies surveyed teachers but did not include students' perspectives. The question which arises therefore is whether this specification undermines or improves the view of questioning in EFL classrooms. In this sense, I believe that investigating classroom questioning, from both student perspectives and teacher practices, contributes to a better understanding of what exactly takes

place in the EFL classroom. It also highlights that before questioning is claimed to be a beneficial discursive practice, it must be clear exactly what the questioning practice does in the milieu of classroom discourse and how it is perceived by knowledge sharers in the classroom (i.e. teachers and students). According to Carlsen (1991), during classroom interaction, the teacher and learners mutually influence each other in the social construction of a discourse context. Additionally, the advantage of having dual perspectives, explained here, may not necessarily be limited to the notion of 'questioning'. This study suggests that the same approach could be applied to other classroom discourse aspects, e.g. feedback.

6.4 Implications of the Study

On the basis of the findings presented in this thesis, the following implications can be useful for research, teacher education and language pedagogy.

- First, this thesis has sought to contribute to the ongoing discussions concerning the role of teachers' questions in the language classroom. The study has presented a number of functions, and modifications, of teachers' questions. Therefore, albeit being drawn from Saudi EFL classrooms solely, comparing the findings from the current study with those currently available/available in future in the literature on EFL teachers' questioning could be beneficial. For instance, it may help pave the way for creating or developing 'an EFL classroom-oriented' question function taxonomy. Used by teachers when planning lessons or certain discursive events, such a taxonomy can offer teachers with the answers to questions such as:
 - What questions could a teacher ask to encourage student talk?
 - What questions could a teacher ask to manage classroom practices?
 - What questions could a teacher ask to repair communication breakdown?
 - What kind of output do students produce in response?

According to Seedhouse (2004:160), it is very important for L2 teachers to know which particular techniques are effective or ineffective in a specific context. For example, extracts 19-26 showed that a modification business is made concise when the teacher modifies an answered question. In this manner, the classroom questioning discourse can progress without delay. Therefore, teachers could be advised to employ different forms of question modifications in certain circumstances in L2 classroom contexts.

- Second, the data of this study showed that teacher questions can serve a number of functions, and be exposed to a number of modifications, within the classroom discourse. Thus, in one way the gleaned findings illustrate the complexity and diversity of 'questioning' in the Saudi EFL university classroom. Therefore, the findings of this study can potentially be very useful for teacher training programmes. For instance, extracts from video-recordings can be used in teacher training sessions, encouraging teachers to reflect on their practice. Scholars, such as Walsh (2006, 2013) and Seedhouse (2008), have emphasised the value of reflective practice as regards teacher talk in language teacher education. Walsh (2006) developed the Self Evaluation of Teacher Talk (SETT) framework based on the idea that teachers can learn from their own classroom practice by repeatedly watching recordings of their own classroom discourse, and hence develop 'teacher language awareness' (Andrews, 2001, 2007). The transcripts analysed in this thesis, particularly those concerning question modifications (see 5.6), could thus be used as a stimulus for such awareness. In addition, using an adapted version the SETT framework, observed teachers are advised to watch the video-recorded classroom discourse, for which they have been offered a joint ownership by the researcher, and reflect on which questioning techniques are successful and can lead to further student participation, and consider what they might do differently in the future as regards their questioning practices. Moreover, it is expected that the findings of this study will be of importance for EFL teachers and students

in Taibah University's ELC in general, who will be able to access a copy of this study in the Taibah University Library theses repository¹²⁶, as they are based on numerical evidence and discourse analysis of classroom questioning.

- Third, due to the scope and nature of the current study, I have sought to avoid any kind of definitive conclusion, in the sense that the topic - as I have raised it - remains open to further exploration and understanding. Therefore, this study hopes to serve as a starting point for subsequent studies to further examine classroom questioning in Saudi EFL classrooms, both at university and across education levels. This could inevitably lead to finding other interactional functions of classroom questioning. In addition, considering the list of question functions (see 5.3) and modifications (see 5.6) identified in this study, there may well be room, with further research at the study's target context, for drawing distinctions on the micro and macro levels. Whilst micro-functions/modifications could be based on limited stretches of the discourse or classroom tasks, macro-functions/modifications could cover the questioning practice over longer discourse stretches or be based on whole-class interaction. This would also accord with calls made by researchers (e.g. Dalton-Puffer, 2007) which declared that a multi-level analysis of classroom discourse is "a likely conceptual frame under which the study of academic language functions can profitably be conducted" (Dalton-Puffer, *ibid.*:130).

6.5 Limitations of the Study

Notwithstanding the contributions and implications of some aspects of this study, it remains an individual effort that has its inevitable limitations and shortcomings. The study involved EFL students from one university in Saudi Arabia, making it difficult to generalise the findings for the wider context of EFL

¹²⁶ See: <http://dla.taibahu.edu.sa/uhtbin/cgiirsi.exe/0/CENTRAL/0/60/119/X>

classroom discourse regionally and globally. In addition, owing to cultural and social considerations, it was not possible to include female students in the video-recording of classroom discourse, even from the same institution, because they are taught separately, and this constraint had to be borne in mind when the data collection plan was designed. It would further validate the results of the current study and indeed be more informative if female classes were to be observed. Furthermore, dealing exclusively with first year university EFL students in this study bound the research to a particular milieu, which is representative of similar contexts only. This limitation may be attributed to access and time constraints which compelled the researcher to undertake this study over a certain period of time in only one setting. In addition, whilst the stimulated-recall interview works well when there is time and a willingness to participate on the part of the participants, there can be serious practical difficulties in implementing it in a busy teaching environment. In this study, half of the observed male EFL teachers (n=4) were not available for this protocol, resulting in a shortcoming on the coverage pursued in this study.

Additionally, due to the complex nature of classroom questioning, it was not possible for this study to extensively analyse or interpret all aspects of this phenomenon. According to Shulman (1986:7), “there is no real world of the classroom, of learning and of teaching. There are many such worlds, perhaps nested within one another, perhaps occupying parallel universes, which frequently, albeit unpredictably, intrude on one another”. Therefore, notwithstanding its focus and gleaned findings, the current study makes no claims whatsoever that it has captured everything vis-à-vis questioning that occurred in its observed classes. Moreover, owing to limitations of space, it was not possible to analyse the current study’s interviews in more depth. This is unfortunate and limiting as it is believed that had the interviews been analysed in full, the research could have offered more complete and deeper insights.

6.6 Suggestions for Future Research

This thesis is but an initial foray into the study of questioning in the Saudi EFL classroom discourse. The data analysed in this study suggests that teachers' questions, as perceived and practised, are indeed a significant classroom practice that serves a multitude of functions (see 5.3), and can be exposed to a variety of modifications (see 5.6). It appears that questioning in the EFL classroom has its own unique place in the discourse and when used varyingly (question functions) and appropriately (question modifications), it can positively influence the ongoing discourse. However, as I approached the end of the study, I came to the conclusion that, as with any piece of research, whilst I attempted to answer the questions I sought to investigate (see 3.2), other issues emanating from the current study were necessarily (due to time, scope, or space constraints) left unexamined. These will remain suggestions for future research.

- Firstly, the data of this study and its findings suggest that there is considerable potential for further research on classroom discourse and student-teacher questioning practices in the Saudi Arabian EFL classroom. As a result, alternative ways of viewing such data could take place. One example would be the use of socio-cultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978, 1981, 1986; Lantolf, 2000, 2006¹²⁷) to examine the ways in which teachers can mediate students' learning by asking questions and providing appropriate feedbacks that are dependant on students' level of understanding in the classroom interaction milieu. For instance, such additional research could consider answering questions such as: "At what stage of EFL instruction is it most appropriate to ask questions?", or "What kinds of questions do teachers use that can create more EFL learning opportunities?". A further possible research orientation could also be through the use of corpus linguistics and discourse analysis to identify the pattern of teacher questioning behaviour. This analytical

¹²⁷ See also: Daniels, H. (2001). *Vygotsky and pedagogy*, London: Routledge.

approach could allow researchers to generate quantitative data (via corpus linguistics¹²⁸) which helps to identify teachers' questioning patterns as well as qualitative, micro-analytic data (via discourse analysis) of the dynamics of teacher questioning discourse. Such a research design could offer an opportunity for having a broader image of the effects of teacher questioning processes on students' second language learning. It could also be equally important to carry out detailed scrutiny of teachers' questioning in the Saudi EFL classroom could also by means of Conversation Analysis (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973) as an analytical framework¹²⁹. Such a line of research may present in-depth results as to how teachers' questioning discourse is organised, and uncover the reflexive relationship between pedagogy and interaction.

- Secondly, additional research could develop the potential significance of some of the general concepts identified in this study, including students' perspectives (see 4.6), variations between student and teacher perspectives (see 5.3), variations between teachers themselves (male vs. female) (see 5.4, 5.5, and 5.7). More detailed exploration of these issues, each of which may well stand alone as a research topic, could have implications for EFL classroom research as well as provide practically-useful information for teacher education. For instance, a possible follow-up to this study could consider exploring students' and teachers' shared, or varied, perspectives vis-à-vis classroom questioning and examine: 1) how these perspectives are conditioned by different factors affecting both teachers and learners, e.g. cultural and social norms; and 2) how these perspectives, together with an understanding of classroom discourse, develop over time.

¹²⁸ See: Biber, D., Conrad, S. and Reppen, R. (1998). *Corpus linguistics: Investigating language structure and use*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; and Conrad, S. (2002). Corpus linguistic approaches for discourse analysis, *Annual review of Applied Linguistics*, 10(1): 97-108.

¹²⁹ See: Sert, O. and Seedhouse, P. (2011). 'Introduction: Conversation analysis and applied linguistics', *Novitas-ROYAL, Research on Youth and Language*, 5(1): 1-14.

- Thirdly, the results from the present research may prompt future researchers to investigate classroom questioning over a longer period of time. My research study has covered the second semester of an academic year (2011-2012), however, an examination of EFL classroom questioning throughout the whole year may well be an avenue of research that is worthy of pursuit. In addition, comparative research could also be conducted in different EFL settings within Saudi Arabia, for instance, in schools, to consolidate the findings of this study. Furthermore, future research could consider collecting data from the classes of novice or more experienced Saudi EFL teachers to establish whether there is a relationship between the use, and perception, of classroom questions and the length of teaching experience.
- Fourthly, it was not possible in this thesis to use the data collected from the teacher interviews in full, owing to limitations of space, however this data could be used to provide further insights into teachers' beliefs regarding classroom questioning in Saudi EFL university classrooms. Future research could also utilise more than one camera to record the classroom discourse which could provide a more detailed view of the EFL classroom questioning discourse and facilitate the examination of non-verbal cues (if any) that teachers use in their questioning practices.

6.7 Concluding Remarks

Overall, this is the largest single piece of academic work I have carried out up till now and it certainly had its impact on me both personally and academically. I feel I have learnt a great deal about a number of aspects of the EFL classroom discourse research whilst carrying out this study. Also, I have developed a greater appreciation of the implementation of a research project into the area of EFL classroom discourse. I have also learnt from the 'classroom questioning' experiences (observed and reported) of the Saudi EFL teachers and students I dealt with in terms of practical ideas and practices. However, considering the current study as a whole makes me realise that it is

without doubt a work-in-progress endeavour. That is, as discussed previously, more can be done to analyse the collected data and reflect on the gained results. Therefore, it is to be hoped that this thesis can contribute to opening the windows on a common, but under-researched, phenomenon in the Saudi EFL classroom discourse, namely that of questioning. Importantly, as far as I am concerned, this research endeavour has enabled me to have a better understanding of what I regard as an essential element of EFL classroom discourse. As mentioned at the beginning of this thesis (see 1.2 and 1.3), this issue has not been addressed by Saudi researchers who have largely focused on EFL students' problems and teachers' teaching approaches. Hence, by focusing on this phenomenon in the Saudi EFL classroom discourse milieu, I hope that this thesis has developed an awareness of the ways in which teacher questions and question modifications function in the milieu of the Saudi EFL university classroom discourse.

To conclude, classroom discourse research involves considerable effort and time on the part of researchers, however it is the responsibility of language educators to make every possible effort to better understand and inform on the subject of classroom discourse, let alone questioning, as this would serve to make the EFL classroom a more effective environment for language use and language learning should this line of research's findings and recommendations be put into practice. Therefore, I have been (and I would be) very happy to participate in endeavours which could help to increase understanding of language use in classroom discourse.

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APPENDICES

Appendix [A]

Questionnaire cover letter - English version

Dear Student,

Please find enclosed a questionnaire on the classroom interaction undertaken in your classrooms with particular focus on teachers' questioning practice. The questionnaire involves both closed and open-ended questions that ask about your attitudes towards question-answer exchange in the classroom, including your evaluation and experience concerning the notion of classroom questioning in general.

I would like to assure you that your answers, whether positive or negative, would be treated and used exclusively for the purpose of the current research. Please take your time answering the questionnaire items as thoroughly as you can and don't hesitate to contact me if you need a question item to be clarified. Meanwhile, if you have any further comments or suggestions towards the research issue under investigation, you are most welcome to write them down.

With many thanks in advance for your help and kind cooperation.

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Appendix [B]

Questionnaire cover letter - Arabic version

عزيزي الطالب / عزيزتي الطالبة :

مرفق لكم استبيان حول التواصل اللفظي في الفصل مع التركيز على أسئلة المعلمين . الاستبيان يحتوي على أسئلة محدودة الخيارات وأسئلة أخرى مفتوحة تهدف الى قياس توجهك نحو الأسئلة الصفية وتقييمك لخبرتك المتعلقة بهذا الأمر .

أود أن أؤكد لك أن إجاباتك سواء كانت إيجابية أم سلبية سيتم التعامل معها لأغراض بحثية فقط في هذه الدراسة . يضاف الى ذلك أن جميع الطلاب سوف يحصلوا على توصيات هذا البحث ان هم أرادوا ذلك .

من فضلك خذ وقتك نحو الاجابة على أسئلة هذا الاستبيان بشكل كامل ومن فضلك لا تتردد في التواصل معي حال احتياجك لتوضيح أي سؤال . أيضا إذا كانت لديك أي تعليقات أو مقترحات لا تتردد في كتابتها مشكورا .

مع خالص التحية والتقدير والشكر لك على مشاركتك الكريمة .

الباحث :

حمزة الشنقيطي

جامعة نيوكاسل

بريد الكتروني :

h.m.a.alshenqeeti@ncl.ac.uk

جوال : 00447593031885 / 556565447-00966

Appendix [C]

The study questionnaire - English version

<p><u>Questionnaire for Students at the English Language Centre (Taibah University)</u></p>
<p>Name (optional):.....</p> <p>Languages Spoken:.....</p> <p>Gender: <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female</p>
<p>Please read the following questions and tick the appropriate expression.</p>
<p>1. Do you feel that teacher's questions help students participate more in classroom L2 discussion?</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <i>To a large extent</i> <i>To a moderate extent</i> <i>To little extent</i> <i>Not at all</i> </p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
<p>2. Do you think students need a longer wait time to answer teachers' questions given in English?</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <i>To a large extent</i> <i>To a moderate extent</i> <i>To little extent</i> <i>Not at all</i> </p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
<p>3. Are students afraid to answer teacher's questions in English because they think their English is not good enough?</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <i>Strongly agree</i> <i>Agree</i> <i>Not sure</i> <i>Disagree</i> <i>Strongly disagree</i> </p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
<p>4. When asked a difficult question, do you feel you can think of a right answer but have trouble answering it in English?</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <i>Often</i> <i>Sometimes</i> <i>Rarely</i> <i>Never</i> </p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>

5. When the teacher asks a question about the L2, do you feel you do not want to respond even if you know the answer?

<i>Often</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments:

.....

6. Over the span of the class, do you feel more willing to answer a teacher's questions about the L2 when other students also answer?

<i>Often</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments:

.....

7. Would you answer the teacher's question if you might be wrong?

<i>Often</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments:

.....

8. When the teacher asks a question in English, do you prefer being called upon by him/her rather than volunteering an answer?

<i>Often</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments:

.....

9. Do students find it more beneficial resorting to Arabic when asked to work in pairs or a group to answer teacher's questions?

<i>Often</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments:

.....

10. Do you find it more comprehensible when the teacher uses Arabic and English in their questioning practice?

<i>Most of the time</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments:

.....

11. Do you think you should always get the teacher's permission before you contribute an answer to his/her question?

Strongly agree

Agree

Not sure

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Comments:

.....
.....

12. Do you think it is the teacher's role to answer other students' questions?

Strongly agree

Agree

Not sure

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Comments:

.....
.....

13. What do you think about keeping one's questions to themselves rather than asking in class, particularly if these are in English?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

14. Lastly, what would be your overall perspective of the classroom questioning practice in your classroom?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Thank you very much for your cooperation

Appendix [D]

The study questionnaire - Arabic version

استبيان لطلاب وطالبات مركز اللغة الإنجليزية (جامعة طيبة)				
<p>الإسم (اختياري): <u>فاطمة</u></p> <p>اللغات التي تتحدثها: <u>عربية - انجليزي</u></p> <p>الجنس: ذكر <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> أنثى <input type="checkbox"/></p>				
من فضلكم اقرأ الأسئلة التالية و اختر الإجابة المناسبة .				
1. هل تشعر بأن أسئلة المعلم تقيد الطلاب في المشاركة أكثر في مناقشات الفصل باللغة الإنجليزية ؟				
بشدة	الى حد قليل	الى حد متوسط	الى حد كبير	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
التعليقات: <u>نعم عبارة هي كذا</u>				
2. هل تشعر بأن الطلاب بحاجة الى وقت انتظار أطول ليقوموا بالإجابة على أسئلة المعلم المطروحة باللغة الإنجليزية ؟				
بشدة	الى حد قليل	الى حد متوسط	الى حد كبير	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
التعليقات:				
3. هل يشعر الطلاب بالخوف ازاء الاجابة على اسئلة المعلم المطروحة باللغة الانجليزية لانهم يشعروا بان لغتهم غير جيدة بشكل كافي ؟				
بشدة	لا توافق	تستمتد	توافق	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
التعليقات:				
4. عندما يطرح عليك سؤال صعب ، هل تشعر بأنك تستطيع التفكير في إجابة صحيحة لكن تجد صعوبة في تعلقها باللغة الإنجليزية ؟				
بشدة	تخرا	أحياناً	عادة	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
التعليقات:				
5. عندما يطرح المعلم سؤالا حول اللغة الإنجليزية ، هل تشعر بأنك لا ترغب في الإجابة حتى لو كنت تعرف الجواب ؟				
بشدة	تخرا	أحياناً	عادة	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
التعليقات:				

6. مع مرور الوقت في الحصة ، هل تشعر بدافعية أكثر نحو الاجابة على أسئلة المعلم حول اللغة الانجليزية عندما يجيب آخرون أيضا ؟				
أبداً <input type="checkbox"/>	نحراً <input type="checkbox"/>	أحياناً <input type="checkbox"/>	عادة <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	التعليقات : وهو شيء مفيد جداً
7. هل ستقوم بالاجابة على أسئلة المعلم عندما قد تكون مخطئاً ؟				
أبداً <input type="checkbox"/>	نحراً <input type="checkbox"/>	أحياناً <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	عادة <input type="checkbox"/>	التعليقات : على حسب الزمان
8. عندما يطرح المعلم سؤالاً بالغة الانجليزية ، هل تفضل أن تايدهوك للاجابة أم ستقوم بالتطوع للاجابة من تلقاء نفسك ؟				
أبداً <input type="checkbox"/>	نحراً <input type="checkbox"/>	أحياناً <input type="checkbox"/>	عادة <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	التعليقات :
9. هل يجد الطلاب اللجوء الى استخدام اللغة العربية مفيداً عندما يطلب منهم العمل في مجموعات أو بشكل ثنائي للاجابة على سؤال المعلم ؟				
أبداً <input type="checkbox"/>	نحراً <input type="checkbox"/>	أحياناً <input type="checkbox"/>	عادة <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	التعليقات :
10. هل تجدها أكثر قابلية للاستيعاب عندما يقوم المعلم باستخدام اللغتين العربية والانجليزية في استنتهم ؟				
أبداً <input type="checkbox"/>	نحراً <input type="checkbox"/>	أحياناً <input type="checkbox"/>	معظم الوقت <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	التعليقات :
11. هل تعتقد بأنه عليك الحصول على إذن المعلم قبل أن تجيب على سؤاله/ها؟				
أوافق بشدة <input type="checkbox"/>	لا أوافق <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	لست متأكد <input type="checkbox"/>	أوافق <input type="checkbox"/>	أوافق بشدة <input type="checkbox"/>
التعليقات :				
12. هل تعتقد بأن دور المعلم هو الاجابة على أسئلة الطلاب الآخرين ؟				
أوافق بشدة <input type="checkbox"/>	لا أوافق <input type="checkbox"/>	لست متأكد <input type="checkbox"/>	أوافق <input type="checkbox"/>	أوافق بشدة <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
التعليقات :				

13. ما هو رأيك حيال اعتقاد الطالب بأسئلته لنفسه وعدم طرحها على المعلم خاصة إذا كانت باللغة الإنجليزية ؟

لا يجب أن يكون للطالب دور في طرح الأسئلة - ولكن على المعلم
أن يهتم بمساعدتها

14. وأخيرا ، ما هو شعورك الاجمالي حيال الأسئلة الشفهية المطروحة في فصلك ؟

* ارتباك الامم الاسئلة - بطرق واضحة

* زيادة مستوى الطالبات

* تخصيص وقت رخص للاسئلة في الفصل

لك جزيل الشكر على المشاركة

Appendix [E]

The study questionnaire (Pilot study's version)

<u>Questionnaire for Students at the English Language Centre (Taibah University)</u>				
Name (optional):.....				
Languages Spoken:.....				
Gender: <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female				
Please read the following items and tick the appropriate expression.				
1. I think that teachers' questions help students participate more in classroom practice.				
<i>Strongly agree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Agree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Not sure</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Disagree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Strongly disagree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>
2. I think that teachers' questions provide students with an opportunity to offer their opinions.				
<i>Strongly agree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Agree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Not sure</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Disagree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Strongly disagree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>
3. I think that students need a longer time to answer teachers' questions that are given in English.				
<i>Strongly agree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Agree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Not sure</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Disagree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Strongly disagree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>
4. I think that responding to teachers' questions in English can help students improve their English.				
<i>Strongly agree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Agree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Not sure</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Disagree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Strongly disagree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>
5. I think that students are afraid to answer teachers' questions in English because they think their English is not good enough.				
<i>Strongly agree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Agree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Not sure</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Disagree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Strongly disagree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>
6. I think that students feel more comfortable answering teachers' questions in Arabic.				
<i>Strongly agree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Agree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Not sure</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Disagree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Strongly disagree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>
7. When the teacher asks questions in English, I prefer to answer in English.				
<i>Strongly agree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Agree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Not sure</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Disagree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Strongly disagree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>
8. When the teacher asks questions in Arabic, I prefer to answer in Arabic.				
<i>Strongly agree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Agree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Not sure</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Disagree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Strongly disagree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>
9. When I feel that the teacher's question is difficult, I prefer to answer in Arabic.				
<i>Strongly agree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Agree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Not sure</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Disagree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Strongly disagree</i> <input type="checkbox"/>

10. When the teacher asks a question in English, I prefer not to respond to it even if I know the answer.				
<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I would not want to answer the teacher's question if I might be wrong.				
<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I prefer being called upon by the teacher rather than volunteering an answer.				
<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. When asked a difficult question, I can think of a right answer but have trouble answering in English.				
<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I am more willing to answer questions in class if other students also answer questions over the span of the class.				
<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thank you very much for your cooperation				

Appendix [F]

Observation video-recording consent form

We, the undersigned, agree to participate in a research study on classroom discourse in the Saudi university EFL classrooms conducted by Hamza Alshenqeeti (a PhD researcher in Applied Linguistics from Newcastle University, UK) with the understanding that:

1. The focus of the study is on investigating EFL student and teacher classroom discourse.
2. The interaction between teachers and their students will be video-taped in classrooms.
3. All tapes will be played and then analysed by the researcher (Hamza Alshenqeeti) for research purposes only.
4. No participant shall be identified by their real names.

Signing this form indicates that you have read and agreed with these conditions.

Teacher	
Signature	
Date	
Student	
Signature	
Signature	
Signature	
Signature	
Signature	
Signature	
Signature	
Signature	
Signature	

Appendix [G]

Transcription Conventions for Classroom Data

Hhh	Audible laughter
<i>Italics</i>	Arabic words
S	Identified student, using numbers (e.g. S1, S2, etc.)
SS	Several students at once or the whole class
T	Teacher
' '	English translation
(5.0)	Numbers in parentheses measure pauses in seconds.
(())	Doubled parentheses contain the transcriber's notes to describe a non-verbal action (e.g. pointing)
.	Period, end of sentence
...	Uncompleted talk
?	Question
xxx	Uncertain hearing (e.g. noise)
↑ ↓	Up or down arrows are used to indicate that there is sharply rising or falling intonation. The arrow is placed after the syllable/word in which the change in intonation occurs.

Appendix [H]

Interview consent form

Dear Teacher,

I am conducting this interview as part of my PhD study which I am pursuing at Newcastle University (UK) under the supervision of Dr. Peter Sercombe. This study aims to investigate the nature of classroom interaction taking place at your EFL classroom with particular focus on student-teacher questioning practice. The title of the study is [*Questioning in the Saudi EFL University Classroom: Student Perspectives and Teacher Practices*].

I guarantee that the no information about individual participants will be used in any other research.

I, (**Participant's** full name) agree to take part in the above named project/investigation; the details of which have been fully explained to me and described in writing.

Signed:

Date:.....

I, **HAMZA M. A. ALSHENQEETI**, certify that the details of this project have been explained and described to the subject named above and have been understood by him/her.

Signed: *Hamza Alsheneeti*

Date:.....

Appendix [I]

The study interview questions

Q.1: Do you use questions in you EFL class?

Q.2: Do you ask those questions for different reasons?

Q.3: Roughly, and on a daily basis, could you please tell me how much time you allocate to classroom questioning?

Q.4: What sort of questions do you normally use?

Q.5: In general, how would you describe your students' asking and answering behaviour?

Q.6: What do you think the reasons behind some students switching off or refraining from talking (particularly asking and responding)?

Q.7: Do you use code-switching during your questioning practice in class? If so, when and why?

Q.8: Do you allow being interrupted by students to ask, even if this was off-topic?

Q9: Lastly, what would be your suggestion to improve or change the students' questioning practice in your EFL classes?

Follow-ups:

- Could you please comment on that?
- If yes, why?
- If no, why not?
- How?

Appendix [J]:
Samples from textbooks taught at the observed EFL classes

Noun	Parts of Speech	
	Adjective	Adverb
advantages	advantageous	X
availability	<u>available</u>	X
activity	active	<u>actively</u>
biology	<u>biological</u>	biologically
_____	confused	X
culture	_____	culturally
defects	_____	X
decisions	decisive	_____
fame	_____	famously
genes	_____	genetically
generalities	_____	_____
humanity	_____	ignorantly
<u>importance</u>	_____	importantly
_____	natural	_____
mountains	_____	X
_____	typical	<u>typically</u>
_____	_____	traditionally

5 Focusing on High-Frequency Words Read the paragraph below and fill in each blank with a word from the box. One of the words is used twice. When you finish, check your answers on pages 144–145.

¹ combination	⁶ damage	⁹ engineering	³ parents
correct	diseases	improve	oppose
⁴	²	⁵⁻⁷	⁸

D What are *genes* and why are medical researchers always trying to find out more about them? Genes are part of the center (that is, the *nucleus*) of every living cell; in the form of DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid), this biological characteristics (features) of every living

changing the genes of the food farmers grow. Genetic engineers claim that these differences in DNA structure will increase food production, prevent damage from insects, and improve world health; in contrast, others oppose the use of genetic engineering not only in plants but also in animals and humans.

Which sentence best states the point of the facts and beliefs in Paragraph D?

- (A) Deoxyribonucleic acid is not as beneficial as DNA—the biological material related to genetics—in research on the causes of birth defects.
- (B) Genetic engineers and other specialists claim that research into the gene structure of living things can improve human health in many ways.
- (C) Because there is a natural limit to the length of human life, only changes in gene structure can increase longevity in senior citizens that drink cherry juice.

After You Read

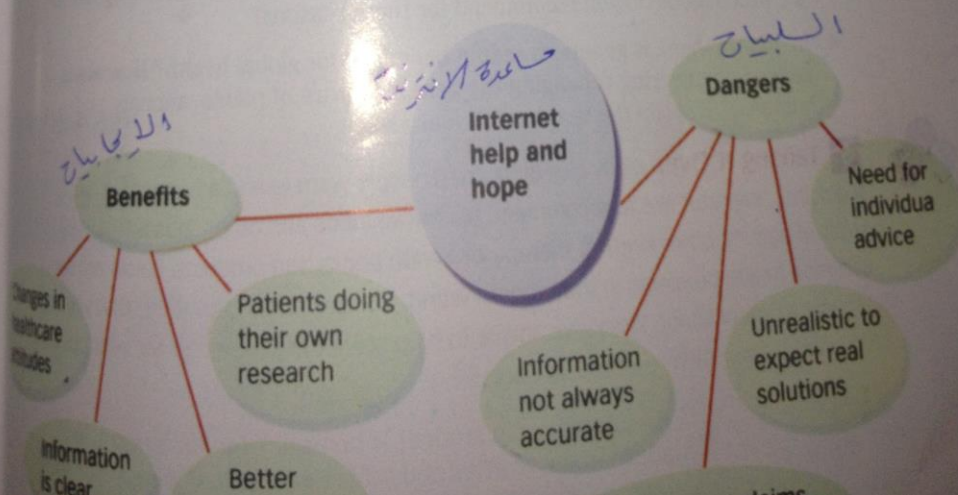
Strategy

Summarizing Using a Mind Map

You learned how to summarize in previous chapters. Another way to summarize is to use a mind map.

- First, figure out the topic, the main ideas, and the supporting details. You can make a mind map showing the relationship of the points to one another.
- Then create a short summary from the items in the map.

Below is an example of a mind map of Paragraph A from the reading "Claims to Amazing Health." A summary based on the mind map follows.



READING

A Discuss. Find these people, places, and things on page 3.
Write the words under the correct topic.

desk teacher building classroom
board student English class

People	Places	Things

B Read. Read the information.

Francisco's School


Francisco Garcia is a student. He is fifteen years old. He is from Los Angeles, California. Mrs. Moore is his English teacher. Mrs. Moore is a good teacher. She is kind and friendly. Francisco and Mrs. Moore are in the classroom now. They are in an English class. They are busy. Francisco is at a desk. Mrs. Moore is not at a desk. She is at the board. The classroom is not a big room. It is a small room. It is clean and colorful. The classroom is in a large building.



Learn new words. Write them in your personal dictionary.

C Write captions. Write a sentence for each picture on page 3.
Use sentences from the reading.

CENTRAL SCHOOL
STUDENT ID



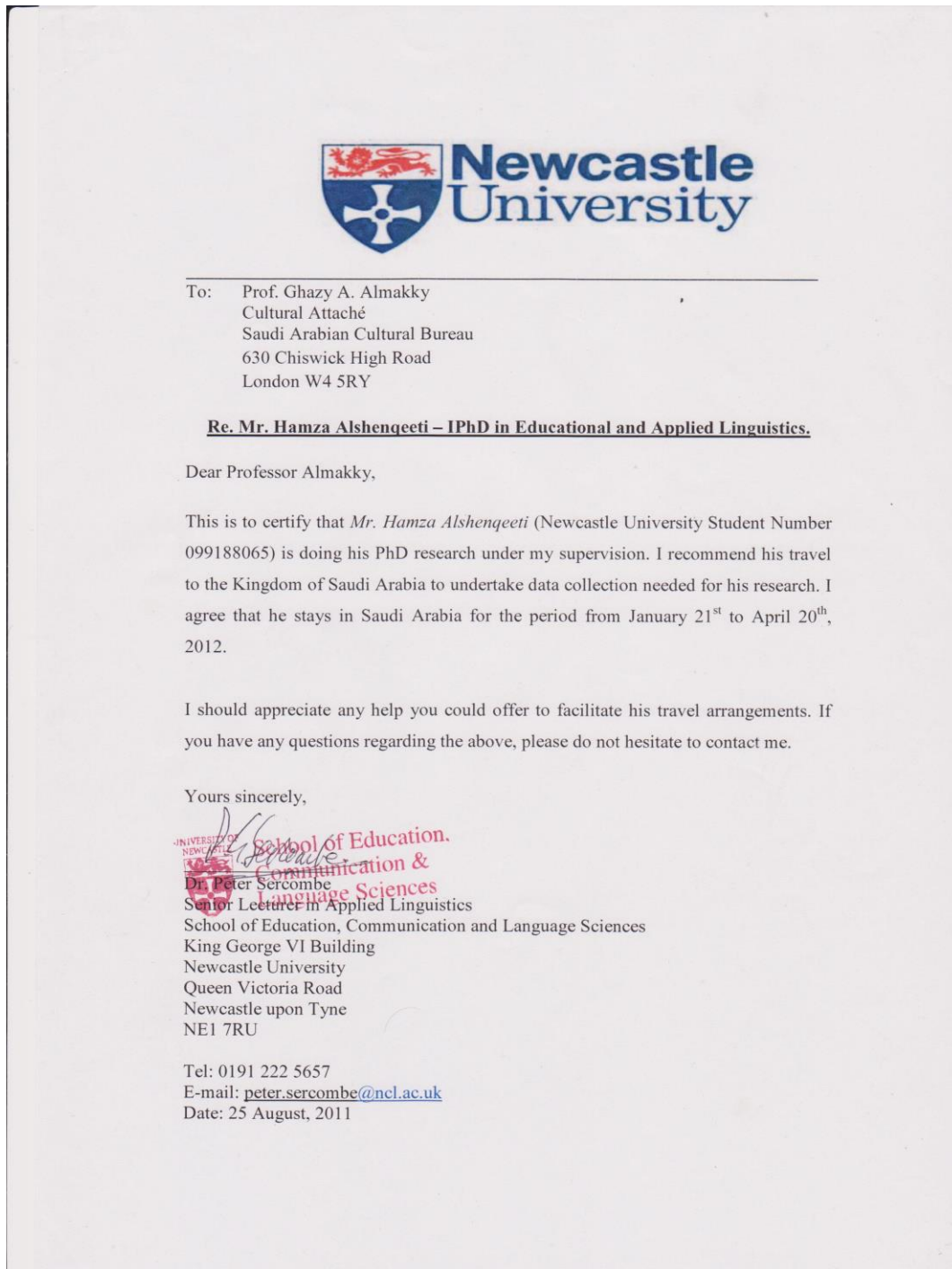
Francisco Garcia

signature

Name: Francisco Garcia
Age: 15 years old

Appendix [K]


Letter of field trip approval (from the research supervisor)



Appendix [L]

Letter of field trip approval (from the researcher's school)

School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences
 King George VI Building
 Newcastle University
 Queen Victoria Road
 Newcastle upon Tyne
 NE1 7RU



International Census – Approval for Student Absence

Student Name:	Hamza Alshenqeeti
Student Number:	099188065
Dates of leave requested:	21 st January – 20 th April, 2012
Reason for Absence:	Carrying out a field trip in which data for the PhD research project will be collected.
I approve that this leave of absence has been authorised:	
Name of DPD/Personal Tutor:	Dr. Peter Sercombe <i>P. G. Sercombe</i>
Signature of DPD/Personal Tutor:	
Date:	31 Oct 2011

Appendix [M]

Taibah University's approval to the field trip

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Ministry of Higher Education
Taibah University
Code (039)

المملكة العربية السعودية
وزارة التعليم العالي
جامعة طيبة
الرمز (٠٣٩)

إدارة الابتعاث والتدريب

قرار إداري

قيام برحلة علمية

١	٠	٣	٦	١	٠	٩	٧	٧	٣	السجل المدني	حمزة بن محمد محمود الشنقيطي	الاسم	
اللغات والترجمة										القسم	كلية الآداب والعلوم الإنسانية	جهة العمل	
١٤٣٠/١٢/٢٧ هـ										بتاريخ	١٤٣٠٧٠٣٨٧	رقم قرار الابتعاث	
المملكة المتحدة										نيوكاسل	المدينة	UNIVERSITY NEWCASTLE	مقر البعثة
علم اللغة										التخصص الدقيق	لغة إنجليزية	التخصص العام	
ثلاث سنوات										مدة الابتعاث	الدكتوراه	الدرجة العلمية	

إن وكيل الجامعة للدراسات العليا والبحث العلمي وبناءً على:

- الصلاحيات الممنوحة له.
- استناداً على المادة العشرين من لائحة الابتعاث والتدريب لمنسوبي الجامعات.
- وموافقة كلاً من:

تاريخ	رقم	م
١٤٣٣/١/١٠ هـ	الثامن	اللجنة الدائمة للابتعاث والتدريب في اجتماعها
١٤٣٢/١٠/٢٣ هـ	الثاني	توصية لجنة النظر في طلبات المتبعثين بالكلية
١٤٣٢/١٠/٩ هـ	الأول	توصية مجلس القسم

يقدر ما يلي

أولاً: قيام المبتعث/ حمزة بن محمد محمود الشنقيطي، الموضحة بياناته أعلاه، برحلة علمية إلى:

مكان تطبيق الدراسة	القسم بجامعة طيبة	الدولة	المملكة العربية السعودية
مدة الرحلة	ثلاثة أشهر	ابتداءً من تاريخ	٢٠١٢/١/٢١ م
المشرف على الرحلة	أ. د/ حسين عبد الرؤوف (بجامعة طيبة)		

ثانياً: مباشرة المبتعث أبحاثه تحت إشراف القسم التابع له.

ثالثاً: تزويد قسم المبتعث وكالة الجامعة للدراسات العليا والبحث العلمي تقرير متكامل عن الرحلة العلمية.

رابعاً: على الجهات المعنية تنفيذ هذا القرار كلاً فيما يخصه.

وكيل الجامعة
للدراسات العليا والبحث العلمي المكلف
د. سعود بن عبد القادر ظاهر

الرقم ١٤٣٣/٩/٩ التاريخ ١٤٣٣/١٣/٩٧٦

الأصل لإدارة الابتعاث والتدريب، وصورة مع النسخة لكل من:
○ سعادة وكيل وزارة التعليم العالي لشؤون البعثات - سعادة مدير عام الإدارة العامة لشؤون البعثات، بوزارة التعليم العالي - سعادة مدير عام الشؤون الإدارية والمالية بوزارة التعليم العالي - الملحق الثقافي السعودي في مقر بعثة البعث.
○ أمارة مجلس الجامعة - وكيل الجامعة للدراسات العليا والبحث العلمي - كلية البعثات - إدارة التخطيط والميزانية - إدارة شؤون الموظفين - قسم التأديب والروتب - البعث.

Appendix [N]

A detailed description of the structure of the Saudi education system

Stage	Description
The Pre-elementary Stage (Kindergarten)	By and large, although it is supervised by the Saudi Ministry of Education, this stage is still considered an informal one. That is, unlike forthcoming stages, this kind of schooling cannot be found in all cities and regions of the country. Furthermore, this stage of education is mostly operated by the private sector (i.e. owned by Saudi citizens), and hence, it offers paid-education for its students. Children usually attend these schools at the age of three to five years old.
The Elementary or Primary Stage	Students enter this stage at the age of six. This stage consists of six grades. When the students pass all six grades successfully at the age of 12, they enter the intermediate level. It is worth noting that students at this stage study different subjects as diverse as history, geography, Arabic and science. Starting from the academic year 2004-2005, however, English language has been officially introduced in the sixth (last) grade in this stage and hence students receive four 45-minute classes per week. More interestingly, earlier this year (2011), a decision has been made by the Ministry of Education to introduce English from the fourth grade in the next academic year.
The Intermediate Stage	This stage consists of three grades. Students enter this stage at the age of 12. Besides other subjects taught at this stage and similar to the primary stage, students learn English for an average of four classes week throughout the three years spent at it.
The Secondary Stage	This stage represents the final stage of general education in Saudi Arabia. Students enter this stage at the age of 16. It consists of three grades. In the first grade, all students follow the same curriculum. Students who pass the first year can then choose between two streams: scientific and literary, to enter for Years 2 and 3. Yet, subjects like Islamic culture and English language are compulsory and equally-delivered to students in both streams. Students who finish the final examinations successfully are granted a secondary certificate and are eligible for admission to enter undergraduate programmes at higher education institutions, based on their overall achievement.
The University Stage	Currently, there are twenty-five universities in Saudi Arabia (twenty-one state-owned universities in addition to four private universities) spreading throughout the country and offering undergraduate and postgraduate studies, to students from 18 years upwards. All of these universities are supervised by the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education. Candidates for admission to these institutions must have passed the secondary stage and their admission is based on their secondary school stream choice and their final grade (GPA).
The Postgraduate Study Stage	This grade, although suffers from a shortage of specialties available for applicants, has recently been joined by large numbers of university graduates. Yet, most of the postgraduate programmes available in Saudi Universities are provided by still-growing departments and schools. Accordingly, this would affect the length, quality and content of such programmes.