

## Exploring the connection between teacher questioning and student learning behavior from a discourse perspective - A case study

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### ARTICLE INFO

DOI:10.46223/HCMCOUJS.soci.en.12.2.2583.2022

Received: November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Revised: November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Accepted: November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022

#### Keywords:

classroom discourse; constructivist learning; critical discourse analysis; learning behavior; teacher questioning

### ABSTRACT

Teacher questioning is common interaction in classrooms, which seems to be an effective tool to stimulate and enhance teaching and learning. This paper aims to investigate English teachers' questioning strategies in connection with student learning behavior from a discourse perspective at the University of Foreign Languages, Hue University, Vietnam, within a case study of a Reading class at the English Department. One teacher and 30 students voluntarily participated in the study. Data were collected via audio recordings and classroom observation of 06 teaching hours for Reading classes. Critical Discourse Analysis Theory and Constructivist Learning theories were applied as the analysis and explanation frameworks. Results revealed that teachers employed various discourse strategies for questioning to enhance students learning behavior such as eliciting responses, checking comprehension, and soliciting agreement question functions; which helped arouse students' interest in the upcoming reading texts, prepare them for vocabulary learning and background knowledge forming, and guide them through the process of reading comprehension skill practice. The paper also addressed implications and suggestions to help teachers exploit teachers' questioning more effectively in language teaching.

### 1. Introduction

Discourse, when considered in linguistics, is natural spoken or written language in particular contexts. Cook (1994) assumed that discourse as the combination of text and context is interacted, perceived as meaningful, and unified by the participants. More specifically, classroom discourse has drawn much of researchers' attention in the field of second language acquisition. Part of classroom discourse refers to teachers' questioning. Questioning in the classroom mostly carried out by teachers is to draw students' participation and attention, check their understanding and evaluate students' performances and results. Teacher questioning is also discussed as a means to link with students' learning behavior. In fact, learning behaviors express students' attitudes who take part in active learning activities by orally responding to their teachers' questioning. Richards and Lockhart (1994), Nunan and Lamb (1996), and Chaudron (1988) stated using teachers' questions is a basic way with some instructional purposes to pay learners' attention, stimulate verbal responses and assess their progress. A question proposed by teachers can stimulate students' learning, participation, and thinking, especially critical thinking (Wilén, 1991). Caram and Davis (2005) stated that teacher questions are of significant value for many instructional purposes, eliciting students'

reflection and challenging deeper students understanding and engagement in the classroom.

Chang (2012) has integrated and developed the taxonomies proposed by Thompson (1998) and Camiciottoli (2008), who classified questions into two main categories: audience-oriented questions (with three functions) and content-oriented questions (with two functions). After researching the material of these question functions, Chang (2012) took over and gave a supplementary subcategory in the type of audience-oriented questions known as classroom management/engagement. As a result, the new combined framework of question functions designed by Chang also included two main categories, audience-oriented, and content-oriented questions. Audience-oriented questions go into five subcategories like *eliciting responses*, *class management/engagement*, *soliciting agreement*, *checking comprehension*, and *requesting confirmation/clarification* while content-oriented questions comprise two major functions *focusing information* and *stimulating thoughts*.

Some former studies in language teaching and learning have also discussed various question types and functions. This study planned to analyze one of Chang (2012)'s questioning categories, which is audience-oriented questions, and investigate them under the discourse perspective to explore the relationship between English teachers' questioning and students' learning behavior in an EFL Reading classroom.

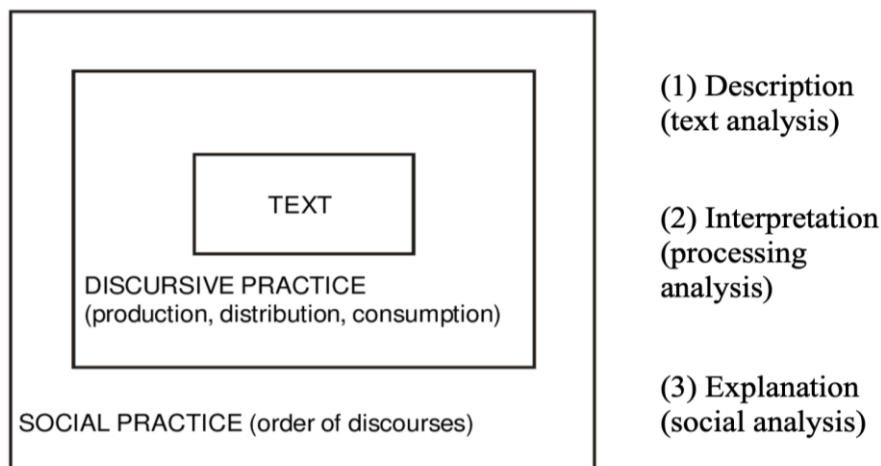
## **2. Theoretical basis**

### **2.1. Discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis**

Discourse is a term that is described as a series of talking conveyed by the speakers and the meaning of utterances interpreted by hearers in their linguistic contexts. The approaches to sentences about linguistic change have resulted in economic variation, geographic mobility, and power relations. Discourse is referred to as the text of spoken and written utterances when texts in interaction sessions are influenced by social practice as participants' power and people's actions (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Jäger & Maier, 2009; Nunan, 1993). In other words, people interact and communicate in the process of producing and interpreting texts. Thanks to the analysis of text in a social context, people can also make sense of the relationship between texts, processes, and their social status.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a theory that involves researching and analyzing written and spoken texts to express discursive sources of power, control, prejudice, and disparity (Van Dijk, 2005). In addition, *critical* means to evaluate social relationships by analyzing language and simultaneously reveal invisible power and hidden ideology, as Fairclough (1995) has defined. Language and ideology have close relevance when language is considered a tool to express an opinion or belief into social attitudes. In terms of social practice in the classroom, the interaction between the teacher and students is taken into consideration.

This study applies the framework of Fairclough's CDA with three dimensions of viewing language. Based on the assumption that CDA is not only a look at text production and text interpretation but further into the relationship among texts, production processes, and their social context, Fairclough (1995) has developed a three-dimensional approach to a communicative event. As language is seen as a social practice, he asserts that every communicative event comprises three dimensions. It is seen as a text (speech, writing, visual images, ...), a discursive practice that involves the production, distribution, and consumption of texts; and a social practice where the order of discourse is reinforced. Corresponding to the three levels of discourse are the three stages of CDA: (1) description (text analysis); (2) interpretation (processing analysis); and (3) explanation (social analysis).



**Figure 1.** An adapted model of the three-dimensional view of discourse, proposed by Fairclough (1995)

## 2.2. *Teacher discourse and teacher questioning*

In classroom situations, teacher talk is viewed not only as an understanding of grammar and vocabulary but also as structured paragraphs and arguments and a contribution to interaction between teachers and students. Teacher discourse in classroom activities is vital to understand and classify students into different levels and then offer some appropriate orientations to facilitate students' intrinsic motivation as well as stimulate students' interest in learning during the lectures. Nunan (1987), Seedhouse (1996) and Walsh (2002) discovered that classroom language is a kind of institutional discourse, connected to the real-world context through communicative interaction between teachers and students with the aim to enhance the exchange of knowledge in the teaching and learning process more effectively.

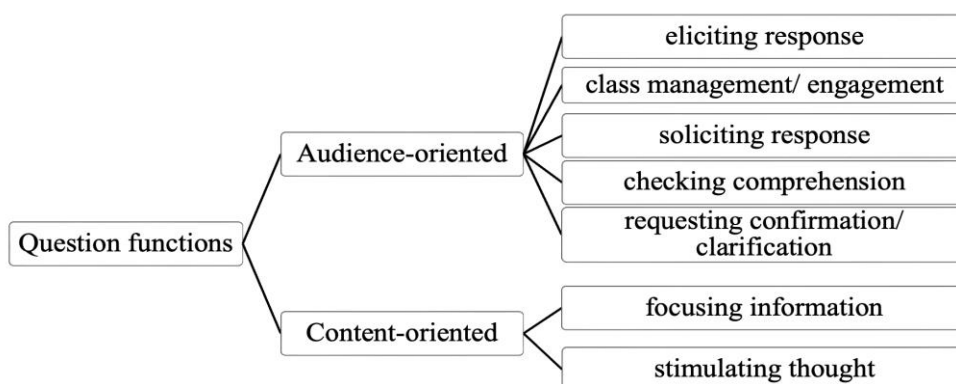
Teachers' questioning is assumed to be an essential factor to facilitate classroom discourse. Gall (1984) advocates that teachers' questioning forms considerable parts of teacher talk in the classroom. He maintains that teachers' questioning not only supports students' construction of knowledge but also evaluates what students know because the nature of questioning is constructivist-based and inquiry-oriented in lessons. In such lessons, the purpose of teachers is to elicit what students think and to construct knowledge. Therefore, teachers use questioning to diagnose and broaden students' ideas. Richards and Lockhart (1994) stated that questioning is one of the frequent techniques used by teachers, which takes over half of the class time to respond to exchanges between teachers and students in a basic way. These exchanges are arranged to foster interaction among teachers. Teachers use questions as an instructional strategy with some instructional purposes to pay learners' attention, promote verbal responses and assess learners' progress. According to Chaudron (1988) and Nunan and Lamb (1996), questioning is an agency to draw out information, and analyze students' comprehension and their behavior. Gall (1984, pp. 42-45) and Richards and Lockhart (1994, p. 185) have elaborated on the widespread use of questions. They claimed that questions might be used to find out the amount of students' learning; enable a teacher to account for what a student has said; draw out particular structures or vocabulary items; encourage and keep up students' interest; improve students' engagement and participation; foster students to think and promote the development of thinking skills.

Appropriate questioning may exert positive effects on both educators and learners as their mutual understanding has been enhanced and connected more regularly thanks to teacher questioning and students' responses in the classroom. The exchanges, thus, have affected students' learning behaviors and stimulated the process of language learning.

### 2.3. *The classification of teachers' questioning and its positive effect on EFL classrooms*

Teachers' questioning is the heart of students' thoughtful and skillful discussion, so the plan to construct students' knowledge and broaden their ideas from questioning plays a crucial role in teaching language, which requires a variety of techniques to enhance the exchange and interaction. Roth (1996) and Lemke (1990) found that teachers' questions have a great contribution not only to the construction of students' knowledge but also to the engagement in discursive activities to increase interaction between teachers and his/her students. Cotton (2001) mentioned that teacher questions are considered hints and instructions that offer the content of what students are going to learn and how they should do it.

There are several ways to classify teachers' questions. Questions can be categorized into two types *display questions* and *referential questions* (Long & Sato, 1983) or into two levels of question orders *low-level* and *high-level* (Anderson et al., 2001). However, with the classification of teachers' questions into *audience-oriented* and *content-oriented* questions, proposed by Thompson (1998) and Camiciottoli (2008), and then developed by Chang (2012), the reflection of teachers' questions connected with students' learning behaviors have been made clear. There were two main categories in the new framework designed by Chang (2012), the first of which was named *audience-oriented questions* with five subcategories as *eliciting responses*, *class management/engagement*, *soliciting agreement*, *checking comprehension*, and *requesting confirmation/clarification* while the other group is called *content-oriented questions* with two major functions as *focusing information* and *stimulating thoughts*.



**Figure 2.** The taxonomy of question functions proposed by Chang (2012)

In the scope of this paper, we are going to explore the category of audience-oriented questions, classified into five functions to investigate their connection with students' learning behaviors. The other category (content-oriented questions) will be discussed in another context of research further than this paper's scope.

### 2.4. *Constructivist learning theory as a framework of theory for the analysis of teachers' questions relating to students' learning behaviors*

Besides applying Fairclough's (1995) CDA framework for the analysis of teachers' questioning, the theory of Constructivist Learning will be also employed to define and explain the process of forming students' knowledge and behavior through teacher questioning. Dewey (1938), Driscoll (2000), and Fox (2001) argued that learning is a social activity in which all knowledge goes along with each other in interaction rather than an abstract concept. Teaching and learning is a process of sharing and negotiating socially the constituted knowledge. Each individual has their own personal experience of learning, so the result of learning by each student is diverse even if they are all in the same lesson. However, knowledge should be regularly developed and updated

in students' own individual minds to reflect new experiences. That is why students will construct their own meaning of reality as they perceive new information.

### **2.5. Previous studies**

Literature shows considerable research on teachers' questions from the discourse perspective over a period of time. In the research of Farist (2011), Al-Zahrani and Al-Bargi (2017) or Phuong and Nguyen (2017), teacher talk was examined by identifying the types of initiation and follow-up moves used by teachers in classroom interaction and then used to align with the actual practice with Bloom's taxonomy classified into two groups of lower-cognitive questions and higher-cognitive questions. These studies went without emphasis on investigating the impact of teachers' questioning strategies to foster classroom interaction and students' attitudes. Vivekmetakorn and Thamma (2015) aimed to explore interaction patterns generated by questions in an EFL class and found that the Initiation-Response-Feedback interaction pattern (I-R-F) was most frequently used in Reading classrooms. The findings were also discussed parallelly with the 02 question types (display questions and referential questions). Other studies employed a quantitative approach and focused on the distinction between divergent and convergent question types (Döş et al., 2016) or aimed at the automatic classification of Question & Answer discourse segments (Blanchard, D'Mello, & Olney, 2015).

Though there was much research on teachers' questions in EFL classrooms, there has been some gap in the way researchers looked into the social discursive aspects of teachers' questioning, which is viewed as a discourse, and under the categorization of questions developed by Chang (2012). This study, therefore, aims to explore the connection between teachers' questioning and students' learning behaviors, based on analyzing types of questions in the first question group (audience-oriented questions) in Chang's framework, utilizing Fairclough's three-dimension CDA framework (1995) and basing the explanation on the constructivist learning theory, with the hope to close the gaps mentioned above.

### **3. Methodology**

This paper is a case study where an investigation of teachers' questioning strategies was conducted in three teaching sessions (06 hours) of a teacher of English with more than 10 years of teaching experience. This teacher and 30 first-year English-major students at the English Department, University of Foreign Languages, Hue University agreed to participate in the study. Data were mainly collected through audio recordings of the teacher's talk and her speech in all classroom interactions. Besides, to observe students' behavior and responses, facial expressions in the interaction with their teacher, classroom observation, and field note were also employed. A semi-structured interview with the teacher was conducted after the 03 classes. Audio-recording data were then transcribed using the latest version of Nvivo software (2021), checked for accuracy, and classified into types of functions prescribed by Chang (2012). All the teacher's talk transcription was then double-checked and examined for question selection before validation and categorization coding.

Regarding the analysis framework, as we planned to apply Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA (1995), we are going to conduct the analysis of the teacher's audience-oriented questions following three steps: (1) text analysis (to describe the linguistic features of the teacher's questions); (2) discourse practice analysis (to interpret the discursive practice); and (3) social practice analysis (to unveil the ideology of the speaker and explain the social-cultural background of language use).

The paper will aim to seek answers to the two research questions:

1. What are teachers' audience-oriented questioning strategies used in the EFL Reading classrooms?
2. What is the connection between teachers' questioning and students' learning behavior?

#### 4. Result and discussion

##### 4.1. Teachers' audience-oriented questioning strategies

Chang's questioning model comprises two categories, audience-oriented, and content-oriented questions. This paper only focused on the former type as there is a hypothesis that this type of question has had an impact on students' learning behavior. Before finding out about this connection we explored the frequency of the teacher's use of audience-oriented questions in 05 different function categories: *eliciting responses*, *class management/engagement*, *checking comprehension*, *soliciting agreement*, and *requesting confirmation/clarification*. Findings (indicated in Table 1) show that the three functions *eliciting responses*, *checking comprehension* and *soliciting agreement* were most frequently used, which accounted for 53.58%, 21.43%, and 14.29% respectively. *Requesting confirmation/clarification* (7.13%) as well as *class management/engagement* (3.57%) fell into the low-frequency area.

This result indicated that the questioning strategies employed by the teacher for a reading class may reflect the teacher's purposes of directing her instruction toward students' learning behavior. In reading lessons, eliciting-response questions are of utmost importance, especially in the pre-reading stages as it gives out chances for teachers to detect whether students have known a vocabulary or a particular piece of information so that it would save time not to conduct a time-wasting presentation of something students have known before. Similarly, checking comprehension might stand second in terms of frequency as almost all classes are aimed at students' comprehension and grasping of knowledge. These two questioning strategies went in line with Chang's (2012) study results. For the soliciting function, the frequency level may be a bit different from Chang's, where it stood fourth out of five.

**Table 1**

The frequency of teachers' use of audience-oriented questions

| <i>Audience-oriented question functions</i>     | <i>Examples</i>   | <i>Frequencies<br/>N = 84<br/>(100%)</i> |
|---|---|--|
| 1. <i>Eliciting responses</i>                   | They don't live one way, they travel from here to there. You have a phrase in Vietnamese. What is it? "du mục" So, in English, you say, ...? "nomadic" (A27)  | 53.58%                                   |
| 2. <i>Class management/engagement</i>           | What are you going to do when watching a video? (A45)   | 3.57%                                    |
| 3. <i>Soliciting agreement</i>                  | For example, I'm sick, I need some medicines, so I say "I take medicine", right? (A51)  | 14.29%                                   |
| 4. <i>Checking comprehension</i>                | If you have stomachache, you say "I feel sore". But you just come back home after school, your mother asks to do washing-up, you're tired. So, you say "I feel pain", what are they different? Sore and pain? (A63, A64, A65) | 21.43%                                   |
| 5. <i>Requesting confirmation/clarification</i> | Ethnic, maybe. It is ethnic? (A81)  | 7.13%                                    |

#### 4.2. *The connection between teacher's questioning and students' learning behavior*

To find out how teachers' audience-oriented questions might motivate students' learning attitudes and behavior, we are going to apply Fairclough's (1995) CDA framework with three interrelated processes of analysis, which are linked to three interrelated dimensions of a communicative event. Three steps (description, interpretation and explanation) were followed in the teacher discourse analysis. These steps are expected to help clarify linguistic features, discursive practice and social practice of the teacher's questions to explore their connection with students' learning behavior.

##### 4.2.1. *Eliciting responses question function*

Questions to elicit responses from students were mostly Wh-questions, followed by a few incomplete questions, Yes/No questions, or alternative questions, as in the following examples:

(A1) *How many new words are together?*

(A3) *What is the second one?*

(A20) *When do you need that one? When you have a broken arm or a broken leg, you use, ...?*

(A33) *Where is the island located?*

(A40) *Is there any further information about the character?*

(A43) *Do you think a leech is amazing?*

These question forms allowed the teacher to encourage students' thinking and produce responses which led to the introduction of a new concept or checking their existing knowledge, which serve the teacher's purpose of teaching reading lessons.

Fairclough (1995) referred to the situational context and the intertextual context as central to the process of interpretation. We might see that the teacher's questioning strategies here were influenced by the context of the reading lessons and classroom interaction.

(A34) *Have you heard about New Zealand?*

(A35) *Where is New Zealand located?*

(A36) *What is New Zealand famous for?*

The teacher asked these questions at the beginning of the lesson before starting the lesson "Endangered Culture". The topic of the reading text is "Endangered Culture" and the content of the reading text is about Maori, one of the ethnic minorities in New Zealand. The teacher's questioning was aimed at eliciting students' geography and social understanding of a country in the world. This is the act of arousing the topic of the reading lesson and the teacher planned to deliver these questions at the beginning, which indicated the upcoming content relating to New Zealand.

In another situation, the teacher gave out an additional exercise for unit 7 "My health". The content of the reading text is about a leech. Before asking her students to practice reading comprehension skills, she asked:

(A43) *Do you think a leech is amazing?*

(A44) *Nó mà cắn mình là nó gắn vào hút máu mình không nhả ra, đúng không?*

*(Author's translation: The leech bites and sticks to our body to suck our blood and it doesn't leave, right?)*

This situation was built up to lead students into the topic of the reading text. The teacher would like to construct her students' cognition and lead them to the next part of the lesson. Students as the audience were tied to changes in the situational context and provoked by the questions of the leech. This enabled students to prepare well for the next stage of reading comprehension. They were interested and excited about what was happening around the new lesson and motivated by questions that were familiar to their daily life. This questioning strategy is, therefore, believed to impact students' learning behavior. This finding was in line with Kalantari (2009) that questioning techniques could improve students' conversation performance and develop an interest in the lessons.

In order to understand the social practice foundation of the teacher's audience-oriented questions and how these questions exerted impacts on students' learning behaviors, the first principle of the constructivist learning theory was considered. Learning makes the learners engage in the world through sensory input and construct meaning out of it (Hein, 1991). The study revealed interesting evidence that the teacher tried to make questions and practical tenets such as setting the situation before leading students into the topic, and asking questions that relate to the topic of the lesson about the real world around students for sensory input. Students do not have to passively receive what exists "out there", but their learning are actively involved in different situations in the real world.

#### 4.2.2. *Checking comprehension question function*

The second most common question function used by the teacher in the researched reading classes is "checking comprehension". A particular example in unit 7 was taken into an account from the class observation. When the teacher planned to teach a new word, which is "allergy", she used a series of questions about 'being allergic' and modeled by the action of scratching her arms and back.

(A70) *"Be allergic" đi với giới từ nào?*

*(Author's translation: what preposition goes with "be allergic"?)*

(A71) *How about you? Are you allergic to anything? Are you allergic to onions? Are you allergic to seafood?*

(A72) *Một số trường hợp dị ứng, da mình bị gì?*

*(Author's translation: What symptoms are skin allergies?)*

One may consider why the teacher asked a series of questions about "being allergic to something". In terms of the context, the teacher was in the process of teaching vocabulary, and she taught a new word "allergy". However, she would like to expand its lexical form, meaning, and use by providing a preposition to follow an adjective: "be allergic to". Therefore, to help her students familiar with this combination, the teacher asked a series of questions using the phrase "to be allergic to". Thanks to Yes/No questions, the teacher might invite her students' agreement and help them to memorize the new lexical item.

The following examples of using the "checking comprehension" questioning function were observed in the stage of teaching vocabulary. Question forms to represent this function were mostly alternative questions with the conjunction "or" and incomplete questions, as seen in the questions below.

(A62) *We have 03 words: sore, pain, and hurt. All are the same or different?*

(A63) *Đau bụng quá, cần đi bệnh viện thôi, các em nói là, .... I feel pain or I feel sore?*



*(Author's translation: I have a stomachache, I need to visit the hospital, you would say: "I feel pain" or "I feel sore?" )*

(A64) *Nhưng khi các em đi học về mệt mỏi, mẹ yêu cầu lau nhà rửa chén, cả người mệt rũ rượi ra, các em nói là "I feel painful"?*

*(Author's translation: but when you came back home after school, your mother asked you to do the washing up. You're exhausted. So, you say "I feel painful"?)*

(A65) *How are they different? Sore and painful?*

In this situation, when teaching the compound noun "sore throat", the teacher asked her students about the difference or the similarity of the two words, "pain" and "sore". These two words were believed to confuse students in identifying their meaning and use. Thanks to this questioning strategy, the teacher utilized her experience in teaching to help students recognize. Through teaching the new word "sore throat", the teacher had a chance to convey the difference between these words and draw students' attention towards the distinction to avoid using these two words incorrectly, which might be due to a false understanding of collocation knowledge or context. The interaction by questioning helped students make clear what they were confused about and also enlarge their capacity for new words with their various meanings, which possibly support the practice of reading comprehension.

Explaining the use of this second question taxonomy from the constructivist learning theory, it is said that each meaning the teacher constructs are to make students receive the message better. We need to allow students to experience and provide close evidence in daily life to help their understanding by giving simple examples before coming to the reading comprehension stage. The essential activity of constructing meaning is mental: it happens in the mind. Therefore, providing questions that engage the mind is crucial for students in the process of accepting new knowledge and supports them to understand the concepts more easily. The result has been to stimulate students learning behavior.

#### 4.2.3. *Soliciting agreement question function*

The third most common question function employed is "soliciting agreement". For soliciting agreement, the teacher used the word "right" very frequently, as she believed this vocabulary would help her direct students toward an agreement with what she was stating in her utterances of instruction. The following is an example illustrating that teachers' questioning can have an impact on students' learning attitudes.

(A28) *Patient, còn có từ loại gì nữa nhĩ? Sometimes, it is a noun and sometimes, it is an adjective, right? Where do you see a lot of patients?*

*(Author's translation: Patient, what word form is it? ....)*

This word is an example that might make students confused with the meaning of the word "patient". "Patient" when being taught within the topic "health" (context) relates more to a person who is treated at a hospital. However, some students may confuse that "patient" refers to the state of being able to accept or tolerate delays, problems, or suffering without becoming annoyed or anxious. This is a reason why the teacher asked another question about adjective word form, she then made her students clear of its various meanings, thanks to her questioning strategies.

Thus, there is a consideration of the other principle of constructivist learning theory which claims that "learning is a social activity". This means that students learn when they speak and interact with each other. In the classroom, a teacher's questioning serves to activate the interaction

that encourages students to be involved in the lesson, if they are asked, shared, discussed, and confirmed. Therefore, a teacher's questioning is not only the interaction between the teacher and his/her students but the application of knowledge as an integral technique of learning. Therefore, teachers' questioning embedded with exciting situations in students' daily life plays a crucial role to connect students to absorbing new knowledge as input for reading a text. This is useful and necessary to engage learners in pursuing the flow of the lesson.

What is more, evidence for using the question function as a tool to solicit the audience's agreement is given below:

(A58) *Mình có một vài từ khác đồng nghĩa với destroy như damage/ruin, đúng không?*

*(Author's translation: We have some synonyms of destroy as damage/ruin, right?)*

(A59) *Danger, threat, risk, ... all of them are nouns, but endangered, threaten, and risked are verbs, right?*

This example revealed that the teacher would like to expand students' language knowledge. Besides learning the new words, her students need to know synonyms of the original word in the lesson as well as differentiate word forms such as a noun, an adjective, or an adverb. When understanding the meaning of the word and its relatives, her students can enrich their language knowledge and become more motivated in their learning. The more students capture new words, the more effective their studying of reading comprehension skills is.

It is also demonstrated in a principle of constructivist learning theory that learning involves language (Hein, 1991). This lays the foundation for the claim of Vygotsky (1962) that language and learning are inextricably intertwined. It creates a desire in using material and programs in the process of learning the language. Assumably, questions when used effectively can engage students in learning.

The analysis of the three question functions and quotation of relevant examples above showed that different question functions played distinctive roles in directing students' learning behavior. The findings pointed out that eliciting responses, checking comprehension, and soliciting agreement were the three most common question strategies used by the teacher in the studied reading classroom with an aim to engage her students in the course content, provoke their minds, and give hints or cues during the practice of teaching. The purpose of using questions posed by the teacher aimed at the objectives of the course, which is to assist learners to experience reading comprehension with different themes and build up their own source of vocabulary. Moreover, the teacher enabled students to improve new words as well as knowledge in a variety of fields such as culture, society, science, and life; therefore, using questions to elicit students' responses became a basic tool for the teacher to assist and encourage her students to expand sources of new words and to lead them into the new theme. As a result, the practice of teacher questioning supported, managed, and directed students' learning. All these questioning strategies in the examined reading classroom truly reflect many claims by Gall (1984, pp. 42-45) and Richards and Lockhart (1994, p. 185) on the pervasive use of questions.

The use of teacher questioning strategies to influence classroom behavior can be explained based on the social background of language teaching practice in general and Vietnamese educational settings in particular. The power teachers are prescribed in classrooms has been discussed so immensely that we all believe that teachers may use their power to influence their students in teaching, to some extent. In this particular context, besides learners' autonomy encouraged the teacher needed to activate students' active participation in the lesson by making

appropriate and relevant questions. This is the right that teachers are completely ready to employ. Through the analysis, the teacher's ideology was also unveiled. It is understood that she would like her students to fulfill classroom tasks through which their language competence would be enhanced.

In terms of explanation of the specific context, it is also worth mentioning that the result from the classroom observations showed that the interaction between the teacher's questioning and students' response was sometimes not smooth. The teacher used questions to solicit agreement in order to reduce students' pressure when they were in trouble seeking answers but blocked to think of appropriate answers and even took much time to draw out their answers. At that time, rather than asking questions to get information, the teacher made a change of question function from *focusing information* into *soliciting agreement* to appeal to her student's agreement with her propositions. This shift helped students tackle their problems and understood the teacher's instructions more easily, thanks to the teacher's interaction with her students by questioning. It is also found that the level of students' perception was affected by the teacher's questions. If the questions were so difficult, the students would be out of the lesson. That was why the teacher always maintained asking questions to check their understanding. In addition, questions to request confirmation/clarification or class management/engagement (the other two types) were used less frequently because of the context of higher education classes. Students at this higher level of cognitive thinking seemed not to benefit much from these questioning functions, but rely on more subtle question functions as indicated in the study. This is explicable as the Reading 2 syllabus defines a balance of classroom hours and self-study. Also, the functions presented in audience-oriented questions corresponded with the standard of the course requirements and expected learning outcomes defined in the unit description of module Reading 2 issued by the English Department, University of Foreign Languages and International Studies, Hue University. Accordingly, a variety of subskills for reading mentioned in the unit described as "making and confirming predictions", "identifying the main ideas", "identifying different types of supporting details", "recognizing examples in a text", "following chronological sequence", "comparing information from two readings" or "supporting general statements in one text with examples from another text", so teachers' audience-oriented questions contributed a large part to stimulate students' learning in terms of taking for granted the expected learning outcomes against the syllabus and curriculum.

## 5. Conclusions & implications

In conclusion, the study has worked out answers to the two research questions. Firstly, it revealed the three most common types of audience-oriented question functions that the teacher used for conducting classroom management tasks including eliciting responses, checking comprehension, and soliciting agreement. They helped the teacher organize her classroom activity and assisted her to manage the class well. Secondly, the examination of teacher questioning and its connection to student learning behavior from a discourse perspective based on Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of CDA (1995) has brought about remarks on classroom practice and teacher talk. More specifically, the linguistic analysis revealed the teacher's use of question forms that corresponded accordingly with the functions for a reading class such as Wh-questions, Yes/No questions, and alternative questions. Together with question forms, the use of topical vocabulary was also focused to orient the students' classroom behavior toward the teaching content, which resulted in increasing the interest and expectation of students and preparing them for the approaching of the reading texts. Next, the interpretation of discursive practice showed the teacher's intention in creating classroom interaction by realizing discourse features in their questioning patterns to aim at eliciting responses from students, checking whether they understood,

and soliciting agreement from them, all of which were primarily teaching objectives and main aims of the teacher's teaching plan. This process also helped to maintain the relationship between the teacher and her students, an essential component of classroom interaction. Finally, in the interpretative analysis of social practice, the ideology and power of the teacher have been made obvious when it is understood why teachers made such questioning strategies and how she embedded her discourse in carrying out the job of language instruction.

We can conclude that teachers' appropriate questioning behavior can help extract relevant responses from the student. Their questioning strategies reflect their questioning competency applicable to the specific form of problems arising in classrooms. Teachers might also measure the level of each student in participating in the lesson and realize learning attitudes by using appropriate questioning strategies and then employ approaches to stimulate and promote learning. In other words, the teachers' questioning and students' learning behaviors are inter-connected and thus, have impacts on each other.

From the results of this study, implications for classroom practice and teacher questioning in language classrooms can be worked out. Knowledge about how teacher questioning can position the order of classroom interaction and direct student learning behavior should be used as a reflective tool in critical discussion of classroom discourse and its impacts on language education. Teacher questioning should not only be clear in form, methodologically purposeful in meaning but also ideologically influential to students learning. The interaction between teachers and students in language classrooms should also be explored more from a discourse perspective to maximize the capacity of teacher talk in terms of effectiveness in EFL language teaching and learning.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was funded by the Ministry of Education and Training, Vietnam via Science and Technology Project No. B2020-DHH-01.

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