

CLASSROOM INTERACTION AND TEACHERS' UPTAKE IN RESPONSE TO TEACHERS' REFERENTIAL AND DISPLAY QUESTIONS IN EFL SETTING

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Abstract

One extensive strategy used for interaction in language classroom is teacher questioning. The types of questions used by teachers may very likely affect both the quality and quantity of the classroom interaction. In spite of the large number of students participating in EFL classes, there are few descriptive evidence on teacher talk in Iranian university English classrooms. This qualitative/quantitative study as a classroom research focused on two question types, display and referential to explore the questioning types and elicited responses by observing recurring patterns of questioning behavior and their interactive effects through non-participant observation. The audio-recorded data were transcribed using Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) conventions. The findings revealed that the two most common and efficient questioning types used were probing and code-switching indicating that the use of different types of teachers' questions does not guarantee the responses elicitation. Put differently, attention must be paid to questioning strategies that can serve as good techniques to elicit responses and promote interaction.

Keywords: Classroom Interaction, Uptake, Referential Questions, Display Questions

1. Introduction

Teacher talk (TT), kind of language used by teacher for instruction in the classroom, is one of the major ways through which instructors can communicate with learners. It is also one of the primary means of controlling learners' behavior. Richards (1992: 471) defined TT as "that variety of language sometimes used by teachers when they are in the process of teaching. In trying to communicate with learners, teachers often simplify their speech, giving it many of the characteristics of foreigner talk and other simplified styles of speech addressed to language learners".

As a critical part of classroom teaching, TT did not arouse attention of academics as early as those studies on teaching (Ellis, 2008). The study of TT owes much to the development of classroom research, which investigates the process of teaching and learning as they occur in classroom setting Allwright & Bailey (1991) maintain that it

simply tries to look into what occurs inside the classroom. Its aim is to identify the phenomena that promote or hamper learning in the classroom. The growth of interest in the analysis of teacher language has been stimulated by the rejection of language teaching method as the principal determinant of successful learning (Richards & Schmidt 2010).

To confound the matter, it is compelling to say that quite a few researches have discussed the relationship between TT and language learning. Nunan (1991, p. 334) pointed out that teachers, through the language that they use in the classrooms, could achieve their objectives in regard with their teaching plan. Therefore, TT is of crucial important in the organization of the classrooms. On the other hand, in terms of acquisition, he believed that TT is also important because "it is one the major sources of comprehensible target language input the learner is likely to receive." The biggest issue in TT research is to determine what makes TT an aid to learning in the classroom. Thus, in order to investigate how to make TT comprehensible and available as a source of target language input, a number of descriptive studies on various types of formal characteristics and linguistic modifications of L2 TT have been done (Krashen, 1985; Morrel, 2004, 2007). Specifically, more recently, a much greater role has been attributed to interactive features of classroom behaviors, such as turn-taking, questioning and answering, negotiation of meaning, and feedback (Morell, 2004, 2007).

From among these interactive features of classroom Lee (2006,2007) and Dalton-Puffer (2007) sees questioning an important aspect of TT through which a variety of pedagogical and social actions are carried out, for example, introducing topics, demonstrating concepts, eliciting forms of reasoning, correcting grammar, or even reproaching. With the rise of communicative approach, much attention has been placed on the ways teachers involve learners in classroom interaction. Teacher questioning is a popular way of creating opportunities for interaction. The types of questions and questioning strategies used by the teachers to elicit responses may very likely affect both the quality and quantity of interaction.

Studies relating to ESL teaching have pointed out the need for teachers' questioning (Brown 2001; Nunan 1991). In second language classrooms, where learners often do not have a great number of tools, teacher's questions provide necessary stepping stones to communication. Questioning is reported as one of the commonly used strategies, and in some classrooms, teachers use more than half of the class time exchanging questions and answers. Moreover, in studies exploring the contribution of teachers' questions in second language classrooms, these questions play a crucial role in language acquisition. They can be used to allow the learners to keep participating in the discourse and even modify it (Richards & Lockhart 1994: 185; Walsh, 2002; Wu, 1993). The following are functions that questioning serves in the classrooms (Richards, 1996):

1. Stimulating and maintaining students' interest.
2. Encouraging students to think and focus on the content of the lesson.
3. Enabling a teacher to clarify what a student has said.
4. Enabling a teacher to elicit particular structures or vocabulary items.
5. Enabling teachers to check students' understanding.
6. Encouraging student participation in a lesson.

There are many ways to classify teacher questions, and each classification has its own criterion. An early study of L1 classrooms distinguished between "closed" and "open-ended" questions (Barnes, 1969, cited in Chaudron, 1988). Another way to categorize questioning is in terms of convergent questions or divergent questions (Richard, 1996).

Still another classification which has received much attention is that of Long & Sato's (1983) distinction between display and referential questions: display questions are those questions for which the answer is already known to the teacher, and referential questions are those for which the response is not known to the teacher. The supposition is that referential questions would promote greater learner productivity, and display questions would be less likely to promote more meaningful communication between the teacher and the learner.

A number of studies have been conducted on the use of teacher questions in the language classrooms. Long & Sato (1983) analyzed the forms and functions of classroom speech of 6 ESL teachers, as well as the speech of 36 native speakers in informal conversations with non-native speakers. By analyzing the language data collected through tape-recording and by comparing the findings of ESL teacher speech with those of 36 native speakers in informal conversation with non-native speakers, they found significant differences in the relative properties of the two types of questions asked in the two settings. The six teachers were found to ask significantly more

display questions (51%) than referential questions (14%). The native speakers in the informal conversational setting, on the other hand, asked a majority (76%) of referential and virtually no display questions.

Following Long & Sato (1983), Brock (1986) conducted an instructional experiment on the effects of these two types of questions on learners' target language production. The participants of this study were four teachers and twenty-four advanced ESL learners. Brock trained two teachers in the use of referential questions and encouraged them to use these to discuss a reading passage and a vocabulary lesson. The results showed that the treatment teachers obviously used significantly more referential than display questions (173 to 21), quite the reverse of control teachers (24 to 117). Most importantly, in addition to this finding, Brock found that referential questions can promote students to provide significantly longer and syntactically more complex responses than display questions.

The findings of Brock's study were consistent with those of Nunan's research (1987), where he showed that the use of referential questions by teachers resulted in more complex language by the students. Moreover, students' responses elicited by referential questions contained significantly more features characteristic of genuine communication in naturalistic settings than those elicited by display questions. Findings from the studies above suggest that open-ended, referential questions may increase the amount of speaking learners do and the complexity of students' responses in the classroom. According to Swain's (1993) output hypothesis, which argues that output may be an important factor in successful SLA, the implications which could be properly drawn from the studies above is that open-ended and referential questions may be important tools in language classroom, especially in those context in which the classroom provides learners their only opportunity to produce the target language.

In her study, Musumeci (1996) investigated teacher-learner exchanges in three college-level content-based language classrooms. Three 50-minute Italian lessons, conducted by three different teachers, native or non-native speakers of the L2, Italian, were videotaped and transcribed. The results revealed that teachers dominated classroom talk, speaking 33, 35, and 36 minutes out of 50, with remaining time devoted to student speech and silence. In addition, the three teachers initiated the majority of the verbal exchanges by asking display questions, accounting for 84%, 69%, and 90% of all teacher-initiated exchanges. While the teacher's preferred mode of initiating exchanges entailed the use of display questions, students, on the other hand, asked all referential questions to initiate requests.

Studies on teachers' questioning practice reviewed above all focused on ESL context. To examine teachers' questioning practice in EFL context, Wu (1993) videotaped four English language lessons of four Cantonese teachers who taught in two secondary schools. Contrary to the conclusion reached by Brock (1986) and Nunan (1987), Wu (1993) found that neither display questions nor referential questions were effective in eliciting responses from the Hong Kong students. In addition, referential questions and open-ended questions are less effective than display and closed questions in eliciting responses from students. Wu's study suggests that in the Hong Kong context, referential questions may not result in more student output or better quality classroom interaction.

Classroom research has also demonstrated that certain types of questioning behavior have persisted over many years (Nunan, 1990; 1991). It has often been observed that teachers tend to ask more closed questions than open-ended questions, and more display questions than referential questions (Long & Sato, 1983; Musumeci, 1996). However, closed questions and display questions serve only to facilitate the recall of information rather than to generate students' ideas and classroom communication (Richard, 1996). Also, these questions may provide limited opportunities for students to produce and practice the target language. Open-ended and referential question, on the other hand, provide learners with opportunities to engage in meaningful communicative language use to effectively acquire a foreign language. Thornbury believed that answering referential questions demands a greater effort and depth of processing on the part of both teacher and learners. Further he argued that "referential questions touch parts beyond the reach of other types of question" (Thornbury 1996: 282).

Ellis (2008) explained that referential questions are questions which are genuinely information-seeking. Brock (1986) found that teachers who ask more referential questions generally receive longer and more grammatically complex responses from their students. Lynch (1991) argued that teachers should ask referential questions because (a) learners tend to give longer answers than they do to display questions and (b) learners will be less willing to answer questions if their purpose is always to test knowledge. Lynch (1991) added that only with referential questions can students practice initiating interactions.

According to Ellis (2008), in language lessons where the focus is on form, display questions are likely to predominate, whereas in content-focused lessons referential questions may be overwhelmingly used. Many studies (White & Lightbown, 1984; Lynch, 1991; Ellis, 2008; Pica, 1994) recommend the use of referential questions in place of display ones because of their authentic communicative value. Lightbown and Spada (2006) noted that teachers ask display questions not because they are interested in the answer, but because they want to get their learners to display their knowledge of the language.

By focusing on the sequential production of the questions and the interpretive choices and methods they enact, Lee (2006) demonstrated that display questions are of the essential resources whereby language teachers and their students collaboratively organize their lessons and produce language pedagogy as course of action. He further concluded that it would be premature to dismiss display questions as an ineffective teaching variable for language acquisition before looking into the process by which the teachers and students produce and use them, and what they accomplish in doing so. He proposed that close sequential analysis shows that it is in the production of interactional exchanges that display questions are made comprehensible; topics are introduced, meanings are clarified, answers are tried, and resources are produced.

Having examined the literature, we see that some mixed findings have been reported. Although the results would more tap into effect of the referential questions than into display questions, the scene is not devoid of counter-evidence like those found in (Wu, 1993), discussed earlier. The present study set out to examine classroom interactions through teachers' use of questioning in EFL classrooms which is quite rare in comparison with ESL classrooms. The study, specifically, aimed to investigate two types of questions, referential and display questions, asked by EFL teachers and learners' interaction in the classroom and the effect of these types of questions on classroom interaction and teachers' uptake. Based on the literature reviewed, we think that these two types of questions can, on the one hand, include other question types and, on the other hand, are more questioner-oriented than other classifications, where their focus is more on the respondents. Regarding the aim of the study and excluding other classifications explicated in the literature, the following research questions are formulated:

- 1) To what extent do teachers employ referential and display at university classroom interaction in EFL setting?
- 2) Which type of questions (referential or display) enhance teachers' uptake better at university classroom interaction in EFL setting?
- 3) Are teachers' questions facilitative or inhibiting with regard to the learners' responses?

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants

In this study, two lecturers at the Department of English at Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran, who were teaching in different sections of the Conversation II course in the Department, together with their students were selected as intact classes. The lecturers were two female Iranians, teaching English for an average of 13.6 years. The number of students, who had already passed Conversation I, were thirty male and female sophomore majoring in English.

2.2 Instrumentation

To investigate teachers' questioning, a research method called "naturalistic inquiring" (Allwright & Bailey, 1991) was adopted to observe what is really happening in our foreign language classrooms. "Naturalistic inquiry" refers to the researcher's trial not to intervene in the research setting and not to control naturally occurring events, because the research aims to describe and to understand the process rather than testing specific hypotheses about cause-and-effect relationship. For the purpose of this study, the following methods were used to collect research data: 1. Non-participant classroom observations of teacher/student verbal interaction, and 2. Audio-recording of classroom verbal interaction.

2.3 Theoretical framework

For the analysis of classroom discourse, a three-turn sequence, often referred to as IRF (Initiation-Response-Follow-up) by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975, 1992), or triadic dialogue by Lemke (1990, cited in Nassaji & Wells, 2000:379) was used. This model of analyzing classroom discourse proposes that classroom discourse can be divided into a series of levels. Starting with the largest, these levels are lesson, transaction, exchange, move, and

act. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) have been most influential in describing the structure of exchanges, and especially teaching exchanges. They argue that a typical exchange is made up of three moves: first, an initiating move (I) typically made by the teacher; second, a responding move (R) from a student; and third a feedback move (F) by the teacher. Mostly found in classroom interaction, this sequence begins with the teacher's question followed by the student's answer(s) in the second turn. The turn routinely goes back to the teacher who offers feedback on the correctness or adequacy of the second turn answers.

The main reason for the use of Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) framework for this study is that it can fit the goal of this study, namely, to identify the type of questions used by the teacher in EFL classroom. The focus is on the teacher talk itself and is not intending to examine goals more associated with ethnographic and sociocultural perspectives. While such issues are undoubtedly important, an understanding of the types and functions of questions would help greatly with interpreting the findings from any investigations into such issues. Taking question-and-answer sessions as parallel, ethnographic and sociocultural interpretations of such discourse are generally based on an assumption of the underlying IRF pattern identified by Sinclair and Coulthard (Hall, 1998). It is believed that a similar understanding of the patterns in questioning would aid further investigations, and this study can therefore be viewed as an attempt to provide a foundation for further ethnographic and sociocultural studies of instructions.

This type of sequential relation is quite prevalent in teacher-fronted whole class discussions (Nassaji & Wells, 2000:382). Various analytic examinations have been carried out to identify what types of questions are initiated in the first turn and to what extent they are pedagogically effective (Brock, 1986; Lynch, 1991). Equally essential in this sequence is the role of the third turn, because its position implicates the teacher's uptake of the students' second turn response. There have been several categorical formulations to capture the primary roles the third turn plays, such as offering evaluation, feedback, or follow-up on the student's second turn (Carlsen, 1991; Nassaji & Wells, 2000; Wells, 1993).

2.4 Procedures

The teachers' consent for observation of their classes was gained and they responded positively to the researchers' request. It should be noted that each class met twice a week, 13 weeks during the whole course, which made up fifty-two 90-minute sessions overall. These classes were audio-recorded and the interactions were transcribed accordingly, using simplified conversation analysis transcription conventions, adopted from Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson (1974). Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) 'triadic dialogue' framework was used to identify the sequential patterns of classroom discourse. All of the moves were transcribed for analysis. To address the research question in this study, a discursal unit rather than isolated questions was used as the main unit of analysis in this study. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were employed. On the qualitative scale, the tokens "Facilitative and Inhibiting" were used as nominal scales. On the quantitative scales, the data were tabulated in frequencies to have their percentages. Then, the data were compared by means of Chi-square procedure to note the significance of the differences between the two types of questions.

3. Result

3.1 Patterns of classroom interaction

The data revealed that the two lecturers dominated classroom talk most of time, and controlled the topic of discussion, with a little time devoted to student speech. Both teachers initiated the majority of their verbal exchanges with students by questions (87%), and called upon certain students or volunteers to answer their questions, but little student-initiated exchanges were found (13%). Students seldom asked questions in both classes, but in case they asked, they preferred to ask teachers in private; either in a small group setting or one-to-one exchange.

Upon examination, the pattern of classroom interaction found in this study confirmed the dominance of the IRF pattern of teacher-student discourse. An example below shows the three-part structure of classroom conversation:

Excerpt 1:

T1: What's the name of the new governor of California? (Initiation)

S1: Arnold. (Response)

T1: That's right. (Follow-up)

However, when the teachers' question (initiation) elicited incorrect response, or failed to elicit any response, the teachers employed other questioning strategies such as repetition, simplification, code-switching, and so forth to encourage the students' oral participation in class until the expected response is obtained. The following instance illustrates Teacher 2's questioning strategy of repetition to make his question comprehensible and answerable with the learners' linguistic proficiency so as to obtain the expected reply.

Excerpt 2:

T2: Number one, where does the writer's family live? (Initiation)

Ss: (Silent)

T2: This is the basic question from our story, right? Where does the writer's family live? (Questioning strategy)

S2: Langton. (Response)

T2: yes, that's correct. (Evaluation)

In the following exchange, Teacher 2 asked a referential question in the first utterance, where no answer could be elicited from the students in the second utterance. To encourage the students' oral participation in class, Teacher 1 employed a variety of questioning strategies such as repeating the original question and providing or-choice until the question was answered.

Excerpt 3:

T2: Ok. First of all what should Lorenzo do? Any suggestion? What should Lorenzo do?

Ss: (Silent)

T2: What's the suggestion?

S3: xxx

T2: Say little louder. How about your group? What should Lorenzo do? What do you think he should do? Who can give me an answer?

Ss: (Silent)

T2: Come on. Somebody gives me an answer or we just waste time.

Ss: (Silent)

T2: You don't know. Should he stay with his wife and children, or should he get divorced and to be with his lover?

Ss: (silent)

T2: What do you think?

Ss: (Silent)

T2: How would you feel if you were Lorenzo?

S4: he should divorce and...keep in touch with his children.

T2: Ok. Leave his wife. And keep in touch with his children.

3.2 Teachers' questioning types

Based on Long & Sato's (1983) classification, display questions ask the respondent to provide or to display knowledge of information already known by the questioner, while referential questions request information not known by the questioner. The following questions were found in the data:

Display questions:

T 1: Can anybody tell me another word for rich?

Number one, where does the writer's family live?

So can someone tell what the past tense of "think" is?

T2:

Adjective and adverbs, they're both used to describe. Which one goes with noun? Adjectives or adverbs?

What is synonym?

What is the meaning of blind date? What does it mean to go on a blind date?

Referential questions:

T1:

What are some ways to contact or keep in touch with old classmate?

Can anybody tell me other things that make you unhappy with your friend?
 Anyone has an example of persistent problems?

T2:

How about you? What characteristics should a good friend have?
 What are your expectations from your mother? What about your father?

Table 1:
 Number and percentage of display and referential questions asked by two teachers

	Teacher 1		Teacher 2	
Display question	174	83%	146	53%
Referential question	36	17%	127	47%
Total	210	100%	273	100%

Table 1 demonstrates the number and percentage of display and referential questions asked by the two teachers in this study. It should be noted that it is not easy to calculate exactly how many questions were asked by each teacher since some of the questions involved questioning strategies such as repetition, paraphrasing, decomposition, probing, and so forth. To get the number of questions used by the teachers in this study as exactly as possible, questions that were paraphrased, repeated, and simplified were considered as the same questions, and questions that were decomposed, or probed, were considered as different questions.

As the table shows, Teacher 1 asked more display questions than referential questions (174 vs. 36). Teacher 1 asked more display questions in her class; she was not seeking information from the student but rather checking up on the students' comprehension or whether or not the students had done the class activity. It was found that most of her questions were directly from the textbook: questions about vocabulary, reading comprehension, grammar and so forth and most of her questions did not require much explanation or reflection but specific definite answer. Since the required answer was short, there was time for her to ask more questions and more students would have the chance to answer her questions. To sum up, the general pattern of her questioning practice in class was that she posed each question in teacher-fronted discussion and called on individual student to answer the question and then moved on the next question. Anyone who answered the questions in class could have extra point on classroom participation. Therefore, the students were willing to answer the questions in class voluntarily.

Like Teacher 1, Teacher 2 also used a number of display questions to check up on the students in some way to see if the students had done their work or had understood what he had said. One clear distinction making his questioning practice different from teacher 1 was that teacher 2 also used a number of referential questions to seek information from the students. It was observed that he often asked the students to discuss questions related to the topic in group discussion. During their discussion, Teacher 2 would circulate around and assist the students with vocabulary, translation, and so forth. Very often he posed his question in group discussion and elicited individual response. One interesting finding was that when asking the questions in the textbook or handout, Teacher 2 often expanded the questions to relate the students' personal experience. For instance, after asking the reading comprehension questions, he would pose another question by asking, "What would you do if you were in his place?" or "What would you feel if you were her?" By doing so, he let his students think and express their point of views in someone's situation.

3.3 Students responses

To determine the role of questions based on the research questions in this study, i.e., facilitative or inhibitive, in this paper, students' responses solicited by the teacher are classified into two categories: 1) restricted and 2) elaborate. A restricted response is defined by Wu (1994:57) as a word or a simple sentence, and in contrast, an elaborate response is defined as two or more sentences linked by various cohesive or coherent devices. Some examples of students' responses in this study are:

Restricted:

T1: Who can tell me what's one thing women want? What is one thing women want?
 S5: Handsome.

T2: What's the name of the new government of California?

S6: Arnold.

Elaborate:

T1: Last question, Number 5. What are some ways to contact or keep in touch with old classmates?

S7: Send mail.

T1: Good. Send mail.

S7: Yeah. Contact on the cell phone.

T1: Cell phone.

S7: Yeah. And go to coffee shop to drink coffee.

T2: How about you? What do you think? Give us some example.

S8: He should go. And then he should stay and live with his children.

Table 2:
Number of the students' restricted and elaborate responses

	Teacher 1		Teacher 2	
Restricted response	130	95%	156	90%
Elaborate response	7	5%	18	10%
Total	137	100%	174	100%

By analyzing the discourse of students in the two classes, it was found that the responses in both classes were overwhelmingly restricted to words and phrases, illustrating that the students tended to talk less. However, on closer examination of the classroom data, it was observed that the students in Teacher 1's class appeared to negotiate meaning more than those in Teacher 2's class because more elaborate responses and sustained negotiation were found in Teacher 1's class and they often occurred in group discussion but not in whole-class discussion. Furthermore, the students' elaborate responses in Teacher 1's class were often elicited by referential questions (about 95%). In other words, referential questions could better generate elaborate responses in Teacher 1's class, and could be considered as "Facilitative" questions in Teacher 1's class, which facilitate more interactions in her class.

Conversely, although there were 36 referential questions in Teacher 2's class, only one of them elicited one student's elaborate response. The students' elaborate responses in Teacher 2's class were often generated by display questions though their elaborate responses were not so many. About 83% elaborate responses in Teacher 2's class were elicited by the display questions, suggesting that display questions could better elicit the students' output production in Teacher 2's class, so it is this type of question which is called "Facilitative" in Teacher 2's class. In other words, the findings indicated each teacher's question type that elicited the students' elaborate responses was quite different. Table 3 illustrated the relationship between the students' elaborate responses and the question types.

Table 3:
The relationship between the students' elaborate responses and the question type

	Elaborate responses in T1's class		Elaborate responses in T2's class	
Display question	6	83%	1	5%
Referential question	1	17%	17	95%
Total	7	100%	18	100%

4. Discussion

4.1 The patterns of classroom interaction

By examining the pattern of interactions, the sequences of both classes went like this: the teachers asked the students questions; the students answered; then the teachers reacted to the answers. The pattern of interaction was like IRF (Initiation-Response-Follow-up). However, it was observed that the sequence was not always

complete. Very often when the teachers asked the questions for the first time, the students might not answer. If there was no response at all, both teachers tended to employ an array of questioning strategies to help elicit the students' responses. Similarly, if the responses were inappropriate, the participating teachers would deploy a variety of questioning strategies to elicit possible answers from the learners. Despite these variations, it is obvious that, normally the teachers were in control of speaking turns. It was observed that both teachers dominated classroom talk, initiated the majority of their verbal exchanges with the students by means of a question followed by the selection of particular student to respond. In spite of their efforts to ask a lot of questions to give the students more opportunities to speak up, the investigated classes were teacher centered. Not only did the teachers talk a lot, but the teachers usually controlled the topics that were discussed in the classes. Although it was found that Teacher 1 tried to conduct her class in somewhat more student-centered fashion by engaging her students in pair and group work discussion, still, her talk dominated the whole-class participation. One possible reason that could account for both teachers' preference for this teacher-centered classroom might be the advantages of control and efficiency (Garton, 2002). However, according to Van Lier (1996, cited in Garton, 2002:48), the advantages may limit students' initiation. He mentioned the following consequences that might be encountered:

. . . this efficiency comes at the cost of reduced student participation, less expressive language use, a loss of contingency, and severe limitations on the students' employment of initiative and self-determination (p.184).

As mentioned in the literature review section, "within the IRF structure teachers usually holds the floor by controlling the turn-taking, presenting 'closed' questions to students and deciding who will answer and how, thereby providing little opportunity for student-initiated discussion" (Hardman & Williamson, 1998:6).

4.2 Questioning types and students responses

Most responses in both classes were restricted to words and phrases, illustrating that the students tend to talk as little time as possible. This finding is consistent with Wu's (1993) clarifying the point that neither display questions nor referential questions were effective in eliciting responses from the Iranian students. However, through a closer inspection of the students' interactions, responses in both classes revealed that a number of elaborate responses occurred in Teacher 1's class and such elaborative responses were often generated by referential questions. That is, referential questions could better dig out the students' elaborate responses in Teacher 1's class. It appears that Teacher 1 tended to use this type of questions to seek information, to negotiate with the students to achieve genuine communicative purposes. Teacher 1's class findings also lend support to the previous studies that maintained referential questions could result in more complex linguistic production than display questions (Long & Sato, 1983; Brock, 1986). However, one might argue that if referential questions worked effectively in eliciting students' responses in Teacher 1's class, why 47% referential questions occurred in Teacher 1's only resulted in 10% elaborate responses. It seemed that some of the referential questions could not elicit any elaborate responses from the learners in Teacher 1's class. If that is the case, how one can state that referential questions are better eliciting students' responses in Teacher 1's class? Certainly, there were cases that referential questions failed to elicit any elaborate responses from the students in Teacher 1's class. However there were too many reasons accounting for why students kept silent or talked less in both classes observed. Students might be capable of answering teachers' questions but are simply unwilling to contribute verbally because of factors other than linguistic competence, and needless to mention that the analysis of the study only focused on the linguistic factors. In other words, the researcher only focused on the relationship between different types of questions asked by teachers and the elaborative responses elicited from students to explore how the students' second language production in class was influenced by the teachers' questioning practices.

Examining the classroom data in Teacher 2' class, however, it was found that referential questions did not work much as expected in Teacher 2's class since the referential questions often failed to elicit any of the students' elaborative responses in Teachers' 2's class, suggesting that referential questions might not necessarily result in more student output or better quality classroom interaction in certain classroom context. Display questions, on the other hand, prevailed and worked effectively in Teacher 2's class. It seemed that students in teacher 2's class favored the display questions because they required only one possible answer or very limited set of answers. Many reasons account for why Teacher 2 used a large number of display questions in her teaching. It can be postulated that the main purpose of Teacher 2's questions was either to do language practice

or to evaluate whether the students could understand the material they were reading. And display questions were good enough to serve this instructional purpose. Furthermore, it was found that Teacher 2 paid much attention to classroom management. Thus, it was better to put students under control than to give them opportunities to do free talking. That stands reason to why display questions in Teacher 2's class prevailed all his instruction. As Musumeci (1996) pointed out, display questions can serve several functions in the classroom. Not only can display questions test learners' knowledge of subject matter, maintain attention or arouse curiosity, but they can discipline, manage lesson, and, in the traditional language classroom, to elicit production of particular grammatical forms as well.

Findings in this study indicated that each teacher's questioning type to elicit elaborate responses from the students was quite different. In other words, both types of questions have their places in classrooms and teacher should use them adequately to achieve certain purposes. Otherwise, teachers' questions may hamper classroom interaction. As Carlson (1991, p.171) indicated: "teacher questions may, at times, discourage students from speaking"; therefore, it is important to implement question practices adequately. Moreover, the use of different types of teachers' questions does not guarantee to elicit the students' responses. Attention must also be paid to questioning strategies. In other words, it is not enough to focus on the types of teacher questions only; questioning strategies can serve good techniques to elicit the students' responses and to promote classroom interaction.

4.3 Whole-class discussion vs. group work

Compared to the students' responses in Teacher 2's class, more elaborate responses and sustained negotiation were found in Teacher 1's class. It is interesting to note that such elaborate responses in Teacher 1's class were often elicited in group discussion. One possible reason maybe that the students were afraid of speaking in front of the class, so the students tended to talk less in the whole-class discussion. This finding is consistent with Musumeci's (1996) finding that students preferred to talk during individual activities in small-group or one-to-one settings, rather than in front of the whole class. More importantly, such sustained negotiations taking place in the group discussion are believed to have a great deal of advantages for learning.

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