

# Language Teaching and Educational Research

e-ISSN 2636-8102

Volume 3, Issue 1 | 2020

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**To cite this article:**

Şimşek, A., & Kuru-Gönen, S. İ. (2020). Raising awareness of EFL teachers on question types and pedagogical goals: An analysis through classroom modes. *Language Teaching and Educational Research (LATER)*, 3(1), 56-75. <https://doi.org/10.35207/later.702179>

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## Research Article

# Raising awareness of EFL teachers on question types and pedagogical goals: An analysis through classroom modes

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### Abstract

Questioning is one of the most frequent strategies used by teachers during classroom interaction. Therefore, teachers employ different type(s) of questions during classroom interaction due to the uniqueness of each language classroom. This study was conducted to identify the question types asked by teachers and discover the pedagogical goals of these questions. Besides, teachers' opinions regarding question types they asked during classroom were investigated. A mixed-method research design was followed. Quantitative data was gathered through a descriptive analysis of questions types used in the classroom. Qualitative data was obtained via semi-structured interviews and stimulated recalls based on classroom observations. Three EFL teachers working at a private university preparatory school participated in this study. Their classes were observed by one of the researchers three times. The video and audio recordings were analyzed and then semi-structured interviews and stimulated recalls were carried out. The results of the study yielded that referential and display questions were the two most common question types. While referential questions were common in classroom context mode, display questions were much more common than referential questions in materials mode. The number of referential questions mostly doubled the number of display questions in classroom context mode. Even though teachers are not aware of the name of the question types, they use the questions based on the pedagogic goals of the classroom.

**Received**  
11 March 2020

**Accepted**  
09 May 2020

**Keywords**  
classroom interaction  
classroom modes  
teacher questions

**Suggested APA citation:** Şimşek, A., & Kuru-Gönen, S. İ. (2020). Raising awareness of EFL teachers on question types and pedagogical goals: An analysis through classroom modes. *Language Teaching and Educational Research (LATER)*, 3(1), 56-75. <https://doi.org/10.35207/later.702179>

### Note(s) from the author(s)

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»This paper does not require an ethics approval document according to ULAKBİM's (TR INDEX) new coverage criteria as the data were collected before 2020.

### Author(s)' statements on ethics and conflict of interest

**Ethics statement:** We hereby declare that research/publication ethics and citing principles have been considered in all the stages of the study. We take full responsibility for the content of the paper in case of dispute.

**Statement of interest:** We have no conflict of interest to declare.

**Author contribution disclosure:** Both authors contributed equally to this study.

**Funding:** None

**Acknowledgements:** None

# Yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin soru türleri ve pedagojik hedefler konusunda farkındalığını arttırmak: Mikro bağlamlara göre analiz

## Öz

Soru sorma sınıf etkileşimi sırasında öğretmenler tarafından en sık kullanılan stratejilerden biridir. Her dil sınıfının eşsiz doğası gereği, öğretmenler farklı soru türleri kullanırlar. Bu çalışma öğretmenler tarafından sorulan soruların türlerini belirlemek ve bu soruların pedagojik hedeflerini keşfetmek amacıyla yapılmıştır. Ayrıca öğretmenlerin sınıfta sordukları soru türlerine ilişkin görüşleri de incelenmiştir. Karma yöntem araştırma modeli kullanılmıştır. Nicel veriler, sınıfta kullanılan soru türlerinin tanımlayıcı bir analizi ile toplanmıştır. Niteliksel veriler ise, yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler ve sınıf gözlemlerine dayalı uyarılmış hatırlama röportajları ile elde edilmiştir. Özel bir üniversitenin Hazırlık Programında çalışan üç yabancı dil öğretmeni bu çalışmaya katılmıştır. Dersler, araştırmacı tarafından üçer kez gözlemlenmiştir. Video ve ses kayıtları analiz edildikten sonra yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler ve uyarılmış hatırlama röportajları gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışmanın sonuçları, öğretmenin cevabını bildiği ve bilmediği soru türlerinin en yaygın kullanılan soru türleri olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Öğretmenin cevabını bilmediği soru türü en çok sınıf bağlamı modunda görünürken, öğretmenin cevabını bildiği sorular en çok malzeme modunda kullanılmıştır. Öğretmenin cevabını bilmediği soruların sayısı sınıf bağlamı modunda öğretmenin cevabını bildiği soruların iki katıdır. Katılımcılar soru türlerini terim olarak farkında olmasalar bile, dersin pedagojik hedefin uygun olarak kullanmışlardır.

**Gönderim**  
11 Mart 2020

**Kabul**  
09 Mayıs 2020

**Anahtar kelimeler**  
sınıf içi etkileşim  
mikro bağlamlar  
öğretmen soruları

**Önerilen APA atıf biçimi:** Şimşek, A., & Kuru-Gönen, S. İ. (2020). Yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin soru türleri ve pedagojik hedefler konusunda farkındalığını arttırmak: Mikro bağlamlara göre analiz. *Language Teaching and Educational Research (LATER)*, 3(1), 56-75. <https://doi.org/10.35207/later.702179>

## Introduction

Interaction in the classroom is an inevitable part of the language learning process. Being aware of the significance and role of interaction in classroom fosters the quality of the acquisition process. Dagarin (2005) defines interaction as “a two-way process between the participants in the learning process”. In terms of the place of interaction in language learning classrooms, Long (1996) asserted that language acquisition occurs as a result of interaction between the learners' mental abilities and the linguistic environment. Moreover, interaction was defined as the most significant part of the curriculum (Van Lier, 1996) since it creates opportunities for students to receive comprehensible input and feedback (Gass, 1997; Long, 1996; Pica, 1994). The language learning process becomes more challenging for learners when they do not interact with each other (Riascos, 2014). Thus, interaction is an indispensable component of the second language acquisition process. Creating classroom interaction involves the effective utilization of different techniques (Seedhouse, 1997). The act of questioning is one of the techniques teachers usually implement in their teaching to create and enhance classroom interaction (Lynch, 1991). In addition to this, questioning was assumed as one of the most common forms of teacher talk in language classrooms (Lee, 2006). Therefore, classroom interaction includes a significant amount of questions asked by the teachers (Brown, 2001). Especially, the act of questioning and answering occurring between teachers and students is much more frequent than any other technique employed in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms (Richards, 2003). The amount of the questions identified in the language classrooms provides evidence of the significance of the questioning technique. Plentiful studies proved that a high number of questions are utilized in language classrooms. In earlier studies, Long and Sato (1983) and White and Lightbown (1984) identified a total of 938 questions in six elementary English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms and approximately 200 questions per class period, respectively. Besides, Gall (1984) stated that over a half classroom talk consists of question-answer exchanges. Teachers mostly use questions as initiating the interactions in the classroom (Yanfen & Yuqin, 2010). In consequence, teachers create an atmosphere where learners can express themselves and interact with each other (Walsh, 2013). Hence, teachers' questions cannot be detached from classroom interaction (Vebriyanto, 2015; Center for Faculty Excellence, 2009).

Studies in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) indicate that questioning has a crucial role in language acquisition. As stated by Ellis (1993), learners mostly have a chance to engage in class when they are posed a question. Through questioning, teachers can draw the attention of learners to form or meaning of the target language (Tan, 2007). For this purpose, teachers employ different types of questions during classroom interaction. There have been numerous studies to investigate the question types and their frequency in language classrooms (Döş et al, 2016; Ölmezer-Öztürk, 2016; Rido, 2017; Inan & Fidan, 2012; Wright, 2016; Suryati, 2015; Erlinda et al., 2014; Farahian, 2012). Moreover, the effect of questioning on classroom interaction was studied by several researchers (Vebriyanto, 2015; Shomossi, 2004; Yang 2010; Hamiloğlu & Temiz, 2012; Özcan, 2010). There are, also, some studies focusing on teachers' questioning skills (Ma, 2008; Şahin, 2013).

A large number of existing studies in the broader literature have examined the questions types, their frequency, and their effects on the language learning process. The results,

in general, indicated that some of the questions achieve the purpose of the interaction, while others fail to do (Al-Zahrani & Al-Bargi, 2017) since the act of questioning requires a significant pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986, as cited in Boaler & Brodie, 2004). As it was stated by Şahin (2013), although the majority of teacher and student interaction is comprised of teacher's questioning, we are not sure whether teachers are aware of the purpose of questions. When we take into consideration the significance of teachers' questioning in classroom interaction, it is highly significant to raise awareness about the types and purposes of questions. Not only the type but also the pedagogical goal of the questions is a predictive factor of success in classroom interaction. Therefore, using appropriate question type according to the mode of the classroom is crucial in order to foster the classroom interaction. Since each classroom context has different features, analyzing the question types and purposes with respect to classroom modes, provides an insight into the functions of questions asked during EFL classroom interaction. It is significant to analyze the questions by linking to contexts in which they were utilized. However, previous studies have almost exclusively focused on the question types, frequencies, and effects on classroom interaction. To the best of researchers' knowledge, no prior studies have examined the types of teacher questions and interpreted them according to the pedagogic goals of classroom modes suggested by Steve Walsh (2013). Moreover, only a few works in the literature demonstrate teachers' opinions in regard to classroom interaction and their awareness of question types. To fill this gap in the literature, this study was conducted to identify the question types asked by teachers and discover the pedagogical goals of these questions. Besides, teachers' opinions regarding question types they used during the classroom were investigated.

### **Types of teacher questions**

Several scholars have attempted to describe different question types and named them differently. They can be classified in terms of the answer they seek or the purpose they serve. No matter how they are named, each question type has a place in the classroom interaction (Ma, 2008). Thus, it is of crucial importance to investigate teachers' pedagogical rationale in selecting different question types during classroom interaction.

Various question types have been identified in previous studies. Thompson (1997) categorized question types in terms of their form, content, and purpose. The first question type is related to the grammatical form of the question such as Yes/No questions and Wh- questions. Additionally, the latter focuses on the purpose of the questions such as displaying knowledge or communication. Richards & Lockharts (1994) further classified questions as procedural, convergent, and divergent. The first one, procedural questions, is related to classroom management and routines but the content of the lesson. However, convergent and divergent questions are closely connected with the content of the class. The convergent questions include short answers and learners do not go through the higher thinking process. The main purpose is to encourage learners to participate in class. On the other hand, divergent questions are asked to motivate and include them in the higher thinking process. Nuttall (1982) categorizes question types as literal comprehension questions of which answers can be located in the text, reorganization or reinterpretation questions require the students to obtain the information from different part of the text and put it together, inference questions which ask the students

to read between the lines and make inferences, questions of evaluation through which students make considered decisions and questions of personal response consist of reactions of the learners to the text.

Long and Sato (1983) classified questions as echoic and epistemic questions utilized to ask for a confirmation or clarification and to obtain knowledge, respectively. Echoic questions involve comprehension check, clarification request, and confirmation check questions. On the other hand, epistemic questions include referential, display, expressive, and rhetorical questions. Display questions do not attempt to find new information, on the contrary, they are asked to elicit what the learner has already known. The purpose is to enable learners to display their knowledge and information (Cullen, 1998) and to lead to practice in the target language and expand learners' participation (Ellis, 1993). On the other hand, referential questions are the ones to which the teacher does not know the answer and aim at a genuine communicative purpose (Cullen, 1998). Teachers ask referential questions to produce a social context in the classroom and to enhance learners' communicative skills. Therefore, the answers to referential questions are more meaningful, complex, and subjective in most occurrences (Tsui, 1995). This current study was concerned with echoic and epistemic questions, in general. Specifically, referential and display question types were examined meticulously.

### **Functions and purposes of teacher questions**

Teacher questioning serves different purposes during classroom interaction. Cotton (2001) explained the aim of the questions as; to make learners more motivated, to become active learners in the class, to check assignments, to enhance critical thinking, to review previous lessons, and to maintain class discipline. Christenbury & Kelly (1983) and Kinsella (1991) explained the purpose of the questions as; to generate language, to obtain instant feedback about learners' comprehension, and to create an atmosphere in which the learners can interact with each other. Kauchak and Eggen (1989) described the functions of the questions in three categories that are diagnostic, instructional, and motivational functions. The teacher's questions are utilized to diagnose what students know and think about a certain topic. For the instructional function, teacher's questions can lead learners to study new information and finally, as motivational function, teacher's questions can make learners participate in the class actively.

### **Pedagogic goals and classroom modes**

Seedhouse (2004) stated that there is a need for a closer understanding of the relationship between language use and pedagogic goals. These two, language use and pedagogic goals, cannot be separated from each other (Walsh, 2011). To emphasize this idea, Walsh divided a classroom into *modes* which were defined as 'an L2 classroom micro context which has a clearly defined pedagogic goal and distinctive interactional features determined largely by a teacher's use of language' (Walsh, 2006). He designed a framework that can be utilized by teachers to evaluate interaction in their classes. The framework consisted of four modes; managerial mode, classroom context mode, skills and systems mode, and materials mode. Each mode includes specific interactional features and particular pedagogical goals (Walsh, 2011). The managerial mode is related to the organization of learning and mostly occurs at the

beginning of the lessons. In the materials mode, the interaction develops around a piece of material such as a text, worksheet. The skills and system mode includes language practice focusing on the language system (phonology, grammar, vocabulary, discourse) or language skill (reading, listening, writing, speaking). Finally, the classroom context mode is made of genuine conversation, in which the teacher's role is more passive to provide the interactional space for learners. The pedagogic goals for each mode suggested by Walsh (Walsh, 2011, p.113) were displayed in Figure 1.

Mode	Pedagogic goals
Managerial	To transmit information To organize the physical learning environment To refer learners to materials To introduce or conclude an activity To change from one mode of learning to another
Materials	To provide language practice around a piece of material To elicit responses in relation to the material To check and display answers To clarify when necessary To evaluate contributions
Skills and system	To enable learners to produce correct forms To enable learners to manipulate the target language To provide corrective feedback To provide learners with practice in sub-skills To display correct answers
Classroom context	To enable learners to express context themselves clearly To establish a context To promote oral fluency

**Figure 1.** L2 classroom modes by Steve Walsh (2011)

### Literature Review

The literature review shows that there is not a single classification utilized for teacher questions, and most of them are overlapping each other (Ölmezer-Öztürk, 2016). Numerous studies have investigated the type and frequency of the questions used in language classrooms, and their effects on language acquisition. Additionally, a few studies have been conducted in order to analyze the classroom interaction in terms of micro-contexts; managerial mode, classroom context mode, materials mode, and skills and systems mode. This section presents a review of recent literature on question types used during classroom interaction and modes applied in the classroom.

In Yang's study (2010), it was found that non-native speaker pre-service English teachers frequently asked yes/no questions, and closed and display questions, whilst open and referential questions were rarely or never asked. Erlinda and Dewi (2014) investigated the question types used in the classroom interaction and the results indicated that rhetorical, procedural, closed, open, display, and referential questions were asked. Chafi and Elkhouzai (2014) analyzed the classroom interaction and found that teachers mostly used factual questions while a few questions gathering opinions and hypotheses were identified. Meng,

Zhao and Chattouphonexay (2012) analyzed type of questions used in classroom interaction and the results indicated that even though referential and display questions were employed by the teacher, only display questions were asked as dealing with learning and teaching.

In the Turkish context, Ölmezer-Öztürk (2016) conducted a study to report the types of questions asked by the teacher. The findings yielded that the type of questions asked frequently was convergent questions. However, the number of divergent questions was rare during the interaction. Another study was conducted by Fidan and İnan (2012) to explore the type and functions of teacher questions in a Turkish as a foreign language class. The data were analyzed according to the classification of Long and Sato (1983) which comprises echoic and epistemic questions. The findings yielded that the majority of the questions asked during interaction was of epistemic nature. Whereas the most common epistemic question type was display questions, the most common echoic question type was confirmation checks. Hamiloğlu and Temiz (2012) conducted a study to identify the question types used in the classroom. The findings illustrated that the classroom interaction consisted of mostly yes/no questions and short-answer questions, followed by open-ended questions, display questions, and referential questions. Çakır and Cengiz (2016) conducted a study to see how a training program on open-ended questions motivated teachers to develop their classroom practice. The analysis showed that the training program encouraged teachers to apply a more systematic and reflective pedagogical practice. Teachers used more open-ended questions, which enabled the learners to participate in class.

In their pioneering study, Long and Sato (1983) found that ESL teachers utilized considerably fewer referential questions than display questions during classroom interaction. Similarly, David (2007) carried out a study investigating the distribution of question types and the results showed that the number of display questions is more than referential questions. It was claimed that display questions create more interaction than referential questions. Shomoossi (2004) investigated the teacher questioning in EFL classrooms. The results showed that display questions were more frequent than referential ones that generated more classroom interaction. It was also stated that display questions include a small piece of information on part of speech, word stress, intonation, antonyms, and synonyms, etc. Additionally, display questions can encourage learners to participate in class. Arifin's study conducted in lower secondary school (2012) showed that 66.7% of the questions asked by the teacher were display whereas 33.3% were referential questions. Zohrabi, Notash, and Khiabani (2014) investigated the frequency of two types of questions: referential and display in three different proficiency level classrooms. The study findings demonstrated that the number of display questions at the elementary and intermediate levels was higher than the advanced level. In high-level proficiency classrooms, the number of display questions diminished whereas the referential questions increased. A similar finding regarding the high frequency of display questions in the language classrooms was confirmed by Suryati (2015) who investigated the classroom interaction strategies employed by English teachers in the EFL context. The analysis indicated that the number of display questions (18%) was higher than referential questions (4,3%). Vebriyanto (2015) conducted a study to describe the question types that teachers use in the classroom. The results showed that closed/display questions (69%) were used more frequently than open/referential questions (31%). It was found that open/referential questions elicited longer responses and were used to obtain certain information from students. On the other

hand, closed/display questions were utilized to check comprehension of the material. This study was in line with the study conducted by Rido (2017) examining the questioning strategies of master teachers in the vocational English classroom. According to the researcher, close/display questions were among the frequently asked questions by the master teachers. Open/referential and follow-up questions were the following strategies used by master teachers. On the other hand, Yang (2010) found that teachers employed more referential questions than display questions in the ESL classroom context. It was concluded that referential questions obtained more structures that are complex from students.

Wang and Huan (2011) investigated the relationship between language use and pedagogical purpose through SETT (Self Evaluation of Teacher Talk developed by Walsh, 2006). They examined whether the teacher talk is appropriate in terms of classroom context or mode. In a similar vein, Suryati (2015) analyzed interaction strategies used in the lower secondary level of education. The results indicated that the majority of the classroom interaction was revolved around material mode and skill and system mode. Feedback (IRF) patterns, display questions, teacher echo, and extended teacher turns were among the common strategies utilized in the classroom. Soraya (2017) further examined classroom interaction according to micro-contexts and pedagogical goals. Accordingly, teachers frequently used material and managerial mode whereas classroom context and skill and system modes were identified rarely. Moreover, Korkut and Ertuş (2017) discovered interactional features during the material mode. They found that interactional features matched with the ones stated in SETT. However, there were, also, some different features stemmed from cultural and local practices. For instance, Ghafarpour (2017) analyzed classroom interaction according to modes. It was found that the material mode was the most dominant micro context. Classroom and material modes lasted for long periods, whereas managerial and skills and system modes sustained for short periods. These results can be attributed to contextual differences and institutional requirements.

The literature reviewed so far included studies focused on the identification of questions and comparison of them, and the purpose of questions, and their effect on classroom interaction. However, to the best of researchers' knowledge, no study has been conducted to examine and interpret teacher questions according to the pedagogic goals of classroom modes suggested by Walsh (2013). Moreover, only a few studies were conducted to explore teachers' opinions in terms of interaction and their awareness of question types. To fill this gap, this study was carried out to identify question types asked by teachers and examine the pedagogical goal of these questions. As a secondary aim, teachers' opinions pertinent to question types they utilized in the classroom were scrutinized. To this end, the following research questions were asked:

- 1- What are the type(s) of questions that are asked by the university-level EFL teachers during classroom interactions?
- 2- What are the pedagogical goals of the teachers while asking questions in different classroom modes?
- 3- What do teachers think about the question types they use during classroom interaction?

## Methodology

### Research design

The present study adopted a mixed-method research design. Quantitative data were gathered through a descriptive analysis of question types used in the classroom whereas qualitative data were obtained via semi-structured interviews and stimulated recalls based on classroom observations.

### Setting

The study was conducted at a preparatory program of a private university in Turkey. This program consists of two language levels, namely, Route 1 and Route 2. The former includes students whose level is from beginner to elementary whereas the latter includes students with intermediate and high-intermediate levels. Route 1 students have 22 hours of English per week as Route 2 students have 18 hours of English per week. There are approximately 15-20 students in each class. Since the number of students is low, the classroom context is mostly interactive and engaging. The duration of the lessons is 80 minutes considered as a block session. At the end of the term, students have to take a proficiency exam and if they get 80 points or above from this exam, they can continue their education at their departments.

### Participants

Three EFL teachers working at a preparatory program participated in this study. They were selected according to the non-probability convenience sampling method suggested by Creswell (2005) as the teachers were willing and available during the study. At the beginning of the study, the participants signed a consent form; and thus, the confidentiality of their participation was ensured. They were given a demographic survey in order to elicit information regarding their educational background and previous experiences in teaching. Accordingly, Teacher 1 (hereafter T1) is 25 years old and holds a BA degree in English Language Teaching. She has been teaching for 3 years. Teacher 2 (hereafter T2) is 22 years old and holds a BA degree in English Literature and Language. She has been teaching English for one year. Teacher 3 (hereafter T3) is 25 years old and has been teaching for 3 years. She holds a BA degree in English Language Teaching and continues an MA in the same department. The participants teach reading and listening classes; therefore, the observations were conducted in either reading or listening classes.

### Instruments

The study utilized audio and video recordings, as well as observation protocols and field notes form to capture the classroom interaction in detail. One of the researchers of this study was a non-participant observer (Creswell, 2012); therefore, she did not get involved in the activities. The field notes form was designed by the researchers to take notes during observations regarding question types and classroom modes (Appendix A). It included both descriptive field notes of the events and reflective field notes focusing on personal thoughts of the researcher (Creswell, 2012). In addition, semi-structured interviews and stimulated recalls were used to gather more in-depth information about the awareness of teachers. Five questions focusing on classroom interaction and question types were prepared for the semi-structured

interview (Appendix B). Three experts in the ELT field were consulted for the interview questions and field-note and necessary changes were done before conducting the study. The last question of the interview serves the purpose of stimulated recalls. Some recording excerpts including various question types from a different mode of the lesson were shown to participants during interviews and their opinions were asked related to excerpts to gather more in-depth information.

### **Data collection procedure**

The research data were collected by following the steps below.

*Week 1:* Administrative permission was ensured. Afterwards, an email was sent to teachers to notify them about the study. Three teachers were selected based on their voluntary participation. They were given information on the general purpose of the study, but the specific focus of the study was not mentioned in order not to spoil the nature of classroom interaction. They were informed about audio and video recordings and given a consent form to sign.

*Week 2:* The observer researcher visited the classrooms of three teachers and took field notes in regard to question types.

*Week 3:* The second observations were carried out and field notes were taken. The observer researcher took notes regarding questions asked by the teachers during classroom interaction.

*Week 4:* The last observation was conducted and related field notes were taken to support video-recordings.

*Week 5:* Video recordings were transcribed and analyzed in terms of question types and classroom modes. Audio recordings were utilized in case of necessity.

*Week 6:* Semi-structured interviews were carried out with all participants. Interviews were conducted in Turkish to help participants feel comfortable with their answers. Afterwards, excerpts from video recordings were given to the teachers. Moreover, they shared their opinions regarding questions in the video. Each participant was given two different excerpts that included display and referential question types. However, they were not informed about the types of questions and differences between these types.

*Week 7:* The data from interviews and stimulated recalls were analyzed according to the purpose of the study.

### **Data analysis procedure**

This study employed both qualitative and quantitative analysis procedures. The data gathered from video recordings were transcribed using the transcription system adapted from van Lier (1988) and Johnson (1995). The recordings from the first observation were not included in data as the teachers were not familiar with recordings. After the transcription procedure was completed, questions utilized during classroom interaction were highlighted. Afterwards, they were listed and categorized according to question types suggested by Sato and Long (1983). Each question type was counted for the quantitative data. In addition to this, classroom modes were identified, and the two most common question types were analyzed according to classroom modes in which they were applied. The semi-structured interviews were transcribed verbatim. As for the qualitative data gathered from the interview and

stimulated recalls, Content Analysis suggested by Creswell (2012) was conducted with an extension of the Evaluation Coding framework of Miles and Huberman (1994). The data were examined in detail to get a sense of the whole and coded according to relevance to research questions. Afterwards, themes were created.

### Findings

To answer the first question focusing on the type(s) of questions asked by the EFL teachers during classroom interaction, quantitative analysis revealed 301 questions in total (Table 2). Accordingly, T1 used 96 questions, T2 used 119 questions, and T3 used 86 questions in recorded lessons. Table 1 below shows the frequency and types of questions used by T1, T2, and T3, respectively. As it can be seen in Table 2, referential questions (n=163) were the most frequent question type, followed by display questions (n=96). The data, also, included rhetorical questions (n=17), confirmation check questions (n=15), comprehension check questions (n=9), and clarification request (n=1). The referential questions were mostly used by T1 (n=71) and T2 (n=42), however, the display questions were applied mostly by T2 (n=42) and T3 (n=35).

**Table 1.** Frequency and types of questions

	T1	T2	T2	TOTAL
Number of referential questions	70	59	32	163
Number of display questions	16	42	35	69
Number of rhetorical questions	3	3	11	17
Number of comprehension check questions	-	3	6	9
Number of clarification request	1	-	-	1
Number of confirmation check questions	6	7	2	15
Total number of questions	96	119	86	301

In order to answer the second research question, based on the pedagogic goals of the teachers while asking a question in different classroom modes, the two most common question types, referential and display questions, were analyzed according to classroom modes in terms of the pedagogic goals of the teachers. Table 2 below displays the question types used by the teachers according to classroom modes identified in the study.

**Table 2.** Question types according to classroom modes

	Classroom context mode		Materials mode		Skills and system mode	
	Referential	Display	Referential	Display	Referential	Display
T1	56	8	14	8	-	-
T2	37	5	22	37	-	-
T3	16	9	16	22	0	4

According to Table 2, the data consisted of three modes, which were classroom context mode, materials mode, and skill and system mode. Classroom context mode consisted of 131 questions, materials mode included 119, and skills and system mode included four questions. Accordingly, the number of referential questions (n=109) was much higher than display questions (n=22) in classroom context mode. On the other hand, the number of display questions (n=67) was higher than the referential questions (n=52) in materials mode (Table 3). Moreover, skills and system mode included only four display questions. In the remaining part of the results section regarding the second research question, excerpts taken from different classroom modes were given to exemplify how teachers used questions according to various pedagogical purposes.

Referential questions in classroom context mode were used by the teachers to enable learners to express themselves clearly and to establish a context. Excerpt 1 taken from a lead-in stage in a reading class focusing on music trends exemplifies this function of the referential questions in the classroom context mode.

*Excerpt 1 – T1:*

T: okay. let's talk about music... **where do you get your music from?**

L: (2)spotify=

T: =where else?

L2: =youtube.

T: youtube.

L3: =itunes.

T: **do you pay for your music?**

LL: /yes/seven lira/no/.

Different from the classroom context mode, the pedagogic goal of referential questions used in materials mode was to elicit responses in relation to the material and to check and display answers. Excerpt 2, taken from the same reading lesson displayed in Excerpt 1 shows the use of referential questions in materials mode.

*Excerpt 2 – T2:*

T: ...now, please look at these statements. let's start with the first one (3) can you read?

L3: (2)people pay for the music

T: **=do you agree with the statement?**

LL: ...disagree/agree.

T: **=why do you disagree with the statement?**

L3: because...music is (4) art we cannot (2) pay...pay for art.

Despite the function of the referential questions used to take learners' attention and elicit their responses, the main pedagogic goal of display questions utilized in classroom context mode was to establish a clear context. Excerpt 3 taken from a lead-in stage of listening class focusing on gambling is a sample of display questions asked for this purpose.

*Excerpt 3 – T3:*

T: okay then, **what kind of gambling is legal or illegal in our country?**

LL: nothing legal / horse race... legal / lottery

T: **what about the illegal ones?**

L: poker...

The pedagogic goals of the display questions utilized in materials mode were to check and display answers, to clarify when necessary, and to elicit responses in relation to the material. Excerpt 4 taken from an answer checking section of the listening class focusing on crimes is an example of this pedagogical purpose in materials mode.

*Excerpt 4: - T3*

T: **what about the reasons for the crime for the 1st speaker?**

LL: psychological problems/illness.

T: actually...he lost his temper...**What is temper?**

L: =akıl hastası mı?

T: no. he can get...angry easily and...quickly. he can't control it

As it was stated earlier in this section, skills, and system mode included only 4 display questions. The pedagogic goal of these questions was to enable learners to produce correct forms. Excerpt 5 gathered from grammar lessons focusing on likely and unlikely, probability topics shows how display questions were used in the skills and system mode.

*Excerpt 5 – T2:*

T: Antarctica will form a government. **is it likely or unlikely?**

LL: <Unlikely> / unlikely.

T: Antarctica is one of the most important areas in the world. (3) **Likely or unlikely?**

LL: likely/likely/likely

The data gathered from semi-structured interviews and stimulated recalls were analyzed and coded to respond to the last research question regarding teachers' opinions about the question types they used during classroom interaction. Accordingly, teachers thought the place of interaction in language classrooms was significant since students were not exposed to foreign language outside the classroom, classroom interaction had a motivational effect to involve students in the lesson, and it was seen as the main facilitator in language teaching.

*“Most of the time, the classroom is the only place they use English. Therefore, the interaction is very important to catch their attention and show them that they can speak English if they want. I try to do it by creating a good interaction with them.” (Teacher 2)*

Teachers in the study categorized the type of interaction as a *teacher to students*, *students to students*, and *students to materials*. With respect to the role of the questioning

strategy in classroom interaction, they stated that questions could be utilized to catch students' attention, to activate their schemata, to shape the outline of the lesson, and to create a smooth transition between the stages of the lesson. When the participants were asked to name the type of questions they have used in the classroom, they expressed that they used yes/no questions, thought-provoking questions, attention-catching questions, general questions about learners, and specific questions about materials.

*“My students cannot easily focus on reading materials during the lesson. In such situations, I prepare thought-provoking questions about reading materials. I let them discuss the questions. This way they feel a connection with materials.”*

(Teacher 3)

Finally, for the purpose of stimulated recalls, the participants watched two excerpts including samples of display and referential questions from their classes. Even though they could not state the terminological names of the questions, they were able to identify the purposes of the questions. For the display questions given in the excerpts, they stated that they used this kind of question to review the previous lesson, to check their comprehension, to elicit their background knowledge, and to illustrate the rationale of doing things during the lesson.

*“Sometimes, I start my lessons with a revision of previous lessons. I ask many questions to help them remember what we have covered so far. This helps them to connect lessons.”*(Teacher 1)

On the other hand, the purposes of referential questions were to catch students' attention, to motivate them, to activate their schemata, and to enable learners to express themselves clearly. These findings supported the quantitative findings and further revealed the pedagogical rationale behind different question types. All in all, the results of the study indicated that teachers used questions in different modes of classroom interaction for different purposes; hence, classroom mode had an effect on their choice of the questions.

## Discussion

This study aimed at exploring types of questions asked by the teachers in a higher educational context, unveiling their pedagogical purposes according to different modes of classroom interaction as well as having a deeper insight into their opinions on the selection of different question types. A total of 301 questions were identified regarding two lessons of the participants. Since questioning is one of the main tools of interaction (Qashoa, 2013), teachers in this study engage in a large amount of questioning activity. The results of the study yielded that the number of referential questions was higher than the display questions in general. Although the large body of the previous research highlighted the high number of display questions compared to referential questions in language classrooms in different teaching contexts (e.g. Arifin, 2012; Chafi & Elkhousai, 2014; Fidan & İnan, 2012; Rido, 2017; Suryati, 2015), the findings of the current study revealed a preference for referential questions in the higher education context. This result may stem from the nature of the study context as the

students were university-level students and teachers might have a tendency to ask more referential questions to elicit more answers from the young adult students, to motivate them and involve them in the classroom interaction.

When the data were examined in a close fashion, the number of question types changed according to classroom modes. While referential questions were common in classroom context mode, display questions were much more common than referential questions in materials mode. The number of referential questions mostly doubled the number of display questions in classroom context mode. This finding contradicted the findings of Vebriyanto's (2015) study. We speculate that this might be due to the higher education with young adults, and the interactive and communicative classroom setting the teachers created. The results demonstrated that classroom context and material modes were the most prominent modes in the data. This result contradicted the findings of Suryati (2015). She found that the classroom context mode rarely occurred during classroom interaction, which indicated that teachers were not aware of appropriate interaction strategies. However, in our context, classroom context mode occurred mostly. This may be due to the high level of learners who are willing to communicate and the interactive classroom context in the higher education context. A very small section of the data included skills and system mode. Moreover, the managerial mode was not found in the data. At this stage of understanding, the reason why classroom context and material modes were found mostly can be attributed to the nature of listening and reading classes, which are mostly interactive and based on text-based materials.

This study showed that teachers were aware of the purpose of the questions they were asking. That is, teachers were not posing questions at random; rather, they were using questioning strategy purposefully to engage students in the lesson, to motivate them, and to elicit more responses for effective classroom interaction. Moreover, although teachers were not able to identify the types of questions, they were aware of questions' purposes and functions as echoed by Şahin (2013). The pedagogic goals of the questions according to modes matched with the purposes stated by the participants. This finding highlights that even though the teachers in the study were not familiar with the terminology used to classify question types, they had an awareness of using different question types at different stages of the lesson in accordance with their pedagogical purposes. The common purpose of 'display questions' was to check their background knowledge and to remind them of the things from the previous lesson. This result is in line with Qashoa's study (2013) which revealed that display questions are the most common type of question in class and the purpose of these questions is to review the previous lesson, checking understandings or warm up the class. On the other hand, the common purpose of 'referential questions' was to give an opportunity for students to express themselves and to activate their schemata. As discussed earlier, this may be due to the nature of reading and listening classes. Prior to a listening or a reading text, it is of crucial importance to activate the existing schema and direct learners' attention to the text by posing questions. Moreover, to engage learners in reading and listening, asking purposeful questions can help them to focus on the texts with a purpose in mind and talk about their listening and reading experiences following the texts.

All in all, the findings indicated that the appropriate use of any question type in classroom interaction is significant to enhance the learning process and engage learners more in

the lessons. As long as the purpose of the question is in line with the pedagogic goal of the teacher, any questions type can be utilized during classroom interaction. As it was stated by Walsh (2013), referential and display questions should be aligned with the pedagogic goals of the teacher at the time of the lesson. Thereby, according to the pedagogic goals of the lesson, display, and referential questions can be utilized (Lee, Y. 2006). Even though each question type has a different purpose, none of them is superior to another. All question types have a place in classroom interaction as long as they match with the pedagogical goals of the teachers and serve for fostering more interaction.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

This study attempted to reveal the question types asked by teachers in a Turkish higher education context, the pedagogic goals of the teachers while asking questions and their opinions regarding the questions they asked during classroom interaction. The findings gathered from qualitative and quantitative data yielded that referential and display questions were the two most common question types asked by teachers. When the question types were analyzed according to classroom modes, it was found that in classroom context mode the number of referential questions was higher than display questions since this mode provides an environment where the learners can express themselves and communicate with each other. However, in the materials mode where students focus on a material, the number of display questions was higher than referential questions. The pedagogic goal of the teachers while asking referential questions in classroom context mode was to enable learners to express themselves clearly and to establish a context. However, the purpose of referential questions in materials mode was to elicit responses in relation to the material and to check and display answers. On the other hand, the purpose of the display questions asked by the teachers in materials mode was to check and display answers, to clarify when necessary, and to elicit responses in relation to material whereas the purpose in classroom context mode was to establish a context. The qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews and stimulated recalls showed that the pedagogic goals of the teachers aligned with classroom modes. The main conclusion that can be drawn is that teachers do not employ only one type of question during classroom interaction. We cannot deduce that referential questions should be utilized more than display questions or vice versa. Both question types have positive effects on classroom interaction as long as they align with pedagogic goals of the classroom modes.

The findings of the study offer some implications for language teachers. One implication is that teachers need to be aware of the pedagogic goals of each classroom context. Instead of posing questions for the sake of asking questions, they can properly decide the type of questions they are going to ask as each question type may serve a different purpose. As it was highlighted in this study, when teachers know the pedagogic goal of lessons, they may choose the appropriate type of question which fosters effective classroom interaction. Thus, another implication might be offering training opportunities for teachers to reflect on their own questioning strategies, gain an understanding of how they use questions in the classrooms, and seek ways to enhance classroom interaction with the use of appropriate questioning strategies tailored to different modes of classroom interaction. Such training can focus on different question types and encourage the teachers to use them in classroom interaction instead of

employing only specific question types. Last but not the least, teachers can be trained in evaluating their own classroom interaction by using various tools such as reflection logs, video analysis of their lessons, and self-evaluation instruments such as SETT.

Although this study stressed the importance of questioning strategy used in different modes of classroom interaction, results are limited only to observations in reading and listening classes. Therefore, future studies could fruitfully explore this issue further by analyzing writing, speaking, and grammar classes. This study was conducted at a private university; hence, a low number of students in classes and a more interactive classroom atmosphere may have an effect on the questioning strategies used by the teachers. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to all higher education contexts in Turkey. This study can be replicated at state universities with more crowded classes to gain more in-depth information regarding classroom interaction as an issue for future research to explore.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

Observation No: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

#### CLASSROOM INTERACTION OBSERVATION FORM

Name of the Teacher:  
Teacher Code:  
Class:  
Level of students:  
Type of Lesson:  
Book:  
Topic:  
Objectives:

NO#	TIME	QUESTION	QUESTION TYPES	FIELD NOTES
1			REFERENTIAL <input type="checkbox"/>	
			DISPLAY <input type="checkbox"/>	
2			REFERENTIAL <input type="checkbox"/>	
			DISPLAY <input type="checkbox"/>	
3			REFERENTIAL <input type="checkbox"/>	
			DISPLAY <input type="checkbox"/>	
4			REFERENTIAL <input type="checkbox"/>	
			DISPLAY <input type="checkbox"/>	
5			REFERENTIAL <input type="checkbox"/>	
			DISPLAY <input type="checkbox"/>	

### Appendix B

#### Teacher interview questions

- 1- What is the role of classroom interaction in EFL classrooms? Please, explain it.
- 2- What do you think about the role of teacher's questions during classroom interaction?
- 3- What types of questions do you generally ask in class? Can you itemize them?
- 4- What are the purposes of those questions?
- 5- What is the type of this question? Why did you ask this question? Could you explain the reasons?  
(Sample excerpts from teachers' classroom video-recordings will be shown to teacher.)