


MAKING QUESTIONS COUNT

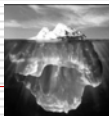
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AGENDA



1. Why this workshop?
2. Types of questions?
3. Common errors /Areas of work?
4. Making your questions count

Icebreaker



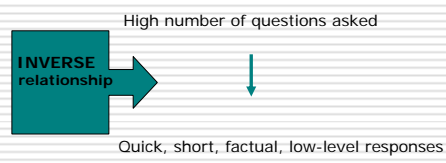
- Come up with one question that you hope will get answered during this workshop.

1. WHY THIS WORKSHOP

- Practical intelligence is “knowing what to say to whom, knowing when to say it, and knowing how to say it for maximum effect.”
R. Sternberg
- Good teaching is knowing how to ask questions of whom, when to ask them, and how to ask them for maximum effect.

Some facts about questions

- Language teachers ask up to 150 questions a day
- Elementary/secondary teachers: up to 50 per period, 350 per day



High number of questions asked

INVERSE relationship → ↓

Quick, short, factual, low-level responses

Rule of 2/3

- 2/3 of class time is verbal
- 2/3 of that time: questions
- 2/3 are asked by teacher
- 2/3 are answered by teacher

Kathy Shaw (based on Gage/Berliner)

How much does gender matter?

- When students answer the questions...
 - Women – more cautious
 - Men want the floor
- Teachers more likely to ask difficult questions of boys

Deborah Tannen

M. and D. Saker, *Falling At Fairness*

How much does culture matter?

1. Students from some cultures...

- ... are not expected to ask questions
- ... are not likely to take risk in public
- ... are more likely to remain silent.

2. How much do gestures/intonation matter?

2. TYPES OF QUESTIONS



Our ultimate goal with questions?

For elementary & secondary teachers: develop students' cognitive and critical thinking skills

In Adult ESL:

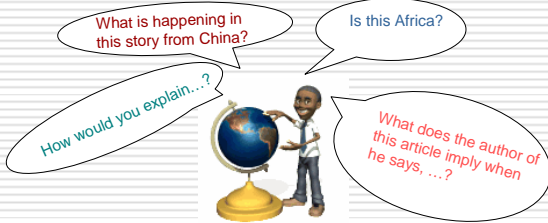
1. Check comprehension or evaluate what the students have learned
 2. Motivate students to acquire new language skills and think critically
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Types of questions?

- Yes/No:** "Do you like vegetables?"
- Open-ended:** "What kind of vegetables do you like and why?"
- Convergent (one correct answer only):** "Whose picture is on the \$100 bill?"
- Divergent (encouraging students to express opinions):** "What can we do to solve this problem?"
- Elicitation (elicit various responses):** "What do you think x means?"
- Referential (the teacher doesn't know the answer):** "When did you come to Canada?"
- Display* (the teacher knows the answer):** "What do you see in this picture?"

*most commonly used in teaching

Which questions for which level?



Question complexity

LEVEL	QUESTION
RECOGNITION	Can you show me ...?
FACTUAL	Who/ what / where is... ?
GIST COMPREHENSION	What happened after ...?
FULL COMPREHENSION	How would you define .../ explain ...?
EXTENSION	What inference can you make about ...?

COMPLEX ↓

Activity 1.

- With your group, read the transcript.
- How effective are this teacher's questions?



3. COMMON ERRORS



Some common errors/ areas of work

- Wait/think time
- Useless questions
- Guidance questions
- Irony/Sarcasm in questions
- Showing impatience or frustration
- Other

What do teachers do when they get the response?

Most of the time, we evaluate the response.

- High achieving students praised 12% of the time for correct responses
- Low achieving students praised 6% of the time
- Teachers twice as likely to stay with high achieving students

Who do teachers call on to answer the question?

Studies show:

- Distribution not even (more able students 25 times more likely to be called to speak)
- Those who may need most practice least likely to get it

Activity 2.

- Read and discuss the student survey on teacher questions



4. MAKING YOUR QUESTIONS COUNT

Making your questions count

Effectiveness of questions can be improved by

- reflection and work on questions
- video/audio taping (transcripts are invaluable)

Is there room for teacher growth?

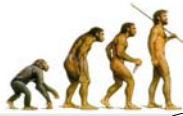
Gist comprehension questions



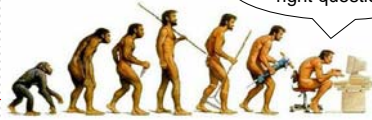
Your goal?

- Use the right type of question for the level
- Use gestures, particularly at lower levels
- Help students increase the length and complexity of responses
- Increase wait time
- Focus on a balanced distribution of talk
- Ask questions that encourage students to use strategies and critical thinking skills

How are we progressing?



I can also ask the right questions!



Thank you for participation!

Before leaving, discuss with your group ...

- One thing from this workshop that you found interesting
 - One thing you would like to apply immediately
 - One thing you would like to share with your colleagues
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