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## **DEVELOPING QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES IN PROSPECTIVE ENGLISH TEACHERS**

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**Abstract.** *The study focuses on developing questioning techniques in prospective English teachers. It is argued that questions in the English learning classroom are used as a tool of establishing and maintaining the contact with the classroom, introducing new material, checking the level of comprehension, assessing the previously obtained knowledge. A complex of tasks aimed at developing questioning techniques of MA students both before and within practice teaching is suggested.*

**Keywords:** *questioning technique, prospective English teachers, master students, practice-teaching.*

*Good learning starts with questions, not answers.*

*G. Claxton*

Scientists have argued convincingly that the act of questioning is central to thinking, to storing and communicating knowledge and social interaction. Questioning plays a significant role in the classroom being a means of exchanging information and an effective tool of student-teacher, student-student interaction; teaching per se is defined by Socrates as “the art of asking

questions". Questions in ELT classroom are even more important, where language is a target and a tool of the teaching-learning process.

The problem of teaching questioning techniques has been raised in a number of works; the studies cover such topics as developing teacher's effective questioning skills, developing general question formulation techniques (QFT), building up taxonomies of questions, working out the strategies of creating positive classroom climate using questions as tools etc. (Cotton, K., Baker M.H., Bloom, B., Jackson S., Rothstein D., Santana L. et al.). But the issue of developing questioning techniques has been predominantly viewed as a simple set of tips for the teacher to follow, so that the stage-by-stage methods of teaching questioning techniques to prospective English teachers have not been sufficiently elaborated, which justifies the topicality of the research in this field.

*The objective* of the article was to work out a complex of tasks to develop questioning techniques in prospective English teachers.

Questioning is an integral part of the teaching process, questions accounting for up to a third of all teaching time, second only to the time devoted to explanation [2]. In classroom settings teacher questions are defined as instructional cues or stimuli that convey to students the content elements to be learned and directions for what they are to do and how they are to do it [1].

The questions teachers use in the classroom may be categorized into two groups – procedural and learning-based questions. Procedural questions are used as a tool of managing the work in the classroom, e.g. *Have you finished the task? Is your name on the list?* Learning-based questions aim at teaching per se. In the classroom, as surveys demonstrate [2], a large proportion of questions are procedural rather than learning-based.

Questions in the ELT classroom serve many purposes. They can help pupils to reflect on information and commit it to memory. They can develop thinking skills, encourage discussion and stimulate new ideas. Questions allow teachers to determine how much a class understands and enable them to pitch lessons at an appropriate level. They are an important tool for managing the classroom, since questions encourage engagement and focus students' thinking on key concepts and ideas. And questions have a symbolic value - sending a clear message that pupils are expected to be active participants in the learning process [1; 2; 3].

Scholars worked out numerous taxonomies of questions used in the classroom, which can be summarized in the following way:

- display, or fact, questions - designed to elicit learners' prior knowledge and to check comprehension. They often focus on the form or meaning of language structures and items, have only one correct answer and provide an understanding of the details of a topic;

- referential, or imagine questions - require the learner to provide information, give an opinion, explain or clarify; they often focus on content rather than language; there are no “wrong” answers to such questions.
- “open-ended”, or “divergent” questions – are broad, may have multiple answers, and require a higher level of thinking from the learners.
- “closed”, or “convergent” questions – have more narrowly defined correct answers which can be recalled from memory and require little reflection or originality.

Other scholars divide questions into two large groups with further subdivisions – lower cognitive questions (fact, direct, recall, and knowledge questions, close-ended) which involve the recall of information; and higher cognitive questions (interpretive, referential, open-ended, evaluative, inquiry, inferential, and synthesis questions) – those involving the mental manipulation of information to produce or support an answer [1].

Questions can also be classified into knowledge dimensions. Scientists describe four types of knowledge: factual, conceptual, procedural, and metacognitive. These knowledge dimensions range from the concrete to abstract. Factual knowledge includes the technical vocabulary used in a discipline and the details extracted from reliable sources of information. While factual questions often ask students to recall specific elements from a reference source, they address higher-order thinking. Questions on the factual dimension of knowledge can be constructed to demonstrate understanding, prompt analysis, or evaluate the work of others. Conceptual knowledge includes an awareness of the inter-relationships between the elements of a larger structure. Conceptual questions might ask learners to justify an answer based on underlying principles or theories, or to classify elements into categories. Procedural knowledge is the ability to use algorithms, techniques, or criteria as well as the ability to determine when it is appropriate to use them. Procedural questions might ask the learner about well-established methods for gathering information or selecting the most appropriate equation in a particular situation. Finally, metacognitive knowledge is an awareness of one’s own cognition. Metacognition questions might ask a learner to articulate a cognitive strategy required to complete a task or examine personal motivations and values [3, p. 158].

James W. Tollefson suggested the taxonomy of teacher’s questions used in the course of work on texts, which divides questions into five levels of complexity, namely:

- literal comprehension – focus on ideas explicitly stated in the text;
- reorganization – students analyze, synthesize, organize information;
- inferential comprehension – requires students to use information explicitly stated in the text along with personal view in order to conjecture and form hypothesis;

- evaluation – requires students comparing the information with one's own experience;

- appreciation – students have to articulate emotional and aesthetic responses to the text according to styles, genres etc. They may require learners to generate alternative hypotheses based on observed phenomena, devise a new procedure to accomplish a task, or conceptualize a new product [4].

From our perspective, questioning technique is what should be developed in prospective English teachers intentionally at pre-service stage by direct and indirect methods.

Questioning techniques are developed indirectly within all undergraduate courses – in reading comprehension, listening comprehension, discussions etc.; students are familiarized with questions structure and typology indirectly.

Students are also taught questioning techniques by means of direct instructions, e.g. teacher in lectures provides information about questions of different types and levels of cognitive complexity.

MA students – prospective English teachers, should not only be aware of the types of questions functioning in English, but need to have developed skills of questioning, which will enable future conscious use of questions as a teaching tool in the classroom. A good opportunity to improve students' questioning skills is when practice teaching in school. So, we suggested a complex of tasks aimed at developing questioning techniques which proved to be effective with prospective English teachers.

Thus, work on developing questioning techniques is carried out at two stages – pre-practice teaching tasks and on-practice teaching tasks. Pre-practice teaching tasks aim to form students' overall awareness of the types of questions, to build up general questioning skills. The goal of on-practice teaching tasks is to teach students generate questions in working conditions of the classroom, taking into consideration the plan of the lesson, the group specifics, the level of pupils' English proficiency etc.

Pre-practice teaching tasks include the following steps.

*1. Lecturing.* Students are given information about the types of questions according to their structure (closed-up / open), level of cognitive complexity (lower-level / high-level) etc.

*2. Designing a Question Focus.* The teacher can divide the students into small groups or pairs provided the scope of the audience is not large. The question focus is a prompt that can be presented in the form of a statement or a visual / audio aid, a text etc. to focus and attract students' attention and quickly stimulate the formation of questions.

*3. Producing Questions.* Students' task at this stage is to generate as many questions to the statement as possible. Certain time-limits may be optionally set.

4. *Classifying and Modifying Questions.* After the questions generated and written down, the students are asked to classify them into certain groups, e.g. open-ended / closed question, or, alternatively, making the students change open-ended questions into closed and vice versa, which leads students to think about how the phrasing of a question can affect the depth, quality, and value of the information they will obtain.

5. *Prioritizing Questions.* The teacher, with the lesson plan in mind, offers criteria or guidelines for the selection of priority questions. For instance “Choose the three questions which reveal the essence of the problem the most”.

6. *Reflecting on the Questions.* The teacher reviews the steps and provides the students with an opportunity to review what they have learned by producing, improving, and prioritizing their questions.

At the on-practice teaching stage students learn to interact with a classroom, to effectively use questioning as a tool of establishing and maintaining the contact with the classroom, as a means of introducing new material or checking the level of comprehension or knowledge of the previously studied topics. The following tasks are suggested here.

1. *Observation of teacher’s questioning behavior..* Attending lessons of other English teachers the students are given in groups or pairs various observation assignments, for instance, they should answer the following questions: *How many questions did the teacher use? What types of questions were used? Which questions dominated? What was the wait-time to answer them? What were they used for? etc.*

2. *Generating questions for the English language class.* At the given stage students are requested to prepare a plan of their lesson and, accordingly, a list of questions following the plan at each its stage – starter questions, close-up questions, comprehension questions, probe questions etc. Having prepared it individually they discuss the questionnaires in groups and make necessary improvements.

3. *Action research.* Students in groups / pairs work out a list of questions to check their own questioning behavior, such as: *Were my questions whole-class or individual? Were they referential or display / procedural or learning-based questions? Which types of questions did I use most often? Which questions proved to be the most effective? etc.* Then they are recommended to video or audio-record their own English lesson and afterwards analyze it following the questioning checklist. On finishing this task, they discuss in groups / pairs their results, emphasizing their weak and strong points.

**Conclusions.** The suggested complex of tasks proved to be efficient for developing questioning techniques in prospective English teachers. Perspectives for further research are seen in elaborating tasks to develop other verbal behavior techniques in prospective English teachers, such as praising technique, criticism techniques, etc.

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### THE INTERACTIVE TECHNIQUES OF WORK WITH FOREIGN PROFESSIONAL LITERATURE AT A SPECIAL FACULTY

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**Abstract.** Annotation is considered as a summary of the contents of the initial document drawn up as a result of the text compression, which gives a brief description of the content and highlights the issues touched upon in the original document. There has been determined that an abstract contains in a compressed form the information about the original text, its purpose, subject, research methods and findings. The general requirements for writing an annotation are as follows: taking into account annotation designation; the volume of annotation; compliance of the logical structure that may be different from the order of information rendered in the original; abundance for linguistic annotation features.

The methods of teaching the strategies of annotating are based on compression of text on the semantic and structural and stylistic levels. There has been determined that while writing annotations it's desirable to use simple sentences containing passive constructions, homogeneous predicates, participial constructions, impersonal sentences etc.

**Keywords:** annotation, annotation writing interactive tasks, lexical and grammatical means of English text annotating, stages of annotating.

*The relevance of research.* Annotating of the English text is one of the most important tasks imposed on the students working with foreign literature and engaged in writing diplomas and master's works. Hence, the relevance of the subject is clear due to the fact that higher education graduates should acquire