Teachers’ questioning techniques employed in Japanese senior high school’s English class and the perceptions of three Japanese English teachers

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Abstract

Today, English education in Japanese high schools is facing a major change. The Course of Study for English in senior high schools, which has emphasised the importance of developing students’ ‘communication abilities’ for past few decades, announced a new policy in 2009 suggesting that teachers primarily use the English language for teaching (this will be enforced in full as of the next academic year, in 2013). However, it is said that teachers are still relying on the traditional method in their classrooms, which employs a more teacher-centred, instruction-based approach, despite the need to apply a more student-centred, interaction-based approach. In this respect, although it is necessary for Japanese English teachers to adapt to teaching in English, ‘teachers’ questioning’, as one form of classroom interaction, is considered one way to make their classes more communicative. Hence, three English teachers in Japanese senior high schools were interviewed in order to explore their perceptions of the effectiveness of questioning techniques, using a sample lesson plan that included different types of questions. The interviews showed a gap between what teachers considered effective questions and what they actually asked in classrooms. Furthermore, the teachers revealed the existence of external factors that affected the questioning techniques they employed in their lessons.

Keywords: questioning; classroom interaction; communication ability; senior high school; Japan
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I hope this dissertation will be helpful for the students who will study at the University of Edinburgh in the future, and want to give consent, with great pleasure, to the staff and students to use it for reference.
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Chapter One: Introduction

This study will bring one of the most common actions taken by teachers in their classrooms under a spotlight, namely ‘teachers’ questioning’, or the way teachers provide questions to their students. This chapter briefly introduces what this study addresses and why it could play an important role in English education in Japan. The context and research questions of this study will be presented here, followed by the whole outline at the end of this chapter.

1.1 What this study is about

Teachers’ questions are asked for various reasons in English class regardless of whether they are planned in advance before the lesson starts or just asked because the teacher finds it necessary to inquire during his or her teaching. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that all teachers have a full understanding of the function of their questions and the positive effects that they can have in helping students learn the subject matter in depth. There are articles that refer to ‘teachers’ questioning’, and some educational institutions give guidelines for teachers so that they can self-evaluate the questioning techniques applied in their lessons.

However, those articles and guidelines are often written to cover the whole field of a given subject in schools and are not specified for English class, particularly in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context in which Japanese high school teachers teach English to their students. Therefore, this investigation was conducted with the aim to examine how English teachers in Japanese high schools regard the questioning techniques employed in their own contexts. Furthermore, interviews with Japanese English teachers were carried out as a part of this study, and also addressed what ‘effective questioning’ meant for each teacher who took part.

It is expected that this study will draw Japanese English teachers’ attention to ‘teachers’ questioning’ and the questioning techniques adopted in other contexts, which have been less focused compared with other factors in teaching, so that they can adapt those effective techniques to enhance students’ learning in their own contexts. The theories of learner’s achievement, which belong to the wider educational field, can support the importance of discussing questioning techniques in the context of Japanese high schools.
Moreover, it is hoped that it will reveal the hidden issues related to questioning that the teachers in Japanese high schools are confronting today.

1.2 The background knowledge of Japanese high schools

Before this study discusses the questioning techniques of Japanese English teachers, it will describe the contexts that teachers belong to, in order to help the reader understand the background of English classes in Japanese high schools. The transition of the Japanese Course of Study and the teaching method that has been widely used in Japanese high schools will be introduced so that this study can examine the situation teachers find themselves in from two different angles.

1.2.1 Shift in the Course of Study in Japan

English class in Japanese high schools is conducted with reference to the Course of Study that the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Technology (MEXT) periodically revises and announces almost every ten years. MEXT shows its strong pedagogical concern for those communication abilities of Japanese high school students that will interrelate with students’ listening and speaking skills in English. In fact, the aim of MEXT in Japan from the late 1980s has been to make the English class in high schools more interactive, with an emphasis on students’ communication skills (Taguchi, 2005, p.3). This concern rose because it was often pointed out that students in Japanese high schools are passive, and that they just listen and follow their teachers’ instructions. They are not used to a learning style that positively engages in the interactions that transpire in the classroom.

One factor that makes students passive learners is regarded as the traditional approach employed in Japanese high schools, namely the grammar-translation method. The grammar-translation method was originally invented to help learners read foreign language literature (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p.11). However, Gorsuch (2000) claims that it has been a long-term objective for Japanese English teachers to shift from the traditional grammar-translation method to the approach that applies more communicative activities based on classroom interaction. Actually, in order to achieve a
breakthrough from this situation, MEXT has been taking a variety of actions. For example, the implementation of Oral Communication courses in high schools in 1996 called Japanese English teachers’ attention to the communicative aspects of English, which had been neglected for a long time (Hiramatsu, 2005, p.129).

Furthermore, when looking at the Course of Study announced in 2009 (which will be enforced in 2013) with the overall objective of the subject of English in senior high school, English as a foreign language is considered an important subject for developing both learners’ language competence and communication skills.

Section 8 Foreign Languages

Article 1 OVERALL OBJECTIVE

To develop students’ communication abilities such as accurately understanding and appropriately conveying information, ideas, etc., deepening their understanding of language and culture, and fostering a positive attitude toward communication through foreign languages.

(MEXT, 2009, p.87)

However, O’Donnell (2005, p.314) points out that teachers in Japan are facing several systemic burdens, including the size of their classes, policies for students’ promotion, and heavy course loads, all of which make it difficult for them to adopt the communicative approach effectively. Furthermore, while the communicative approach in the English as a Second Language (ESL) context was originally conducted in small classes using pairs and group work, the EFL context in Japanese high schools is different from that situation, and ‘includes large classes, a tradition of non-native teacher-centred lessons, limited communicative needs among students, and minimal foreign language input outside the classroom’ (Nishino, 2008, p.29). Nevertheless, Ruegg (2009, pp.401-403) claims that Japanese English teachers have to overcome their lack of communicative competence to make English education in Japan reach the same
level of communication ability that exists in other counterpart countries, which spend less time and money on English education.

### 1.2.2 Teacher-centred approach with grammar-translation method

Teachers have their own style when they teach English to their students. Watanabe (1996, p.332) points out that although there might be some external factors affecting the teaching methods of English teachers in Japanese high schools, such as university entrance examinations, the methods employed by teachers are significantly influenced by each teacher’s beliefs, educational background, and past learning experience. In this respect, for a long time, Japanese English teachers have believed that ‘yakudoku’, an ‘equivalent of the grammar-translation method’ (O’Donnell, 2005, pp.301-302), is an effective way to teach English to their students. O’Donnell (2005, p.302) explains ‘yakudoku’ as a learning approach in Japan based on translation through teacher-centred instruction focusing on grammar.

The belief in the effectiveness of the translation method may not be held only by teachers in Japan, since previously grammatical structures and vocabulary were considered to be the first knowledge that learners should address when learning a language (Nation & Crabbe, 2011, p.8). However, the high dependence on ‘yakudoku’ is being asserted in the Japanese high school context today. In contrast with Watanabe (1996), scholars such as Bray (1999), Brown (2002), and McCarthy (2010) consider that the over-reliance on ‘yakudoku’ is caused because teachers focus so much on entrance examinations, whether they are aware of this or not. This leads to considerable debate among educators in Japan, who argue whether teachers should continue using a traditional ‘teacher-centred, instruction-based’ approach or, instead, employ a ‘student-centred, interaction-based’ approach.

While Japanese English learners are considered to be good at displaying the knowledge that they have been taught by their teachers, it is also true that teachers’ over-reliance on the grammar translation method is seen as a major factor that causes learners’ weakness in giving their own opinions and exchanging views. In fact, many students find themselves passive learners within the ‘yakudoku’ system, since usually teachers are expected to convey knowledge to their students rather than mutually constructing
with them (McCarthy, 2010, p.224). The use of ‘yakudoku’ in class is also seen as one of the factors that demotivates Japanese high school students (Kikuchi, 2009). This would be another problem for these learners, as without strong motivation they cannot acquire the target language effectively, when compared with learners who are highly motivated (Dornyei, 2001).

1.3 Hypotheses and research questions

Once the main focus of this study was decided on ‘teachers’ questioning’, the theories and concepts that seemed to be related to questioning were addressed in order to explore the topic from several different perspectives. The research questions investigated in this study were determined by taking account of the needs of those who are concerned with Japanese English education in senior high schools.

1.3.1 The hypotheses in this study

This study addressed the concepts in the foreign language teaching/learning area and came up with hypotheses that can support why it is important to investigate ‘teachers’ questioning’. The hypotheses developed in this study for the Japanese context were:

- Teachers’ questioning can enhance their students’ achievement in learning
- Questioning can stimulate interactions held in classrooms
- Teachers can use questioning techniques to manage their classes
- Students can be more motivated with teachers’ questioning techniques
- Questioning techniques in the ESL context must be revised to be adopted effectively in the EFL context

1.3.2 Research questions

In determining the hypotheses mentioned above, the study aimed to investigate two main research questions related to the topic ‘teachers’ questioning’. The questions addressed in this study were:
• How do Japanese English teachers regard the effectiveness of their questioning techniques in class?
• How do Japanese English teachers consider that they can improve their questioning techniques to be more effective for their students’ learning?

However, it must be noted that while English education in Japanese high schools is now seeking a way to become more communicative, and emphasises the use of the target language in classrooms, the participant teachers’ questioning techniques in this study will not be distinguished between asking questions in Japanese and in English. This is because the latest Course of Study (2009), which recommends that teachers use English for instruction, has not yet been enforced, and there is still a wide disparity in the amount of English used in each teacher’s class. Nevertheless, focusing on ‘teachers’ questioning’ as one interaction technique was expected to be the first step to cause teachers to consider how they can make their classes more communicative by increasing classroom interaction.

1.4 The outline of this study

This study is composed of five chapters. First, Chapter One: Introduction, will present the context in which Japanese high school English education takes place, and the reason why this investigation was conducted, so that the reader can easily understand and follow this study. Second, with Chapter Two: Literature review, the reader can address and explore the background knowledge that is necessary to approach the topic from both a wider view and a more focused view. Next, the approach taken in this study to investigate the research questions will be described in detail in Chapter Three: Methodology. Then, the results that emerged from addressing the questions with the methodology will be introduced and discussed in Chapter Four: Results. Finally, Chapter Five: Conclusion, will bring all aspects of this study together and give implications that refer to the effective use of ‘teachers’ questioning’ in the EFL context in Japanese high schools.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter introduces the literature related to two core theoretical aspects addressed in this study. Social constructivism and classroom interaction, focusing on ‘teachers’ questioning’, will be referred to with some interrelated aspects.

2.1 Social constructivism

The way learning takes place in the second language classroom has been debated for a long time, and various studies presenting different theoretical perspectives have been done. In the view of one of those perspectives, ‘behaviourism’, which was previously dominant, the instruction model known as ‘direct instruction teaching’ was employed (Palincsar, 1998, p.347), and learning was seen as the learner’s adaptation to the displayed behaviour (Adam, 2006). However, although teaching/learning approaches based on ‘behaviourism’ are still regarded as effective strategies for language acquisition among some educators, an increasing number are shifting to the theoretical perspective of ‘constructivism’ (Adam, 2006).

‘Constructivism’ regards learning as a construction of the new knowledge that occurs after an interaction between the experience and the ideas of the individual learner, whereas ‘behaviourism’ considers that objective knowledge, which would be learnt by learners, already exists. Palincsar (1998, p.345) explains that, within the postmodern constructivism called ‘social constructivism’, advocators ‘focus on the interdependence of social and individual processes in the coconstruction of knowledge’. She also adds that the perspectives held by postmodern constructivism reject the idea that knowledge exists within the individual, and regards learning as an inherently social matter.

2.1.1 Factors interrelated with social constructivism

‘Social constructivism’ is one perspective on how knowledge may be acquired by learners. Although it might be regarded that the way learners achieve knowledge is a very complicated process that could not be explained easily, the concept of ‘social constructivism’ might help teachers to understand the important factors needed to create an ideal classroom environment that can result in effective learning for their learners.
Certain aspects that seem to be key factors in conducting this effective learning will be discussed next, such as the learning environment, the theory of a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), and the scaffolding involving negotiation, followed by another crucial factor—motivation—which can be enhanced by taking account of the idea of social constructivism.

2.1.1.1 Learning environment

Social constructivism considers that learners’ learning environment could play a significant role in their construction of knowledge. When observed from the viewpoint of social constructivism, Kim (2001) claims that the context where learners belong and the social context that they bring to their learning environment are both important for learning to take place and cannot be considered separately. Adam (2006, p.247) points out that, within a good environment for learning:

- Participants should be focused on their learning rather than performance
- Teachers should view learners as ‘co-constructers’ of meaning and knowledge
- The teacher-learner relationship should be established upon guidance rather than instruction
- Teachers should seek to engage learners in tasks that have implicit worth

Referring to the fourth point, a ‘task’ is an activity or a problem that is presented by the teacher, and that the learners are required to perform or to solve (Harmer, 2001). Adam (2006) also states that, in the social constructivism view, the important role that teachers play is to provide an environment in which students can feel safe to construct knowledge with their teachers and peers. Daiute and Dalton (1993, p.283) explain that, within the environment where the relationship of ‘apprenticeship’ is held between an expert and novices, the expert in the field will involve the novices in meaningful activities in order to enable them to process the activities independently. This apprenticeship between an expert and novices has been adopted into the relationship between a teacher and learners in the classroom. It is here that the idea of a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) was introduced by the psychologist Vygotsky.
2.1.1.2 Vygotsky and the theory of ZPD

Vygotsky made a different assumption from Piaget’s on how the ‘construction of knowledge’ takes place within learners. According to Rogoff (1990), Piaget considered that it would occur between equals who are attempting to understand alternative views and, from this viewpoint, peer-peer interaction could lead to new perspectives for learners. On the other hand, Vygotsky believed that the ‘construction of knowledge’ would occur after a skilled expert gave appropriate support to novices, and adult-peer instruction could expand the learner’s strategies and skills for addressing the subject matter (Rogoff, 1990, pp.140-150).

The concept of ZPD was introduced in the educational field with the following definition:

...the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86)

With this concept, Vygotsky suggested that teachers must take learners’ current developmental level into account and provide instruction that enables them to proceed to the next developmental level. He stressed the importance, when teachers are giving instructions, of considering learners’ actual developmental level, since effective learning will not take place spontaneously if a teacher just gives instructions without thinking the level of the learners (Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygotsky indicated that instruction should be given by taking account of learners’ two stages of developmental level: the ‘actual developmental level’, in which activities can be completed successfully without any help, and the ‘potential developmental level’, in which activities require a competence slightly beyond learner’s current level (Rogoff, 1990). Vygotsky believed that when teachers gave instructions at the developmental level that their students had already achieved, or tasks that they can finish successfully by themselves, it would not bring any effective results for learner’s overall development. In short, he considered that effective learning must take place in advance of each learner’s current level.
This is the core idea of Vygotsky’s ZPD, and it is often regarded as closely related to the theory called ‘sociocultural theory’. Sociocultural theory claims that social interaction plays an important role in individual learners’ development as well as cognitive growth (Donato & McCormick, 1994, p.453). The social interaction in schools takes place in various ways and it could take the form of ‘scaffolding’ or negotiation conducted by teachers and students in classrooms.

2.1.1.3 Scaffolding and negotiation

According to Hammond and Gibbons (2005a; 2005b), ‘scaffolding’ in education means task-specific support designed to assist learners so that they can complete the same or similar tasks on their own. It is underpinned by the social cultural perspective that regards knowledge as something being shared within communities, and for that reason people establish their understanding by engaging with cultural and historical factors (Rojus-Drummond & Mercer, 2003, p.100). Hammond and Gibbons (2005b, p.8) explain that scaffolding entails a belief that new learning takes place when a learner who is working within the ZPD requires support from others.

Rojus-Drummond and Mercer’s study (2003) actually reveals that learners can benefit considerably by learning in the classroom, where integration of teacher-led discourse and peer group interaction take place. However, to make scaffolding conducted in classrooms more effective, both high levels of support and high levels of challenge for the learners are necessary through collaborative and negotiated social processes (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005b, p.9). The way knowledge is constructed by scaffolding might vary depending on which participant structure a teacher selects, such as individual, pair, group, or whole class. Therefore, scaffolding could be either a teacher’s temporal help for learners to complete a task and achieve new understandings, or possibly support from peers during communicative activities. However, this study will focus on scaffolding from teachers as they elicit answers from their students in the form of questioning.

In terms of negotiation, after talking about social process with collaboration and negotiation, Donato (1994, p.34) suggests that one of the necessary and sufficient conditions for second language acquisition is ‘negotiation on meaning’. Before
discussing what ‘negotiation on meaning’ is, the term ‘meaning’ as used in a linguistic context might be better explained by referring to two contrastive language teaching instructions called ‘focus on forms’ and ‘focus on meaning’. According to Ellis (1994, p.639), ‘focus on forms’ instruction aims to draw learners’ attention to a specific linguistic feature by direct instruction. On the other hand, ‘focus on meaning’ instruction is based on the idea that language knowledge is acquired by learners through communication with the target language instead of the teacher’s explicit instructions (Ellis, Basturkmen & Leowen, 2001, p.407).

To put it simply, in ‘focus on meaning’, language needs to be regarded as a tool to conduct communication with others and achieve some non-linguistic goals, rather than a subject to be learnt by learners. It seems that this idea is closely interrelated with Krashen’s theory of ‘comprehensible input’. Krashen (1992, p.402) points out that learners will acquire their target language more effectively when they understand the messages inherent in communication or interaction with others. At this point, the motivation for learning the subject matter is believed to have a strong effect on how positively learners take part in the communication, interaction, and activities conducted by the teacher and their fellow learners. Furthermore, it is also considered to affect how much of the target language they can actually acquire through the transaction of knowledge in class.

2.1.2 Learners’ motivation

Motivation is often regarded as one of the most important factors that affects learners’ language acquisition. Harmer (2001, p.53) claims that when teachers want their students to be intrinsically motivated, all three aspects—the ‘subjects’, ‘topics’, and ‘activities’—that students address have to be interesting for them. Lightbown and Spada, (2006, p.64) point out that teachers can positively contribute to students’ motivation for learning by making the classroom a place where students can enjoy coming to because:

- the content is interesting and suitable for students’ age and level of ability
- the learning goals are challenging but also manageable and clear
- the atmosphere within the classroom is supportive
In this respect, Skehan (1989) explains four hypotheses, the ‘Intrinsic Hypothesis’, the ‘Resultative Hypothesis’, the ‘Internal Cause Hypothesis’, and the ‘Carrot and Stick Hypothesis’, which all refer to learners’ motivation and the factors that affect it.

According to Skehan (1989), the first hypothesis, ‘Intrinsic Hypothesis’, considers that motivation derives from an ‘inherent interest’ in the learning task that learners are required to perform. The second hypothesis, ‘Resultative Hypothesis’, assumes that the results of learners’ performance can affect their motivation, which leads to perseverance for students who are performing well and discouragement for the students who are performing inadequate. Then, the third hypothesis, ‘Internal Cause Hypothesis’ (or ‘Integrative Motivation’), posits that learners possess a certain quantity of motivation when they are interested in the people and culture using their target language, and it is believed that this will have a strong relationship with learners’ L2 learning (Hynes, 2002, p.42). Lastly, the fourth hypothesis, ‘Carrot and Stick Hypothesis’, asserts that external factors and incentives, such as praise and rewards, can strengthen learners’ motivation.

Referring to the hypotheses that Skehan has explained, Ellis (1994) distinguishes four types of motivations, namely ‘Causative’, ‘Resultative’, ‘Intrinsic’, and ‘Extrinsic’. ‘Causative Motivation’ is regarded as a motivation that affects learners’ acquisition of knowledge from the perspective of cause and effect. In contrast, ‘Resultative Motivation’ is regarded as a type of motivation that can be influenced by the positive or negative effect of their learning. Then, ‘Intrinsic Motivation’ and ‘Extrinsic Motivation’ see how learners become motivated from different angles. While the former is based on the view that learners will be motivated by their personal interests and inner needs, the latter considers that external sources such as material rewards will affect learners’ motivation. However, teachers might have to shift learners’ ‘Resultative Motivation’ to ‘Causative Motivation’ and ‘Extrinsic Motivation’ to ‘Intrinsic Motivation’ if they are trying to enhance students’ spontaneous learning.

In summary, the various types of motivation mentioned here can be considered very crucial factors that play a significant role in helping students in classrooms construct knowledge within the learning environment where they belong. Dornyei (2001) states that learners who are motivated sufficiently can learn their target language effectively. Therefore, taking learners’ motivation into consideration is necessary to facilitate their
learning both with their teachers and their peers, and varying classroom interactions could be one way to do this.

2.2 Classroom interaction

Classroom interaction is the interaction between the teacher and learners in forms of either teacher-learner interaction or learner-learner interaction (Tsui, 2001). It has been found that frequent interactions between teacher and learners are significantly related to students’ achievement and can even promote their achievement (Rosenshine, 1971). Ur (1996) introduces various interactions that occur in classroom participation patterns, such as ‘Individual work’, ‘Group work’, ‘Collaboration’, and ‘Full-class interaction’.

According to Ur (1996), while the teacher monitors and assists when students are working on their tasks independently during ‘Individual work’, the teacher walks around and listens to students’ interaction with little intervention during ‘Group work’, in which students convey information or conduct group decision-making in small groups. Within ‘Collaboration’, in which students do tasks similar to those in ‘Individual work’, the teacher occasionally intervenes when students are working together, usually in pairs. The difference between ‘Group work’ and ‘Collaboration’ is that the task in ‘Collaboration’ does not necessarily need interactions to occur in order to be achieved. Finally, in ‘Full-class interaction’ the teacher requires students to ‘debate a topic or do a language task as a class’, while occasionally intervening in order to monitor and stimulate students’ participation (Ur, 1996, p.228).

However, these patterns are only one perspective on the interactions in classrooms and their roles in language class. Walsh (2011, p.1) explains that (a) access to new knowledge, (b) acquisition and development of new skills, (c) identification of problems for understanding, (d) treatment for ‘breakdowns’ in communication, and (e) establishment and maintenance of relationships can all be conducted through language in interaction. He points out that, while classroom interaction entails the complicated relationship among language, interaction, and learning, most teacher education programmes devote a vast amount of time to dealing with teaching methods and subject knowledge but not enough time to developing an understanding of interactional processes (Walsh, 2011, p.3). Walsh emphasises the importance of fostering an
understanding of the complex relationship between language and interaction, so that teachers can establish, develop, and promote their students’ understanding.

Two of the basic interactions that teachers can take into account in the first place would be teachers’ ‘questioning’ and ‘feedback’. Richards (2002, p.24) claims that, although teachers should not attempt to look for ‘a general method of teaching’ or ‘a particular set of teaching skills’, they should try to find the way that works the best in their contexts by constantly discarding old practices and taking new ones on board. In my experience, the way teachers ask questions and respond to their students’ answers plays a significant role in enhancing classroom learning. Therefore, teachers’ questioning techniques will be focused on next, followed by techniques to give a feedback after asking questions.

2.2.1 Teachers' questioning

Brualdi (1998) believes that teachers must be able to question well in order to teach well. Thompson (1997, p.37) claims that language teachers need to ‘ask appropriate questions and emphasise the complexity attached to good questioning’, so that they can have a broad effect on students’ learning and be able to increase the opportunities for meaningful participation in classroom interaction. However, he also explains that most of the studies on classroom interaction just give descriptions instead of being pedagogic (Thompson, 1997). In other words, although teachers have developed an understanding of how a language is learnt in classrooms, it is still inconvenient for them to employ them. Wilen (1991, p.8) points out that ‘most of the decisions teachers make about questioning in the classroom are intuitive and are therefore based primarily on experience’.

Hence, teachers need more opportunities to address their questioning techniques, not only with the knowledge that they have acquired through experience, but with the knowledge that is theoretically underpinned by the latest studies. It may be difficult for teachers to recognise a ‘good question’ if they do not know what factors make good questions (Morgan & Saxton, 1991, p.4). Therefore, before discussing the questions asked in English class in Japanese high schools, the studies in the area will be addressed.
2.2.1.1 Why do teachers ask questions?

Walsh (2011, p.11) states that classrooms are unique settings, because for most of the questions asked by teachers there ‘the answer is already known’ by them. However, teachers’ motivation for asking questions is regarded as actively engaging their students in language material through speech by eliciting ‘fairly prompt, motivated, relevant and full responses’, and without (a) resulting in long silence, (b) being answered exclusively by the strongest students, (c) boring the class, and (d) eliciting only brief or unsuccessful answers (Ur, 1996, p.230). Questioning is believed to play a critical role in helping instructors to structure the class environment and organise the content of the course, and is also closely related to the way students assimilate the presented information that is discussed in class (McComas & Abraham, 2005, p.1).

In the early 20th century, it was discovered that teachers spent almost 80% of classroom time asking students questions (Stevens, 1912, cited in Brualdi, 1998). In the 1980s, Leven and Long (1981) claimed that teachers provide their students with 300-400 questions each day. It seems as if this teacher behaviour of asking their students a great number of questions has not changed even in these days. Walsh (2011) explains that the discourse held in classrooms is still dominated by question/answer routines, in which mostly teachers ask questions. Scholars such as Morgan and Saxton (1991) and Ur (1996), have named several potential reasons why teachers in classrooms keep asking questions, such as:

- to get students actively involved in their lessons and learning
- to provide students, especially weaker ones, with the opportunity to express their ideas and thoughts openly
- to enable students to acquire different explanations for the material from their stronger peers rather than from teacher
- to pace the lessons and moderate students’ behaviour by directing their attention to the topic
- to evaluate students’ learning through checking, testing, and revising their understanding, knowledge, and skills, if necessary
Nakajima (2010, p.36) explains that teachers in Japan ask questions (a) to confirm students’ comprehension of the content taught in the lesson, (b) to deepen students’ understanding of the topic, and (c) to link what is taught in the lessons with each student. However, remarking that high school classes in Japan are mainly constructed around teachers’ questioning and students’ answering, Nakajima (2010) also claims that whether or not teachers can make effective use of their teaching materials depends entirely on how they are able to (1) elaborate their questions, (2) provide questions at the best time, and (3) make the characters that appear in the materials lively (that is, not just teaching and asking what is explicitly written).

### 2.2.1.2 Four basic types of teachers’ questions

According to Ito (2010), if teachers want to enhance learners’ comprehension, they need to change the patterns and methods to present the content of the teaching material, so that learners can address it over and over again in various ways. In this respect, Lightbown and Spada (2006) point out that a number of studies have examined two particular types of questions ‘Display questions’ and ‘Genuine’ (or ‘Referential’) questions, and the role that each plays in classroom interaction. The questions to which teachers have an expected answer or a particular answer to be ‘displayed’ are called ‘Display questions’, and the questions that result in more ‘natural’ responses or conversational interactions are called ‘Genuine’ or ‘Referential’ questions (Walsh, 2011). The former is considered to lead to short and simple responses that do not demand much cognitive effort from learners, while the latter requires more cognitive processing, and therefore learners can generate more complex answers (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p.130).

However, Brualdi (1998) and Wilen (1991) point out that teachers generally do not ask high-level cognitive questions as frequently as low-level cognitive questions in classrooms. Teachers’ over-reliance on low-level cognitive questions is, to some extent, considered to be deliberate. Ellis (1993) explains that teachers are likely to rely on low-level cognitive questions (a) to avoid the lessons being slow-paced, (b) to retain their students’ attention, and (c) to maintain control of the class. However, although the effects of asking high-/low-level cognitive questions are not completely understood (Arends, 1994), it is believed that high-level cognitive questions, which require a
deeper understanding of the topic, can motivate students to use their knowledge for ‘higher order thinking’ and ‘reasoning’, as well as to analyse, evaluate, and solve problems (Brualdi, 1998).

There are two other types of questions, ‘Closed-ended’ and ‘Open-ended’ questions, distinguished by the type of response required. While ‘Close-ended’ questions have only one ‘correct’ response, there are various answers that can be accepted for ‘Open-ended’ questions, which makes it possible for teachers to elicit more responses from their students (Ur, 1996). ‘Open-ended’ questions may also require higher level cognition, as students have to consider what has been asked and what kinds of answers are expected, instead of just presenting factual knowledge that they already have, which is often all that is required for ‘Closed-ended’ questions. Nakajima (2010) points out that, when the class is not lively, teachers are asking only ‘Closed-ended’ questions in many cases. However, it does not necessarily mean that ‘Display’ (or low-level cognitive) questions are inferior to ‘Genuine’ (or high-level cognitive) questions, as they can still ‘serve important pedagogic and interaction functions’ (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p.131).

2.2.1.3 The functions of teachers’ questions

According to Cotton (2001), the functions of teachers’ questions are not only interrogative, but can also be ‘instructional cues or stimuli’ that convey content elements and directions (what to do and how) to students in the classroom. Likewise, Tanaka (2011) states that questioning is not only about gathering information from respondents, but includes some other functions. He adds that questions are provided to learners in order to fill the gaps in information between the questioner and the respondent with three functions: an ‘Interpersonal function’ (questions to establish, maintain, and adjust the relationship between the questioner and the respondent), an ‘Information-gathering function’ (questions to obtain information related to the issues or topics), and a ‘Meaning-creating function’ (questions to produce new ideas) (Tanaka, 2011, pp.7-8).
However, according to Tanaka (2010, pp.12-13), if the questioning is not being conducted sufficiently, it might be because:

- the questions are not related to the essence of the teaching materials
- the teacher is trying to teach everything by him/herself
- the questions do not demand any challenge from students at all (i.e., they can be answered too easily)
- the questions do not require various opinions and ideas (e.g., Closed-ended questions are overused)

From his teaching experience, Taguchi (2010, p.14) claims that (a) relationships in the classroom (i.e., teacher-learner and learner-learner), (b) each student’s characteristics and age, and (c) a lack of knowledge about ‘how to respond’ to the questions (no matter whether they know the answers or not) can also be considered factors that affect student’s replies, and might discourage them from answering.

### 2.2.1.4 How to make questioning more effective

Tanaka (2011, p.10) introduces the criteria for effective questions, indicating that they require ‘authenticity’ (the question is natural), ‘meaningfulness’ (the question is understandable and also interesting), and ‘personalisation’ (students can regard the question as relevant to themselves). Furthermore, to elicit a desired response from students, Ur (1996, p.230) believes that effective questioning should have:

- clarity: what is asked and what kind of answer is expected are clear
- learning value: the question stimulates thinking and contributes to further learning
- interest: the question is challenging but also interesting
- availability: most students will try to answer
- extension: the question encourages extended and varied answers

In terms of ‘clarity’, Brualdi (1998) states that teachers’ vague, abstract, or tricky questions might lead to students giving incorrect answers because they do not know
how to respond, and consequently cause them to be less confident in participating in class because of the experience of failure.

Bond (2007) indicates the effectiveness of questioning from a classroom management perspective by suggesting several practical techniques that teachers can adopt, such as:

- writing out some questions that they are planning to ask, along with the behaviour they expect from their students during the questioning period
- calling on a variety of students while cueing them before the questions are asked
- asking an appropriate level of questions that can elicit positive or correct responses
- providing sufficient wait time after asking questions that can be answered in various ways

When looking at the last point, which refers to the teachers’ behaviour after they ask questions, providing sufficient wait time for students to think and respond is often regarded as a crucial factor for effective questioning that can enhance learning (Bond, 2007; Department for Education and Skills, 2004; Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Ohno, 2010; Walsh, 2011; Wilen & Clegg, 1986).

In summary, questioning techniques are not only useful for enhancing learners’ participation or performance in classrooms, but they can also help teachers to manage their classes, which can consequently lead to a good learning environment. In this respect, teachers’ reactions to their students’ answers will be discussed next, taking into account the effects these reactions have on students’ learning.

### 2.2.2 Teachers’ feedback

Teachers’ reactions towards students’ answers are believed to play a significant role in students’ learning (Inomori, 2010). It can be said that effective questioning is accompanied by effective feedback, since ‘feedback’ is the last part of the questioning’s Initiation-Response-Feedback (I-R-F) sequence, in which a teacher initiates a question, students respond, and the teacher gives feedback (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975, cited in
Ur, 1996, p.227). Ur (1996) suggests that teachers pay close attention to their feedback towards students’ answers and treat them with respect; students should not be put down or ridiculed when they give inappropriate answers. In other words, teachers should ensure that students are in an environment where they feel safe to answer and make errors. While Ohno (2010) claims that students will be more positive once they realise their learning settings accept errors, Maeda and Abe (2010) advise teachers to predict students’ answers in advance in order to create a positive atmosphere by giving proper feedback.

However, although it is widely recognised that negative feedback towards students can cause unfavourable results, the Department for Education and Skills (2004) warns teachers to avoid overusing praise in classrooms to make students aware of their mistakes. Incorrect answers are believed to provide a good opportunity for teachers to clarify the underpinning knowledge and, if the answer is partly incorrect, it can still be used to let students find the correct answer by, ideally, involving other students in the discussion (Department for Education and Skills, 2004). In terms of error correction, Walsh (2011, p.33) states that, although he does not necessarily think that teachers should correct their students’ errors directly and in minimal way, correction has to be conducted in a way that causes little interruption and ‘maintains the flow’ of the class.

Finally, from the classroom management perspective, Bond (2007) points out that teachers should pay attention to several aspects after asking questions, so that they can create an environment in which learning occurs more frequently. These aspects are (a) responding to each answer by indicating the errors, (b) occasionally letting other students respond to their peers’ responses, (c) providing follow-up questions, and (d) encouraging students to ask additional questions. Related to the last point, Sakai (2010) explains that teachers can also enhance students’ learning through ‘asking questions in English’, which can be a model for when their students are asking questions.
Chapter Three: Methodology

The methodology employed to investigate the research questions will be described in this chapter by introducing the participants and the way data were gathered and analysed. The reliability and validity of the methods will also be addressed, followed by the limitations of the research design.

3.1 Research design

By referring to two different theoretical perspectives, ‘positivism’ and ‘interpretivism’, Gray (2009, p.17) explains that it is necessary to know which theoretical assumption the researcher starts from, as it helps to identify the methodology and approach that is most suited to explore what will be addressed. While ‘positivism’ considers that knowledge can be quantified and empirically studied (Wheeldon & Ahlberg, 2011), ‘interpretivism’ considers that what has been discovered in research is an interpretation of the researcher based on his or her own experience and background (Creswell, 2007).

Qualitative research was applied in this study, as Pring (2004) indicates that it is an appropriate approach to understand personal and social reality, while the quantitative approach is more suitable for addressing physical phenomena. According to Creswell (2007, p.39), qualitative inquiry allows research to make an ‘interpretation’ of what the researcher can ‘see, hear, and understand’ by reflecting on his or her ‘own background, history, context, and prior understandings’. The advantage of employing the qualitative approach was secure, as Silverman (2006, p.113) claims that ‘what happens in the world’ can be addressed directly.

Although it was not entirely an ethnographic study, this study adopted the idea of a researcher being a participant who, as Thomas (2009, p.119) states, engages in the situation being observed and studied as ‘instrument[s] of investigation’. This study tried to see the world of teaching/learning from different perspectives employed by individual teachers in terms of what was happening in their classrooms. The researcher collaboratively participated in interviews to see what is embedded in the issues of ‘teachers’ questioning’ with three teachers in the Japanese context.
Bryne (2004, p.182) points out that qualitative interviews are especially useful for approaching individuals’ attitudes and values. The research questions of this study ask for both teachers’ perceptions of the main topic ‘teachers’ questioning’ (see 1.4.2 Research questions), which are constructed by each teacher’s beliefs, and the experience underpinning them. Therefore, qualitative research interviews were used, as Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, and Davidson (2002, p.727) argue that they can elicit ‘participants’ views of their lives as portrayed in their stories’ and ‘gain access to their experiences, feelings and social worlds’.

3.1.1 Participants

According to Arksey and Knight (1999, p.52), the claim made with the information collected in the research will be influenced and determined by ‘the sample of informants’. While the researcher employed the stand point of ‘corroborative participant’, and try to ‘learn from people rather than study people’ (Spradley, 1979, p.3, cited in Thomas, 2009, p.118), the role of the three teachers was to help the researcher gain new insights.

The participants in this research were three Japanese in-service English teachers who had experienced teaching English at high schools for more than two years. One male teacher had been teaching for 10 years at a private junior-senior high school in Tokyo (Teacher A), another male teacher who had taught for five years at public senior high schools in Kagoshima (Teacher B), and one female teacher who had taught for two years at a private senior high school in Ibaraki (Teacher C).

Table 1: Summary of teacher interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Teaching experience</th>
<th>The location of high school (Prefecture)</th>
<th>Type of high school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>Tokyo</td>
<td>Private/Junior and Senior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Kagoshima</td>
<td>Public/Senior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Ibaraki</td>
<td>Private/Senior</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All three teachers were selected from the Japanese students who were taking the MSc Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) course at the University of Edinburgh for further professional development in teaching. The overall criteria for selecting the participants were that: they each (a) had theoretical knowledge underpinning TESOL, (b) had more than two years’ teaching experience, (c) had teaching experience at Japanese senior high schools, and (d) were from different areas in Japan.

The belief was that the first criterion (a) ‘theoretical knowledge’ would address the opinions supported by the theories in TESOL. The second criterion, (b) more than two years’ experience, was taken into account because usually teachers in Japanese high schools have opportunities to attend intensive in-service trainings at this term. For example, public high school teachers in Tokyo are required to take part in compulsory training in their first-third year in order to learn teaching techniques (e.g., Nakatsuma, 2012). The third and fourth criteria, (c) senior high school teachers in the same context, but (d) from different areas, were expected to bring more breadth to the data than conducting the study with teachers from the same area.

As they were all studying TESOL, it could be assumed that they were all enthusiastic teachers who were highly motivated to improve their teaching skills and therefore willing to make a change in their current teaching methods. The criteria were set to gather valuable data by addressing the opinions and beliefs underpinned by each teacher’s teaching, as well as their learning and experience. In addition, the range of teaching experience, 2-10 years, consequently gave the study an opportunity to gather diverse data.

### 3.1.2 Procedure

Teachers were interviewed individually after they had answered a questionnaire containing several questions related to ‘teachers’ questioning’ (see Appendix A) and had assessed the questions employed in a sample lesson plan (see Appendix B) that would be discussed later in the interviews. In the questionnaire, the participants answered several Yes/No questions with the option to explain why they had chosen those answers. However, they were not asked to explain their views in detail, since
gaining in-depth data from their answers was not the purpose of the questionnaires. Instead, the questionnaires were used to help the interviews run smoothly, with the interviewer referring to the participants’ answers. Similarly, to conduct the interviews without any difficulties, a sample lesson plan was provided in advance, with enough time for the teachers to address the entire content and process.

Moreover, before the interviews were conducted, to make sure that the participants comprehended the lesson plan without any misunderstandings, any points on which they were unclear were addressed by reconfirming the definition of each type of question in the lesson plan (e.g., *Closed-ended, Open-ended, Display, Genuine*). Any unclear points that emerged during the interviews were also treated in the same way.

Kumer (1996, p.115) points out that one of the advantages of using interviews is that ‘questions can be explained’, and the interviewer can repeat or rephrase to prevent the respondents from misunderstanding the questions.

The questionnaires and interviews were conducted taking account of ethical considerations. Although this research did not actually address vulnerable groups, which Greener (2011, p.154) states interpretivists often work with, it was conducted ‘considering any potential risks of making the participants feel upset or harmed’ (Gregory, 2003, p.31). Therefore, questionnaire and interview data were all gathered and analysed taking confidentiality into account, and only the researcher knew who the participants were.

### 3.1.2.1 Semi-structured interview to address the participants

Semi-structured interview was chosen as the way to address the topic ‘teachers’ questioning’ from the participants’ points of view. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p.2) explain that ‘An interview is literally an *inter view* [italic in original], an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about the theme of mutual interest’. Semi-structured interview ‘without fixed wording or fixed ordering of questions’ (Burns, 2000) was employed to co-construct the knowledge with the interviewees rather than just eliciting answers from them. According to Gray (2004, p.217), the interviewer can explore participants’ views by expanding on their answers which, consequently,
allowed this study to elicit a more valid response ‘from the informant’s perception of reality’ (Burns, 2000, p.424).

Although the questions asked in each interview were basically the same questions, several additional questions were also asked according to each teacher’s answers and comments given in the questionnaire, which made the interviews more meaningful because of their flexibility. In contrast, if the questions had been closed-ended or, in other words, in the form of a standardised list, the interviews might not explore the participants’ views as deeply as they actually did. Therefore, it can be said that, because of the flexibility of the questions, each interview was able to elicit and explore the participant teacher’s beliefs and claims based on their particular experience.

### 3.1.2.2 Setting and timing

David and Sutton (2004, p.90) claim that the time and place in which an interview takes place have to be considered carefully so that the interviewee can feel comfortable to participate. The invitations were sent via e-mail and agreement to participate was gained after the participants were informed about the main topic and what they would be asked in the interviews. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p.3) explain that an interview is ‘not a conversation between equal partners’, because the interviewer ‘defines and controls the situation’. Therefore, the interviews were conducted taking the effects of the power relationship between interviewer and interviewee into consideration to make the influence on the conversation as small as possible. The interviews were all held after the topic had been previously discussed, and some ice-breaking questions were also asked before the interviews in order to start and continue them more naturally.

The interviews were carried out in June in study rooms at the university’s facilities, where they could be conducted without any interruptions, and each interview took 30-40 minutes. They were all done in the interviewer’s and interviewees’ L1 (i.e., Japanese) to make the interactions held in the interviews more natural and to avoid any misunderstandings occurring from the use of L2 (i.e., English). Each interview was recorded with a digital audio recorder so that the interviewer could focus on asking questions and confirming that both the interviewer’s and interviewee’s message had
been received correctly. Furthermore, by recording, the conversations held in the interviews could be transcribed and analysed later.

3.2 Analysis of the data

According to Creswell (2003, p.190), a data analysing process is necessary for ‘making sense out of text and image data’. The recorded interviews were transcribed and analysed to make sense of the information by ‘grouping information into codes, themes or categories, and larger dimensions’ (Creswell, 2007, p.51). Although this study employed a qualitative method as the main approach, the use of semi-structured interviews helped to compare the data gathered from each interview, as it is easier to make a statistical comparison when the interview is more structured (Bechhofer & Paterson, 2000). Thematic analysis, which is ‘the process for encoding qualitative information’ with an explicit code (Boyatzis, 1998, p.VI), was used to analyse the interview data by finding a theme as a pattern in the information.

Boyatzis (1998, p.VII) explains that a theme might exist at either the manifest level or the latent level; namely, it could be ‘directly observable in the information’ or ‘underlying the phenomenon’. Furthermore, he claims that themes can either be generated ‘inductively’ from the raw information or ‘deductively’ from theory and prior research. In other words, coding can be conducted in either a concept-driven or data-driven way, and while the former applies codes that have been developed in advance by referring to the material or literature in the field, the latter starts without codes, but ‘the researcher develops them by reading the material’ (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p.202).

In this study, the themes embedded in the interview data were addressed using both inductive and deductive approaches, by finding explicit and implicit patterns in the information. Using the inductive approach, the keywords that often appear in the literature and articles referring to ‘teachers’ questioning’ (e.g., ‘type’, ‘level’, ‘clarity’, and ‘time’) were encoded, while several interesting themes emerged from the deductive approach, such as ‘learners’ motivation’ and ‘lack of time’(which will be discussed in Chapter Four).
3.3 Reliability and validity

Gray (2004, p.218) explains that an interview needs to be designed to ensure sufficient ‘credibility’ (i.e., whether it can be trusted or not) of the findings, as well as firm ‘reliability’ and ‘validity’. In qualitative research, ‘reliability’ (i.e., ‘stability or consistency of responses’) can be used to confirm whether there are ‘consistent patterns of theme development’ among multiple investigators, while ‘generalisability’ (i.e., ‘the external validity of applying results to new settings’) can also be adopted by generalising ‘some facets of multiple case analysis’ (Yin, 1989, cited in Creswell, 2003) to other cases (Creswell, 2003, p.195). However, it is considered that ‘reliability’ and ‘generalisability’ can play only a minor role in qualitative research, while ‘validity’, that is, the ‘accuracy’, ‘trustworthiness’, and ‘credibility’ of the findings, is regarded as the strength of qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2003, pp.195-196). This study’s main aim was not to generalise the data gathered from the interviews, but to gain in-depth information from each teacher; therefore, whether the information was transferred with or without any misunderstandings needed to be examined carefully.

When addressing the interview data, this research employed the theoretical perspective of ‘interpretivism’, which is explained above (see 3.2 Research design). Mottier (2005) claims that it is impossible to conduct a fully objective observation of pure data, since all scientific data will be interpreted when they are observed. However, to secure the ‘accuracy’ of the data as much as possible, the interviews in this study were conducted by constantly confirming that the information provided by the interviewer and interviewees had been conveyed correctly. In addition, before the interviews started, participants were told not to be hesitant to ask for further information if there were any uncertain points during the interviews. The questions were repeated and, if necessary, rephrased by the interviewer using easier words and expressions to make sure that they were clear enough to be followed by the interviewees.

3.4 Limitations

However, as can be said for any research methodology, the approaches taken in this study also had some acknowledged limitations which might have affected the findings.
The two major limitations on ‘the sampling of the participants’ and ‘the method employed to address research questions’ will be discussed here.

3.4.1 Limitations of sampling

First, the findings from the interviews would have been more representative if the size of the sample was larger. Additionally, the voices of ‘classroom teachers’ (i.e., teachers who are actually teaching at the moment) can be regarded as missing and could have been included. However, the criteria for the participants, which has been mentioned previously (see 3.2.1 Participants), was prioritised in this study to elicit Japanese English teachers’ views reflecting the further knowledge that they had acquired through studying TESOL. Moreover, teachers who were not on active duty were chosen in order to avoid putting additional pressure on the participants by addressing them at the very important, and also busy, moment after the new school year had just started. (The data collection for this study was conducted in June when teachers, students, and schools are still on their way to getting used to the new environment.)

3.4.2 Limitations of method

The reliability could have been strengthened by examining the interviewer’s potentially-biased assumptions and interpretation. Although the validity of the data was taken into consideration as carefully as possible, triangulation could also have been used in order to enhance the validity of the findings. Triangulation is based on the idea that ‘viewing from several different angles is better than viewing from just one’ (Thomas, 2009, p.111). Arksey and Knight (1999) explain that the advantage of using multiple methods is that the weakness of a single research method can be overcome by the strength of the other methods. Although Thomas (2009) states that triangulation does not necessarily have to be conducted, or carried out with three methods, the use of additional approaches might have increased the reliability and validity of this study.

In this study, observations could have been conducted together with the interviews, as Ruegg (2009, p.406) states that ‘teachers’ perceptions of their own teaching practices are not necessarily representative of what actually happens in their class’. However,
addressing the three participating teachers’ beliefs and views was the main aim of this study, and the approach of a semi-structured interview was taken to explore them, which could not have been done by observation of their teaching.
Chapter Four: Results

The results of the approaches taken to answer the research questions will be discussed in this chapter. While the findings will be important for understanding each teacher’s beliefs and views as embedded in their actions, the discussion will focus on the core factors related to ‘teachers’ questioning’.

4.1 Findings from the questionnaires

Although the questionnaires conducted before the interviews were not the main approach to address the three teachers’ perceptions on questioning techniques, they did reveal some significant issues that needed to be considered. In the questionnaire, each participant completed ‘1. General information’ (i.e., gender, teaching experience, and location and type of high school) and answered two types of questions related to ‘teachers’ questioning’, namely ‘2. Questions related to Topic’ and ‘3. Evaluation of the Sample lesson plan’ (see Appendix A).

4.1.1 Findings from ‘2. Questions related to Topic’

In Q.1 in ‘2. Questions related to Topic’, all three teachers showed their awareness of the positive effects that teachers’ questions can have. Although Teacher C answered ‘Not sure whether teachers’ questions can directly relate to student’s achievement’, she still regarded teachers’ questioning techniques as an important aspect when considering how to enhance students’ learning. On the other hand, Q.2 and Q.3 also revealed that these teachers had few opportunities to learn about questioning techniques. Teacher B mentioned that he had learned questioning techniques by himself ‘through classroom observations’ in order to ‘apply the techniques that other experienced teachers use’, but the other two teachers answered that they had neither self-studied about questioning nor attended any seminars or programmes focusing on questioning techniques. Nevertheless, in Q.4, all three teachers showed their willingness to have more opportunities to study them explicitly.
Table 2: Summary of the three teachers’ answers towards the questionnaires (No.1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Answers</th>
<th>Reasons (*Optional)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q.1 Do you think teachers’ questions can play an important role in enhancing student’s achievement for learning?</td>
<td>YES: 2</td>
<td>Teacher can measure students’ understanding. Questioning can influence students’ motivation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.2 Have you ever studied about teachers’ questioning techniques by yourself before?</td>
<td>YES: 1</td>
<td>To learn how other teachers ask questions and how I can apply them to my own context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.3 Have you attended any seminars/programmes to improve your questioning techniques?</td>
<td>NO: 3</td>
<td>Not so interested in questioning techniques themselves. The seminars or programmes focusing on questioning are not familiar to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.4 Do you think there should be more opportunities to learn questioning techniques provided by educational institution? (e.g., Ministry of Education, Broad of education, your school)</td>
<td>YES: 3</td>
<td>Learning questioning techniques is beneficial for teachers. Not only questioning but English teachers need more opportunities to improve their teaching, especially in-service teachers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.2 Findings from ‘3. Evaluation of the Sample lesson plan’

How three teachers assessed the sample lesson plan in ‘3. Evaluation of the Sample lesson plan’ in the questionnaire will be described here briefly. Eleven aspects asked in the questionnaire were based on several different criteria for effective questioning
provided by Bond (2007), the Department for Education and Skills (2004), S. Tanaka (2011), and T. Tanaka (2010). The results of these teachers’ evaluation showed how each teacher took each aspect into consideration when they were asking questions of their students.

As can be seen from Q.10, all teachers considered the questions to be highly related to the materials used in the lesson (‘relativeness’ was marked the highest within the 11 factors). Then, the questions’ ‘authenticity’ (whether they were provided naturally or not), ‘comprehensibleness’ (whether they were easy to understand or not), and to what degree the questions asked could be ‘personalised’ followed (Q.4, 5, 7). In contrast, the aspect that was assessed the lowest in the 11 aspects was the ‘level’ of the questions (Q.2). As in ‘Q.2 The level of the questions’, two teachers marked 3 for ‘Q.1 The number of questions’. However, Teacher A assessed Q.1 as 5, which seemed to reveal the different perceptions of the proper ‘number’ of teachers’ questioning. The marks on Q.1 and Q.2 made it clear that each teacher had very different perceptions of the appropriate ‘level’ and ‘number’ of teachers’ questions.

Table 3: Summary of the three teachers’ answers towards the questionnaires (No.2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Teachers’ evaluation (1-5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>teacher A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The number of the questions is proper.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The level of the questions is proper.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The variety of the questions is proper.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The questions are asked naturally.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The questions are comprehensible.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The questions are interesting.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The questions can be personalised (Students can regard the questions are related with themselves).</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The opportunity for learning is enough.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The questions are clear enough to follow.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The questions are related enough to the materials.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The time spent for the questions is enough.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 Findings from the semi-structured interviews

The questions asked in the interviews were composed of two parts: Part A: Three teachers’ perceptions of their questioning and Part B: Asking about questioning used in the sample lesson plan. While the former was asked to investigate how each teacher perceived their own questioning techniques, the latter was asked to further discuss effective questioning in its context by referring to the questions in the sample lesson plan.

4.2.1 Part A: Three teachers’ perceptions of their questioning

The participating teachers’ perceptions of their questioning were addressed in Part A of the semi-structured interview. The findings reflecting each teacher’s view, which emerged from the interviews, will be presented here.

4.2.1.1 The purpose of asking questions

First, the purpose of asking questions and the ratio of questioning to instruction in each teacher’s class were addressed. The interviews made it clear that all three teachers asked questions for some kind of confirmation of what had been taught in the lesson.

A: I ask questions mainly to check my students’ understanding; for example, the understanding of what they have read.

B: I ask questions to get my students’ attention at the beginning of the class, and I ask questions after we have read the textbook to confirm the content with students. Also, I ask questions at the end of the class to make sure that they understood today’s lesson.

C: I think I was providing a lot of questions just for form’s sake […] maybe I will ask my students ‘What do you think?’, but that’s it.

Teacher A perceived that his ratio of providing questions to giving instruction in his class was roughly 2:8, and stated that he asked questions to check his students’
understanding. Teacher B, who also answered 2:8, explained that he asked questions to get students’ attention, and to confirm an understanding of the content of textbooks and the lesson itself. Teacher C, who regarded her ratio of questioning to instruction as 1:9, mentioned that she was confirming her students’ understanding by asking questions, but she added that they were mainly superficial questions, which she asked as ‘a matter of form’, that did not necessarily lead to further learning.

4.2.1.2 The most important factor of questioning for each teacher

Next, the most important factor for each teacher when they were asking questions was revealed by the interviews. Their answers showed that two teachers, Teacher A and B, considered the ‘level’ of their questions provided during the class as the most important factor.

A: I will not start with difficult questions at the beginning. Instead, I will check the facts, which are written in the textbook...and when they have understood the story deeply...I will ask questions, such as to read between the lines, the questions that require more high-level thought, by gradually making the level of the questions higher...

B: First, I consider the level of questions and the way they are provided. [...] I always keep it in my mind to ask a question such that my students can come up with their answers with no difficulty. [...] I think questions like ‘What do you think?’ are difficult for students to answer, so I will provide some ‘scaffolding’ to help them answer.

These statements have some correlation with their answers in the questionnaire. One explanation for this could be that, while Teacher C marked 4 for the ‘level’ of the questions in the sample lesson plan, both Teacher A and B marked 3, which was slightly lower than Teacher C (see Table 3). Therefore, it could be said that Teacher A and B were more demanding in the ‘level’ of questions in the sample lesson plan. Teacher C, however, considered the ‘clarity’ and ‘number’ of the questions to be the most important factors.
C: (I consider) whether my questions are clear for my students or not, and also whether the number of questions I ask is too much. I think it is troublesome for them…

4.2.1.3 The type of questions that each teacher asks

The interviews also disclosed the types of questions that each teacher asked their students. While Teacher A and C claimed that they asked more Closed-ended questions than Open-ended questions, Teacher B pointed out that he asked both types of questions equally. However, all three teachers clarified that they used more Display questions than Genuine questions in class. Each teacher analysed their questions as follows:

A: I think… I am using more Display questions. […] I believe that if a teacher has some model answers in one’s mind, which he or she expects their students’ to provide, that teacher can ask more effective questions that can lead to students’ comprehension.

B: I ask more Display questions in my class. […] I think… I cannot lead my class to the way I want to if I use more Genuine questions.

C: I think I ask more Display type of questions. […] I did not ask many Genuine questions.

While every teacher shared the same perception on this point—that they ask more Display questions—Teacher B and C explained that the reason why they did not ask Genuine questions so much was related to their teaching style, which depended on their pre-planned lesson procedure.

B: Genuine questions might elicit a limitless number of questions. […] if I try to put all of their ideas together it will take a long time. However, I plan my lesson in advance considering the whole process and the direction that I want to lead my students to… and I want to follow the procedure that I plan beforehand.
C: ...during the class, I stick exclusively to my original pattern for class. [...] sometimes I pre-plan my questions, for example, ‘Okay, I will ask about A with this question’, but most of the questions are Closed-ended and Display type.

4.2.1.4 The perception of students’ response and teachers’ feedback

Taking account of the I-R-F sequence of questioning (see 2.2.2 Teachers’ feedback), this section will introduce the findings related to the three teachers’ perceptions of students’ response and teachers’ feedback. The findings revealed that all teachers regarded their students’ positive attitudes to engage in the class an important factor to value.

A: ...even if they make a mistake, I want to respect the students who speak. Well, if the answer is correct of course it will be better, but I want to appreciate their positive attitude. [...] I want to make my class accept errors, so I am always telling my students that making mistakes is not a bad thing...

B: I regard a positive attitude as the most important aspect. [...] I often praise my students when I give feedback. When their answers are partly wrong, I still praise them in order not to make them feel depressed.

C: I encourage my students as much as I can. No matter whether the answers are correct or not, I try to find good points that they’ve made and praise them. [...] I always try to show my respect for the students who are trying to take part in the lesson positively...

The teachers who took part in this research all shared the same idea, that they would set a high valuation on students’ participation rather than the correctness of their answers. When the student’s answer was wrong, Teacher A asked follow-up questions by giving some hints, so that he could elicit the answer from the students instead of providing the expected answer by himself.
4.2.2 Part B: Asking about questioning used in the sample lesson plan

The participating teachers were also asked to investigate the questions in the sample lesson plan in Part B of the interview. Their perceptions on questioning techniques were addressed by referring to the eight sets of questions asked in the lesson plan, which could be categorised by Closed-ended/Open-ended, Display/Genuine, and the type of aspect asked with the questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Closed-ended or Open-ended</th>
<th>Display or Genuine</th>
<th>The type of aspect asked</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q.1</td>
<td>Closed-ended</td>
<td>Display</td>
<td>Topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.2</td>
<td>Open-ended</td>
<td>Genuine</td>
<td>Topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.3</td>
<td>Closed-ended and Open-ended</td>
<td>Display and Genuine</td>
<td>Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.4</td>
<td>loosely Closed-ended</td>
<td>Display</td>
<td>Grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.5</td>
<td>Closed-ended and Open-ended</td>
<td>Display and Genuine</td>
<td>Grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.6</td>
<td>loosely Closed-ended</td>
<td>Display</td>
<td>Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.7</td>
<td>loosely Open-ended</td>
<td>Genuine</td>
<td>Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.8</td>
<td>Open-ended</td>
<td>Genuine</td>
<td>Opinion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Between the continuum of Closed-ended (i.e., questions that have correct answers) and Open-ended (i.e., questions asked to explore students’ views), the lesson plan also set ‘loosely Closed-ended’ and ‘loosely Open-ended’ questions. While loosely Closed-ended questions were explained as ‘the teacher has some particular answers that he or she wants to elicit with them’, loosely Open-ended questions were ‘the inquiry that has some potential answers from the students that the teacher could predict’ and not fully open. The eight questions were also classified according to the type of aspect asked, such as Topic, Content, Grammar, or Opinion.
4.2.2.1 The effective questions for each teacher

All three teachers chose either Open-ended or loosely Open-ended questions as the most effective questions in the sample lesson plan. Teacher A and C both selected Q.7 (loosely Open-ended) as the most effective type of questions likely to lead to students’ further comprehension, with Teacher A referring to a particular question: Q.7 a) ‘Could you find in the video anything that you think implies the hummingbird/other animals/fire?’

A: I thought that Q.7 a) was a question that can touch the substance of the lesson. I mean the question that can play the most important role in this lesson. […] I think Q.7 is effective because those are the questions addressing the most essential part of the text, so I believe that, by facing these questions, the students’ comprehension will be much deeper.

C: I think Q.7 and maybe also Q.8 at the end of the lesson play an important role in this lesson. […] The procedure seems to be effective to make the students notice and understand the true message embedded in the text. […] So, it seems that those questions are good questions that can make the students’ comprehension deeper.

Teacher B chose Q.2 (Open-ended) as the most effective question that could involve the students further in the lesson. Teacher B also implied that the questions that can make students use their higher-level cognition might lead to students’ further learning.

B: I think…Q.2 is the most effective question in this lesson plan. […] Students would automatically think ‘Why?’ before the questions are asked by the teacher.

4.2.2.2 The adoptability of the questions

The interviews also addressed the type of questions that each teacher considered easy/difficult to adopt in their own contexts. Teacher A regarded two specific questions, Q.5 b) and c), which ask about grammatical aspects, as easy to adopt in his class. They were: b) ‘Describe hummingbird’s behaviour in one adjective, giving some reasons’,
and c) ‘Compare the modal verbs that the hummingbird and other animals used and tell the difference’. Teacher B considered that either loosely Closed-ended or loosely Open-ended questions were more applicable in his context, while fully Open-ended questions were regarded as ‘uncontrollable’. Teacher C pointed out that the questions asking about the content of a textbook or video might be easy to adopt, as they are widely regarded by Japanese English teachers as one type of ‘commonly-asked’ questions.

A: I thought questions such as Q.5 were easy to adopt in my class, as I teach more grammatical aspects... [...] although I think Closed-ended, Display questions asking about grammar aspects are the easiest to adopt, questions such as b) and c) ... also seem to be applicable for me.

B: I believe the type of questions that is difficult to adopt in my context is the Open-ended question. [...] I cannot predict the answers that will be presented... and also, I don’t know how I can make good use of the answers I elicit from that type of question.

C: Questions like Q.3, which asks about the content of reading materials or the video that students have watched, are kind of commonly-asked questions in Japanese high schools. [...] so I think students can predict how the video and those questions will lead to the next step.

4.2.2.3 Other important factors that emerged from the interviews

Prior (2003, p.4) states that by focussing on how documents function, instead of what they contain, they will become more than just ‘a resource to be scoured for evidence and data’. While the sample lesson plan was used as a resource to help conduct the interviews efficiently, it also revealed some embedded factors that interrelate with ‘teachers’ questioning’. Three prominent aspects that can be the key factors for enhancing ‘teachers’ questioning’ will be described here.

First, all three teachers assumed that the way teachers provide questions can affect their students’ motivation:
A: I think by devising the way a teacher provides questions it is possible to enhance students’ motivation. […] I think if the answer is correct, the student will feel pleased…

B: ...depending on how teachers ask questions, students can be more motivated and engaged in the lesson with the question ‘Why?’ in their mind...

C: ...if the topics are interesting for them, maybe they will become more motivated by the way questions are provided...

Second, Teacher A and C pointed out that the use of ‘multiple modes’ (e.g., pair work and group work) to vary the type of interactions held in classrooms would lead students to further learning. However, the teachers did not actually use different modes in their classes very often.

A: I think using the different modes in class is effective. ...by discussing within groups, I think students can learn more deeply ...but looking back at how I have taught, there might be only a few cases where I used group work to let them discuss in my class...

C: I think letting other students respond to their peers’ answers is effective for their learning if I can do it, but...usually I didn’t spend much time for group work in my class. [...] actually I did not use group work to let my students discuss the questions with their peers.

Lastly, the three teachers considered that they only spent a short time waiting for their students’ responses after they asked questions. Teacher A and C also referred to the limited time that teachers can spend in their classes.

A: ...because there are many things that need to be taught in such a limited time, I cannot give enough time for them to think deeply […] I experienced many times that I have to teach quickly while sorting out what I teach...I always feel the pressure of time. [...] I think if we had more time we could use more varieties of questioning techniques in class.
B: I think maybe the time spent after a question is also short.

C: …perhaps teachers spend only a short time to let students answer their questions because of the limited time that we can use… […] when tests are coming soon and the teacher wants to teach everything that he or she has planned, maybe the teacher cannot answer their students’ questions by spending enough time when they ask questions…

4.3 Discussion on the findings

The findings that emerged from examining teachers’ perceptions of their questioning techniques will be further discussed in this section. The points made in the literature introduced in Chapter Two will be referred to again in this chapter.

4.3.1 Awareness of an effective approach

All three teachers interviewed showed their awareness of the positive changes that can occur by using various classroom interactions and varying the way they ask questions. All three were actually applying the techniques that Bond (2007) introduces as effective questioning approaches for managing a class, such as (a) pre-planning the questions, (b) providing an appropriate level of questions, and (c) asking questions that accept various answers. The strong tendency of English teachers in Japan to plan and manage their classes neatly can be seen here.

The three teachers aimed to elicit answers from their students rather than presenting answers themselves. All three teachers shared the same opinion—that teachers must create a supportive atmosphere in the classroom to elicit their students’ answers by occasionally giving support, which was described as ‘scaffolding’ by Teacher B. Each was attempting to create a supportive learning environment, which Kim (2001) regards as an important factor for enhancing students’ learning within social settings. However, to make the scaffolding conducted in class more effective, teachers have to consider their students’ ZPD carefully, as their questions might end up eliciting only brief and unsuccessful answers, which Ur (1996, p.230) claims will result in ‘insufficient questioning’.
All of the teachers believed that *Open-ended* or *loosely Open-ended questions* could be more effective than *Closed-ended* or *loosely Closed-ended questions*, in terms of enhancing students’ learning. While Teacher A and C considered that *Open-ended questions* could help students to deepen their comprehension, Teacher B believed that students would be more engaged in their learning using higher-level cognitive skills. This perception held by these teachers corresponds with Tanaka (2011), who claims that the overuse of *Closed-ended questions* and asking too simple questions can lead to insufficient questioning. However, the strong awareness of the effectiveness of questioning techniques held by Teacher B, who referred to students’ cognitive abilities, seemed to arise from the classroom observations for improving his own teaching techniques, which was mentioned in the questionnaire.

The three teachers also believed that learners’ motivation can play an important role in their students’ learning, as Dornyei (2001) points out. Although they may have to re-examine whether or not their questions are cognitively demanding, which is a crucial factor in enhancing students’ motivation (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p.64), the teachers considered that ‘teachers’ questioning’ can affect students’ Resultative and Extrinsic motivations (see 2.1.2 Learners’ motivation). Moreover, the teachers referred to the fact that their questions should be at the appropriate level and clear enough so that students can come up with the answers by themselves. Nevertheless, even though the teachers were aware of the positive effects that ‘teachers’ questioning’, as one form of classroom interaction, could have for their students, there were still some gaps between what was considered effective questioning and how the teachers actually provided questions.

**4.3.2 Teachers’ self-imposed constraints on Open-ended questions**

To begin with, while all three teachers indicated the effectiveness of *Open-ended questions*, they actually asked many *Display questions* to confirm whether or not their students had understood a particular aspect, and these were closer to *Closed-ended questions*. The teachers knew that if the questions they asked were more *Open-ended* and *Genuine*, they could elicit various responses from students, as Ur (1996) claims. However, they did not provide *Open-ended, Genuine questions* in their classes because of their concerns about the extensive responses that can potentially come out of these
questions. This can be seen from Teacher B’s using the word ‘uncontrollable’ to represent potential responses to *Open-ended questions*.

The second point, teachers’ dependence on pre-planned lessons and procedures, seemed to be strongly related to the first point, the frequent use of *Display questions*. The teachers revealed that they had a tendency to use more *Closed-ended, Display questions* than *Open-ended, Genuine questions*, as they wanted to manage their lessons using a process that they were more used to. This, of course, was a justifiable reason, since one of the reasons that teachers ask questions in class has been described as ‘to pace the lessons and moderate students’ behaviour’ (Morgan & Saxton, 1991; Ur, 1996). The discussion on whether teachers should use more *Open-ended questions*, which the participant teachers regarded as more effective, or *Closed-ended questions*, which can help them manage their pre-planned classes, seemed to settle on the latter for the teachers in this study.

Thirdly, looking back at Adam’s (2006) necessary conditions for good learning environments (see 2.1.1.1 Learning environment), there were several aspects that still needed to be considered. Although all of the teachers covered Adam’s first point ‘to value their students’ learning (e.g., participation or positive attitude) rather than their performance (e.g., test results or score)’, others points, such as ‘co-constructing meaning and knowledge with students’, ‘establishing teacher-learner relationships through guidance instead of instruction’, and ‘engaging students in effective tasks’, were not necessarily incorporated into their classes sufficiently.

In fact, the three teachers revealed their preference for giving instruction rather than expanding the lesson through interactions, which could be initiated by ‘teachers’ questioning’. Even though they were aware of the effectiveness of using multiple interactions or modes in their classes, these teachers used mostly ‘teacher-to-whole class’ instruction and did not employ pair work or group work so much because of the strong concern about the time that they can spend on their lessons.
4.3.3 The obstacles for the teachers

There were two main two reasons why the three teachers asked more Closed-ended questions in their instruction. One was the priority on content confirmation and the other was the limited time in class.

All of the teachers asked questions to confirm their students’ understanding by gathering their knowledge, a technique that also appears in studies by Morgan and Saxton (1991) and Ur (1996) as one significant function of ‘teachers’ questioning’. However, if teachers exclusively focus on this Information-gathering function and ignore others, such as Interpersonal and Meaning-creating functions (see 2.2.1.3 The functions of teachers’ questions), their questioning might potentially lead to ‘ineffective questions’, which are less demanding and do not accept variable answers (Tanaka, 2010). On the one hand, the three teachers could be regarded as dedicated teachers who are eager to make their students understand every single aspect taught in their classes. On the other hand, it can be considered that they were not trying to construct knowledge with their students, but ‘teaching everything by themselves’, which was causing the teachers to adhere to their pre-planned procedures excessively.

The term ‘time’ also appeared very frequently in the teachers’ statements. The Three teachers spent a great large amount of time on confirmation in class. However, while scholars point out that sufficient wait times can enhance students’ learning (e.g., Bond, 2007; Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Ohno, 2010; Walsh, 2011; Wilen & Clegg, 1986), all three teachers perceived that they were not providing enough time for their students to think and answer the questions deeply. Therefore, when considering the criteria that Ur (1996) introduces for effective questioning (see 2.2.1.4 How to make questioning more effective), the clarity of the three teachers’ questions might meet the criteria, but learning value and extension seemed to be lower than the other aspects.

One reason that could explain this would be the teachers’ unfamiliarity with the techniques to employ these two factors in their questioning. In fact, Teacher C revealed her feelings at the end of the interview by saying she did not consider that time was the only reason for not using Open-ended, Genuine questions. Although Teacher C was aware that teachers always have only a limited amount of time for teaching in the classroom because of the great number of items to be taught, she revealed that she was not confident enough in her classroom interaction techniques to change her style of
questioning. Teacher C added that she actually wanted to ‘use more Group work discussion and let students discuss Open-ended questions eliciting various opinions’. At this point, teacher training might help teachers to gain confidence in their questioning, as Wilen (1991, p.8) claims that ‘teachers’ questioning’ is largely based on their intuition and experience.
Chapter Five: Conclusion

The conclusions drawn from this study will be addressed in this chapter. The findings and discussions will be summarised before examining whether the research questions have been answered or not. Finally, the implications to practice from this study will be presented at the end.

5.1 Summary of findings

This small-scale study explored three participant teachers’ understanding of ‘teachers’ questioning’. It addressed their perceptions of their own questioning techniques and how their questions could become more effective to enhance their students’ learning.

These three teachers pre-planned their lesson procedures before their classes, and also had a specific type of question that they would ask during class. The ‘level’, ‘clarity’ and ‘number’ of the questions were considered important factors that they had to pay particular attention to when they were planning questions. However, in their classes, they mainly employed teacher-centred lesson procedures, in which, in most cases, the teacher gives instructions and students listen and follow what they are expected to do.

When the teachers were actually asking questions, Closed-ended, Display questions were provided as a standard type of question more than other types, no matter whether they were asking about the topic, the content, or the grammatical aspects of the material. Confirmation, as the main purpose for the teachers to ask questions, was believed to bring that aspect, which would be addressed and focused on in the question, to every student’s attention. All of the teachers were attempting to encourage their students’ engagement and show their respect for students’ answers by taking their feelings into careful consideration.

After the questions had been asked, the teachers tended to find any good points that they could in their students’ answers so that they could be shared with the whole class. These three teachers also did not forget to accept the respondents’ errors and praise their positive attitudes. By doing this, the teachers considered that they could create a ‘good learning environment’ within a positive atmosphere, which was expected to stimulate their students’ motivation for learning. However, the time spent after each
teacher had provided questions was found to be too short to elicit well-thought-out answers and to expand them into further learning.

5.2 Summary of discussion

The findings of this research were brought up for further discussion. The study focused on the limited opportunities for the teachers to improve their questioning techniques.

The three teachers’ concerns about ‘teachers’ questioning’ were recognised regardless of whether they had any learning opportunities to address or not. Although one teacher indicated that he had acquired some questioning skills through self-conducted class observations, none of the teachers had actually received any training from institutions that particularly focused on teachers’ questioning techniques. In this respect, the participating teachers revealed the view that training highlighting questioning techniques would be beneficial for them to further develop their teaching skills. However, they also believed that there were several obstacles to overcome in order to change their classroom interactions.

The teachers’ awareness of the benefits of employing various techniques became clear, and this awareness could potentially lead to classrooms where learning occurs more frequently. The three teachers expected that adopting a variety of questions could help their questioning to initiate more meaningful interactions, but there were several factors that made them hesitant to adjust their questioning techniques. The amount of time that Japanese English teachers had for teaching a wide range of aspects was regarded as one crucial factor that consequently led them to rely on a questioning style that emphasised the confirmation of content as a first priority. The justifiable excuse for the teachers to ask questions with the aim of confirming could be because it can help the student to share the same level of knowledge by addressing the content with all of the members in the classroom.

However, familiarity with teacher-centred lessons may also be a barrier to employing interaction-based lesson procedures. Compared with teacher-centred instruction-based classes, there is a need for both teacher and students to be flexible in interaction-based lessons, so that they can accept ideas and opinions from others and co-construct knowledge with them. As English classes in Japanese high schools adopt a more
instruction-based style, teachers are not familiar with the teaching strategies that require high flexibility to make good use of various interactions by teacher and students. This may be caused by the lack of opportunities for teachers to address the classroom interactions that can be adopted into their classes and the theoretical background that underpins them. The need to make English teachers more confident in their classroom interaction skills emerges out at this point.

5.3 The answers to the research questions

The answers to the two research questions will be described in this section. The necessity for in-service English teachers to achieve more confidence by improving their questioning techniques has been revealed here.

By addressing the first question asking the three teachers about their own perceptions of their questioning techniques, it was made clear that generally they asked Display questions to check their students’ understanding by drawing their attention to the important items in the lesson. However, this study did not explicitly reveal whether or not the teachers perceived that their own questioning techniques were effective for improving their students’ learning achievements. While they showed their consideration of the influence of their questioning on their students’ learning, the effectiveness of their questions on the students’ achievement was not certain for them.

The second question in this study inquired how three teachers considered that they might improve their questioning. Although the effectiveness of their own questioning techniques had not been clearly mentioned by the teachers, they believed that if the questions asked in their classrooms were more Open-ended and accepted diverse answers, students could learn English more effectively in the expanded interaction between teachers and students. However, in order to adopt Open-ended, Genuine questions into their familiar teaching style, which relies more on teacher-to-learner instruction, these teachers believed that further professional development and training were necessary.
5.4 Implications

By addressing the research questions, this study disclosed how ‘teachers’ questioning’ was regarded by English teachers in Japanese high schools as one of the skills for interacting within the classroom. While the three teachers’ attention was not always focused on their questioning techniques, since they also had to manage and keep pace with their classes, this study revealed that teachers in Japan would appreciate having more opportunities to learn how to provide questions more diversely in their classrooms.

Providing professional training for Japanese English teachers, who were revealed as being aware of the advantage of learning ‘teachers’ questioning’, can be beneficial for their students as well as the teachers themselves who are unfamiliar with various questioning techniques. If there are more opportunities for the teachers to observe other teachers’ questioning techniques, as Teacher B did on his own, and also to have their skills observed by their peers, it might help them to become more familiar with different varieties of techniques addressing the strengths and weaknesses of the questions they ask.

Familiarity with adopting different types of questions can lead them to be more confident in their teaching skills in ‘using different tools for different tasks’. In addition, if English teachers have more opportunities to address the theoretical knowledge of effective questioning and to review the way they provide questions, it may enable them to open up a new field in questioning. For example, teachers might be able to take more account of their questions’ variety and opportunity for learning, two areas that did not emerge from the interviews, but could potentially contribute to the effectiveness of their questioning.

However, teachers may also need to re-examine what they are attempting to do when providing questions to their students. The individual needs of each participant in the classroom should be taken into consideration. The reason why teachers are asking questions, and also what type of answers they can elicit from the questions being asked, need to be clear in each teacher’s mind if they want to make good use of their inquiry. In addition, what their students are actually aiming for when they attend high school English classes may also need to be considered. For example, although the teachers in this study believed that the use of Open-ended questions could be effective for their
students’ further learning, depending on the aims of the class, *Closed-ended questions* can also be the most suitable tool for managing a given class.

### 5.5 For study in the future

This study will potentially be a pilot study for further investigation and extensive research, with generalisable findings from more participants. While the interviews with these three English teachers allowed new findings particular to the Japanese high school context to be revealed, if observations of their lessons were conducted, any gaps between their statements and how they actually ask questions in class could have been identified and compensated for. At this point, the effect of the Japanese context on their questioning needed to be considered, as teachers have to work within the context where they belong, no matter whether it puts some restrictions on their teaching style.

Nevertheless, the insights from the study raised two major points. On the one hand, the teachers all claimed that there was not enough time to sufficiently expand interactions with their students, which is an important factor from a social constructivists view. On the other hand, one teacher acknowledged a lack of confidence in her questioning, and this might be a hidden perception that could also be true for other English teachers in Japanese high schools. In any event, it is hoped that this study can draw Japanese English teachers’ attention to ‘teachers’ questioning’ and interrelated issues as one form of classroom interaction.
References


Appendices

Appendix A: Questions before the interviews

The perceptions of questioning techniques of high school teachers in Japan

1. General information

Your gender: Male / Female  Age:  22-24  25-29  30-34  35-39  40-44  45-49  50-
Teaching experience (year): Location of the high school (prefecture):
Type of the high school you teach/have taught at: Public  Private  National / Junior  Senior

2. Questions related to Topic  *Please state reasons also if there are any

Q.1 Do you think teachers’ questions can play an important role in enhancing students’ achievement for learning?
YES / NO -WHY (  )

Q.2 Have you ever studied about teachers questioning techniques by yourself before?
YES / NO -WHY (  )

Q.3 Have you attended any seminars / programmes to improve your questioning techniques?
YES / NO -WHY (  )

Q.4 Do you think there should be more opportunities provided by educational institution (e.g., from Ministry of Education, Board of education, your school)?
YES / NO -WHY (  )

3. Evaluation of the Sample lesson plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The number of the questions is proper.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The level of the questions is proper.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The variety of the questions is proper.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The questions are asked naturally. (In a natural way).</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The questions are comprehensible.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The questions are interesting.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The questions can be personalised. (Students can regard the questions are related with themselves.)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The opportunity for learning is enough.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The questions are clear enough to follow.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The questions are related enough to the materials.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The time spent for the questions is enough.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you very much for your cooperation. This information will be handled confidentially.
## Appendix B: The sample lesson plan (p.1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title:</strong> &quot;I will be a hummingbird from Wangari Maathai's speech&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Class Profile:</strong> The class is held in a senior high school in Japan for 2nd year. English class is compulsory, and students are used to sharing their opinions in English class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level:</strong> This is an intermediate level class overall. However, each student has different levels of English competence. Students have higher grammar understandings, but not used to share their opinions in English class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time:</strong> 50 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Previous Learning:</strong> Students understand modal verbs and adjectives that show characteristics such as strong, fast, brave, clever, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lesson Aim:</strong> To introduce the story of the first African female Nobel Peace Prize winner, Wangari Maathai.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objectives:</strong> To develop comprehension by discussing a story of humminbird and Maathai.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Materials and Equipment:</strong> Students’ material: powerpoint slides/video1 (I will be a hummingbird / Wangari Maathai) video2 (Taking Root-planting trees in Kenya)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expected Problems:</strong> Students may struggle with expressing their opinions and discussing their views in English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anticipated Problems:</strong> Each student has different competences and motivation for English class. Students may have different needs and interests, so it will be necessary to adjust the level of difficulty and pace of instruction to accommodate all students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Solutions:</strong> Make a good atmosphere in class to elicit their opinions and ideas. Use scaffolding and various levels and types of questions through activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment:</strong> Students will work in pairs to discuss the main points of the story and answer questions. This will help them practice their listening and critical thinking skills. The teacher will circulate the classroom to monitor student progress and provide feedback.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Teachers’ feedback is essential to help students improve their understanding of the material and their ability to communicate in English.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Teacher Activity</th>
<th>Student Activity</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Stage Aims Success Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 minutes Review</td>
<td>Opening: This is the first part of the lesson. Quickly review the expressions that are useful for showing one’s opinions. (e.g., I think I can.../ It would be.../ He/she might...)</td>
<td>$S$s recall the expressions that they can use to show their opinions.</td>
<td>Whole class</td>
<td>$S$s: Reactivate knowledge from previous lesson. $S$l: $S$s remember how to express their opinions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 minutes Engage</td>
<td>Talk about what T did last week by using some animal metaphors (e.g., I was as hungry as a bear and could eat anything). Explain many animals are used as metaphors that imply their characteristics.</td>
<td>$S$s listen and learn some animal metaphors.</td>
<td>Whole class</td>
<td>$S$s: Engage $S$s to English class: $S$s think about the expressions in English which includes animals. $S$l: $S$s notice there are many expressions which include animals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 min</td>
<td>Activity 1: Show PPT slide (No.1) that introduces the Nobel prize winner Maathai and her words “I will be a hummingbird” with the picture of hummingbird. Ask $S$s to make pairs with the person next to them to think and discuss why she said this. Q. a) Why do you think Maathai said this? 1) What image do you have for hummingbirds? Q.2 (Open-ended. Genuine. Topic)</td>
<td>$S$s make the slide and share their opinions.</td>
<td>Fair work &amp; Whole class</td>
<td>$S$s: Arise interest to the topic of the lesson. $S$l: $S$s get interested in the topic of the lesson and start to think about the story of the hummingbird and Maathai.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$S$l: Ask $S$s to present their ideas.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explain that $S$s will watch a video to figure out the answers and some $Q$s will be asked after the video.</td>
<td>$S$s watch the video.</td>
<td>Whole class</td>
<td>$S$s: Prepare for next activity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix B: The sample lesson plan (p.3)

**21 minutes Study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 3</th>
<th>Activity 4</th>
<th>Activity 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>4 min</strong></td>
<td><strong>6 min</strong></td>
<td><strong>10 min</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Activity 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Activity 4</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask Ss to talk in pairs about the video.</td>
<td>Explain that Ss are going to study the story of the hummingbird and Maathai deeper to find out the inner message they contain.</td>
<td>Ask Ss to make groups with 6 people and discuss how the hummingbird was described in the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q. a) Who (What kind of animals) were in the video?</td>
<td>1. Read a text of the story of the hummingbird briefly.</td>
<td><strong>Q. a)</strong> Find the adjective which describes the hummingbird in the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q. b) What happened in the forest?</td>
<td>2. Find some keywords in the text.</td>
<td><strong>b)</strong> Describe hummingbird's behaviour in one adjective with giving some reasons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q. c) How did the animals react toward it?</td>
<td>a) Underline the words that tell the animals' feelings.</td>
<td>c) Compare the modal verbs that the hummingbird and other animals used and tell the difference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q. d) What do you think is the message of the video?</td>
<td>b) Circle the modal verbs used in the text.</td>
<td><strong>Q. 5 (Mixed of closed and open, Display and genuine, Grammar)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q. 3 [Mixed of closed and open, Display and genuine, Content]</td>
<td><strong>Q. 4 (loosely Closed-ended, Display, Grammar)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Q. 5</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FB: Ask Ss to share their answers.</td>
<td><strong>FB:</strong> Ask Ss to share their answers.</td>
<td><strong>FB:</strong> Ask each group their answers to the Qs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>21 minutes Study</strong></td>
<td><strong>Note:</strong> Tell Ss the time (3 min) for the reading to let them focus on content of the story and not details.</td>
<td><strong>Note:</strong> Scaffold and elicit words Ss have already learnt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pair work &amp; Whole class</strong></td>
<td><strong>Individual &amp; Whole class</strong></td>
<td><strong>Group work &amp; Whole class</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pair work &amp; Whole class</strong></td>
<td><strong>Pair work &amp; Whole class</strong></td>
<td><strong>Each group shares what they have discussed.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SA:</strong> Confirm what the story of the hummingbird was about briefly and prepare for the task cycle stage.</td>
<td><strong>SA:</strong> Confirm the story and find the keywords which tell the animals' feelings and opinions.</td>
<td><strong>SA:</strong> Confirm what the story of the hummingbird was about briefly and prepare for the task cycle stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SA:</strong> Confirm the story and find the keywords which tell the animals' feelings and opinions.</td>
<td><strong>SA:</strong> Focus on content of the story and raise awareness of the usage of the target language feature modal verb in the text, by skim reading a text.</td>
<td><strong>SA:</strong> Deepen the understanding of the story of the hummingbird and critically analyse the way the hummingbird is described in the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SA:</strong> Confirm what the story of the hummingbird was about briefly and prepare for the task cycle stage.</td>
<td><strong>SA:</strong> Confirm the story and find the keywords which tell the animals' feelings and opinions.</td>
<td><strong>SA:</strong> Engage in the discussion and deepen their understanding by analysing the hummingbird and the words that are used to express its characteristics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity 5</td>
<td>13 minutes</td>
<td>Activate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ask Ss</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Present the answers of the Qs asked beforehand.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Discuss in the groups.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Could you find in the video anything that you think implies the hummingbird/other animals/fire?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Are there any similarities/differences between the story of the hummingbird and this video?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q.7</strong> [Loosely Open-ended, Genuine, Content]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Note:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell Ss that they can see <strong>Worksheet</strong> to compare with the video. Scaffold if necessary by reminding them the content of the video.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FB:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask each group to share their ideas.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**5min**

- **Explain that Ss will watch a video of Maathai to briefly understand the background of the story-teller and to compare her with the hummingbird. Also, some Qs will be asked after the video.**
  - Ask Ss to read the Qs on PPT slide (No.2) before they watch the video.
    - Q1: How did the women in the village change?
    - Q2: How was Maathai reported in the newspaper?
    - Q3: Why was Maathai reported like that?
  - **Q.6** [Loosely Closed-ended, Display, Content]

- **Play Video 2 “Taking Root: planting trees in Kenya”.**
- **Ss watch the video.**

**6min**

- **Ss check the Qs briefly before they watch the video and make sure which point they have to pay attention to.**
- **Whole class & individual**
  - **SA:** Prepare for next activity.

**10min**

- **Ss share their answers about the Qs:**
  - 1) **Ss compare the content of the video 2 with video 1 and discuss in groups.**
  - 2) **Each group shares their ideas to the whole class.**

**SA:** Confirm the content of the video 2, and critically analyze the way the hummingbird was described in the previous video 1 and the extent Maathai was described in video 2 by comparing the words and phrases used in them.

**SI:** Ss actively engage in the discussion and critically analyze the two videos they have watched, considering the characteristics of the hummingbird and Maathai.

**3min**

- **Show Ss the previous PPT slide and ask Qs.**
  - Q1: Did your understanding of why Maathai said “I will be a hummingbird” change after watching two videos?
  - Q2: What image do you have of hummingbird now?
  - **Q.8** [Open-ended, Genuine, Opinion]

- **Confirm that she used hummingbird to express the person who she wants to be has little power but never gives up.**

**SA:** Reconfirm what Ss have studied in task cycle stage.

**SI:** Ss understand why Maathai used hummingbird to express herself, and what does it imply through lesson.
Appendix B: The sample lesson plan (Videos used in the lesson)

1. Video1- “I will be a hummingbird” - Wangari Maathai
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGMW6YWjMxw

2. Video2- Taking Root- Planning trees in Kenya
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WB5Kg8rMYM8&feature=related

Appendix B: The sample lesson plan (PPT p.1 & p.2)

Lesson “I will be a hummingbird”

- After you watch the video of “Taking Root- planting trees in Kenya” these questions will be asked.
  Q. a) How did the women in the village change?

  b) How was Maathai reported on the newspaper?

  c) Why was Maathai reported like that?
Appendix B: The sample lesson plan (Worksheet No.1)

Lesson “I will be a hummingbird” (Worksheet No.1)

Animal Metaphors Quiz

e.g. My brother is always in his own world. He is slippery as an (eel).
1) I've never seen Mike getting upset. He is always peaceful as a ( ).
2) Susan won the first prize in the contest. She was proud as a ( ).
3) My father used to tell me to be myself instead of (ing) someone.
4) I have a two-year-old niece. She is really cute as a ( ).
5) I am so hungry now that I could eat a ( )!
6) We have three assignments to do by next month. We are busy as a ( ).

kitten / horse / parrot / bee / lamb / peacock

e.g. eel

Do you know more? ( )
Appendix B: The sample lesson plan (Worksheet No.2)


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Lesson “I will be a hummingbird” (Worksheet No.2)

The Story of the Hummingbird

Photo by Tony Cricelli

I first heard this inspirational story in May 2006 when Noble Peace Laureate Wangari Maathai addressed 7,000 international educators who had gathered in Montreal for NAFSA’s 58th annual conference. Here is the story she shared with us in Montreal.

One day a terrible fire broke out in a forest - a huge woodlands was suddenly engulfed by a raging wild fire. Frightened, all the animals fled their homes and ran out of the forest. As they came to the edge of a stream they stopped to watch the fire and they were feeling very discouraged and powerless. They were all bemoaning the destruction of their homes. Every one of them thought there was nothing they could do about the fire, except for one little hummingbird.

This particular hummingbird decided it would do something. It swooped into the stream and picked up a few drops of water and went into the forest and put them on the fire. Then it went back to the stream and did it again, and it kept going back, again and again and again. All the other animals watched in disbelief; some tried to discourage the hummingbird with comments like, “Don’t bother, it is too much, you are too little, your wings will burn, your beak is too tiny, it’s only a drop, you can’t put out this fire.”

And as the animals stood around disparaging the little bird’s efforts, the bird noticed how hopeless and forlorn they looked. Then one of the animals shouted out and challenged the hummingbird in a mocking voice, “What do you think you are doing?” And the hummingbird, without wasting time or losing a beat, looked back and said, “I am doing what I can.”

Like the hummingbird, we each must do what we can.

Imagine if Poverty Alleviation Through Education, and other like-minded, open-hearted, and common-spirited projects, put 6 billion drops of water on the fire every minute of every day.

Imagine what we could do to build that better world we all dream about.

Imagine! Now let’s get busy and put out the poverty fire.

Excerpt from Ron Moffatt’s Opening Address to the educators attending the Poverty Alleviation Planning Meeting at Pacific Lutheran University on November 30, 2006.
Appendix C: Questions asked in the interviews

The perceptions of questioning techniques from high school teachers in Japan

10 questions that give new perspectives to the research!

Part A: Three teachers’ perceptions of their questioning

Q.1 When do you ask questions in your class?

Q.2 Which aspect do you take into account most when you ask questions (e.g., number, level, variety, authenticity, meaningfulness, opportunity for learning, clarity, time)? *multiple answers allowed

Q.3 Which type of question do you ask MORE /LESS? and WHY?
   a) Open-ended or Closed-ended  b) Display or Genuine

Q.4 Which aspect is most important for you when students response to your questions (e.g., correctness, comprehensible, positiveness)? *multiple answers allowed

Q.5 Which aspect do you pay attention when you give feedback (e.g., give the correct answers, follow-up questions)? *multiple answers allowed

Part B: Asking about questioning used in the sample lesson plan

Q.1 Which question do you think could be more effective, in terms of enhancing students’ learning, than the others? and WHY?

Q.2 Which question do you think could be less effective than the others? and WHY?

Q.3 Which question might be easier to adopt in your class? and WHY?

Q.4 Which question might be more difficult to adopt in your class? and WHY?

Q.5 Which question should be modified to be more effective in your context? and WHY?
Appendix D: Full Transcription of the interviews

Interview 1. The interview with teacher A

I= Interviewer, A= teacher A

Section A

I: Ok, the first question is, how do you perceive the ratio of instruction to questioning in your class?

A: Well, I think it is almost 8:2.

I: Then, when do you think you ask questions in your class?

A: Well… I think I ask questions mainly to check my students’ understanding; for example the understanding of what they have read.

I: Ok, next question is, when you are asking questions, which aspect do you take into account the most?

A: Well… as I mentioned, checking my students’ understanding is my aim (for asking questions), so… I will not start with difficult questions at the beginning. Instead, I will check the facts, which are written in the textbook…and when they have understood the story deeply…I will ask questions, such as to read between the lines, the questions that require more high-level thought, by gradually making the level of the questions higher, I think.

I: So, it means you are taking account of the level of your questions first?

A: Yes, the level.

I: Ok, then next question is, which type of question do you use more, Open-ended or Closed-ended question?

A: Well… from my standing position, to make my students understand the content, I think I use more Closed-ended questions.

I: I see. You mentioned that you think Closed-ended questions can help students’ comprehend the content, but do you have any other reasons that, you think, make you use Closed-ended question?

A: Well, first, if students do not understand the content (written in the text), we cannot move on (to more deeper thought), so… maybe, I am trying to make what is written in the text clear for my students, as there are various levels of students in my class, so when I think about those students who cannot comprehend the content well, I want to confirm for them.

I: Ok, so the main purpose is for the confirmation of the content, is it correct?

A: Yes.
I: Then, next, same question with the next two type, Display and Genuine. Which do you use more?

A: Well… I think… I am using more Display questions. Because… maybe, it could be related with what I have mentioned before…. I believe that if a teacher has some model answers in one’s mind, which he or she expects their students’ to provide, that teacher can ask more effective questions that can lead to students’ comprehension.

I: So, it will come back to your previous statement on the confirmation of the content, is it right?

A: Yes. First, we confirm the content and then move on to further learning… however, the time (that teachers can spend for lesson) is limited, so… there are many cases that we cannot move on to the further learning… considering the reality…

I: Ok. Then, next question is, which aspect do you take into account the most when students respond to your questions?

A: Well… first, even if they make a mistake, I want to respect the students who speak. Well, if the answer is correct of course it will be better, but I want to appreciate their positive attitude.

I: I see. Then, when you are giving feedback to your student, which aspect do you pay attention to?

A: When the provided answer is wrong, normally I will ask follow-up questions. And… by giving some hints, I will try to elicit the answer from the nominated student rather than answering by myself. However, if he or she cannot come up with the answer, occasionally, I will ask to the student sitting next to the first student. But, basically I want the student who is asked first to answer the question by him/herself and will give the hints as much as I can.

I: Ok. The following question is about the time spent by teachers after they asked the questions. It is often said that the time is often shorter than the students really need for answering, but how about the time used after your questioning?

A: I think I also spend only little time…hahaha… because there are many things that need to be taught in such a limited time, I cannot give enough time for them to think deeply. Also, if it is a question asking for confirmation of the content, such as a question that will not require high-level cognition as close-ended, maybe… I have in my mind that it has to be answered straightaway, perhaps.

I: So, how do you deal with if the answer does not come out?

A: I will give additional information, such as suggest them to read a particular part on the textbook, and like in that way, I think I will try to lead them to answer the question.

I: In that case, do you still focus on one student or you nominate another student to answer?

A: Well… if I have tried several times and still the answer does not come out… I think I will pass the question to the next student.

I: Right. Relating to that point, when your student respond to the questions, do you always give feedback by yourself or do you, occasionally, let their peers to give some feedbacks on it?
A: Well, I think I do both. Like, I will ask them whether they think the provided answer is right or wrong, or … whether there is anyone who has the same opinion?... for example, if the provided answer is incorrect, I might ask the same question to the same person after giving a hint, and also I might ask another person how do they think.

I: Do you think, with doing those things, students achievement for learning will be enhanced? I mean by employing not only teacher-student interaction but also student-student interaction in the class.

A: I think, if the teacher interacts with just one student for a long time, lest of the students might feel bore. So when I feel like I have to involve others in the interaction… that is when I pass the question to other peers.

I: You mentioned that some students might feel bored if the teacher keeps interacting with one student, but do you think teachers’ questioning can improve students’ motivation?

A: Well, it might be difficult but still, I think by devising the way a teacher provides questions it is possible to enhance students’ motivation.

I: Do you think students’ motivation will be enhanced when they can provide a correct answer?

A: Yes, I think if the answer is correct, the student will feel pleased, however….

I: How about when the answer is incorrect? How do you deal with the incorrect response?

A: Well… I want to make my class accept errors, so I am always telling my students that making mistakes is not a bad thing, but still, I think, students themselves are feeling the pressure that comes from making mistakes, so… sorry it might be less relative with questioning, but I think removing the pressure on them is very important. and… I believe if the questions are more personalized, I mean directly related to them, it can make students more interested… and I think that it can affect their motivation.

I: So, your opinion is, asking a question that students can regard as it is related with them might affect their motivation, am I right?

A: Yes.

Section B

I: Ok. Then, next question is about the sample lesson plan that was presented beforehand. First of all, on the print that was also presented in advance, you pointed to a particular question asked in the lesson plan in Q.7 a) ‘Could you find in the video anything that you think implies the hummingbird/other animals/fire?’, as your favourite question, but could you tell me why did you feel like that?

A: I felt… the implicated meaning of the humming bird, and the other animals, were the essential part of this lesson, so… I thought, asking about the essential aspect in the way explained in the lesson plan can enhance students’ comprehension… and I thought that Q.7 a)
was a question that can touch the substance of the lesson. I mean the questions that can play the most important role in this lesson.

I: I see. Then, when looking at the eight types of questions employed in the sample lesson plan, which one do you think can be more effective compared with the others?

A: It might be related to what I have already mentioned but I think Q.7 is effective because those are the questions that addressing the most essential part of the text, so I believe that, by facing these questions, the students’ comprehension will be much deeper.

I: You mean the comprehension of the content?

A: Exactly, the comprehension of the content, which I consider as the main aim of this whole lesson.

I: Ok, then, which question do you think is the less effective one in those questions?

A: Well… I think the one which is less effective is… the question in Q.2 b) ‘What image do you have for hummingbird?’ as it think it could be asked in next activity. I felt that it might be better to ask after students have watched the video of the story of the hummingbird.

I: Oh, I see… Then, next question is, which question do you think is easier to adopt in your class?

A: Well… I thought questions such as Q.5 were easy to adopt in my class, as I teach more grammatical aspects, so I think the question such as… ‘Describe in one adjective’ is easy to ask.

I: I see, so when you say ‘easy to adopt’, it means the question will suit the style of your teaching, which focuses on grammar, is it right?

A: Yes, exactly. Well… although I think Closed-ended, Display questions asking about grammar aspects are the easiest to adopt, questions such as b) and c) referring to… such as modal verbs… also seem to be applicable for me.

I: Ok. So, which question might be difficult to adopt in your class, then?

A: Well……..I don’t actually see any difficult questions in the lesson plan (to adopt in my context)

I: So, what if you consider your real class, I mean the limitations such as the amount of time you can spend in you class…

A: I see. If I consider about time available in my context, I regard that the level of the questions in the sample lesson plan is getting higher and higher as the lesson proceeds… so… perhaps more time would be needed to conduct this lesson…. and it might end up with just checking the content and the facts written in the text.

I: Ok. The following question is, which question should be modified to be more effective in your context, if you have any ideas, and why?

A: Well, it might be contradictory to what I have said before, however I think in the Activity 5 if teacher asks a question such as ‘What does the action taken by the hummingbird mean to
you?”, it could be more interesting as… the activity ends with learning what do the hummingbird and other animals imply… but by moving on to the next step and let students think, for example what does the hummingbird’s behaviour mean to each individual… I mean by letting them personalize the questions, they might be able to learn deeper. Although, again, we have to take account of the time we can use for the lesson, but if it is possible I think it will be more effective.

I: Ok, you have mentioned about the ‘time’ several times, but how do you think we can use more effective questions within the limited-time we have?

A: I think pre-planning the questions that teacher will ask in the class is really important thing to do, although it might be difficult to plan in detail each time. Additionally, asking appropriate level of questions, and I think avoiding a situation like… one student cannot come up with his answer and the flow of the class stops there, is also important.

I: I see. How about using the different modes, such as pair work, group work or whole class, in the class? Do you think the classroom that adopts not only teacher-student interaction, such as always teacher asks questions and students respond, but also student-student interaction can help enhancing students’ learning?

A: Yes, I do. I think using the different modes in class is effective. … by discussing within groups, I think students can learn more deeply … but looking back at how I have taught, there might be only a few cases where I used Group work to let them discuss in my class…

I: Do you think it is because of the time? Coming back to the same issue…

A: Yes…, there are plenty things that we have to deal within the class, and if I can do it all by myself I think I can be more flexible. However, in the situation that 3 or 4 teachers teaching the same subject and are expected to teach the pre-decided content before the term test, I experienced many times that I have to teach quickly while sorting out what I teach… so, I always feel the pressure of time.

I: So, you think if you don’t have any limitations because of the time, you can you ask more variety of questions, right?

A: Yes, I think if we had more time we could use more varieties of questioning techniques in class.

I: I see. That was the end of the questions, thank you so much.
Interview 2. The interview with teacher B

I= Interviewer, B= teacher B

Section A

I: The first question is, what do you think of the ratio of instruction to questioning in your class, if you put it in to numbers?

B: I think… it is about 8:2.

I: Ok. Then, when do you think you ask questions in your class? What is the reason that makes you ask questions?

B: I ask questions for various reasons and purposes. I ask questions to get my students’ attention at the beginning of the class and I ask questions after we have read the textbook to confirm the content with students. Also, I ask questions at the end of the class to make sure that they have understood today’s lesson.

I: So, each time you ask questions you ask questions that can achieve your aims?

B: Exactly.

I: Ok, then next question is, which aspect do you take into account the most when you ask questions?

B: First, I consider the level of questions and the way they are provided.

I: Ok, what do you mean with ‘the way questions are provided’?

B: It means… if I ask the questions ‘broadly’, maybe students cannot answer them, so I always keep it in my mind to ask a question such that my students can come up with their answers with no difficulty.

I: Could you tell me what does ‘broad’ mean? Can I take that as ‘Open-ended’?

B: Yes. For example, if I want to hear my students’ opinion I will not start with the question like ‘What do think about it?’ in a way that could be perceived widely. Instead, I will introduce several opinions and let them think which one is the closest to their views. I think questions like ‘What do you think?’ are difficult for students to answer, so I will provide some ‘scaffolding’ to help them answer.

I: I see, is it like ‘scaffolding’ them to answer?

B: Yes, it is.

I: Ok, next question is, which type of question do you ask more often, first Open-ended or Closed-ended?

B: I think… I ask them both equally. However, when I ask Open-ended questions I will make sure that the questions are clear and the answers will not be so abstract, as I mentioned before.
I: Then, same questions with Display and Genuine questions. Which type of question do you think you use more frequently?

B: I think… I ask more Display questions in my class.

I: Could you tell me why?

B: Because… I think… I cannot lead my class to the way I want to if I use more Genuine questions.

I: Why do you think so?

B: Genuine questions might elicit a limitless number of questions. I mean… the number of the answers could be the number of the students in the classroom and if I try to put all of their ideas together it will take a long time. However, I plan my lesson in advance considering the whole process and the direction that I want to lead my students to…and I want to follow the procedure that I plan beforehand.

I: Do you also plan your questions that will be asked in your lesson in advance?

B: Yes, I pre-plan most of my questions that I ask during class before the lesson. However, if I feel that my students did not understand my question, I will ask more concrete questions or make the questions more specific so that it could be easier for my students to answer it.

I: I see. Next question is, which aspect, such as correctness or positive attitude, do you take into account most when students respond to your questions?

B: I think… I regard a positive attitude as the most important aspect.

I: Ok, so how about when you give feedback to your students. To which aspect do you pay attention when you provide feedbacks?

B: Well… when I give my students feedback I keep it in my mind to repeat what the student said to confirm whether I understand correctly. Also, I often praise my students when I give feedback. When their answers are partly wrong, I still praise them in order not to make them feel depressed.

Section B

I: Next, I will ask few questions about the sample lesson plan that you have already in advance. The first question is, which question do you think could be more effective, in terms of enhancing students’ learning, than the others?

B: I believe it would depend on whom I am asking the questions to… but in my contexts I think… Q.2 is the most effective question in this lesson plan.

I: Why do you think so?

B: I think… when the students see the PPT slide and Maathai’s words (written on it) they will think ‘Why?’ with some questions spontaneously coming up to their mind before their teacher
asks questions. Students would automatically think ‘Why?’ before the questions are asked by the teacher.

I: Ok, so how about the question you think is less effective compared with others?

B: Maybe… Q.1 or Q.8 looks less effective for me.

I: Could you tell me why do you feel so?

B: Although it seems like an interesting question, considering whether it is effective to enhance students’ learning, I think Q.1 is… cannot directly influence their achievement for language learning.

I: Then, how about Q.8? Why do you think it is less effective?

B: Q.8… I felt Q.8 overlaps with… is repeating Q.2… I know it is aiming for the consolidation, isn’t it?

I: Yes, this question (Q.8) will be asked in order to check whether there are any changes in each student’s views after the lesson.

B: OK… I mean, if it can be expanded by building on this question (Q.8) I think it could be more interesting, so… I will say Q.8. But, I think it is still fine.

I: Ok. Next question is, which type of question might be easier to adopt or use in your context?

B: I think… either loosely Closed-ended (1) or loosely Open-ended (2) question might be more adoptable. If I consider the procedure of my class, I think loosely Closed-ended can help me to proceed with the plan as arranged. On the other hand, if I want to expand my class… I mean, make it more interesting or develop it… I think loosely Open-ended question can be used more easily.

I: I see. Then, which one might be more difficult to adopt?

B: I believe the type of questions that is difficult to adopt in my context is the Open-ended question.

I: What makes you think so?

B: Because, it is ‘uncontrollable’.

I: What do you mean by ‘uncontrollable’?

B: I mean I cannot predict the answers that will be presented… and also, I don’t know how I can make good use of the answers I elicit from that type of question. I think it is difficult, because it can lead to something which is not so related to the main topic of the lesson and… I assume that it is possible that the meaningfulness of the question will be lost if the answers expand too much and lose consistency…

I: So, you want your class to be under your control to some extent, is it what you are saying?
B: Yes, I want my class to be under my control to some extent because if I do something less relative to the lesson I think it can result in losing the main aims or what I was really trying to do…

I: I see. Then, the following question is, which question in the sample lesson plan would be better modified to be more effective? or how do you modify the question in the sample lesson plan if you want to make it more effective for your students’ learning?

B: I will… at the beginning of the lesson… I consider my first priority on teaching as to make my students interested in the lesson, and arouse the level of their interest, especially for the less motivated students… so, if I am asking Q.2 a) Why do you think Maathai said this?, I think there might be some students who do think ‘Why?’ before their teachers ask them, but cannot answer in their own words straightaway, therefore… I would rather ask some other questions that are related before this question.

I: You mean you will give more background information before you ask this question (Q.2)?

B: Background information… I mean… for example, first I will show the PPT slide and ask my students whether there is anything that they already know or whether there is something that they notice… things like that.

I: Oh, so you mean you will provide some more steps before they address the question (Q.2)?

B: Yes, I think it is kind of ‘eliciting’ the answers from them. That means… teacher is not directly asking a question that can provide an answer that he or she wants, but making students interested with the topic and think ‘Why?’ by themselves. That is the kind of question that I want to ask.

I: Ok, then what do you think is the most important aspect for ‘eliciting’ the answers?

B: I think… the most important aspect for ‘eliciting’ students’ answers is students’ level… teacher should understand their students’ competence. I mean, the important point is how well the teacher knows his or her students’ comprehension level.

I: So, you are saying that teacher must know about their students’ understanding first, aren’t you? You suggest teachers know their students comprehension level well in order to know the appropriate level for the questions that will be presented in the lesson, right?

B: Yes, exactly.

I: Ok, then the last question is… I want to ask you about learner’s motivation as you have mentioned it on the print presented before the interview to see how you perceive questioning techniques.

B: Ok.

I: You said learner’s motivation can be enhanced by teachers’ questioning, but why and how can it enhance learner’s motivation in your opinion?

B: … Ok, for example… with showing a picture that is featureless… a teacher can ask students to tell the words (written in English) that they already know, and like that, the way teachers provide questions… or by asking a question, teachers can create an opportunity for their
students to ‘engage’ and make them participate more. Also, depending on how teachers ask
questions, students can be more motivated and engaged in the lesson with the question ‘Why?’
in their mind, and on the other hand, they could just be asked to Display the fact that is
presented in the text. So, I thought that it all depends on how the questions are provided.

I: I see. By the way, it is often claimed that the time given to the students for answering the
questions are not enough, because they want to keep the control of their class, as you mentioned
above, but… how do you perceive your waiting time?

B: In my case… yes, I think maybe the time spent after a question is also short, especially,
when I am asking a question to an individual student. However, normally I do not ask questions
to an individual student, but my questioning procedure is, provide a question to the whole class
and if the answer comes out, it is ok. So, there are some students who do not speak at all, but if
they are listening and if they understand I think it is fine, and if the passive students can take
part in the class (even in that way)… both the students who are keen to study, and the students
who are passive can also take part in the class, and I like my class conducted in that way. So, I
do not ask questions with pointing out one’s name, and when I ask questions to the whole class,
I try to make sure that the answer will come out from the students by taking account of the level
of the questions I ask… and, if the answer does not come out… …

I: If the answer does not come out do you give the answer by yourself or provide a following
question that is easier?

B: I think if the student cannot answer my questions I will not make the question easier but ask
the question in an alternative way.

I: So, you will not answer your questions by yourself?

B: Yes, I think maybe I will… rather give some hints.

I: Ok, I see. That is all, thank you so much.
Interview 3. The interview with teacher C

I= Interviewer, C= teacher C

Section A

I: Ok, the first question is, what do you think of the ratio of instruction to questioning in your class, if you put it in to numbers?

C: Well… probably it will be something like 9:1.

I: Ok. Then, when, or for what aim, do you think you ask questions in your class?

C: Well… to be honest, even though I was… of course trying to motivate my student to some extent… I was not that much aiming for… I think I was providing a lot of questions just for form’s sake, so… when my students respond to my questions… I did not try to expand their answers… the answers come out and I give the feedback, and maybe I will ask my students ‘What do you think?’, but that’s it.

I: For what purpose, such as asking about content, grammar or so on… do you ask questions?

C: I was teaching senior high school students for Juken… so, for example, when I was teaching third grade students, the main focus was on Juken, so in those classes I was using grammar textbook, so…for example, when I was teaching ‘the subjunctive mood’ I asked about the rules of it, which is pretty much… so-called ‘question’ (in my context).

I: So, you are saying that you ask pretty much Display questions, which means you already have some certain answers that you want to elicit from your students in your mind?

C: Yes. And, well… in terms of the questions from my students, they often ask me questions in same way… I mean, like a drill, they ask me when do not know why the answer is ‘A’ (instead of ‘B’), or when they do not understand why the answer has to be ‘A’. For example, if they thought the answer is No.2, but actually it was No.4, they will ask why? That kind of questions was asked quite often.

I: Ok, you also talked about how your students ask questions for almost-settled purpose, right?

C: Yes.

I: I see. Then, my next question is, which aspect such as the number or level of your questions do you take into account most when you ask questions?

C: Whether my questions are clear for my students or not, and also if the number of questions I ask is too much, I think it is troublesome for them, so also the number.

I: So, you try to ask only few questions?

C: Yes. Basically I did not ask so many questions in my class, but when I was asking, I think I was concerning about it (the number of the questions).
I: So, you said you were concerned about the number of the questions and whether they are comprehensible or not, am I right?

C: Yes, and also… I think whether it is interesting or not also matters.

I: You mean, whether the questions can make the students interested or not?

C: Yes.

I: I see. Then, next, I am going to ask you, which type of questions do you ask more often, Open-ended questions or Closed-ended questions?

C: Well, I think I am using more Closed-ended questions.

I: Why do you think you use Closed-ended questions more?

C: well…perhaps, it is related with the content of the class. When the main focus of the class is Centre-siken (3), ‘how to answer the questions (in the exam)’ would be the main focus, and… from my perspective, I don’t think Open-ended questions will be asked so much (in the exam)…

I: Ok, so you mean the goal of your class is the preparation for juken (4), and in those exams, Open-ended questions are not that much included from your point of view, is my understanding of your statement correct?

C: Yes.

I: I see. Then, how about Display and Genuine questions, which type of questions do you ask more often?

C: I think I ask more Display type of questions.

I: So, you think you ask less Genuine type of questions?

C: Yes, I did not ask many Genuine questions.

I: Why didn’t you ask that much (Genuine questions)?

C: Well, I think it also depends on which type of class you are taking part in, as I was teaching at private high school and there were classes for preparation for exams (for the further studies), for commercial major, for sports major, and the others were general course, so it means that the high school I was teaching at had a variety of courses.

I: I see.

C: And the preparation for Centre-siken mainly took place at the course for students who are aiming for further study, and those students were basically dealing with the questions that appeared in the past exams, but in other courses teacher would not do it, and students… There were some students who were sleeping during classes, and… some were not really good at English and do not like English, so… I could not conduct my class extensively as… maybe because I did not have such kind of skill, however, having an extensive class that everyone is enjoying was not something we always had, of course, on occasion we could study with having fun, such as when a lot of questions come out from the students and I also asked some questions,
but it was not the usual case, so… Some teachers were letting their students to transcribe the English in the textbook, because when the students are not really good at studying, trying to make them concentrate on the lesson will be difficult issue, so they make their students write down the English sentences in textbook and assess them, so because of those kinds of situation… well… I did not really focus so much on teachers’ questioning. Maybe, it is not a good excuse though… Have I answered to your question?

I: Yes, it is fine, but can I confirm what you have told me again? You said you use more Closed-ended questions which are focusing on detailed aspects such as grammar, because… those aspects would be asked in entrance exams such as Centre-siken, and if the questions are more Open-ended, it could be more difficult for you to adopt in your class, and control it, is it right?

C: Yes. Of course, the questions asked by students outside the class, such as questions for daily lives or for their academic career passage would be more Open-ended, but…during the class, I stick exclusively to my original pattern for class.

I: Ok, I think you have your lesson in your mind when you teach, when you actually proceed with your class, but do you pre-plan your questions that you ask during class in advance?

C: Yes, sometimes I pre-plan my questions, for example, ‘Okay, I will ask about A with this question’, but most of the questions are Closed-ended and Display type.

I: When you pre-plan your questions, I think sometimes they might not lead to what you are expecting, but in that case, such as in the case that your lesson goes to unpredicted direction, do you still try to stick to your original plan? Or, do you try to modify your plan to what is actually taking place in your lessen with taking account of the flow of the lesson?

C: When, for example when students in commercial major course, who do not show their interests in English so often, revealed their interests… I followed the flow in the class (to try to make the lesson more flexible and expand on their questions.)

I: In that case, I believe you sometimes needed to change your pre-planned questions, and also maybe you would ask some questions you did not have in your mind at the beginning, which could be more natural… but have you experienced such kind of things?

C: Do you mean, when I stopped sticking to the original pre-planned questions, the more natural questions (or Genuine questions) come out from me, right? Yes, I think so. I think that might happen.

I: In that case, what kind of questions do you ask? You told me that you ask more Closed-ended, Display questions usually, but…

C: In those cases, it was more like having a conversation, or sharing opinions with the students rather than asking questions to process the lesson.

I: So, you mean you could ask more natural questions than when you ask pre-planned questions? Which one do you think could be more effective, in terms of enhancing their achievement for their learning? The pre-planned questions or the questions asked when a questioner is really curious about what has been asked?
C: I think... well, it might depend on the type of the questions, such as the questions from students or from me, but I do not consider that something will change dramatically by asking or being asked questions... however, perhaps probably they might help remember like 'my teacher was talking/asking about A at that time', but still I am not sure whether they are effective or not for enhancing learner’s achievement.

I: So, you do not think that teachers’ questioning itself has positive effects on the learners that much?

C: Well, I do not think it is totally non-effective, but... I was not so much concerning about my questioning when I was teaching.

I: Ok, I see. Then, next question is, which aspect do you take into account the most when your students response to your questions?

C: I encourage my students as much as I can. No matter whether the answers are correct or not, I try to find good points that they’ve made and praise them.

I: So, you respect their positive attitude for answering the questions rather than the correctness of their answers?

C: Yes.

I: Ok. Then, next question is, although it might be linked to the previous one, which aspect do you take into account the most when you give feedback to your students’ answer?

C: Well, I always try to show my respect for the students who are trying to take part in the lesson positively, because I had an experience making me feel that I should not have given a feedback like that when I started my teaching career. So, maybe, the way I give feedback to my students has changed after that, and I thought that it might be better to show my respect to their answers.

I: So, you mean you were trying to show your respect to your students through accepting their answers and giving feedbacks to them, am I right?

C: Yes.

Section B

I: Ok, next questions are about the lesson plan that has been provided to you beforehand. There are eight types of questions in the lesson plan, and which question do you think could be more effective, in terms of enhancing students’ learning, than the others?

C: I think Q.7 and maybe also Q.8 at the end of the lesson play an important role in this lesson.

I: Q.7 and Q.8, ok, why do you think so? What aspect do you consider as effective?

C: Well, these questions are asking about the meaning embedded in the words and telling that the small hummingbird seems to be powerless, but actually has a great power. The procedure seems to be effective to make the students notice and understand the true message embedded in
the text. Consequently, I think the lesson can help the students to reflect on themselves with letting them consider what they can do, which can also be adoptable for making them think their career and academic path.

I: So, you mean Q.7 and Q.8 are comprehensible and also could be personalized so that the students can regard the questions are related with themselves, right?

C: Yes, with those questions it (the lesson) is not only introducing Maathai’s story but telling that it has something to do with each student, and even further it can be used to teach how to read the texts, or how the language is used to convey the message. So, it seems that those questions are good questions that can make the students’ comprehension deeper.

I: I see. You mean Q.7 and Q.8 can make students think much deeper.

C: Yes.

I: I see. Then, next question is, which question do you think could be less effective than the others?

C: … maybe, Q.1, which asks to select and fill the animal’s name to complete the metaphor, can be asked at more late stage, to make the whole procedure of the lesson clearer and let students realize the animals are used as metaphor…

I: So, it might be a little early to ask this question at the beginning of the lesson when you consider the procedure of the lesson, you mean?

C: Yes, although they are interesting questions, but some students might think how they are related with them or the whole lesson taking account of their level, senior high school second grade.

I: I see. So it might be better for those questions to be provided at later stage from your point of view?

C: Yes, I think if Q.1 is asked at the later stage it can make the questions more interesting.

I: I see. Then, which question might be easier to adopt in your class?

C: When considering whether the questions are easy to adopt or not, I think Q.3, the questions asked after watching the video, is the type of the questions asked commonly in the Japanese high schools.

I: Why do you think so?

C: Well, as I mentioned… for example, questions like Q.3, which asks about the content of reading materials or the video watched by students are kind of commonly-asked questions.

I: With the word ‘commonly-asked’, you mean those types of questions are already regarded generally as one type of question…?

C: Yes, so I think students can understand how the video and those questions will lead to the next step in the lesson much clearly…
I: So you think that those questions can make students predict how the lesson will proceed next?

C: Yes, I think they can.

I: Ok, that’s interesting. Then, next question is, which question in the sample lesson plan might be more difficult to adopt in your class?

C: Difficult... you mean when we consider the limited-time teachers’ can use or the competence of the students?

I: Yes, when you take account of all of those aspects, in your context, or considering your teaching experience.

C: Well... I think if the level of the vagueness gets higher the questions will be more difficult, but I also think it makes the questions more interesting, and once the students get used to those types of questions, I do not really think those vague questions are too difficult for the students to answer.

I: So, you mentioned about the vagueness of the questions, and when the questions asked by the teacher are too vague, it might avoid their (teacher-student) interaction to be conducted smoothly.

C: Yes. So, I felt maybe when the questions about the metaphor (Q.1) are asked some students might think they cannot understand them immediately, but once they get used to the topic in the lesson they can notice what they are doing gradually...

I: Ok, I see. So you think probably asking about the metaphor at the very beginning of the lesson could be a little bit difficult for the students because of the vagueness it has...

C: Yes...

I: Which also means, the question that students cannot come up with any answers might cause some difficulties to the students, right?

C: Yes, exactly. Although, it must be the interesting part once they get used to those types of questions (which require abstract answers), I think students need more time to be familiar with them.

I: I see. Then, are there any questions you think might be more effective if you can modify them? How would you change the questions if you are the teacher who asks these questions?

C: Ok, first, as I mentioned, I will ask Q.1 at latter stage, and... ... I think that is it...

I: Ok, so you will ask Q.1 later and let your students deal with them after they get used to the lesson?

C: Yes.

I: It is because, as you mentioned before, if those questions are asked at more late stage, you think students can deal with them more easily, right?

C: Yes.
I: Ok. Next, I want to ask you about teachers’ feedback. It is often claimed that teachers give shorter time to their students to let them answer the questions, but do you think it is also true in your questioning?

C: Yes, I think it is true.

I: So, why do you think the time spent for waiting the answers is short?

C: Well, perhaps teachers spend only a short time to let students answer their questions because of the limited time that we can use... and, for example, it might be because the teacher considers the question he or she is asking is not that important, and the teacher might think it is not worth spending time for that question.

I: When you say there are no time, do you mean because there are many things you have to do, so you cannot spend much time on each question, in order to teach everything in the pre-planned lesson?

C: Yes, I think that sticking on the pre-planned lesson plan could be one of the reasons. For example, when tests are coming soon and the teacher wants to teach everything that he or she has planned, maybe the teacher cannot answer their students’ questions by spending enough time when they ask questions, although it might be for their convenience.

I: So, you think the teacher might stick to the original plan rather than expanding the discussion caused by the questions?

C: Yes.

I: I see. Then, what do you think about the effects of teachers’ questioning on learner’s motivation? Do you think teachers’ questions can enhance their motivation?

C: Well, it might have some temporary effects. For example, if you ask about A and the student answers ‘no’, you can tell them to search the topic by books or on internet before next lesson, if you consider them as one type of questioning. Then, I think students can investigate what they do not know through conducting a research, and additionally they can realize that they can also study and learn something by themselves and how they can investigate those things... If we can make our students feel in that way, and if the topics are interesting for them, maybe they will become more motivated by the way questions are provided, and some students might even try to find a career which can deal with those issues.

I: Ok, so you say, if you can make them interested with the lesson through questioning, maybe you can enhance their motivation.

C: Yes.

I: Then, next question is... when you ask questions and your students respond to them, do you always give feedback by yourself or you will try to involve other students to give a feedback or any comments to them?

C: Well, I think letting other students respond to their peers’ answers is effective for their learning if I can do it, but... usually I didn’t spend much time for Group work in my class. So... although sometimes my students answered to their peers’ questions without me telling to do so, but actually I did not use Group work to let my students discuss the questions with their peers.
I: So, you said that you never asked questions that aim for raising a discussion?

C: Yes.

I: I see. I think you already mentioned that the questions you asked in your class were restricted by the time you can use in each lesson, but what if you had enough time? How would you ask questions, do you think the questions you provide will change or they will still be the same (more Closed-ended, Display questions)?

C: Well… to be honest, I do not think the time is the only reason for me to use that type of questions… Maybe, the most important aspect is whether you have a good relationship with your students or not, I think it could affect the type of questions that teachers provide. If… all conditions (for the ideal environment for class, including good teacher-learner relationship) are satisfied, I want to use more Group work discussion to let students discuss Open-ended questions eliciting various opinions…

I: I see.

C: So, perhaps not having enough time, could be one aspect that play significant role (which makes teachers use more Open-ended, Display question) , but I think it is not the true (main) reason… Maybe, the teacher does not have a confidence to effectively interact with his or her students, or he or she is hesitating and not sure whether the question A can be an appropriate question to be asked, and… Maybe some teachers can expand their questions by using their humour, but others think they are not good at it and, of course, the relationship with their students. For example, teacher might feel that he or she is having a good relationship with his or her students in class A but not with students in class B, so… I think those psychological aspects may significantly effect on teachers questioning style.

I: I see. That was the last question. Thank you so much.

NOTE:

(1) loosely Closed-ended: teacher has some sort of specific answers that they want to elicit

(2) loosely Open-ended: teacher has some sort of potential answers in their mind that might to be presented by students

(3) Centre-siken: one of the most popular university entrance examinations in Japan

(4) juken: the preparation for exams for further academic study in Japan