

## **Pragmatic Strategy of Indonesian English Teachers in Questioning**

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### **Abstract**

*This study was an attempt to examine pragmatic strategies and questioning types employed by English teachers in classroom interactions. Delivering the functions of questions by their types is insufficient to manage the flow of interaction. As such, the teachers need a certain pragmatic strategy. Data were gathered from three Indonesian English teachers. Purposefully selected teachers were observed, audio-recorded, and analyzed by using Gricean cooperative principle and politeness principle following the principle of Conservation Analysis (CA). The conservation analysis revealed that the use of external devices- adjunct to the head acts or enquirers (grounders, sweeteners, and disarmers) and internal modifiers (syntactic interrogative downgraders and lexical consultative downgraders) were mostly used by the teachers in employing questions to mitigate the illocutionary act of questioning as a request. In addition, the teachers intentionally violated the maxim for the sake of managing the flow of conversation. Subsequently, this study mirrors previous research findings that display questions as the most frequent strategies used to extend the talk and to invite learner response. Instead of analyzing questions that conventionally associate those with speech act theory, social aspects of interpersonal normativity (being responsible and autonomous) might be of benefit in sharing social-communicative intentions in order to extend the classroom talk.*

**Keywords:** *Pragmatic strategy, questioning types, student response*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Exposure towards a foreign language in the classroom setting can be carried out through various practices, ranging from participants themselves (teacher questions, classroom discourse), learning materials and textbooks, and learning tasks and teaching activities design. Among those, questioning is a primary practice for language learners. Farrell and Mom (2015) argue that almost 60 % of the total time of classroom talks in class involves the use of teacher questioning act. It is one of the most common and prominent features of classroom interaction and is a basic technique used to stimulate thinking, learning, class participation, and language production (Tofade, Elsner, & Haines, 2013; Engin, 2013; Hill, 2016; Hu & Duan, 2018). Although learning materials, textbooks, tasks, and activities affect learners' achievement, the learning experience is mostly dominated by teacher questioning behavior (Boyd, 2015; Maphosa & Wadesango, 2017). Through the use of well-constructed questions, learners are guided to think and are helped to attain new knowledge which subsequently reaches the classroom interaction's expectation.

Previous research findings put forward the importance of questioning in classroom discourse. Most of them were concerned with types of questions and found that display questions and low-order questions are simple in terms of provoking students' thinking process (Sundh, 2017; Stivers, 2018; Tofade, Elsner, & Haines, 2013; Wright, 2016). These earlier studies are corroborated by the most recent study that was conducted by Hu and Duan (2018) who revealed that high-order questions would engage and scaffold learners in more challenging processes of talk through analysis, evaluation, and creation. Low-order questions elicit restricted learners responses.

On the other hand, other studies focused on learner responses regarding the typology of questions. The studies have found that learners' responses are important aspects of questioning and are definitely determined by the level of questioning. Teachers, therefore, should be critical in providing good questions and be sensitive of the response (Hosoda, 2015; Ingram & Elliott, 2015; Vaish, 2013). Moving ahead further to the typology, these studies accentuate the questioning types affecting learner talks and thinking level and being the most frequently used in classroom interaction is display question. This questioning type is interactive teaching tools to definitely provoke students' response and thinking level, enhance communication and keep the learners participating in classroom interaction, and to help them to reach deep levels of understanding, curiosity, and thinking level.

Asking the question, however, is a challenging process. It is challenging because it does not only provoke learners' articulation and encourages them to deepen their ideas and ways of thinking but also deals with how the teacher carries the illocutionary act to the students. In other words, examining types and students responses are insufficient. It is necessary to set out research on the pragmatic aspects which definitely affect the force of questioning.

Referring to the previous studies, what is left is the strategy used by the teacher in questioning. The teacher strategy in employing questions is very crucial. It might manage the flow of talk and subsequently pinpoint the illocutionary force of his/her questions to the students. Employing the wrong strategy might be regarded as a blunder action in expecting learners' responses (perlocutionary act). Zemel and Koschmann (2011) state that the

problems in the response might take place not because the response is wrong, but because of a misunderstanding of the initial question set out by the teacher. Therefore, a proper strategy is significant to warrant mutual understanding (Darong, Kadarisman, Basthomi, Hidayati & Niman, 2020). In response to the gap, this study is an attempt to examine the teachers' strategies of employing questions on the pragmatic point of view and challenge the findings that wielding a particular type of teacher question that is display question is the most frequently used. The effect or the force behind the questioning types is important for the teacher to deal with by possessing certain pragmatic strategies. Thus, to contribute to the existing insights of questioning behavior in a language classroom context, this present study focused on teachers' pragmatic strategy and questioning types during their interaction with the students as the problem of research.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Questioning is a speech act that affects the way information is organized. Since there is more than one kind of meaning conveyed by a speech act and types alone are insufficient as a basis for determining function, then the function of questions must be partly dependent on pragmatic strategy governing social relationships.

### **2.1 Pragmatic Strategy**

Pragmatically, every utterance which is designed by a particular strategy definitely serves a certain function. Teachers might be able to share the force behind the utterances as they have ample and pertinent strategies (Walsh & Hodge, 2018). When teachers utter certain words, they do not only concern with types of their utterances but also pay attention to the strategy in employing functions as the intended meaning or information of their utterances. In the meantime, once students have understood the content of their utterances, they should be able to decide what to do and say by interpreting the real force of that utterances as to the sequences of talk they experience (negotiation of the meaning). Furthermore, as has been noted that there is a close relation between questioning strategy, learners learning achievement, and the application in teaching-learning situations. The responses generated from questioning types help teachers realign their teaching and interactional features in response to the needs of learners (Ozuem & Lancaster, 2015). This implicitly means that the choice of questioning and its function must facilitate learner responses and reflect the teacher's way of teaching in eliciting and enlarging the talk. While, Engin (2013) noted that questioning strategies are necessary in order to be an effective scaffolding tool and meaningful input for language learners. As such, the strategies must be employed in such a way that they might contribute and invite the learners to understand and to respond to the illocutionary force of the questions.

Previous findings have shown that teachers utilized the strategies to put their students actively resulting in the meaning negotiation process by means of interactional features such as recast and clarification check questions (Palma 2014). As such, the question as an utterance tends to be connected with input and output (Wright, 2016). Meanwhile, Ellis (2009) mentions that the most popular accepted corrective strategies used in meaning negotiation process are recasts, metalinguistic explanation, elicitation, repetition, and clarification requests which are carried out through implicit and explicit feedback. However,

those are very dependent and to a certain extent, need to view pragmatically associate with classroom discourse moves.

The pragmatic strategy of employing the types and functions of the utterances should be in a reliable manner and be identified in context-based. As noted by Yazdanfar and Bonyadi (2016), beyond its literal meaning, pragmatically, the utterances may be intended to employ particular functions related to the interlocutors and the context in which the exchange occurs. As such, the strategy can be done in numerous ways. Speakers (teachers) may soften their utterances by using external (adjunct to head) and internal modification devices whose functions can be either to mitigate or aggravate (Zhu, 2012).

The former is concerned with the modifiers occurring in the immediate context of speech act and optionally given to indirectly modify the illocutionary force. This category includes grounder (I was absent last week, could you lend me your notes?), sweetener (You used to be nice for everyone, could you drive for me?) disarmer (I beg your pardon, I do hope my words will convenient you, is it possible to drive me home?) cost minimizer (Excuse me. Could you lend me some money, if you bring yours, as I should pay my bill at once). In conversation analysis, such devices are functioned as precursors for the initial utterances (pre-sequences). They are regarded as purely formal tools of conversation management, but usually, they are more than that and have a place which is midway between the formal and the content-related aspects of conversation (Mey, 1993: 221). In this regard, the pre-sequences are enquirers preceding a proposition; their function is to make sure that the utterance being made is definitely within the limits of the possible, from the point of view of the teachers'.

The later deals with the use of downgraders which both set out through syntactic and lexical forms. As such the function is to mitigate the illocutionary force of certain utterances. The syntactic form may include an interrogative form (Could you do the service?), past tense (I wanted to beg your permission), negation (Excuse me, I was thinking about giving me a lift), embedded if clause (I would be happy if you leave me alone here). Meanwhile, the lexical (phrasal) form includes consultative devices (Would you think I could borrow your bike for two weeks?), undrestaters (Could you be there as I arrive?), hedges (It would be very beneficial if you share your notes), downtoners (Will she be able probably to write for me?). In addition, to mitigate the illocutionary force, the internal modifiers might be used to enhance the force (upgraders) which includes intensifier (Put more colors, the picture is still monotonous) and expletives (You still haven't studied hard this course).

Since communication is a form of activity that is analyzed in terms of a sequence of communicative acts performed by the interlocutors (Tajeddin and Pezeshki, 2014), the intention and cooperation between the speaker and hearer are pertinent to delineate the illocutionary force of the utterance. As argued by Bousfield (2008), the definition is in line with Gricean cooperative principle in a way to sharing the interpersonal responsibility between the speaker and interlocutor and sharply stifle that communication is a form of social action. Further, four maxims that are manner, quality, relevance, and quantity are another pragmatic strategy to enact the illocutionary force. In other words, as the strategy, these maxims might underline the illocutionary force of utterance (between speaker and hearer).

In the meantime, the use of modality in indirect utterances such as *can*, *could*, *will* and *would* in interrogative forms is considered more polite than declarative statements in the request (Roever & Al-gahtani, 2015). In addition, the subject matter of the utterances such as in a question, the way is uttered, even the decision to utter is regarded as what is said and reflecting the speaker's evaluation of the social relationships between himself and the addressee (Darong, 2015; Yazdanfar and Bonyadi, 2016; Tajeddin and Pezeshki 2014; Eshghinejad & Moini, 2016; Taguchi, 2012; Zhu, 2012). This has been corroborated by Al-khazraji (2019) stating that questions as a specific language form, by inserting modality, are functioned to soften the impact of a request as Face Threatening Acts (FTAs). However, Zemel and Koschmann (2011) state that the problems in the response might take place not because the response is wrong, but because of a misunderstanding of the initial question occurred. Therefore, correction and evaluation are necessary since it can warrant mutual understanding. The evaluation might be done is reflecting the strategy of employing questioning types. This might be more beneficial to the language articulation as having some inputs (exposures) occurring in the interaction process.

## **2.2 Question Type**

Bloom's taxonomy provides a question category that is made from lower type questions (simple recall or memorization responses and comprehension checking to higher type question (requirement to use the concepts and information to clarify, conclude, compare, and draw conclusions (evaluative and speculative). They are classified based on the thinking domain which is divided into four main categories that are clarifying, associative, critical thinking, and values question (Hu & Duan, 2018).

The question also is classified into the display and referential questions. Previous research studies confirm that display question might invite brief answers and places few student cognitive demands. It is mostly employed at various education levels and often elicits very restricted student responses. unlikely, referential question (opened question) which is also termed as high order question elicits a range of responses and invites students to provide something new to the class interaction (Engin, 2013; Tavakoli & Davoudi, 2016; Wright, 2016).

Aside from the types above, relying on Richard and Lockheart classification (1996), Boyd (2015) through his turn of talk analysis, adds some types namely clarification request, procedural, contingent, convergent and divergent questions. Clarification request is a question seeking to bring about the explanation or redefining of preceding contribution. Meanwhile, the procedural question relates to directions or behavior during the interaction. The third type deals with student contributions made within the three preceding utterances. Its form might be open or closed, authentic or display questions. The functions are to facilitate student thinking and exploration since it offers a coherent bridge across ideas and contribution. The last two types deal with convergence during the talk or conservation. Convergent question is a question that homes in an aspect of what is being talked or discussed. Meanwhile, the divergent question opens up on an aspect of what is being talked about or discussed. Maphosa and Wadesango (2017) and Tofade et al., (2013) note that these questioning types have no definite answer as the students are required to explore a variety of possible responses and permit them to explore in diverse perspectives.

At this point, almost previous studies regard the types of questions as one of the teacher talks functioning as interactive teaching tools to definitely provoke student's response and thinking process. However, the nature of questioning is to manage the interaction. Teacher questions should be able to organize the structure, manage turn-taking and topic of discourse. As such, it indeed does not occur independently. It is absolutely interwoven and are carried out in sequence (Atwood, Turnbull, & Jeremy, 2010) and should be context-based for raising the interactional awareness of language teachers and driving pedagogical and practical knowledge (Ghafarpour, 2016 ). To do this, questioning type and its function must be employed through good strategies. The strategy might be more meaningful as its illocutionary forces affect the students to do an action as their responses (perlocutionary act).

### **3. RESEARCH METHODS**

This study was conducted at Universitas Negeri Malang Indonesia. Three purposefully selected English teachers were observed and audio-recorded. Adapting from Jefferson (Hosoda, 2015) the observed classroom interactions of the three English teachers were fully transcribed (Appendix 1) and analyzed according to their contribution in providing valuable information regarding teachers' questioning strategy and question types as the concern of this study.

As requesting the information is mainly regarded as the prototype of questions, the approach of Gricean cooperative principles and Blum-Kulka and Olshtain framework (1984) of politeness strategy were used. Grice coined several maxims of the co-operative principle, such as maxim of quality, a maxim of quantity, a maxim of relevance, and maxim of manner. Meanwhile, the use of modification devices, both external and internal purposed by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain to soften the impact of requests as Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) is necessarily used to examine whether teachers' strategy might be either to mitigate or aggravate their request.

Conversation Analysis (CA) was chosen as the methodological framework of data analysis. The application of CA principles to data analysis allows the examination of the teachers' strategy in questioning and the question types during teacher-student interactions and the mood exchanges. In order to counteract some of the possible prejudices and attitudes inherent in this study, the data were triangulated from three sources namely in-depth observations in the classroom, audio-taping of classroom interactions and reflective analysis of field notes. Thus, to verify the result of data analysis, all evidence was compared and cross-checked to each other. The results of this verification strategies were included in the final analysis.

### **4. FINDINGS**

In the process of analyzing the pragmatic strategy used in these conversations, the modification devices (internal and external) and directness levels were analyzed. In addition, in terms of sharing interpersonal responsibility to the students' responses, the distribution of maxim for each teacher was also noted. Then, to challenge the previous findings wielding that a particular type of teacher question necessarily affects student response, types of questions were also taken into account. Moreover, by the fact that,

although the physical shape of questions is not only separate from their pragmatic function but unrelated to their functional purpose, as the types and functions of questions are analyzed together, it becomes evident that a relationship might exist between the two.

Table 1 deals with the teachers' pragmatic strategies with regard to internal and external modification devices.

**Table 1. Internal and external modification devices**

Internal Devices	Category	T 1	T2	T 3
Syntactic downgraders	Interrogative	77	139	160
	Embedded if clause	-	1	12
Lexical downgraders	Consultative device	35	54	35
	Downtoner	1	-	-
	Hedge	4	3	6
	Politeness markers	21	18	6
External devices	Grounder	3	2	4
	Sweetener	1	4	-
	Disarmer	1	3	2

*Note: T: Teacher*

With respect to the data (Table 1), the most frequently used strategy employed by the teachers was internal devices through syntactical downgraders which include interrogative form, embedded if clause and lexical downgraders covering consultative device, hedging, and politeness markers. In addition, the use of grounder, sweetener, and disarmer as external devices were also used. The data indicate that in addition to softening the impact of requests as FTAs, the teachers also use some external and internal modifications whose function can be either to mitigate or aggravate the request.

In addition to the mentioned external and internal devices, the teachers' pragmatic strategies with regard to directness level were also necessary to examine. As such, they were examined in such a way that they were of benefit to know what level and what category they belong to.

**Table 2 Directness Level**

Directness level	Category	T 1	T 2	T 3
Direct	Mood derivable	4	7	4
Conventionally indirect	Suggestory formulae	11	9	7
	Query preparatory	15	12	18
Non-Conventionally indirect	Strong hint	13	4	10
	Mild hint	24	2	4

*Note: T: Teacher*

Table 2 shows that the three teachers used indirect strategy in employing their requests. These data strengthen the use of modification devices as shown in Table 1 in which, the teachers modify the impact of their requests. The teachers ignored to use direct request to avoid being rude or impolite, and this can lead to communication problems. Moreover, direct requests are considered to be impolite, because they limit the student's freedom. By means of conventionally and non-conventionally indirect which mostly

employed by the teachers rather than the direct one, they increased the degree of politeness which might invite student response and subsequently enlarge the classroom interactions.

Aside from the two aspects mentioned above, the examination of the maxim was also noted for the sake of knowing how the teachers shared the interpersonal responsibility to students' responses (Table 3). As has been emphasized that the pragmatic strategy definitely corresponds to the conversational maxims perspective. The Interpersonal rhetoric in the Gricean Cooperative Principle (CP) might be able to explain why and how the teachers deviate from the norm in creating an implicature during the interactions.

**Table 3. Distribution of maxim**

Maxim	T1	T 2	T3	Maxim violation	T 1	T 2	T 3
Relevance	210	252	242		4	3	6
Quality	214	256	246		-	-	-
Quantity	212	254	241		2	3	5
Manner	214	256	246		-	-	-

*Note: T: Teacher*

Table 3 confirms that all the teachers' questions functioning as the request were relevant, qualified and properly employed in good manners and proportion. Following the discourse moves and context, they occurred. This means that the teachers definitely considered the cooperative principles in sharing their interpersonal responsibility toward students during the interactions. However, to a certain extent, they deviated from the course. They violated the maxim of relevance and quantity for the sake of enlarging the discourse and extend the conservation.

It is important to note that the previous research studies have shown that a particular type of teacher question that is display question is the most frequently used type in classroom interaction. In order to challenge the previous findings, the researchers examined the questioning types employed by the teachers during the interactions.

**Table 4. Types of questions**

Types	T 1	T2	T 3
Display	171	216	197
Referential	11	10	10
Procedural	21	17	27
Convergent	5	6	3
Divergent	2	3	5

*Note: T: Teacher*

Table 4 acknowledges that the questioning type that frequently used by the teachers was display questions. This means that during the lesson, the teachers' tendency was to check students understanding regarding the previous knowledge they taught. Although this type was dominantly used, other types were still posed following the discourse moves of the classroom talks.

To strengthen the data in tables, the following extracts are highlighted. Following conservation analysis (CA), this section presents illustrative examples which representatively



demonstrate the teachers' strategy of questioning in which the teachers discursively constructed the interaction. This conversation analysis was dominantly carried out through a closer look at question-answer sequences by following the mainstream of classroom pattern that is IRF/IRE. The following extracts were analyzed respectively in accordance with the focus of the study that is the teachers' strategy and questioning types employed by the teachers.

**Extract 1**

50 T : John, I forget to ask you, do you like solving other's problems?

51 T : Well, if you don't mind, what problem do your friends have?

52 S : English. English Subject...I have to teach Ani.

It is because her English is not good.

53 T : Do you always teach her English?

54 S : Yeah. I was there every week.

55 T : That is a kind of problem.

56 T : Thank you.

57 T : Very good.

In the Extract 1, the use of modification devices which functioned might be either to mitigate or aggravate the request, was employed to soften the impact of request as Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) (Blum-Kulka, S., & Olshtain, 1984). In lines 50 and 51, the teacher, respectively, used external modifiers of grounder and disarmer. The former dealt with how the teacher ground his intention by stating the name of John before raising a question. While the later disarmed the students feeling by inserting an agreement clause. As such, the clause was indirectly functioned to modify the illocutionary force. With regard to the directness level, the two strategies belong to conventionally indirect. They were an optional clause because, indeed, the teacher might go straight forward to the questions. Unlikely, in line 53, the teacher employed internal modifiers that are downgrade which functions to mitigate the illocutionary force of the request. Downgrade here was carried out in the form of an interrogative syntactical pattern and categorized as explicit performative of a direct level.

The teacher's evaluation in 53 constituted his intention toward students' response by violating the maxim of quantity (being responsible). As such, students' response was "a course deviation" in which the truth value is being ignored. The teacher had known that when the student answered the English subject, there should be a problem to cope with. And yet, the student explained more about Ani's poor English condition. Stating such condition was something exaggerated which, in fact, the meaning was already implicitly stated in the previous utterance that is English subject. In this respect, students violated the maxim of quantity providing unnecessary information to the teacher.

On the way other around, the student might think that he already fulfilled the maxim of relation (sense of autonomous) and subsequently was a trigger to give a piece of relevant information concerning responding teacher's question. In fact, the relevance as the student had assumed was not required by the hearer (teacher) as he had got what he intended to have, the clear answer (friend's problem). As such, the intention was corroborated by his evaluation (line 53).

Another pragmatic aspect found in the above conversation was that the application of the principle of politeness. Expressive speech act (line 56) employed by the teacher was an appreciation or respected student's response and yet, the response itself was beyond the teacher's expectation. The teacher created interpersonal responsibility by stating a representative speech act (line 57). In this context, the teacher was interpersonally responsible for sharing his attention with the students. Such attention intends to achieve an effect, at least in part, by sharing his care toward the answer.

Moreover, in Extract 1, the teacher's evaluation in 53 was offered by paraphrasing the student's response and followed by acceptance 'that is kind of problem' in line 55 and praise 'very good' in line 56. This sequential pattern was concerned with the way how the teacher employed convergent questions through referential types to request new information from the student. As such, the information was a logical consequence of IRE pattern which is popularly known as the mainstream of the classroom. However, the pattern might be extended as the teacher did not only focus on raising such questions. The questions might go beyond in terms of enlarging the talk occurring in the class such as found in the following extract.

**Extract 2**

170 T : OK. Look at number three.

171 T : What do you usually say when you offer some help?

172 T : What do you say?

173 T : Ok number three.

174 T : What do you say when you offer some help?

175 T : Tony, what do you say when you offer some help?

(Students Silent)

176 T : Well, if you see your friends are in trouble. You want to help them.

177 T : What do you usually say?

178 S : Can I help you?

179 T : Yes, can I help you?

180 T : What else?

181 T : What else?

182 T : Who knows? Besides can I help you. What else?

183 S : What can I do for you?

184 T : Good. What can I do for you?

185 T : These expressions are used for offering helps.

186 T : Would you need to say these?

187 T : Do you usually help someone?

188 T : What do you think?

As shown in Extract 2, the teacher used external modifiers such as grounder (in line 170 and 171, 173 and 174, and 182), and disarmer (line 176 and 177). All these external modifiers as stated in the first extract, are optional clauses that indirectly modify the illocutionary force. Unlikely, in line 180, 181, 186, 187 and 188, internal modifiers were used in the form of interrogative syntactic patterns to mitigate the illocutionary force of the request. At this stage, the functions of the questions were to manage the flow of

communication. The teacher tends to extend the conversation by raising questions and does not definitely express some declarative speech acts. Though, the illocutionary act of questions has on students is to keep giving responses, and subsequently, the dialogic conversation is extended. With regard to directness level, the Extract 2 confirmed that the teacher employed questions both directly (mood derivable) where the grammatical mood of the verb determines its illocutionary force as a request, and conventionally indirect (query preparatory) where the utterance contains reference to a preparatory condition (ability, willingness or possibility to perform certain acts).

The rhetorical question such as in the line (186) occurred as the teacher was not the only one who knows the answer but also the students as well. However, the last two questions (line 187 and 188) violated the maxim of relevance since they did not belong to the topic being problematized. As such, the two questions were offered since the teacher was responsible for sharing social intention by changing the topic or even to let the topic open. Questions in line 187 required a very short response and yet the last question had to have a long response and required students to have a critical thinking process. Yet, the students' responses might fulfil the criteria of maxims of relevance as if they meet the teacher's intention.

The questions in the Extract 2 were mostly convergent (except line 188 was divergent that is a question that opens up on an aspect of what is being talked) and were in the form of display questions, the questions which the answers are already known by the teacher. The functions of questions were to elicit students' talk. However, the teacher's expectation was not reached as the students' did not give any responses. Repeating the same questions was the teacher's effort to reach his expectations. In conversation analysis, as noted by Mey (1993:221), the questions were functioned to be precursors for the initial questions (pre-sequences) or adjunct to head act (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984) yet, in fact, it has been done in line 170. They might be as purely formal tools of conversation management. However, they are more than that and have a place which is midway between the formal and the content-related aspects of conversation, (Mey 1993:221). In this regard, the pre-sequences were as enquirers preceding a request of some kind; their function is to make sure the request being made is definitely within the limits of the possible, from the point of view of the teacher. The other enquirers were found in Extract 3 was in line 179 – 182. The pre-sequences were made of acceptance ('yes,...' in line 179) and followed the enquirers through some procedural questions (line 180-182). The procedural questions were set out through display questions and functioned as precursors to the next sequences, which, however, violated the maxim of quantity.

**Extract 3**

139 S : I help my friend and borrow the book.

140 T : Very good.

141 T : Charles, Do you mean to lend the book?

(The teacher wrote the words to borrow and to lend)

142 T : Could you look at number 3?

143 T : Joseph, what should you say? Answer my question↑

144 S : I lend a dictionary.

145 T : Jansen, How about you?

146 T : You are a kind man. What kind of help?

147S : Giving money.

Similar to the two previous extracts, the teacher employed some external modifiers (except line 142). They are called adjunct to the head acts which occurred in the immediate context of the speech act of questioning and are as optional clauses, which indirectly modify the illocutionary force. Taking a closer look at line 141, 143 and 145, preceding the head act, there was Charles as the adjunct. Following Edmonson and House (1981), the teacher employed category of grounder external modifiers. Meanwhile, in line 146, the teacher used an external modifier of the sweetener category as it sweetened the teacher's intention in his adjunct to the head. Differently, as has been noted previously, the exception was line 142. As such, the teacher set out an internal modifier within the speech act of questioning to mitigate the illocutionary force (downgrade). At this point, the questions were used to soften the impact of request as Face Threatening Acts.

Another thing which was revealed in Extract 3 was that the topic move. The teacher leads the students to the next number to discuss by raising the procedural question which is divergent to the previous utterances and implied a request (line 142). Subsequently, the teacher extended the topic by asking display questions and giving a turn to Jansen (line 143 and 145) with no uptake (teacher violates the maxim of quantity). However, at the same time, the teacher narrowed the scope of the talk by asking a contingent question in the form of referential type (line 146). As such, the question was concerned with the main topic of discussion and explicitly referred the student's contribution made within the three preceding utterances functioning to facilitate student thinking and exploration, as it offers a coherent bridge across ideas and contributions. In this regard, the teacher sets the questions out properly to manage the flow of the student's thinking process. In other words, regardless of response, the function of the last question was as a discourse choice move of the scaffolding thinking process and eliciting the next response.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

Following the framework House and Kasper (1981) and Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) of the level of directness in politeness, the data in the tables and the questions illustrated in the extracts were the teacher's strategies to modify the illocutionary of the questioning act. In this respect, the teachers used external modification as adjunct to the head ( Extract 1 line 50 & 51; Extract 2 line 170, 171, 173, 174, 176, 177 and 182; 143, 145, and 146 of Extract 3) and functioned to modify (mitigate) the illocutionary force of request or to decrease the degree of directness and internal device (downgrade) as in line 53 Extract 1, line 180, 181, 186, 187 and 188 of Extract 2, and line 142 of Extract 3. This finding mirrors the previous studies (Yazdanfar & Bonyadi, 2016; Tajeddin & Pezeshki, 2014; Mohammadi, Nejadansari, & Manijeh, 2015) that the level of directness can be mitigated (face-threat mitigators) by using some modification devices that are external and internal devices.

Another interesting part of the data is the directness level of request. The table 1 shows that the teachers' questions were categorized as conventionally indirect requests in the form of the suggestory formulae containing a suggestion to do and of the query preparatory where the question contains a reference to a preparatory condition (ability, willingness or

possibility to perform the act. In addition, non-conventionally indirect were also used in the form of strong and mild hints containing both partial reference and no reference at all to decrease less on power position. However, the illustration in the extract 3 (line 143) pinpoints speech act questioning as a direct request (mood derivable). As such, the request was categorized as being impolite or rude because it limits the freedom of the hearer (students). This is still tolerable as the social status of the speaker (teacher) or the authority is higher than the student's. In this respect, the assessment of the request strategy relies on the social distance and power of the participants. Since the teacher's status was higher than student's, the assessment of directive request was, in fact, to reveal the teacher's interpersonal responsibility of sharing good proportional intention to the students. This corroborated the findings of Zhu (2012) and Eshghinejad and Moini (2016) noting that social power, rank, and social status of imposition are very crucial in request which subsequently judge the politeness.

In addition to being direct and indirect, the teachers' strategies were also concerned with maxim violation in order to share their interpersonal responsibility to the students. As such, the aims were to respect students, no matter, they got the wrong response and violated the maxim of quantity and relevance. Table 3 which is strengthened by the data in the Extract 1, the true value was being sacrificed (maxim violation) for the sake of politeness which subsequently was beneficial for extending the conversation (line 56 and 57). This case is in line with Christison (2018) saying that the most interesting to study communication is when the principles were violated, especially when they were violated in purposeful ways and found an obvious reason for this violation. By offering irrelevant information, the speaker (teacher) is either communicating or trying to communicate to something for the listener (student).

Unlikely, previous findings have noted that when one or more maxims are correctly used, politeness might occur at that very time. (Manik & Hutagaol, 2015). Yet, Yule (1996) noted that politeness strategies are very crucial to examine as they are employed by people in their social interaction and in the specific contexts, knowing what to say, how to say and to who is said. The term context here is not only concerned with physics but also refers to the scene of such a physical setting. At this point, maxim violation was definitely carried out and intentionally done for the sake of managing the flow of conversation and creating a conducive manner of the interactions.

Considerable efforts made in giving feedback, the teachers required students to respond with knowledge background or checking knowledge and known information. In this study, as shown in Table 4, the use of display questions was found meaningful and contributed towards learner's responses, though, with a very restricted but keep the topic open. Although it is not always a case, the use of display questions, as shown in the extracts (except in Extract 1), might extend the talk, influenced pattern of interaction, and provided valuable inputs for students. This result is consistent with previous research studies on language and subject classrooms in that the teacher questions were predominantly as display and comprehension questions (Hu & Duan, 2018). Such low-order questions usually have very restricted students' responses at equally lower-order cognitive complexity.

In addition to Hu and Duan (2018), this finding corroborated Tavakoli and Davoudi (2016) revealing that knowledge and comprehension questions are used by teachers.

Similarly, this result supported the findings of Hill (2016), Farrell and Mom (2015 and Milawati and Suryati (2019) revealing that teacher questions were mostly knowledge-based ones (display questions) and that higher-order questions were rarely asked in the classrooms for the sake of learners responses. In this study, such questions are mostly employed through the indirect illocutionary act in different recurring discourse moves except line 143 of the extract 3 (direct speech act or directive). This reflects Chappell's findings (2014) noting that language acts such as display questions whose intention is to engage another in one's attempt to understand might invite students' to respond discursively. Their functions were not only concerned with requesting information but request the service of others (students) which is linguistically realized in different ways but definitely affects student response.

By and large, this study has found that the teachers' pragmatic strategies used were both internal and external modification devices and utilized conventionally and non-conventionally indirect levels of a particular type of teachers' questioning (mostly by display questions) speech acts. Besides, we examined essential aspects of the teacher's interpersonal interactions that have the potential to prevent either enable an effective environment in the classroom that is constructive to interaction. In the speech act theory, there is a tendency that a speaker (the teacher) produces a certain illocutionary effect in virtue of the fact that the meaning of the item he/she utters conventionally associates it with producing that effect. In this respect, the teachers employed the questioning utterance which plays a crucial role as social institutions and social actions. Meanwhile, social intentions were taken into account in terms of intentionally sharing their social and interpersonal intention with their students. The data have shown that by relying on the mutual assumptions of cooperativeness, the teachers were more aware of the local, dynamic and context-sensitive aspects in questioning activity, by means of violating maxim, during their interaction with students in order to properly moment-by-moment action that will likely evolve negotiation of meaning and then, invite students' responses.

Yet, interpersonal normativity was also an interesting aspect revealed in this study. As such, it deals with being responsible and autonomous of both teachers and students that subsequently evolve the normative relationships (Carassa & Colombetti, 2015). This consequently binds the teachers and students who cooperatively undergo them. Then, the modification devices coined by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) go divergently from interpersonal relationships and human capacity that is being responsible and autonomous. In my view, both are regarded as crucial in the interactions from which cooperation is evolved. In this study, maxim violation is the evidence of such conception in which both the teachers and the students jointly create and share intention and understanding for the sake of extending the talk. Therefore, with respect to the data, instead of analyzing modification devices as the strategy which conventionally associates them with speech act theory and Grecian cooperative principles of the maxim, aspects of interpersonal normativity (being responsible and autonomous) must be included in terms of sharing social-communicative intentions.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study aims at investigating the teacher pragmatic strategy of questioning and examining types of questions employed by teachers in classroom interaction. With respect to the findings, we may draw some conclusions. First, the internal modifiers (syntactic interrogative downgraders and lexical consultative downgraders) were more dominantly used by the teachers than the external devices (adjunct to the head acts or pre-sequences (grounders, sweeteners, and disarmers) in employing questions as a request. This evidence confirmed that the teachers tend to mitigate or indirectly modify the illocutionary force of the questioning. Second, in employing questions, both teachers and students violated the maxim. The teachers intentionally violated the maxim to manage conversation, elicit student's response and let the topic open. The students' on the other hand, violated the maxim (quality and relevance) as to their knowledge problem. However, both interpersonally and autonomously shared social intentions and contributed the talk exchanges (interpersonal normativity). Third, this study mirrors some previous studies revealing that a particular type of teacher question necessarily affects student response. The most frequently used display questions in this study facilitates students' responses and to a certain extent, they were proven to extend the talk and influence pattern of interaction. Then, comes the agreement on previous findings of Farrell and Mom (2015) and (Hill, 2016) that the teacher questioning type, in this study is the display question type, is the most powerful discourse choice to stimulate thinking, learning, class participation, and language production.

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