

# Improving Participation in English Grammar Class among Public Senior Secondary Students in Ibadan through Teacher Questioning Style

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## Abstract

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*This study examined the relationship existing between the teachers' questioning style and students' participation in English grammar classroom in Ibadan North Local Government Area, Oyo State, Nigeria. The survey research design was adopted for the study. A total number of 10 teachers and 500 senior secondary students participated in the study from 10 randomly selected public senior secondary schools in Ibadan North Local Government Area, Oyo State. Teacher Questioning Style Observation Checklist ( $r=0.71$ ) and Classroom Participation Observation Schedule ( $r=-0.72$ ) were used in data collection. Data collected from the study were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, simple percentage, mean and standard deviation. Also, inferential statistics of PPMC was used to determine the relationship between teacher questioning style and student participation in the English grammar class. Findings from the study revealed that the teachers asked questions relevant to the students. Further findings revealed that teacher asked 14 questions in the class and that there is no significant relationship between teacher questioning style and students' classroom participation in English grammar class ( $r=-0.36$ ;  $p>0.05$ ). Based on findings, it was recommended that teachers of English grammar should not dominate questioning in the classroom, they should give room for students to ask questions in teaching and learning situation and they should be encouraged to ask questions if they do not understand the teaching materials.*

**Keywords:** Teacher, Questioning style, Classroom participation, English grammar, Higher order questions

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## Introduction

Teaching is a set of events used by a teacher to facilitate learning. A good teacher must have the knowledge of what is to be taught, understand how the students want to learn and be able to teach them in the ways they want to learn. Learning takes place only when there is a relatively permanent change in behaviour (Sequeira, 2012). Grammar teaching is very important when teaching or learning English as a second language. While teaching is done by the teacher, learning occurs on the part of the students. Grammar is comprised of rules that control a way of communication system in a language. It deals with the relationship of words in a sentence. To teach the English grammar, the teacher is expected to present the rules and patterns of the language to the students with copious example and allow them to practice. Teaching grammar needs to be done with care in order to avoid over generalisation of rules as there are exceptions to some rules in the English grammar (Pekka Saaristo 2015).

Questioning students is one of the most important teaching methods in a teacher's toolbox.

Socratic questioning is considered an effective teaching approach used to elicit critical thinking on the part of the students (Huse, and Le 2016). The challenge is to find ways to encourage all students to answer the question either individually or collectively. Questioning helps to monitor if the students comprehend what they are being taught and also to make connection to previous lessons. It helps to clarify what the teacher is trying to explain and also has effect on the way students learn. Good teachers use a variety of questioning techniques to engage their students and improve students' learning. Teachers use questions to engage the students and sustain an active style to the learning. The teacher also uses questions as part of the assessment of learning in order to determine how they best structure, organize and present new learning. Maureen Boyd (2015) explains that a key indicator of classroom learning intentions and expectations is the teacher's question. According to Cotton (2001), a teacher who uses more questions has a greater achievement gain than a teacher who uses less.

The goal of questioning is to find out if the students understand what is being taught, enable them to participate in the lesson and to promote creative thinking (Ma, 2008). Questioning fosters interaction between the teachers and students. It helps the teachers to know if learning has taken place. According to Ma (2008), the validity of questions relies on questioning skills. The teacher is expected to prepare his or her questions before the class. He/she should ask the students some preview questions to introduce the lesson to them. This is done to arouse the interest of the learners. He/she should also ask questions in relation to the lesson to be taught. Asking students questions outside the lesson may discourage their participation in the class. Also, questions should be asked in clear terms for easy understanding on the parts of the students. Teachers should also be able to predict students' possible answers and should be able to guide them in answering questions.

Questions can be display or referential. Display questions are used for clarification while referential questions are good for classroom interaction. Teachers should be able to use his/ her questions to arouse the interests of learners. The teacher should also make effort to enhance participation in the classroom. He/she should arrange his/her questions in sequence, that is, he/she should proceed from simple to complex, and he/she should also nominate voluntary and non-voluntary students to answer questions. He/she should also give them time to process the questions before directing questions. He/she should to probe students to force them to give a comprehensive answer. He/she should also be able to distribute questions to all the students for full participation and also listen to their responses to his/her questions. He/she should be able to ask questions clearly and rephrase questions that seem difficult for the students to understand (Fakeye, 2012).

Classroom participation is an important piece in a student's education and it is an achievement of positive learning outcome (Susak 2016). The kind of activities that take place in the classroom helps to shape the experience and quality of learning of a student. Wright (2014) claims classroom participation involves being vocal and active within the classroom. It is also answering and asking questions and also by

participating in discussions and activities in the classroom. Students' participation in English grammar class is significant to improvement in the structure of the language. Classroom participation can raise or lower the participation of other students if a teacher does not use his/her questioning tool properly. Participation should be seen as collective responsibility of the class rather than just an individual's responsibility as some students may be reluctant to participate.

Effective learning takes place when both the teachers and students interact and actively participate in the learning activities. The most important thing a teacher can do to help his/her students intellectually is to create conducive environment for learning (Zuosheng, 2012). According to Davis (2009), students' enthusiasm and willingness to participate in a classroom activity through these verbal engagements will create conducive environment for them. Classroom participation is an important piece in a student's education and an achievement of positive learning outcome. It is the overall engagement of a student or students in a classroom setting (Hill 2017)

Teachers' questioning guides and helps students to reason; it also helps the flow of student's participation in the classroom. Questioning helps the teacher to regulate the immediate scope of students' participation. It can be used to open up or shut down students' participation and it can also be used to support or query their comprehension. Aiyede (2017) noted that the manner in which a teacher asks questions has a way of influencing students' response. A teacher is, therefore, expected to properly plan their lesson with well-prepared questions for introducing, developing and concluding their lessons. He/she is also expected to use his/her question to engage even the less active students in order to improve their learning behavior. According to Naz et al (2013), questioning has the ability to influence learning process and also turn off students' participation in the classroom. He also noted that it can have a long lasting effect on improving the teaching and learning environment. Classroom participation can be greatly influenced by a teacher's knowledge about good questioning.

Although classroom participation has its advantages, it can lead to frustration for the teacher

and confusion for the students if participation is poorly managed; this is because the students might choose to deviate from the subject matter and change the course of the lesson. While employing questioning tool, the teacher should be time conscious as questioning can be time consuming and the objectives of the lesson might not be achieved. It can also cause conflicts and lead to unnecessary arguments within the classroom if there are opposing opinions. To facilitate participation, the teacher should allow students to ask questions in the course of the lesson and be well prepared to give appropriate responses to such questions. Preparedness helps a teacher to be logical in his/her presentation and rational in his argument (Omatseye). Participation is most effective if the teacher summarises and evaluates the content discussed; this is done to check whether the objectives stated for the lesson is achieved or not.

It has been observed that many studies have been carried out on teachers' questioning style and students' classroom participation in English language, this study will focus on its relationship in the English grammar class. This is because Nigerians as second language users are faced with difficulty of understanding the structure of the language as a result of interference of their native languages (Benlulu 2017).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Questioning is the most important tool used by a teacher in order to facilitate students' participation in the classroom. The atmosphere created by the teacher with the use of questions determines whether or not the students will participate in the course of teaching and learning. It has been noted that there are some factors that hinders students' full participation in the classroom and these are the teacher's personality, environment and physical factor, the personality of the student and the influence of other students. The type of questions used by a teacher has a way of influencing students' participation in the classroom. Therefore, the teacher is expected to adopt appropriate questioning style for the active participation of the students. He/she should also learn out to distribute questions and give feedback on their participation in order to motivate them and promote their full participation in the classroom.

Although several researches have looked into both the negative and positive influence of teachers' questioning style on learning outcomes, this research is concerned with relationship existing between the teachers' questioning style and students' participation in English grammar classroom.

### **Research Questions**

1. What type of questioning styles is adopted by the teacher in the English grammar classroom?
2. What is the frequency of teacher's questioning style in the classroom?
3. What is the relationship between teacher's style of questioning and students' participation in the English grammar classroom?

### **Scope of the Study**

The study was carried out to examine the extent to which the teachers' questioning style can influence students' participation in the English grammar classroom in public schools in Ibadan North Local Government Area, Oyo State of Nigeria.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study would help teachers to identify strengths and weaknesses of questioning in English grammar class. It would provide them with information on the types of questioning that should be used. It would also help them to identify ways to improve students' active participation in the classroom. It would help students to understand the importance of classroom participation.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted the survey research design. The population of the study is comprised of all English Grammar teachers and their students in Senior Secondary Schools in Ibadan North Local Government Area in Oyo State.

A total of 10 schools in Ibadan North Local Government Area were randomly selected. One English Grammar teacher was randomly selected from each of the school and observed twice, making a total of 10 teachers that participated in the study. Students were also observed with reference to their level of participation in the lesson. The instruments used in

data collection were Teacher's Questioning Style Observation Checklist ( $r=0.71$ ) and Classroom Participation Observation Schedule( $r=0.72$ ). The researcher carried out the observation by sitting in the class and observing the teacher's use of different questioning styles. The researcher also recorded the number of questions by the teachers and students and indicating their functions. The type of interaction that occurred in the classroom was also observed to determine the extent of participation by the students. The observed behaviour was questioning style and the students' participation. Each teacher was observed twice.

The collected data were analysed using frequency counts, mean, standard deviation and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). This was done to determine the extent of relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The results were interpreted at the 0.05 level of significance.

## Results

### Answering the Research Questions

**Research Question 1:** What type of questioning style is adopted by the teacher in the English grammar classroom?

**Table 1:** Questioning Styles Adopted by the Teacher in the English Grammar Classroom

SN	Item	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std.D
1	Teacher asks questions relevant to students	-	-	5 (50%)	5 (50%)	-	3.500	0.527
2	Teacher asks open-ended questions	-	-	6 (60%)	4 (40%)	-	3.400	0.516
3	Teacher asks follow-up questions	-	-	10 (100%)	-	-	3.000	0.000
4	Teacher asks different types of questions	-	-	6 (60%)	4 (40%)	-	3.400	3.400
5	Teacher repeats the questions where there is no response	-	2 (20%)	7 (70%)	1 (10%)	-	2.900	2.900
6	Teacher modifies questions when it is not understood	-	1 (10%)	9 (90%)	-	-	2.900	2.900

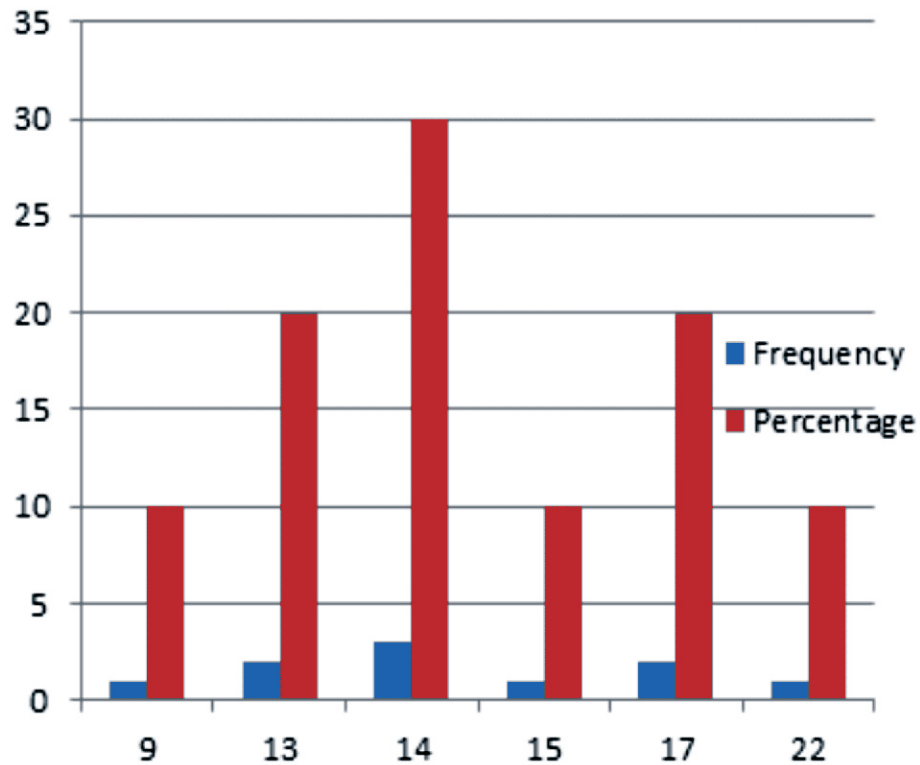
Note: 5:- Excellent, 4:- Very good, 3:- Good, 2:- Fair and 1:- Poor

Table 1 shows the questioning styles adopted by the teachers in the English Grammar classroom. The detailed analysis shows that: Teacher asks questions relevant to students (Mean=3.50), Teacher asks open-ended questions (Mean=3.40), Teacher asks different types of questions (Mean=3.40), Teacher asks follow-up

questions (Mean= 3.00), Teacher repeats the questions where there is no response (Mean=2.90) and Teacher modifies questions when it is not understood (Mean=2.90).

To answer the research question 1, the questioning style adopted by teacher asks questions relevant to students.

**Research Question 2:** What is the frequency of teachers' questioning style in the classroom?



**Figure 1:** Bar Chart showing how often teacher asked questions in the classroom

Figure 1 shows that teachers asked at least 14 questions in English grammar class and the reason behind this is to give room for students' participation in the classroom especially students who would not participate except they are called on to do so.

**Research Question 3:** What is the relationship between teachers' style of questioning and students' participation in the English grammar classroom?

**Table 2:** Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing the Relationship between Teacher's Style of Questioning and Students' Participation in the English Grammar Classroom

Variable	N	Mean	Std.D	R	Sig	Remark
Teacher's Style Questioning	10	19.100	1.101	-0.357	0.311	Not Significant
Student Participation		53.800	6.161			

Table 4.5 shows that there is no significant but negative relationship between teachers' style of questioning and students participation in the English Grammar classroom ( $r=-0.36$ ;  $P>0.05$ ).

**Discussion**  
**Questioning style adopted by the teacher in the English grammar classroom**

It is revealed from the state of findings that the teacher asks questions relevant to the

students and these questions include the mixture of both display and referential. The finding affirms that of Fakeye and Ayede (2013) that the questioning behaviour of the teachers is a mixture of both display and referential questions that is largely mono directional.

### **Frequency of teachers' questioning in the classroom**

Findings from this study revealed that teachers ask at least 14 questions in English grammar class and the reason behind this is to give room students' participation in the classroom especially students who would not participate except they are called on. This agrees with Akandi (2009) who reported that teacher asked as many as 14 questions in a lesson.

### **Relationship between teachers' style of questioning and students' participation in the English grammar classroom**

The result showed that there is no significant but negative relationship between teachers' style of questioning and students participation in the English Grammar classroom. This implies that teachers' style of questioning has no effect on students' participation, because students will participate in the classroom irrespective of the questioning style adopted by the teacher during the English grammar lesson. However, this result negates Arab Naz *et al.*, (2013) that there is a positive relationship between teachers' style of questioning and students' participation in the classroom. Many factors might contribute to this result such as the students' willingness to learn, their attitude to learning, the teachers' mastery of the subject and good communication skill which can either encourage or discourage students from participation apart from the teachers' questioning style.

### **Conclusion**

The summary of the investigation of the relationship between Teacher's Questioning Style and Students' Classroom Participation in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State revealed that the questioning style adopted by teacher asks questions relevant to students, teacher often asked 14 questions in the classroom and there is no significant but negative relationship between

teacher's style of questioning and students participation in the English Grammar classroom. Therefore, it could be concluded from this study that teachers' questioning style when properly handled and deployed in the English grammar classroom could enhance effective teaching and learning of the subject.

### **Recommendation**

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that teachers of English grammar should structure questions specifically for the purpose of diagnosing students' needs and for bridging learning gap among students in order to increase their performance in the subject. Teachers should not dominate questioning in the classroom, they should give room for students to ask questions in teaching and learning situation and they should be encouraged to ask questions when they do not understand the teaching materials. Teachers should observe wait time to provide students with much time to process the questions and formulate a response. Wait time allows students to establish comfort and encourage them to voice their opinions on the questions. English grammar teachers should attend, on regular basis, seminars, conferences and workshops that will expose them to proper deployment of questions in the classroom to optimise learning.

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