



## IMPACT OF QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES ON DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS IN 6TH - GRADE LEARNERS

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### ABSTRACT

*Developing speaking skills in young learners is a crucial aspect of language acquisition, and effective questioning techniques play a significant role in enhancing oral communication. This study explores the impact of various questioning strategies on the speaking skills of 6th-grade learners. It examines how open-ended, closed questions, higher-order questions and reflective questions encourage student interaction, critical thinking, and fluency. The research includes classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of different questioning techniques. Findings suggest that well-structured questioning fosters confidence, expands vocabulary, and improves overall speaking proficiency. The study highlights the importance of teacher-led discussions and interactive questioning to create a communicative classroom environment.*

**Introduction.** In the field of language education, the development of speaking skills holds a central place, particularly in the context of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) to young learners. Speaking is not only a vital mode of communication but also a key indicator of language proficiency. For 6th grade learners, the ability to express ideas fluently and accurately in English contributes significantly to their academic success and builds their confidence in using the language in real-life situations. As learners at this age are in the transitional stage from basic language acquisition to more advanced communicative competence, targeted instructional strategies are essential to support their speaking development.

In today's globalized world, where English functions as an international language for communication, education, and career development, improving speaking skills has become more urgent than ever. In many educational systems, especially those undergoing modernization and reform, there is a growing emphasis on communicative competence rather than rote learning or passive knowledge. As a result, developing students' ability to speak

English confidently and correctly is considered a top priority in language instruction. This makes the topic highly relevant in the modern educational context, where communicative activities are expected to prepare students for real-world interaction and future academic or professional opportunities.

Among the various methods used to enhance speaking skills, questioning techniques stand out as particularly effective and pedagogically sound. Questioning serves as a dynamic tool that encourages interaction, stimulates critical thinking, and promotes learner engagement. When applied strategically, questions can create opportunities for learners to produce meaningful speech, reflect on their thoughts, and participate actively in classroom discussions. This technique shifts the focus from teacher-centered instruction to a more student-centered approach, where learners are encouraged to explore and express their ideas in a supportive environment.

In 6th grade classrooms, questioning techniques are especially valuable because they align with students' cognitive and linguistic development. At this stage, learners are more capable of understanding open-ended questions, forming opinions, and constructing more complex responses. Teachers can use a variety of question types—such as display questions, referential questions, and higher-order questions—to stimulate dialogue and scaffold learners' speaking abilities. This approach not only improves fluency and accuracy but also fosters critical language functions such as describing, explaining, narrating, and justifying.

The advantages of using questioning techniques are numerous: they increase student motivation, reduce classroom anxiety by encouraging participation, help assess comprehension in real time, and promote autonomous learning by encouraging learners to think and speak independently. Furthermore, this method supports differentiated instruction, as questions can be adapted to learners' language levels and learning styles.

Therefore, the present study investigates the impact of questioning techniques on the development of speaking skills in 6th grade learners. It aims to explore how different types of questions influence learners' oral performance and participation, and to identify the most effective questioning strategies for promoting active and meaningful language use. By focusing on this interactive and learner-centered method, the study contributes to the ongoing efforts to enhance speaking instruction in middle school EFL settings, responding to both global educational trends and local classroom needs.

In English language classrooms, the use of varied questioning techniques is essential for developing learners' speaking skills. Closed questions, while effective for checking factual understanding due to their simplicity, offer limited opportunities for extended speech. In contrast, open-ended questions encourage elaboration, critical thinking, and fluency, though they may challenge less proficient learners without sufficient support.

Display questions, where the teacher already knows the answer, are useful for assessing knowledge but lack communicative authenticity. Meanwhile, referential questions, which seek unknown information, promote real interaction and personal expression, though they can be difficult to manage in large or mixed-ability classrooms.

Higher-order questions, based on Bloom's Taxonomy, stimulate analysis, evaluation, and creativity. These deepen both cognitive and linguistic engagement but may require more guidance and time, especially for younger or less confident students.

**Methodology.** This study adopts a qualitative approach with elements of classroom-based action research, aiming to investigate how questioning techniques can be effectively implemented by teachers to foster speaking skills in 6th grade English language learners. The

methodology includes classroom observation, analysis of lesson plans, and teacher-student interaction, supported by learner feedback through speaking tasks and structured interviews.

The research takes place in a 6th grade English classroom over a period of four weeks at a secondary school. The participants include one English language teacher and 25 students aged 11–12 with an elementary to pre-intermediate level of English proficiency. The class follows the national curriculum and uses a communicative textbook as the core instructional material.

The teacher employs a variety of questioning techniques, which are systematically integrated into daily speaking activities such as role plays, group discussions, picture descriptions, and opinion-sharing tasks. The types of questions used include open-ended questions, closed questions, display questions, referential questions, and higher-order questions aligned with Bloom's Taxonomy. Each question type is intentionally selected to match the lesson objectives, the students' language level, and the nature of the speaking task.

The implementation follows three main stages:

**Pre-speaking stage:** The teacher uses closed and display questions to activate students' background knowledge, review vocabulary, and ensure comprehension of the topic. This creates a linguistic foundation before more demanding speaking tasks.

**While-speaking stage:** Open-ended and referential questions encourage students to express personal opinions, make predictions, and describe experiences. The teacher facilitates interaction by prompting and probing, allowing for elaboration and clarification of responses. Paired and group speaking tasks provide learners with authentic contexts to practice language in response to these questions.

**Post-speaking stage:** Higher-order questions help students reflect on the speaking task, evaluate peers' responses, and engage in meta-cognitive thinking. These questions aim to develop both linguistic and critical thinking skills, promoting deeper engagement with language use.

To support implementation, the teacher applies key strategies such as wait time (giving students several seconds to think before answering), scaffolding (providing sentence starters and vocabulary prompts), and positive reinforcement to build students' confidence and participation. Lessons are recorded and transcribed for analysis, focusing on the quantity and quality of student responses to different question types. Additionally, student performance is assessed using a simple speaking rubric based on fluency, vocabulary use, grammatical accuracy, and interaction. Interviews with selected students provide qualitative insight into how they perceive the questions and whether they feel these techniques support their speaking development.

**Results.** The implementation of questioning techniques in the 6th grade English classroom produces notable improvements in students' speaking performance and engagement. Over the four-week period, classroom observations and recorded speaking sessions reveal several positive trends in learner interaction, vocabulary use, fluency, and confidence.

Firstly, open-ended and referential questions significantly increase student talk time. Compared to the initial lessons where students' responses are limited to short phrases or single words, later lessons show that learners begin to produce fuller sentences and more elaborated ideas. For example, when asked, "What do you do if you are in the story character's place?", students offer multiple-sentence answers, supporting their opinions with reasons—an indicator of improved fluency and critical thinking.

Secondly, closed and display questions prove useful in the pre-speaking stages to ensure comprehension and review vocabulary. While these questions do not lead to extended speech, they provide essential support for lower-level students and help them feel more confident before engaging in more open discussions. This scaffolding effect is especially visible in group speaking tasks, where even weaker students participate more actively when they are prepared with guided questioning.

Thirdly, the use of higher-order questions in post-speaking tasks fosters deeper reflection and peer interaction. Students demonstrate the ability to evaluate their own and their classmates' speaking performances, using teacher-modeled phrases such as "I agree because..." or "I think she uses good vocabulary when she says...". This shows not only linguistic improvement but also an increase in metacognitive awareness of speaking as a skill.

Data from student interviews confirm that learners respond positively to varied questioning techniques. Many report that open-ended and opinion-based questions make lessons more interesting and allow them to speak more freely. Some students initially feel shy answering in front of others, but feel more comfortable over time, especially when the teacher gives them enough time to think and responds supportively.

Assessment using the speaking rubric also indicates growth. At the beginning of the study, the average score for fluency and interaction is 2.3 out of 5. By the end of the fourth week, this average increases to 3.8, reflecting more confident and fluent speaking. Vocabulary use and grammatical range also show gradual improvement, particularly among students who regularly engage through referential and higher-order questions.

The results demonstrate that purposeful questioning techniques—when implemented thoughtfully—have a measurable impact on 6th grade learners' speaking skills. The balance of question types, along with strategic support from the teacher, proves essential in promoting not just language accuracy, but also fluency, confidence, and communicative competence.

**Discussion.** The findings of this study demonstrate the critical role that effective questioning techniques play in enhancing speaking skills among 6th grade English learners. By using a variety of questioning strategies throughout the lessons, the teacher successfully creates opportunities for students to engage more actively in speaking tasks. The findings suggest that a diverse range of questioning, along with supportive classroom strategies, significantly improves student participation, fluency, and confidence in spoken English.

One of the key observations is that when students are encouraged to think more critically and personally about topics through questioning, their ability to engage in meaningful conversation improves. This indicates that providing learners with opportunities to express their opinions, reflect on their experiences, and justify their answers helps develop not only their speaking fluency but also their cognitive skills. These aspects of questioning foster a deeper connection to the language, enabling students to use English in a more dynamic and spontaneous way, rather than simply relying on rote responses.

Moreover, the study highlights the importance of creating a supportive classroom environment where students feel safe to take risks and make mistakes. As the teacher provides ample wait time and scaffolds responses, students gain the confidence to participate, even when the tasks are challenging. This supportive approach proves essential for increasing student engagement, especially for those who are initially hesitant or lack self-confidence in speaking.

Another important finding is the necessity of scaffolding throughout the questioning process. Students, particularly those at lower proficiency levels, benefit from structured guidance that

allows them to build their responses gradually. As students progress through various speaking tasks, the gradual increase in question complexity helps stretch their linguistic abilities without overwhelming them. This highlights the importance of adapting questioning techniques to match the learners' evolving capabilities, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to succeed and improve.

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