Teachers' Questioning in EFL Classroom: Facts and Expectations at Senior High School in Ambon

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Abstract—This study examined the real practical situation of teachers' questioning in English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. It focused on a) the level of teachers' questioning based on revised Bloom Taxonomy, b) the ways of teachers in generating questions and c) the challenges that teachers face in formulating questions. A case study was employed as the research design. Purposive sampling was used in selecting three English teachers in a high school as the participants of the study. The data was gathered from classroom observation, in-depth interview and document review. The findings revealed that the levels of teachers' questioning were ranged from remembering until evaluating categories. Furthermore, in generating questions, teachers followed several principles in preparing and producing questions. Regarding the challenges, teachers still have constraints in formulating questions particularly for the high level of thinking questions. They also have difficulties in applying some principles in generating questions. The findings of this study suggested that teachers need to empower their critical thinking through their reflective teaching, therefore, they will aware about their weaknesses and strengths in posing questions as one way to measure the students' understanding of teaching materials as well as to enrich their conceptual and procedural knowledge on questioning in EFL classroom.

Keywords—teachers' questioning; facts; expectations; senior high schools.

I. INTRODUCTION

The role of questioning in EFL classroom plays as an important aspect in building classroom communication and interaction so that both teachers and students should take their roles in teaching and learning process. When questions are derived from teachers, it can be used as the instructional device to stimulate students' prior knowledge towards a new material they will learn as well as to measure students' comprehending about content materials. It also can be applied to elicit students' response to classroom activities and to build classroom interaction among teachers and students. When questions are constructed by students, it is aimed at helping them to have a clear picture about the content knowledge they got from teaching and learning process.

It is not doubted that the power of questioning can influence students' achievement as it is pointed by reference [8] that there is the existing relation between teachers' questioning in a classroom with the students results in their engagement, level of thinking, memories, and accomplishment. From this idea, it can be said that to obtain students' engagement and in particular to develop students' level of thinking, teachers need to consider the quality of questions they construct and the ways teachers deliver it. Nunan in reference [2] explained that it is important for teachers to deliver questions in the proper ways and constructing questions with good plans can be effectively applied in teaching rather than it is done with wrong ways.

In recent years, some previous relevant studies on teachers' questioning have already conducted in several countries with different perspectives of research findings. The study by reference [12] in Malaysia reported that frequently, most teachers in their classroom practice constructed the low level of questions and as result, it did not promote students high level thinking skills. The result also showed that there was the specific connection between teachers' knowledge and belief toward their questioning practices. reference [16] in Hongkong, her research findings showed that teachers were hardly using open and referential question in their teaching practice. The three pre-service teachers were in favor to use yes/no questions, closed and displayed questions, and it was suggested that those pre-service teachers need more learning and practice to develop their questioning skill. Other study conducted by reference [10]; he analyzed and synthesized some theories related to questioning and critical thinking. From his article, it was described by the framework of questioning for developing students critical thinking from teachers' questions purpose, kinds of teachers' questions, teachers questions based on bloom taxonomy and techniques in good questioning.

From the research findings above, then the researchers are interested to conduct the similar study which is focused on facts and expectation of English teachers 'Questioning at Senior High Schools in Ambon city, the central city of Maluku. The preliminary study was conducted in several

schools to find out the real situation about teachers' questioning to limit the study before the researchers collected the data. The result of the preliminary study by interviewing some teachers showed that in their classroom practices, questions were proved to give benefits in the classroom but there were few things to consider in questioning. In some cases, asking high-level thinking questions could be challenging for the senior high school students even though the EFL students often have difficulties in understanding the meaning of questions and sometimes they responded with short answers. The teachers provided the example with the comparison between the students in science study and social study. In the Science study program, the teachers could ask questions from the low-level thinking questions to the high-level thinking questions because most of the students in science study program could easily understand the question and were more critical in responding the questions. On the contrary in the social study program, the teacher could only ask low-level thinking questions. It happened because the students in social study often found difficulties in understanding the questions so the teacher had to spend more time to make sure that the students understood the meaning of the questions. From classroom observation, it was reported that some teachers were having difficulties in formulating high-level thinking questions in their classroom and preferred to use low-level thinking questions.

Therefore, as the researchers who concern with the practice of teachers' questioning in EFL classroom, the researchers wanted to investigate more about teachers' questioning as it is supported by reference [5] that teacher' questioning is very appealing issue in the research field about classroom discourse as it is placed as an important role in communicative approach of EFL context.

II. THE ROLES OF QUESTIONING IN EFL CLASSROOM PRACTICES

reference [5] described question as an instructional signal or stimulation for students about the content of learning and ways for students to do it. Therefore, teachers' questions have a vital role in classroom instruction. It means that teachers need the present question in order to give instruction and to make sure that the teaching process meets the objectives. Questioning serves various significances in language teaching. reference [9] pointed that through questions teachers can create focus for students' attention and gain students engagement in classroom so that it is one of the valuable aspects of teaching and regarding it as well-known technique when it comes to engaging students into the learning process and a great way to assist student involvement.

Posing questions can provide the teacher with an instant response about the students understanding related to the instructions, materials or issues in the classroom. With feedbacks from students after questioning, the teachers can analyze and found about the troubles in linguistic or content of the learning. This is in line with reference [13] explanation that questions are significant as a tool to do the evaluation for students' knowledge and comprehension about the learning. In addition, not only for the evaluation of students' progress,

questions also serve a greater function to monitor the learning process.

Teachers' questions give students chances to discover their own opinion by actually listen to what they say. It is seen that teachers' questioning is very helpful in self-discovery for the students. The students as the individual has their own point of view about some topics, norms, values, etc., but sometimes all of the perspectives only present under students' unconsciousness and by questioning; teachers can help put all the opinions in the surface. This is supported by reference [2] explanation that students' response to questions can expose students' point of view about the topics, provide the teachers opportunity to find out about the students experience related to the materials and gain information about the student's attitude about the subject matter.

There are various types of questions presented in the study of classroom questioning. Academic, non- academic and pseudo questions are one of the types of questions. According to Good and Brophy as cited in reference [12] academic questions are basically all questions that related with materials in the classroom. This question is used by the teachers to check how far the students understand the materials. On the other hand, non-academic questions deal with questions that the teachers usually use for classroom management purpose rather than look for the response from the students, while pseudo questions are questions when the teachers give the answer for their own questions in the classroom.

Questioning also related to the level of thinking, therefore Bloom Taxonomy has been widely used as the strong fundamental in shaping the art of questioning. Questions that are commonly asked by teachers in original taxonomy consist of six kinds which are knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Then in 2001, Anderson and Krathwohl as cited in reference [15] introduced the revised version of Bloom taxonomy contains remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating.

Each level of question helps students to develop their level of thinking. The significance of the level of thinking in language teaching lies in the basic idea of cognitive process dimension in bloom taxonomy. In the revised Bloom taxonomy, there are two domains in cognitive dimension which are low- level thinking skills and high-level thinking skills. Low-level thinking skills fall into remembering, understanding and applying. Meanwhile, reference [7] high-level thinking skills consist of analyzing, evaluating and creating.

In remembering, reference [15] the question helps the students to recall relevant information and basic concept from their long-term memory. In understanding, the question can facilitate the students to explain their ideas and concept about the materials that the students learn in the classroom. In applying, the question can aid the students to put the theoretical knowledge that they learn into real practice. In analyzing, the questions related to how the students can make the connection between ideas. In evaluating, questions can indicate how the students are capable to judging something. At the top of the revised Bloom taxonomy which is creating, the

questions can assess how far the students can create their own concept or idea (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001 in Wilson, 2016).

Reference [8] There is a wide and promising relationship between questioning and level of thinking. Questioning is regarded as one of the techniques to encourage students develops their ability in thinking critically. In addition, according to Nasreen reference [8] states that questions from the teacher can promote a problem-solving approach and extend students' level of thinking. It means that the teachers can use questioning as a very promising tool to develop students' level of thinking. It is believed that if questions are applied correctly, the teachers not only can help students in recalling the information which is the level of thinking in low-level thinking skills in the cognitive process but also they can prepare the students to explore from low until high thinking skills in the cognitive process. Moreover, teachers' questioning usually poses to examine students' knowledge, comprehension and skills, stimulate thinking more deeply about the issues, and invite students to review and practice what they learn Chun-miao reference [18] all of those components are available within the scope of revised Bloom taxonomy.

III. THE PRINCIPLES OF FORMULATING QUESTIONS

In presenting quality of questions, there are some principles to think about. First of all, it is important for the teacher to understand the technique in formulating questions and the kinds of questions that should be avoided by the teachers in questioning. In formulating a question, there are two basic techniques that the teachers need to understand. The first one is teachers needs to have awareness in questioning preparation and the teachers need to have an understanding about the steps in producing questions in the classroom reference [12]. In the preparation stage, the teachers need to consider that the teachers need to prepare the questions based on some consideration which is the students'' level, the kinds of materials and the function of questioning Huang & Zheng, reference [14]. The teachers also need to choose appropriate content and media that can help them in the questioning process. Then, in producing questioning, there are several steps that the teachers need to follow. Reference [13] suggested five steps in questioning as it begins with the teachers ask the question, after that the teachers provide break or pause, then the teachers invite the students to answer by calling students name, afterward, the teachers'pay attention to students answer and finally the teachers need to highlight the right answer.

According to Kinsella reference [4] there are several types of questions that necessarily to be avoided in order to maintain the positive role of questioning in English language teaching and learning. It is important for the teachers to avoid an unclear question. It means that the teachers should avoid the question with double meaning or ambiguous. Also, the teachers entail avoiding questions that formulated in a complex sentence. The teachers are encouraged to keep the questions in the simple form. It is very important for the teachers to prepare a well-worded question before present it to students Clark & Kellough as in reference [8]. Lastly, it is

necessary for the teachers to avoid unsystematic questions that are not containing in the planning that teacher already made before.

In a real classroom situation, there are some constraints that teachers often meet. Teachers usually use questions in more low-level thinking skills than high-level thinking skills Khan & Inamullah reference [10]. Besides that, reference [2] explained that some EFL teachers are the lack of knowledge and suitable instruction strategy in questioning. In line with this, reference [12] revealed that there are few practices that can discourage the positive practices in teachers' questioning. It happens when the teachers accept only one answer from a student to each question. Then other constraints encountered by the teachers in formulating questions also come from the students side. There are many factors that make the students not participate in answering the questions such as students lack of vocabulary in understanding and responding the questions. Besides that, reference [13] states that the most classical problem in EFL is dealing with passive class. In this case, students barely give response voluntary to teachers' questions, or sometimes when teachers ask questions, only one or two students raise their hand to answer the questions as in reference [8].

IV. METHODS

This study was conducted under qualitative method with a case study as the research design. According to Yin reference [17], case is "a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between a phenomenon and context are not clear and the researchers has little control over the phenomenon and context". It is very exciting as the real case in a field is very dynamic and the researcher can obtain the data in natural context without intervention to get the real findings.

The participants of this study were three selected English teachers based on several qualifications. They were Teacher 1 (T1), Teacher 2 (T2) and Teacher 3 (T3). The qualifications for each teacher were different. Qualifications situated under the teacher's education background, professional development and the teachers classroom practice which related with teachers years of experience in teaching.

In gathering the data, the researchers used a variety of instruments such as classroom observation, in-depth interview and document review. Observation in qualitative research is the condition that entails the researchers to makes field notes based on the natural setting that the researcher observes as in reference [6]. In here, the researchers observed the natural flow of the classroom in the questioning process and took notes from all the occurrences. Then for an in-depth interview, as suggested by Merriam reference [17] that interview plays a significant role in case of study because through the interview the researchers can get more information from participants. In-depth interview helps the researchers to reach out the participants perceptive about what happened during their classroom practices and their view about teachers' questioning. Classroom observation and in-depth interviews were video and voice recorded to aid the researchers in analyzing the data further. During the process of gathering the

data, the researchers also checked several documents from the teachers such as lesson plan, additional handout, power point presentation or textbook that the teachers used.

In analyze the data, the procedures by Miles and Huberman as cited in reference [1] was adopted in which it covered data reduction, data display, and conclusion. The researchers prepared all the data from classroom observation, in-depth interview and document review and analyzed it. In reducing the data, the researchers had to sort out which data that the researchers could use to answer the research questions and which data that could be left out from the analysis. After that, in displaying the data, the researchers presented and discussed the data based on its needs then continued to drawing a conclusion as the last part of data analysis.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of classroom-based observation and in-depth interview for the three selected teachers showed that in their classroom practices, the teachers provided students with kinds of questions from academic, non-academic and pseudo based on each question purpose. All those kinds of questions also represent the different level of thinking based on revised Bloom taxonomy. The findings showed that non-academic and pseudo questions were focused in the low-level of thinking. For the level of non-academic questions, it is acceptable for the questions to concentrate on remembering level. As based on the findings, non-academic questions were posed mainly for the teachers to manage the teaching and learning process in the classroom reference [12], thus it was not aimed to develop student's level of thinking. While for the level of pseudo questions, it is interesting as the teachers answer their own questions more in low-level thinking instead of questions in high-level thinking.

Furthermore, for the level of academic questions, the findings of this study proved that the teachers used almost all levels of questions based on the revised Bloom taxonomy. In academic questions, the teachers used the questions in remembering until evaluating levels. It is necessary for academic questions to go from low-level thinking to high-level thinking as the questions mainly focused on the content of the materials and to develop students' level of thinking.

The teachers always asked questions in remembering level during their teaching practices to check the students' background knowledge as they believed that the students have existence knowledge that they bring into the classroom. The teachers also used the questions to make the students recognized or recalled the information by regaining the materials that the students learned before. Concerning in understanding level, the teachers' questions regularly assisted the students to explain the main idea of the materials, to help the students to describe the materials in their own words and to guiding the students to translate something related to the materials.

Regarding in applying level, T2 in her classroom, practices helped the students had the chance to do the problem-solving activity through her questions. The findings also showed how T2 delivered the questions to facilitate the students to apply their knowledge about what they learned and put it into practice. Interestingly, in applying level only T2 delivered the questions in this level while T1 and T3 did not pose questions in this level during their classroom practices. T2 who was the only teacher who went through the process of questioning based on the order of revised Bloom taxonomy, admitted that the teachers needed to have a solid conceptual knowledge about the application of revised Bloom taxonomy in relation with teachers' questioning especially about the order of questions and level of thinking.

While in analyzing level, the questions from the teachers start to help the students develop their high level of thinking by help students to portray the relationship between ideas Anderson & Krathwohl, as inreference [15]. This was in line with what the teachers did in their classroom practices as the findings showed that the teachers used questions to help the students see the connection among the topics that the teachers presented in the classroom by asked them to analyze the similarities or the differences about the topics given. The teachers also used the questions to facilitate the students to analyze the implicit content in the materials

Then in evaluating level, the teachers had several ways in delivering questions in this level. The teachers used the questions to create the opportunity for the students to judge something related to the materials. The teachers also asked the questions to make the students checked and criticized their peers opinion or presentation result. The teachers as well used the questions to help the students evaluated their learning process.

Nevertheless, there is no question from T1, T2, and T3 in the highest level of thinking which is creating. T2 said that it could be difficult for high school students to receive the question in this level. T2 added that questions in this level might just appear in oral or written test but not in the daily teaching and learning process.

Besides that, T2 intriguingly shared how the teachers' questions could be affected by the students. In this case, students in EFL classroom have mix level of English ability and not all of the students could answer questions in high-level thinking. T2 added that the students were more capable of answering the questions in low-level thinking compared to high-level thinking. However, despite the fact shared by T2 above, based on findings, T2 showed her belief that she needed to be consistent in providing questions from low-level thinking to high-level thinking for all the students as it important to develop their level of thinking. T1 and T3 also had the same belief that teachers' questioning played the significant part in developing students' level of thinking. Captivatingly, their belief showed that there was the awareness from the teachers about the relation of teachers' questions toward students' level of thinking.

Regarding the ways teachers generating questions, the findings reported that the teachers basically generated questions based on principles in formulating questions. Principles in formulating questions refer to the techniques that the teachers use in preparing and producing questions reference [11; 13] and the questions that should be avoided by the teachers to have a better quality in questioning Kinsella as in reference [4].

In preparing the questions, the teachers did a good job as it was represented by the T2 statement that she did take into consideration the students ability and the complexity level of the materials when she prepared the questions for the students. She also considered the students need and characteristics. The teachers also used the variety of media in generating questions from power point presentation, video viewing, pictures, and songs. The teachers used those media to help them in their process of generating questions during their classroom practices.

Then, the other technique in formulating questions is the technique in producing questions. According to reference [11], there are five steps to consider when the teachers producing questions; 1) teachers ask question, 2) teachers give wait-time for students to formulate answer, 3) teachers invite students to answer by calling students name, 4) teachers' pay attention to students answer and5) teachers highlight the correct answer. Based on findings, the teachers in this study showed a good application toward those steps. After the teachers posed the questions, the teachers gave three to five minutes for the students when the students had to think individually. On another occasion, when the students had to work with peers or in groups, the teachers gave five to ten minutes wait-time for the students. Meanwhile, in inviting the students to answer the questions, some students were still dominated the question and answer exchanged. As T2 admitted that the students with good ability in English were still more dominating the questioning process in the classroom. Afterward, when the teacher needs to pay attention for students' answer, the teachers tried to make everyone participated in the questioning process by inviting other students to pay attention to their friend's answer by asked the students to comment or to add something for their friend's answer. Lastly, in highlighting the correct answer, besides commented on the content of the answer, the teachers in this study regularly gave the students appreciation with the informal assessment. As presented in findings, the teachers would say thank you, good job or gave applause for the students after the students offered their answers.

To add the explanation about the techniques in formulating questions, there are several types of questions that the teachers should avoid. Basically, from the data gathered in the findings, the teachers in this study on some occasion were posted unclear questions. Those unclear questions were not easy to understand and could have ambiguous meaning. Those unclear questions were also posed with complex sentences. Interestingly, the findings showed that there was the connection between unclear questions and questions with complex sentences with unsystematic questions. As about the case, T1 commented that those unclear questions with complex sentences were the result of unsystematic questions that the teachers were not planned before. T1 explained that on some occasion, she posed unsystematic questions in the classroom and those unsystematic questions came out in form of unclear questions and questions with complex sentences.

The findings also revealed that the teachers in this study were facing several challenges in constructing questions. In constructing questions, the teachers believe that the challenges were came from both the teachers' and the students' side.

According to reference [5] the lack of pedagogical knowledge from the teachers can cause them to have problems in constructing questions. T2 admitted that the biggest challenges for the teachers in constructing questions were to understand clearly about the use of revised Bloom taxonomy and the principles in formulating questions. Basically, from the researchers' point of view, the teachers in this study were not lacking pedagogical knowledge about questioning practices. However, there were some gaps in the application of revision Bloom taxonomy and principles in formulating questions that need improvement. Interestingly, the teachers in this study showed the positive attitude in facing all the challenges in constructing questions. Based on the finding, T1 had good awareness about the importance of reflective teaching for the teachers to evaluate and to improve their teaching practices. The findings also showed that T2 admitted she always motivated the students with her positive spirit and mindset. T2 also stated that she tried to make students feel at ease when they learned.

Then, the challenges in constructing questions faced by the teachers in this study also come from the students' side. Based on the findings, the students were the lack of vocabulary and had the unwillingness to voluntary participated in the questioning process. For the problem related to lack of vocabulary from the students, the teachers had their own ways to help the students such as ask the students consulted with their dictionary, translate the questions from English to Indonesian language, using simple sentences in formulating questions. While with the problem for the students' unwillingness to voluntary answer the questions, T1 said only a few students raised their hand while regularly the teachers needed to persuade the students to answer the questions. It is in line with reference [8] explanation about the condition when only one or two students raise their hand when the teachers pose questions. According to reference [13], facing passive class is the most common problem in EFL classroom.

Based on the facts and challenges faced by the teachers in constructing quality questions in their classroom practices, some expectations are provided by the teachers to be considered for further improvement of constructing question in their daily classroom practices such as the teachers need to empower their critical thinking through their reflective teaching therefore they will aware about their weaknesses and strengths in posing questions as one way to measure the students' understanding of teaching materials as well as to enrich their conceptual and procedural knowledge on questioning in EFL classroom.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the questions from English teachers had the different level of thinking. Academic question from English teachers started from low-level thinking to high-level thinking. However, the highest level of academic question from the teachers was only in evaluating. Also in academic question, some teachers were not following the order of revised Bloom taxonomy correctly. Meanwhile, in non-academic question and pseudo question, the levels of questions were in low-level thinking. In generating question in the classroom, the teachers used the principles in formulating questions. The teachers used

techniques in preparing and producing the questions. They also avoid some types of questions in generating questions. Some of the practices in generating questions were done successfully but some others need improvement to develop the quality of teachers' questioning practices. Also, the teachers faced several challenges in constructing questions. The challenges appeared from teachers' side, students' side interestingly, the teachers showed a good attitude in facing all the challenging in constructing questions.

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