



**Teachers' Questions and Students' Responses in Foundation English
Classes at Prince of Songkla University,
Hat Yai Campus**

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate types of questions and questioning strategies teachers employ in the classroom, the extent that each type of question and questioning strategy elicits students' responses and factors affecting absence of students' responses to teachers' questions.

The subjects in the study were four non-native EFL teachers and four classes of first year students making up a total of 123 students. The four classes taught by each of the four teachers were from two faculties: two were from the Faculty of Science and the other two from the Faculty of Management Sciences. These students had average ability in English in comparison to that of all students taking this course in the first semester of the academic year 1999.

The data of this study were derived from classroom interaction in eight videotaped Foundation English II classes taught by the four teachers in the second semester of the academic year 1999 at the Department of Languages and Linguistics, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Prince of Songkla University, Hat Yai Campus and from the students' responses to a questionnaire as to why they were silent after the teachers' questions. The data were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively.

The findings of this study were summarized as follows:

1. Five types of questions were employed by the teachers: display questions, referential questions, confirmation checks, clarification requests and comprehension checks. Display questions were the most frequently used and they elicited the greatest number of responses as well as the greatest number of words per response from the students.

2. Four types of questioning strategies were used by the teachers: repetition, simplification, rephrasing and decomposition. Repetition was the most frequently used and it elicited the greatest number of responses from the students. However, simplification was found to elicit the greatest number of words per response.

3. The absence of the students' responses to the teachers' questions in this study occurred in three main situations. First, the students did not have the ability to respond to referential questions even though they understood them. This was caused by three factors: their limited language ability, their limited background knowledge relating to the lesson and insufficient wait-time provided by the teachers. Second, the students did not answer display questions even though they understood them and knew the answers. This was affected by four factors: their waiting for answers from the teachers, their not wanting to answer the teachers' questions, their fear of making mistakes and their unfavorable attitude toward speaking English in the classroom. Third, the students did not understand both referential and display questions and could not answer them. This was caused by three factors: their inability to keep up with the pace of the teachers' questions, their not paying attention to the teachers' questions and the content which was too difficult and complex.

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Adap Thongmark