TÜRKİYE'DEKİ YABANCI DİL OLARAK İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETİMİ SINIFLARINDA ÖĞRETMEN SORULARI: NİTEL ARAŞTIRMA ÖRNEĞİ*

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Öz

Bu çalışma, Türkiye'de yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğretilen sınıflarda öğretmen sorularının nasıl oluşturulduğunu ve öğrencilere nasıl yöneltildiğini analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Mevcut çalışmada, öğretmen soruları çeşitleri kategorize edilirken Farrell'ın sınıflandırması göz önünde bulundurulmuştur. Farrell'in öğretmen soruları sınıflandırmasını kapsamlıca belirtmek gerekirse; ekoik ve epistemik olmak üzere iki ana kategori ile sınıflandırılan öğretmen soruları, anlama-kontrol soruları, açıklama istemi soruları, teyit-kontrol soruları, referans soruları, teşhir edici sorular, açıklayıcı sorular ve retorik sorular olarak adlandırılan yedi farklı alt kategori içermektedir. Veri toplama aşamasında, yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğretimi gerçekleştiren üç farklı öğretmenin farklı online dersleri kayda alınmış ve deşifre edilmiştir. Deşifreler, içerik analizi yöntemi kullanılarak araştırmacı tarafından incelenmiş ve Farrell'in sınıflamasına göre analiz edilmiştir. Mevcut araştırmanın bulguları şunu göstermektedir ki teşhir edici sorular ile referans soruları yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğreten Türk öğretmenler tarafından en çok kullanılan soru türleridir. Genel anlamda İngilizce öğretmenleri tarafından en sık kullanılan soru türleri önceki araştırmalar ile benzerlik göstermesine rağmen, videolar ayrı ayrı analiz edildiğinde soru türlerinde kullanım tercihlerinin ders türlerine göre farklılık gösterdiği tespit edilmiştir. Bununla birlikte, öğretmen tarafından söylenmek istenen şeyle öğrenci tarafından algılanın aynı olduğunu kontrol etmek amacıyla, anlama-kontrol sorularının en çok derslerin yönerge verilen kısımlarında kullanıldığı saptanmıştır. Çalışmanın geri kalanında tüm bulgular detaylıca tartışılmış ve çıkarımlarda bulunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Öğretmen Soruları, Öğrenci Katılımı, Sınıf İçi Etkileşim, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi (ELT)

TEACHER QUESTIONS IN TURKISH EFL CLASSROOMS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze how teacher questions were formed and how they are posed depending on their functions in Turkish EFL (English as a foreign language) classrooms. In the current study, the types of teacher questions were classified according to Farrell's taxonomy involving two main categories entitled as echoic and epistemic along with seven divergent sub-categories named as comprehension checks, clarification requests, confirmation checks, referential, display, expressive and rhetorical. Three EFL teachers' different types of online EFL lessons such as grammar, reading, listening and speaking were recorded online for data collection. All recordings were turned into written transcripts for data analysis. The transcribed data was analyzed by the content analysis according to Farrell's taxonomy, which was developed from Ellis (1994), regarding teacher questions. Samples of transcribed lessons were examined by the researcher and the data was qualitatively analyzed accordingly. The findings of the current study revealed that display and referential questions were used more often by the participant EFL teachers among all teacher question types. Although there was a resemblance with

previous research regarding the most frequent teacher question types in general, the preference of question types differed from each other when each teacher's video recordings analyzed separately. In addition, it can also be stated that teachers tended to favor the comprehension check questions intermittently in the instructional phase of lessons by reason of assuring that students perceived what they intended to deliver. The details are further discussed and the implications are made in the article.

Keywords: Teacher Questions, Students' Participation, Classroom Interaction, English Language Teaching (ELT)

1. INTRODUCTION

The questions being posed by teachers have a vital role in EFL (English as a foreign language) classes since teacher questions promote most of the learning environment in the field of language teaching. Thereupon, the emphasis on studies regarding teacher questions in English language classes has been getting attention by researchers in recent times. "Two of the most common ways in which teachers communicate with their students during class is by asking (and answering) questions and by providing feedback" as it was asserted by Farrell (2009, p. 39).

The reason laying behind the teachers' questions may vary dependent on their purpose. For instance, they may want to emphasize who is in charge in the classroom by asking questions. Or, they might wish to give an opportunity to their students to express what they think and feel. Moreover, they may desire to check whether or not the students understood what is meant by the teacher in the class. In addition, they might intend to draw the attention of the students or ensure critical thinking in the environment of English language teaching. Other than these, they may also utilize teacher questions to ask the students to paraphrase what they have said. Briefly, the questions posed by EFL teachers might be used for various purposes.

In the current study, information regarding the significance of teacher questions in ELT was provided in the following part. Besides, the classification of teacher questions was further explained in detail throughout the history of research in this field below.

2. TEACHER QUESTIONS IN EFL SETTING

2. 1. Importance of Teacher Questions

Questions posed by teachers in language classrooms have a crucial role in the process of learning in foreign language teaching for various reasons. Principally, it is stated that questioning is utilized as the most frequent version of teacher talk with regards to classroom interactions (Farrell & Mom, 2015). As asserted by Darong and Niman (2021), "teachers utilize questions to make their students more active" (p.4), which results in a meaning

negotiation process either explicitly or implicitly. Furthermore, the notion of teacher questions has a significant influence on learners' outcomes as noted by Maphosa and Wadesango (2017). Besides, teacher questions are considered as an interactive teaching technique to enhance students' participation in classroom communication (Lee & Kim, 2016; Stivers, 2018). Apart from this, they are also beneficial for learners' language production and stimulate students' critical thinking (Barnett & Francis, 2012).

2. 2. Categorization of Teacher Questions

More than one classification was generated by different experts regarding the teacher questions used in EFL and ESL classrooms in the literature. The history of these questions dates back to the 1970s. The types of teacher questions, at first, were classified by Barnes (1976) under four categories; factual, reasoning, open and social. Then, this taxonomy was followed by Brophy and Good (1991) by dividing teacher questions into two types; higher-order questions -in other words, thought questions- and lower cognitive level questions -or fact questions. Afterward, Farrell (2009) created his taxonomy depending on what Ellis (1994) suggested previously under two main categories; echoic and epistemic, including seven different sub-categories; comprehension checks, clarification requests, confirmation checks, referential, display, expressive and rhetorical.

Farrel's taxonomy was preferred to be used in this qualitative study since it gives an opportunity to analyze teacher questions within a broader perspective than others.

3. METHODOLOGY

The aim of this qualitative study is to respond to the reflective research questions as noted below, which are taken from Farrell (2009, p. 39-46) related to teacher questions based on the transcripts of some English lessons.

1) What percentage of class time is devoted to the teacher's questioning?
2) Which type of questions does the teacher usually use in-class -which type does he or she tend to favor?
3) Does the teacher plan the different types of questions he or she will ask before the class? If not, why?
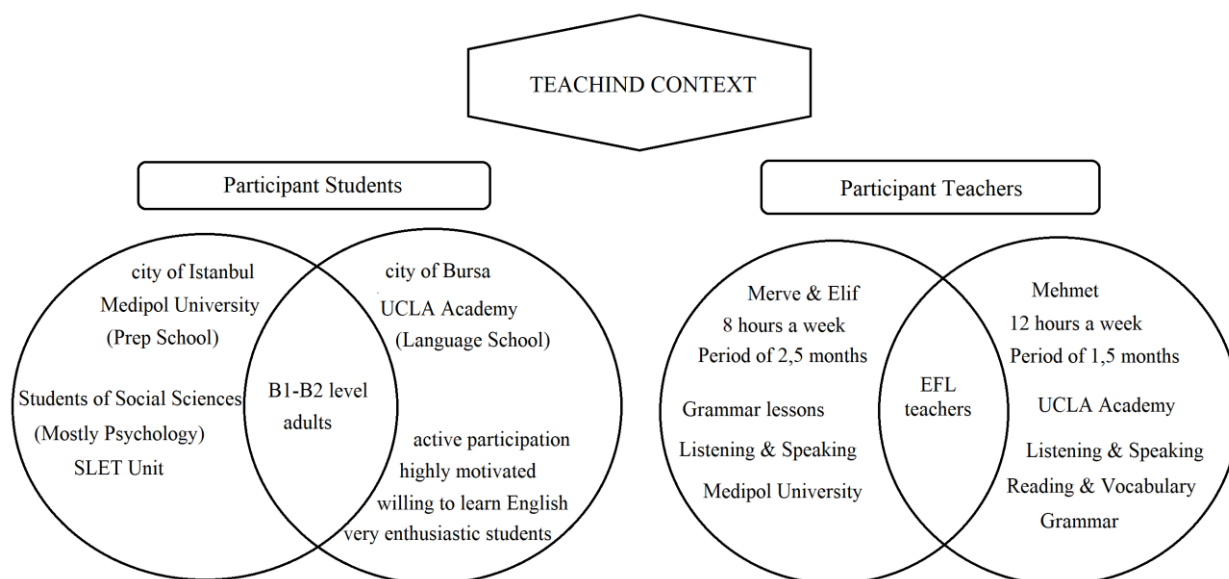
3. 1. Participants

This qualitative research was implemented in two different types of schools, those are a language school and a university, in two different cities, Bursa and Istanbul. The selection of these two schools was dependent on convenience sampling since the researchers knew both of these institutions as an environment of English language teaching. Three English language teachers (Merve, Elif, and Mehmet[2]) participated in the study voluntarily. The researcher asked them to record their video lessons during their usual class time and share their lessons' video recordings with the researcher for data analysis.

10 students, including 7 male and 3 female, from UCLA Academy Language School in Bursa and 7 students (all female) who were studying in their first years in the English preparation department at Language School of Istanbul Medipol University Language School participated in this action research. They were all adult learners whose ages varied from 18 to 26. Learners' proficiency levels were B1+ (the ones in İstanbul) and B2 (the ones in Bursa). All the data was collected through online teaching platforms; Microsoft Teams and Zoom. Normally each lesson lasts 45 minutes, however, this period shows variation from 25 to 45 minutes in recordings due to some constraints such as internet access and initiating the recording after later it was supposed to be.

3. 2. Context

The teaching context of two different institutions was defined in this section. As shown in Figure 1, most of the participant students were residing in Istanbul since they were studying at a private university there. On the other hand, the rest of the participant students were residents of Bursa and enrolled in an English language course given by UCLA Academy in the same city.

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[2] Pseudonyms are used for participants' names for confidentiality.

Figure 1. Teaching context of places

The students studying at Istanbul Medipol University were studying in the department of English preparation. Therefore, they were generally taken 28 hours of English per week. Additionally, two of the participant teachers were employed by the same university and taught English in the English preparation department there. Merve was teaching reading 8 hours a week, and Elif was teaching listening and speaking 8 hours a week. Both of these teachers were lecturing each course during the period of one track. To be more specific, it can be stated that there are four tracks in an academic year since each semester includes two tracks. Therefore, it can be concluded that one course lasts approximately 2-3 months at this university. In addition to all of this information provided above, they are both in the SLET Unit consisting of the students from the Department of Social Sciences. Although their classrooms included students from various departments in social sciences, most of their students were Psychology students.

Even though Merve and Elif defined their students as not very successful ones, they noted that their students were doing their best most of the time. They also stated that synchronous participation into the online lessons at Istanbul Medipol University was not compulsory during the emergency teaching due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, the number of students attending their lessons was low when compared to the total number of the classroom; nonetheless, these students who actively participated in the online lessons synchronously were the eager ones owing to their desires not to miss any lecture even though

they could also have preferred to watch their online lessons asynchronously later on their own at home just like the rest of the students in the class.

Other students enrolled in a private English language course at UCLA Academy Language School in Bursa. All of these students who participated in the research from Bursa were learning English together from B1 to B2 level with the same teacher, Mehmet. Therefore, it can be stated that they had already been built rapport with their teachers in class since they were known each other for a long time. Other than that, it was estimated that they began to learn English from A1 level possibly with a different teacher in the same language academy.

Mehmet declared that his students had English lessons between 7.00 to 10.00 four days a week, which makes 12 hours per week. He also stated that the overall period of a course in one level lasts 5 weeks, so it can be interpreted that students needed to allocate approximately 60 hours in order to complete the course in one level. According to Mehmet's descriptions, these students are generally very enthusiastic and highly-motivated to learn English.

Generally, students are very enthusiastic and highly motivated according to how their teacher (Mehmet) describes them. Besides, they love especially speaking activities.

4. DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS

4. 1. Data Collection

Three teachers working at Istanbul Medipol University and UCLA Academy Language School in Bursa helped the researcher with the data collection voluntarily. They recorded their online lessons through online teaching platforms (Microsoft Teams and Zoom) and shared these videos with the researcher on Google Drive.

225 minutes of recorded lessons was used for the data collection process. All of the lessons were recorded in May 2020 by the instructor of each lesson. Normally, each lesson ends in 45 minutes; nevertheless, the timing of lessons' video recording shows variation from 25 to 45 minutes owing to some constraints causing some troubles such as internet access. In some lessons, the teacher realized he or she had forgotten to record the lesson, and he initiated the recording later than it was supposed to be. Therefore, some lessons last shorter than other ones.

The teachers' main focus varies from one lesson to another since they teach different subjects, or different skills. For instance, the main focus of the lesson was reading strategies and

vocabulary teaching (word families) in Merve's lessons since she lectures reading. She used Password 3 which was published by Pearson as the course-book, Students' Pack, which is the material developed by the teachers in the same institution, and Power-Point slides, possibly prepared by her or her colleagues, including the answer key along with it.

On the other hand, the main objective was to practice while listening and note-taking strategies in Elif's listening and speaking lessons. In her lessons, she made use of Lecture Ready 3 published by Pearson, the Student's Pack, the material developed by teachers, and Power Point slides demonstrating the answer key similar to Merve's sources. In the third participant teacher's (Mehmet's) lessons, the main focus of his grammar lesson was the use of English, such as how to use noun clauses. He used Power Point slides he prepared before the class and Top Notch 3 Third Edition published by Pearson in his lessons. In addition to this, in his reading lesson he focused on practicing skimming and scanning strategies through an online reading twist, which is a kind of short story taken from the book *The Escape 2*.

After receiving the video recordings from the participant teachers, they were transferred into the form of written classroom transcripts by the researcher for the data analysis process. At first, a software designed for generating written transcripts on www.amberscript.com was utilized. Afterwards, all the transcripts were double-checked by the researcher comparing the audio and what was written in the transcript. During the process of checking, some corrections were made by the researcher when necessary.

4. 2. Data Analysis

The researcher employed content analysis to analyze the data which was collected online. In the process of data analysis, transcripts of online lessons were read, and the data were qualitatively analyzed accordingly by employing content analysis.

The transcript of the classroom data was analyzed according to the Farrel's taxonomy, (2009, p. 54) which was adapted from Ellis (1994) regarding teacher questions as demonstrated in Table 1 below. This taxonomy includes are two main categories of teacher questions; these are echoic and epistemic. Within the epistemic category in Table 1, comprehension checks, clarification requests, and confirmation checks take place. On the other hand, referential, display, expressive and rhetorical are the sub-categories of epistemic teacher questions.

When the written form of the classroom data was examined, different types of teacher questions were highlighted by using different colors within the current study. Afterwards, they were counted by pointing to each question type's frequency and percentage and analyzed depending on Farrel's taxonomy. The frequency counting process was implemented for each recorded lesson separately in order to how teachers posed questions during classroom communication in the field of English language teaching.

Table 1. Taxonomy of teacher question types

	Categories		Sub-categories of Questions	Example Teacher Questions
1.	Echoic	a.	Comprehension checks	All right? OK?
		b.	Clarification request	What do you mean …?
		c.	Confirmation checks	Did you mean?
2.	Epistemic	d.	Referential	Why didn't you do your …?
		e.	Display	What's the opposite of up?
		f.	Expressive	It is interesting, isn't it?
		g.	Rhetorical	Why didn't you do that? Because you …

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5. 1. Findings

All the frequency of teacher question types in the transcripts of video-recorded lessons in this study were illustrated in Table 3. Furthermore, the percentages of them are shown in Table 4. And, the data analysis was interpreted according to this data.

When the number of teacher-turns including at least one teacher question (277) was spotted among the total number of teacher-turns (377), it was found that teachers in this qualitative study devoted a significant amount of their talking time to asking questions in classroom communication according to the data analysis in Table 2 and 3. As it can be seen in Table 2, when the whole turns in the EFL classes in this study (747) were analyzed, the ones with teacher questions made up 36% of the total number of classroom communication turns. This

can be interpreted like that the teachers in the field of English language teaching spend almost a quarter of their lesson time by asking questions to the learners in the classroom.

Table 2. Allocation of teacher turns and students' turns

CI Turns*	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Students' turns	93	15
Teacher turns including question	277	36
Total teacher turns	377	49
Total turns (both T and Ss)	747	100

*CI stands for classroom interaction.

It was shown in the results that display questions were the most popular type of teacher questions among the teachers participated in this research. However, the results showed discrepancy when each teacher was analyzed separately by means of the type of teacher question they exploited mostly. To specify, it can be said that Merve and Elif tend to favor display questions during their lessons although Mehmet is inclined to favor referential questions, among others. Nevertheless, their preference may vary from one lesson to another one. For example, despite Merve using display questions at most in her second (66,6%) and third (50,1%) reading lessons, she made use of comprehension checks mostly in her first reading lesson (56,3%). It can be interpreted that the reason laying beyond this could be the assertiveness of the objectives of participant teachers' lessons.

Table 3. Frequency of teacher questions

			Names of Teachers						
Types of Teacher Questions			Merve			Elif		Mehmet		ALL
Categories		Sub-Categories	L1	L2	L3	L1	L2	L1	L2	Total
Echoic	a.	Comprehension checks	22	10	31	5	2	11	1	72
	b.	Clarification request	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2

			L1	L2	L3	L1	L2	L1	L2	Total
	c.	Confirmation checks	-	-	-	-	1	1	2	4
Epistemic	d.	Referential	1	5	11	13	15	40	23	108
	e.	Display	14	30	46	21	10	44	1	166
	f.	Expressive	-	-	-	1	-	4	-	5
	g.	Rhetorical	2	-	3	2	1	4	-	12
Total number of questions			39	45	91	42	29	106	27	379
		Additional Details								
Duration of lesson (minutes)			25	25	30	30	45	45	25	225
Teacher turns including question			20	41	53	33	19	92	19	277
Total teacher turns			26	49	62	37	38	137	28	377
Total turns (both T and Ss)			54	90	123	78	79	254	69	747

Note: The abbreviation L stands for 'lesson' and the numbers starting with L below the teacher names symbolize the number of transcripts for each teacher.

Table 4. Percentage of teacher questions

			Names of Teachers							
Types of Teacher Questions			Merve			Elif		Mehmet		ALL
Categories		Sub-Categories	L1	L2	L3	L1	L2	L1	L2	Total
Echoic	a.	Comprehension c.	56,3%	22,2%	33,7%	11,9%	6,8%	10,3%	2,7%	18,7%
	b.	Clarification r.	-	-	-	-	-	1,8%	-	0,5%
	c.	Confirmation c.	-	-	-	-	3,4%	0,9%	5,4%	1,04%
Epistemic	d.	Referential	2,5%	11,1%	11,9%	30,9%	51,6%	37,6%	62,1%	28%
	e.	Display	35,8%	66,6%	50,1%	49,9%	34,4%	41,3%	2,7%	43,1%
	f.	Expressive	-	-	-	2,3%	-	3,7%	-	1,3%

	g.	Rhetorical	5,1%	-	3,2%	4,7%	3,4%	3,7%	-	3,1%
Duration of lesson (minutes)			25	25	30	30	45	45	25	225

Depending on the basis of teachers' question type preference, it can be reported that the comprehension check questions were usually preferred in the instructional phase of lessons because their function was to make sure that students comprehended what the teacher had just said. Although the function of clarification requests and confirmation checks is almost the same as the function of comprehension checks, the usage of them during the lessons were random. Moreover, referential questions were preferred in order to get the students thoughts, opinions, feelings, or personal responses to that part of the lesson. Additionally, teachers gave preference to display questions mostly when they were covering either a gap-filling or a matching exercise. In that type of questions, their goal was to get the answer from the student rather than to reveal it on her or his own. When students failed to do so, they generally posed reformulation questions to elicit the answer from the students. In contrast to this, expressive questions were aimed to be used by teachers to get approval to the right answer said by them. In addition to all of these question types, rhetorical questions were favored so as to get students' attention to the actual correct response. In other words, they were not like real questions. Instead, their function was to highlight the importance of the fact given at that point in class.

After analyzing frequency counts, the researcher attempted to ask the participant teachers whether they have plans of the questions they will benefit in the class. By doing this, the researcher aimed to examine whether there is a reason for using some questions most for them. She expected that participants responses regarding the type of questions would be related to the pedagogical objectives of each lesson. For instance, a teacher might tend to favor referential questions a lot if he or she teaches listening and speaking skills, and one of the goals of the lesson is to encourage students to produce as much as comprehensible output. On the other hand, the teacher may be inclined to ask display questions more when he or she teaches the use of English in order to get the right answer from the student.

The responses of the participant teachers varied when they were asked whether or not they planned the types of questions of which they would ask before the class. Elif remarked that

while planning the teacher-question types, she made her plans to make her students speak more or contribute to the discussion actively; therefore, her aim was to increase students' oral production since she was teaching listening and speaking. And, she took advantage of the types of questions most allowing her to attain the goal of the lesson. Mehmet has stated that he always plans by taking notes of the questions he is going to ask during the class. Therefore, he saves time by not spending extra time to think about the questing during teaching time. Even if he tried to include various types of questions as much as possible, he noticed in his self-reflection research that he sometimes overused referential questions. And, he concluded that he needed to use others more often as a result of his reflective study. And, Merve stayed silent by not giving an answer to this question. According to Elif's response, it can be implied that the reason why she did not have plans of questioning strategies is obscure and no further interpretation can be made. Briefly, it can be concluded that Elif and Mehmet was making plans of teacher questions that they are going to favor in their English classes although Elif said nothing about planning her teacher-questions.

5. 2. Discussion

The findings of this research illustrated that EFL teachers used the display and referential questions more frequently than the others, with the percentage of 43,1% (display) and 28% (referential), respectively. At this point, the results corresponded to the previous studies conducted about the types of teacher questions (Brock, 1986; Long & Sato, 1983; Farrell and Mom, 2015). Although the major findings of teachers' preference or usage of question types coincided with the earlier research, when the results were analyzed specifically for each teacher, there was no resemblance to the preceding ones at some points. For example, despite Merve using display questions at most in her second (66,6%) and third (50,1%) reading lessons, she made use of comprehension checks mostly in her first reading lesson (56,3%). At this point, some patterns of divergence were found. Hereby, it can be concluded, according to the findings of the results of this study, that teacher's preference of the type of teacher-questions might be different for particular lessons. Aiming to achieve discrete lesson objectives for each course could cause this divergence among the results.

Tavakoli and Davoudi (2016, p. 6-14) asserted that there was a significant relationship between teachers' reflections and the quantity of questions they generated. When the teachers who participated in this study were asked to share if they plan the different types of questions

they would ask before the class, what Elif said corresponded with the findings of Tavakoli and Davoudi. She believed that when the number of questions created by her during the class increased, it also positively impacted the social participation of the students in the classroom communication. Depending on what Mehmet said about self-reflection related to the question types he benefitted from, the findings of this study revealed that involving in the reflective process ended up a greater awareness of one's own practice and problems similar to what Nguyễn (2019) indicated.

In addition to other findings and results of this study, it was surprisingly spotted in this qualitative research that even if the primary aim of teachers directing questions in class is to encourage students to participate in the classroom communication, there were more teacher questions than students' answers in most of the video-recorded lessons in parallel with the study of Hendricks (2003). The reason for this situation might be related to the minor number of comprehension questions, with the percentage of 18,7% seeking evidence to be sure that students received the point that they were responsible.

In this study, some criticism was made during the data analysis that when display questions were benefitted dominantly in class as in Merve's second and third reading lesson; they did not contribute to the students' social participation at all; instead, they pushed them to produce oral production like they were doing something automatically as Cullen (1998) argued. Additionally, it was really hard to find similar studies within the same educational, especially the ones conducted in Turkey, context to compare. For instance, Kılınç and Çalıskan (2019) researched teacher questions, but they focused on the frequency of teacher questions depending on a different taxonomy. This means that there is a lack of recent studies in this research era, and that can be considered by the researchers who are interested in reflective studies for further research.

6. CONCLUSION

In the current study, the data was collected through 225 minutes of online lessons' video-recordings, including 3 participant teachers and 17 students who were learning English either in B1+ or B2 level at UCLA Academy Language School and Istanbul Medipol University in Turkey. Transcripts of these online lessons were analyzed in terms of teacher questions according to Farrel's taxonomy.

The results of the research presented that display questions were the most favored type of teacher questions in the video-recorded lessons. From the point of literature, the results of this study corresponded with the results of the previous studies (Brock, 1986; Farrell and Mom, 2015; Long & Sato, 1983). On the other hand, using the same type of questions excessively by the teacher in language teaching may bring about not only benefits but also some problems such as lack of communicative value (Cullen, 1998).

By the way, some limitations were spotted in the present study. Although the data was collected from various teachers teaching in different locations, it was detected that the whole of the data collection demonstrated display questions were the most preferred question type among other kinds of questions. On the other hand, this result might show divergence when separate lessons were examined. Even one teacher's preference might differ from one lesson to another one depending on their lesson objectives. Consequently, future research on the usage of teacher question types is necessary to include more comprehensive data collection such as more than two or three lessons from each teacher to be able to provide more credible data by comparing their preference of teacher question types.

ACKNKOWLEDGEMENT

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