Effects of teacher questions on students’ oral and written task performance in EFL classrooms

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The study investigates to what extent different types of questions teacher use in the classroom influence students’ subsequent oral performance and written performance. Traditionally, teachers often ask questions for which the answers are clear (display questions) owing to quick responses and for accuracy (White & Lightbown, 1984), whilst the classroom is the place where students interact with creative thoughts that can be elicited by the questions for which we do not know the answers (referential questions), which is common in a real world. Little is known about the effects of teacher questions on L2 acquisition (Ellis, 2012), the study compares two types of questions and learner’ complexity, accuracy and fluency (CAF) and pre-/post-/delayed written and oral test scores are examined. The following research questions are addressed: 1) Do referential questions encourage students’ L2 production in responses than display questions? 2) Do referential questions facilitate students’ subsequent task performance in terms of CAF? 3) Do referential questions increase accuracy in written and oral task performance? Participants (n=26) aged 13-15 at a beginner level were divided into two homogeneous groups (Referential/Display Group). The experiment was carried out over six months with two sessions, in which two tasks (picture differences; personal information exchange) with the same design except for the material were provided using the counter-balanced order. Teacher questions and students’ L2 oral task performance were all audio-recorded, transcribed for the measurement of CAF, and analyzed by ANOVA as well as the written test scores. The results showed that Referential Group economized words; Display Group produced more sentences in responses; however, no significant difference was found between the question types in CAF and in written and oral tests, apart from significant differences between CAF depending on tasks. The findings from chronological changes of students’ oral production of question forms will be also discussed.

Keywords: students’ task performance, accuracy, fluency, teacher questions, complexity.