The Role of Teacher Questions and the Socratic Method

In EFL Classrooms in Kuwait

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Abstract

The present study sheds light on teaching English through two ways of questioning (Socratic & Traditional) methods in Kuwaiti elementary public schools. Data were collected through a qualitative observational method. The study engaged 15 female participants, seven of whom were newly graduate English language teachers with experience in how Socratic questioning works, while the other eight teachers had >10 years experience in teaching English as a foreign language. The study revealed that some new and experienced teachers encouraged their students to go further and explore beyond the topic of today's lesson. However, others used the deductive approach by stating questions and expecting certain answers because they did not comprehend or had lack of time. The present study implication is that English language teachers should be provided with more training on Socratic method of questioning to facilitate students' thinking for themselves and develop the students' mind by encouraging their natural curiosity.

Keywords: English teaching, Socratic method, Kuwait

1. Introduction

Second language classrooms are unique in that language is both the goal of the lesson and the means by which this goal is achieved. Teachers play an integral role in the second language classroom, and they often have several overlapping concerns when it comes to the teaching process. Teachers design activities to improve learners' L2 acquisition and use of the target language (Richards, 2000). At the same time, however, teachers use the target language as the principle means for giving instructions and directions, modeling target language patterns, and providing feedback on student performance. Likewise, students learn language to negotiate classroom interactions with teachers and other students and to complete the demands of classroom work (Richards, 2000).   Previous research on teaching and learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has shown that question-asking is the second most frequent strategy (after lecturing), and the single most important technique, used by EFL instructors in the classroom (Ellis, 2003; Foster, 1998). Teacher questions function as target language input for the students and form an integral part of classroom interaction (Ho, 2005). Nunan (2007, p. 80) suggests that teachers use questions "to elicit information, to check understanding, and to control behavior." Some teachers believe that interjecting questions during instruction is a natural process that should be spontaneous. Questions are an effective teaching strategy when employed thoughtfully, but they can be less helpful for the language learning process when poorly employed (Nunan, 2007). A timely and well-phrased question can capture students' attention, arouse their curiosity, focus their attention on important points, and even occupy a student's thoughts after the class has ended (Nunan, 2007). Students' responses to questions reveal their perceptions and comprehension of the material, levels of experience with the topic at hand, and attitudes about the material or the course.

This article argues that to effectively teach a foreign language, teachers must be knowledgeable about the distinct practices of teaching and learning, and understand how teaching and learning are different from the first to the twelfth year of school (Adler, 1982).   This article examines the role of teacher questions in the EFL classroom and how question-asking is related to student achievement and behavior. Specifically, this article investigates the role of questions from the perspective of the Socratic method of teaching.   This study addresses these topics by asking (1) how EFL teachers pose questions to students during their lessons and (2) whether EFL teachers encourage independent thinking alongside learning language. The data for this study were drawn from observations of EFL fifth grade classrooms in Kuwait and research interviews conducted with these teachers about their experiences in the classroom.

2. Significance of the Study

There are five related domains of language: phonological, grammatical, lexical, functional, and discourse (Scrivener, 2005, p. 28). Language teachers address all these aspects of language, and the Socratic method can be applied at each level to improve students' language abilities and student-teacher interactions. For example, when teaching vocabulary items and lexical semantics, there are many opportunities for instructors to use the Socratic method. When learning new lexical items, younger students might be unsure about the principles that govern why certain words can or cannot be combined in semantically appropriate ways. Therefore, teachers should design specific sets of questions that would help students translate the new words into their L1 in order to understand the appropriate uses and contexts of the new words. This present study investigates how teachers can effectively use the Socratic method to teach L2 vocabulary to younger students. Specifically, this study focuses on fifth grade English language classrooms and examines the use of teachers' questions directed toward the whole class during food and restaurant vocabulary lessons. This study sheds light on how learners transfer classroom vocabulary knowledge to their lives outside of the classroom, and contributes to our knowledge about the role of teachers and teacher-student interaction in developing this skill. What happens in the classroom can profoundly shape young learners' abilities to use the L2 adequately and, ultimately, affect their personal lives and even status in the society. Vocabulary is crucially important for acquiring a second language, and students should avoid simply developing a bank of memorized words, or as Pinker (2000, p. 22) puts it, a "mental lexicon". Instead, students should understand how these words are used to convey appropriate meanings in specific contexts. The purpose of this qualitative paper is to analyze carefully how teachers are involved in the navigation between teachers' questions and students' discourse patterns around daily concepts presented during their lesson to foster students understanding inside the classroom.

3. Literature Review

In most classrooms, teachers use many different strategies such as parroting, engaging the students in different activities, or even asking question just to make sure students are on the right path   and do comprehend the topic of their lesson that is presented that day, before they proceed to the next one.   Specifically, Chaudron (1988, p. 126) suggests that with these different strategies still teachers ask questions   because it helps to hold students' attention, contribute to students' verbal output, and evaluate informally   learners' progress. Thus, teachers' questions play an important role in managing classroom routines (Yang, 2010). Studies of EFL classrooms have chiefly focused on the effects of teacher questions on learner production of the target language, such as the types of student responses (Tsui, 1995). Previous research has described three general types of teachers' questions in the EFL classroom: (1) open and closed questions, (2) display and referential questions, and (3) yes/no questions (Yang, 2010). This section reviews these three types of teachers' questions, and discusses how the Socratic method can provide new ways of understanding the types and functions of teachers' questions in language classrooms.

Teachers use as mentioned before different forms of questions; however, based on the teachers intention in conducting and eliciting the students' answers, the teacher chooses the type of question that might be suitable Tsui (1995).   For example, if the teacher needs students just to talk and there is no right answer or exactly expecting one answer, then she/he will use open and closed questions. Another example, is when the teachers' aim is to convey the answer through interaction with the students, then the display and referential questions are used (Tsui, 1995).

Another framework for categorizing these types of teachers' questions is provided by Thompson (1997) and Ho (2005). In this framework, closed/open and display/referential questions are differentiated in terms of two dimensions. One dimension involves "the content of the question" and whether students are asked about facts or opinions, while the other dimension involves "the purpose of the question," specifically whether the teacher knows the answer (Thompson, 1997, p. 101). Ho (2005, p. 298) argues that closed or display questions elicit "short, mechanical responses" while open or referential questions elicit "lengthy, often complex responses." Finally, yes/no questions are categorized by Thompson (1997, p. 100) according to "the grammatical form of the question."

In traditional language classrooms, factual questions are the most common type, while open questions are the least common type (Myhill, Jones, & Hopper, 2006). For example, Burns and Myhill's (2004) study of 15-minute segments from 54 lessons conducted during Year Two and Year Six classes showed that factual questions were the most common form (n = 64%) of teachers' questions in the classroom. Teachers also often ask display questions as a way to manage the unpredictability of students' responses to open questions (Edwards & Westgate, 1994). The answers to display question are usually predetermined by the teacher; hence, negotiation of meaning is rarely necessary.

The Socratic method of teaching provides another framework for understanding the types and functions of teachers' questions in the second language classroom. Maxwell (2007) describes the Socratic method as a two-phase freestyle model that involves both deconstructive and constructive phases. This two-phase model is demanding and difficult

because it requires a respondent to be willing to question their beliefs and have their beliefs called into question by others. This aspect of the Socratic method is called the deconstructive phase, and the purpose is to prepare students to think freely without feeling constrained by incorrect beliefs. In the next phase of this method, called the constructive phase, Socrates designs his questions to help the respondent arrive at new understandings. Since there are no single correct answers, the typical outcome of these conversations is respondents realizing how little they know. According to Maxwell, Socrates used this method of questioning with the goal of improving the human race. By proclaiming himself ignorant, Socrates left the responsibility for knowledge and the whole process of thinking to the respondent. The constructive phase, according to Maxwell, is used more often nowadays than the other phases. The constructive phase is different in that the person who is asking questions knows the answers and guides the respondent to the correct answer by challenging their misleading or incorrect conceptions.

There are many ways by which the Socratic method can be effectively used in second language classrooms. The elicitation efforts and methods of question-asking used in the Socratic method should not be interpreted or used as a means of endorsing a teacher-centered classroom; rather, this approach should serve to encourage and foreground students' voices in the classroom (Conlon, 2005). According to Paul Raider (n.d., cited in Ellis, 2003), the Socratic method is composed of four key components: the text, the question, the leader (the teacher), and the participants. The core principle of the Socratic method of teaching is the idea that it is essential to develop students' critical thinking skills instead of teachers simply providing them with prescriptive answers. Another way to put this is to say that the method encourages divergent rather than convergent thinking (Adams, n.d., cited in Ellis, 2003, p. 1). Thus, the Socratic method is relevant to EFL classrooms because question-asking is one of the most common techniques used by language teachers. In some classrooms, over half of class time is consumed in question-and-answer exchanges (Gall & Artero, 1994). Improving our understanding about questioning behaviors can thus benefit teachers who want to provide chances for students to interact in English in meaningful ways (Gebhard, 2005).

4. Methodology

The research for this study was conducted during the 2010-2011 academic year in Kuwait. Qualitative observational research methods were used to investigate classroom interactions and teacher-student questioning patterns. Observations allowed the researcher to obtain naturally occurring classroom language data.

The 15 participants in this study are English language teachers in the Kuwait Ministry of Education and are allocated to different public elementary schools in different school districts in Kuwait. This study focused on fifth grade English classes, and there is a standard national curriculum for this grade in Kuwait. All the participants have been trained in English and hold academic qualifications in EFL teaching; however, none of the participants are native speakers of English. Seven of the participants are new teachers who have recently graduated, while the remaining eight participants have as much as 10 years of EFL teaching experience. The seven recent graduates have been familiarized with the Socratic method through their participation in a short teaching course taught by the researcher while they were students in the College of Basic Education. This course exposed these teachers to the concept of engaging students in independent thinking in order to figure out the answers, and showed them how to encourage students to pose their own questions related to the answer.

During this study, the researcher attended the participants' classes and sat at the back of the classrooms to observe the participants as they conducted their lessons. In addition, observation of the entire classroom enabled the researcher not to reveal exactly what she was looking for during the observation. Furthermore, the researcher carried a tape-recorder to tape the speech of participants whenever possible during the lesson period. Each participant was observed two to three times over the course of one week, and the total class time for each observed lesson was 40 minutes. The total amount of observational time for each participant was 10 hours. In addition to observations, the teachers participated in brief interviews with the researcher whenever there was a vague procedure to the questioning method. In this interview, the participants were asked to reflect on their use of questions in the classroom. The data set is thus composed of classroom observations and recorded research interviews with the teachers.

5. Results and Discussion

The results of the observations and data analysis show that the Socratic method of teaching is closely related to the acquisition of organized knowledge, the development of intellectual skills, and the understanding of ideas and values. EFL teachers use questions in the classroom to achieve these interconnected goals. Question-asking is a didactic mode of instruction that can be described as "teaching by telling." Learners' minds improve through acquisition of organized knowledge by learning grammar and vocabulary. Through the development of intellectual skills, students learn how to use the language effectively for communication. These language skills must be practiced regularly so that the student can acquire both linguistic and communicative competence.

Teacher should avoid telling students what they should or should not know through lectures and explanations or demonstrations with visual and audio materials. What is learned in these situations is skilled performance and not knowledge of facts. The observations revealed that teachers used questions in the classrooms mainly to coach and supervise the instructional activities and use of the textbooks. However, the teachers should have used the Socratic mode of teaching because it helps the student generate ideas through referential questions, as shown in Example 1 below.

Example 1.

(Experienced Teacher): I didn't eat anything today, I'm hungry, what can I eat? (Showing a picture of a chicken.)

(S1): Chicken

(S2): Meat.

The goal of this type of question is simply to learn about the students and encourage them to reveal their knowledge. Referential questions provide ways to bring "real questions" into the classroom (Gebhard, 2005). They can also engage students because the questions are aimed at communicating with them rather than simply testing their knowledge. This discussion method of teaching employed in the English language classroom stimulates students' imaginations and intellects by awakening their creative and inquisitive powers. This method improves students' understandings of and their appreciation for foreign cultural objects.

The following sections discuss how the teachers in this study used questions in the EFL classrooms to shape student-teacher interactions, evaluate student understanding, and check content knowledge. This section also provides a discussion of the reasons teachers report about how they use questions in the classroom.

5.1 Student-teacher interaction

Classroom interaction occurred between the students and their texts, teachers, and other students during the observed lessons. Previous research has shown how teacher talk and talk generated by turn-taking with the teacher characterizes much of the classroom discourse (Dillon 1988, 1994; Doughty & Williams, 1998; Edwards & Westgate, 1994;). In this case, this type of talk had a positive impact on learning in the EFL classrooms because it encouraged discussion, provided the teacher was conscious of the important role of question-asking.

For example, one of the new teachers asked her class "What is this?" while showing the students a picture of a McDonald's restaurant. One of the students answered, "Oh ya…McDonald's?" The teacher did not stop her question-asking after this answer. Instead, she requested clarification by asking, "What is McDonald's? Is it a school?" In this interaction, students employed careful observation and analysis rather than memorization. With the help of the teacher's questions, they generated the word chicken. These types of questions ask for confirmation and clarification to foster more natural, and hopefully meaningful, conversations in EFL classrooms.

Example 2 below shows another way a new teacher created an opportunity for meaningful conversation in the classroom.

Example 2.

Teacher: When is "Eid" celebrated?

Student (1): After Ramadan (Muslims fasting month).

Teacher: Is it celebrated as a family?

Student (2): Yes

Student (3): Sometimes.

Teacher: Why do you say sometimes.

Student (3): we leave the country.

Teacher: Is it religious holiday?

Student (4): Yes.

Teacher: Which religion celebrates it?

Student (5): Nosoom (Fasting).

Teacher: Who fasts?

Student (6): Muslims.

Teacher: Are there special food connected with the Eid?

Student (2): Chicken.

Student (7): Meat

One factor that influences student-teacher interactions is the degree to which teachers think critically about those interactions and pose thoughtful questions to students during instruction. The observational evidence collected in this study suggests that question-asking is important for student success in the classroom, and even experienced teachers do not perform well if they do not employ questions in appropriate ways. For example, the recitation and discussion questions an experienced teacher posed to her students were so narrow in their scope that students had to generate the "correct" answer in order to understand the teacher's content goal.

This interaction is shown in Example 3 below.

Example 3.

Teacher: This morning before class, I had a chance to look over some of the homework sentences you wrote. And I think it's going to be important we go over them as a class. I was pretty impressed.. .but some of the main points were missing, so I want to do them before we get through the unit. So, in the restaurant, can someone summarize that for me?

Student (1): [briefly].

Teacher: Okay, urn.. .yes. but could someone tell me what do you do there. Maryam?

Maryam:. well.. .we try soup and ...

Teacher: Okay, that's a start, you're a bit ahead of us.. ?

Amal: They eat.

Teacher: Yes. What do they have there? We eat chicken and what else. What do we eat there?

Student: Meat.

In Example 3, we see that the teacher's questions are so specific that they really only have one right answer. When students do not provide the answer she anticipates, she prompts them to continue searching for the correct answer, as seen in her comment "could someone else tell me" spoken after a student already provided   an answer to the question.

Another example of student-teacher interaction appeared to be very crafted, pointed, and scripted. In this case, one of the new teachers has a style of question-asking that is narrow and often seeks a correct answer for a particular idea she is trying to elicit from her students. In this example, the teacher directs a recitation with her students about color symbolism in countries' flags. Notice that she asks simple and pointed questions and seems to be expecting short one-word answers.

Example 4.

Teacher: What does the color green symbolize?

Student (1): Green usually pops up ….plants, life..

Teacher: Life…Yah which means …?

Student (2): rich.

Teacher: Which country in the book has the color Green?

Student (3): Saudi Arabia

Teacher: What would the color red symbolize?

Student (4): Blood? War.

In this case, it appears as though the teacher has all the answers set in her head and her students simply have to generate those answers. Unfortunately, the teacher does not allow her students to struggle with answers and theories so they could construct their own meaning; instead, she seems to tell them how to think.

5.2 Student understanding

The new teachers also had difficulty with measuring the understanding of their students. If the teacher's criteria for learning and comprehension are student engagement and completion of homework, then the teacher will be unable to diagnose and predict student understanding and misunderstanding. For example, during one of the interviews, the researcher asked a new teacher to describe the students' learning and what this learning looked like in the classroom. The teacher replied, "You're asking me to assess. Urn.. .who got it? I think they all see it. I think everyone in the class sees

where I am getting at, but I didn't think anyone could articulate it. I think Sara did a good job doing it. I think Mona gets it..." In this response, the teacher's assumptions about students' abilities and the relative ease of this vocabulary lesson play a role in her pedagogical reasoning. Her beliefs are also equally important in her pedagogical reflections and reasoning. Teachers do not design their lesson plans and understand their teaching behaviors solely around goals or purposes. Rather, their teaching practices are also shaped by their personal beliefs about what it means to be a teacher and teach a specific content area. From the teachers' interviews conducted for this study, it appears that the vision of the English teacher as a literary expert affects every aspect of the teacher's practices and her pedagogical reasoning. Many of the questions posed to students during the observed recitations had predetermined right answers. In this way, new teachers appeared to believe that, ultimately, teachers have the correct interpretation of a text. On the one hand, new teachers never told a student that he/she was incorrect; however, on the other hand, they often rephrased a question until the students generated the predetermined answer.

In addition to the teachers' focused and somewhat narrow lines of questioning for their students, another example shows that an experienced teacher does not always comprehend what her students are asking. This misunderstanding thus hinders the teacher's reasoning. In this particular case, the students had presented their vocabulary understandings to each other in class, and the experienced teacher then gave directions for a writing assignment. She reviewed the different vocabulary words that small groups of students created, and then directed the students to choose two of these words to write about, or the students could generate a new word related to the topic at hand. One student named Sarah asked, "can we disagree with the topic?" and the teacher responded, "No. You can use a new word if you want." The student was asking if she could challenge one of the existing vocabulary words in her writing assignment, but the teacher appeared to not fully understand her question. During the later interview, the teacher reflected on this lesson and commented, "I just don't think I understood their questions well. I mean I am used to having procedural questions..." As her teaching practices improve, students' questions are shifting from procedural questions such as "how do we do this activity" to more content-oriented questions. This observed example reveals the teacher's struggle with these content questions. When she is unclear about the students' questions, she is not able to reason quickly and think of appropriate follow-up questions to encourage critical thinking from her students. The data collected in this study show that while teachers are able to facilitate students thinking and learning when they use questions, sometimes their follow-up questions create more confusion.

5.3 Content knowledge

Although direct questions engage students, sometimes questions often have to be repeated to gain an answer (Richards, 2007). This pattern was observed in the data collected for this study. For example, when a student offered a response, it was often a brief answer without a clear development of ideas. In this way, it appears that students were trying to second-guess the teacher and provide short, yet accurate answers when the teacher posed a question. Some teachers spent most of their time asking low-level cognitive questions (Richards, 2007; Wilen, 1991), because students with poor learning skills seem to benefit from instructions that include a high percentage of simple direct questions, focusing on the core content of the lesson. For example, these questions asked students to focus on and provide information that can be easily memorized (e.g., where is Kuwait located?). Another example of this type of question asked students to generate the typical questions passengers ask bus drivers (e.g., do you have any change? where is this bus going?). Students can answer these questions almost automatically; furthermore, it is widely believed that this type of question can limit students because they do not require a deep understanding of the subject matter (Richards, 2007). However, sometimes students will ask questions in this scenario that are more difficult and suggest a deeper understanding of their needs and the bus system (e.g., can you tell me the connection to route 36?). Some teachers easily answer the simple questions and also the more difficult ones, yet they do not seem able to fully determine the needs of their learners through the questions they pose.

Questions were used most frequently in the language classrooms in this study to check students' comprehension. Some examples of comprehension check questions are listed below.

(T2):   "Do you understand?"

(T3):   "Did you wake up at 6:00 or 7:00 O'clock?"

(T4):   "We will go to the museum. Right?"

The question "do you understand" was very common in the classrooms and not as common as outside the classrooms, and I wonder what real value this type of question really has because students were mainly nodding their heads as a sign of approval.

The observations concentrated on the content of teachers' questions. Overall, Gebhard stated that by focusing on the

purpose of the questions, we can consider the content of our questions in terms of three content areas: study, procedure, and everyday life (Gebhard, 2005). Many of the questions in the EFL classrooms were about the study of language, such as aspects of grammar rules or vocabulary items. Less often teachers asked content questions about topics such as recent political issues in the newspapers, the environment, ethnic food, or other topics about everyday life not directly related to language study. Some questions were also procedural in nature, such as questions used to take roll, give back papers, and ask students about schedules.

Research over the last 60 years has shown that the predominant type of teacher questions has to do with simple data and recall of facts students have already learned (i.e., lower order questions). Several reasons have been proposed to explain why teachers tend to ask this type of question in language classrooms.

First, teachers feel that learners should first focus on facts and answer more interpretative questions later on. Second, teachers are not trained in the use of diverse questioning strategies. Finally, teachers do not regularly use a theoretical model to organize and classify questions. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers should develop the habit of asking more thought-provoking questions so that learners' involvement in their education increases and they improve their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. Teachers should also make sure that teaching materials and students' involvement in activities provide opportunities to ask focused questions that require learners to compare, contrast, persuade, and determine cause and effect. Encouraging learners to engage in these tasks would improve their critical thinking skills and engage them more fully in the learning process.

All teachers must become aware of the kinds of questions they ask and the kinds of responses that these questions elicit. If teachers desire a response at a particular level of thinking, then questions must be formed in appropriate ways that will elicit the type of desired response from students. Although evidence is somewhat inconclusive, there appears to be a direct relationship between the type of questions asked by the teachers and the level of the learners' responses. If this generally accepted assertion is valid, then teachers must be able to use questions in the most efficacious and appropriate manner, "so that their learners may develop higher levels of thinking to evaluate information, to achieve more, and to be more interested" (Orlich, Harder, Callahan, Kauchak, & Gibson, 1994, p. 185). Therefore, teachers should be trained and efficient on not just how they get the right answer for their questions, but rather arousing students' curiosity to get more information within the topic of the day and connect the knowledge the students are gaining inside the classroom with the outside world.

5.4 Reasons for asking questions

The interviews conducted with the teachers in this study show that teachers use questions to check student comprehension, pronunciation, and informally evaluate their students, as well as to motivate the students to communicate with them in the target language. In addition, all the participants believed that using questions in the classroom was helpful to convey information about the lesson topic and reinforce important points or grammar rules discussed in the lesson. For example, one teacher mentioned that the reason for questioning her students at the beginning of the class could be helpful in terms of introducing new vocabulary items or grammar rules.   Furthermore, the teachers reported that they used questions to measure the students' abilities to listen, talk, express meanings, and interact in the classroom setting. This example was given by one teacher: "I ask my students to make sure they pronounce the words correctly," "I ask questions to introduce a new lesson or to wrap-up my lesson, or on my first day of school, I let the students know each other by asking questions."   However, classroom talk is a special kind of discourse with its own rules and conventions, and classroom language use is sometimes different from the way language is used in everyday life outside of the classroom.

6. Conclusion

Scholarly analyses of the role of questions in the classroom often begin with a discussion of Socrates. Researchers and other writers concerned with question-asking techniques in the classroom remind us that questioning has a long and venerable history as an educational strategy. Indeed, the Socratic method of using questions and answers to challenge assumptions, expose contradictions, and generate new knowledge and wisdom is an undeniably powerful teaching approach. The Socratic method of teaching involves not pouring new ideas and information into an already empty brain, but rather drawing out universal truths that are already present, yet hidden in the mind. This study showed that teachers' lack of knowledge about their content and instructional strategies hindered their ability to provide sound pedagogical reasons for their classroom behaviors. The teachers' reports in the interviews provided little insight into their content knowledge. Moreover, their dependence on recitation and narrow questioning that directed students to provide a predetermined answer may indicate an area of weakness in terms of their knowledge of EFL teaching. Both the new and experienced teachers relied heavily on their personal beliefs about teaching. The new teachers acknowledged that the Socratic method was generally a useful teaching tool and that its main benefit was to encourage students' critical

thinking. One of the participants appreciated that the Socratic method presents a challenge for students, but most participants were concerned with the amount of time it takes to use the Socratic method in the classroom. The majority of participants reported that this method takes a lot of time to implement, especially for teachers who have to follow a very demanding syllabus. In addition, teachers felt as though the teacher must be the expert in the room and the Socratic method of teaching does not always fit with this viewpoint. All these teachers work hard to design effective lesson plans, to provide the right answers, and to do things correctly in the classroom. Yet when these teachers think of themselves as experts, or feel the need to be the authority, there is little room for student knowledge and critical thinking in that model.

In conclusion, this study has shown that both new and experienced teachers develop and use question-asking strategies in the classroom from their own points of view and pedagogical approaches. In other words, the teachers cannot escape ideas about their personal teaching performances and how they appear to their students in the classroom. Their approaches to teaching reading, writing, and thinking skills are interwoven with different instructional strategies, assessments, and assignments. Thus, their knowledge of English is not segmented as separate units of reading and writing; rather, their knowledge is more fluid and comprehensive. In order for the Socratic method to work as an effective and consistent teaching tool in the EFL classroom, it is crucial that teachers fully understand the goals and steps of the method and design questions that lead students to more complex understandings of the topics at hand.

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