

Creative Questioning in the English Language Classroom

Tran Lam Son, MA. – Nghe An Continuing Education Centre.

Why is questioning important?

It helps to

- **extend** thinking skills
- **clarify** understanding
- **gain feedback** on teaching / learning
- **provide** revision strategies
- **create** links between ideas
- **enhance** curiosity
- **provide** challenges
- **strengthen** learning

Good questions are:

- **purposeful** (asked to achieve a specific purposes)
- **clear** (students understand what they mean)
- **brief** (stated in as few words as possible)
- **natural** (stated simply, in conversational English)
- **thought-provoking** (they stimulate thought and response)
- **limited in scope** (only one or two points in chain of reasoning called for)
- **adapted to the level of the class** (tailored to the kinds of students in the class.)

Questioning will be most effective when questions are:

- planned.
- logical and sequential
- addressed to the entire class.
- posed so students have time to think.
- balanced between fact and thought.
- distributed widely.
- not repeated.
- asked in conversational tone.

Creative questioning for youngsters

- **Ask open-ended questions:** *Use a picture then ask questions to stimulate and create a thinking atmosphere.*
e.g. What are the people in the picture doing?
What are the people saying?
What would happen if?

- **Ask students to use their senses:** *They may often have their creative talents stretched by asking them to use their senses in an unusual way.*
- **Ask students about changes:** *One way to help students to think more creatively is to ask them to change things to make them the way they would like*
e.g. What would taste better if it were sweeter?
What would be nicer if it were smaller?
What would be happier if it were bigger?
- **Ask questions with lots of answers:** *Any time you ask a student a question which requires a variety of answers, you are aiding creative thinking skills. Here are some examples of using the concept of water:*
 - *What are some of the uses of water?*
 - *What floats in water?*
 - *How does water help us?*
 - *Why is cold water cold?*
 - *What always stays under water?**Note: Other concepts: fire, sand, cars, smoke, ice.*
- **Ask “what would happen if ...” questions:** *These questions are fun to ask and allow the children to really use their imaginations. Here are some:*
 - *What would happen if all cars were gone?*
 - *What would happen if everybody wore the same clothes?*
 - *What would happen if you could fly?*
 - *What would happen if no one cleaned the house?*
- **Ask “In how many different ways ...” questions.** *These questions also extend students’ creative thinking.*
 - *In how many different ways could a spoon be used?*
 - *In how many different ways could a button be used?*
 - *In how many different ways could an umbrella be used?*

Ways to elicit answers to questions in class

- Ask a question and the students simply call out the answer.
- Ask a question and tell students to raise their hands as soon as they know the answer.
- Nominate students by saying his/her name first, and then ask the question.
- Ask a question then pause for a few seconds.
- Ask a question several times.