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Persistent Monologicality amidst Variation in Teachers' Questioning Practices in Malaysian English Language Classrooms

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This video study examines teachers' questioning practices in English language classrooms in Malaysia, and how different types of questions, wait time, and reaction moves influence classroom interaction. The study found that although there was an overarching monologicality across all classrooms, teachers' questioning practices were not limited to the typical, monologic mixture of display questions, non-existent or short wait time, and/or reaction moves which could obstruct student talk. There were also opportunities for dialogicality initiated through teachers' employment of referential questions, longer wait time, and/or reaction moves which could facilitate advanced student talk, but monologicality in classroom interaction persisted. Such observation directs our attention to the understanding and further contemplation that nurturing dialogicality is not a mere issue of strategy use.

Keywords: questioning, dialogic, monologic, classroom interaction, teacher practice

Introduction

Malaysia is considered a high English proficiency country. It has consistently ranked in the top two in Asia and top 15 worldwide among non-native English speaking countries (Education First, 2017). Malaysia has also fared well in two widely recognized English language tests, taking the top and fourth spots in Asia in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) respectively in 2015 (Educational Testing Service, 2015; Ye, 2016, September 14).

Other indicators however have been less positive, especially the decreasing levels of student proficiency in the country (MOE Malaysia, 2012). Despite having around 200 minutes of English Language lessons every school week from Year 1 all the way to Year 11, students continue to struggle with the language (Cambridge English Language Assessment, 2014; MOE Malaysia, 2015). A 2013 nationwide assessment benchmarked against the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) involving pre-school, primary, and secondary students showed that a majority of students managed to achieve only the lowest levels of proficiency (i.e., 'beginner' or 'basic user' who could perform real-life tasks of a touristic nature) and below (Cambridge English Language Assessment, 2014; MOE Malaysia, 2015). Among the four basic language skills, students were consistently weakest in speaking with more

students achieving the lowest levels and below (Cambridge English Language Assessment, 2014).

One possible reason could be that Malaysian classrooms have been found to contain little meaningful interactions (Cambridge English Language Assessment, 2014; MOE Malaysia, 2012; Tee, Samuel, Norjoharuddeen Mohd Nor, & Shanthi Nadarajan, 2016). The limited opportunities for extended and more complex student talk may be hindering more advanced use of the language. In monologic classrooms, students are mere listeners and recipients of knowledge, and have very little chance at accessing their own and others' voices in depth; on the other hand, dialogic classrooms provide more room for students to articulate their thinking using their own voices and interact with multiple voices (Alexander, 2008; Boyd & Markarian, 2011; Cazden, 2001; Lyle, 2008; Nystrand, 1997; Reznitskaya, 2012; Shor & Freire, 1987).

While more dialogicality is desirable in Malaysian classrooms to encourage communicative use of the language as well as to support the development of thinking skills (MOE Malaysia, 2003; MOE Malaysia, 2012; Pandian, 2002), little is known about what actually takes place during classroom interaction. Several studies focusing on questioning, an important instructional and interactional tool for stimulating dialogic interactions (Alexander, 2008), have pointed out unsatisfactory teacher questioning practices, for instance the prevalent use of lower cognitive questions (Habsah Hussin, 2006; Noorizah Mohd Noor, Idris Aman, & Rosniah Mustaffa, 2012; Rosniah Mustaffa, Idris Aman, Teo, & Noorizah Mohd Noor, 2011; Sedigheh Abbasnasab Sardareh & Mohd Rashid Mohd Saad, 2013; Sedigheh Abbasnasab Sardareh, Mohd Rashid Mohd Saad, Abdul Jalil Othman, & Rosalam Che Me, 2014). Given the curricular emphasis and pedagogical strategies teachers have been encouraged to use, which are largely communicative-based and higher-order-thinking oriented (MOE Malaysia, 2003; MOE Malaysia, 2012; Pandian, 2002), a more precise analysis into Malaysian classrooms is needed.

Past research have normally supported expectations that the use of referential questions, longer and more frequent wait time, and reaction moves which would help induce extended student talk (e.g., probe, prompt, redirect) should improve the quality of classroom interaction between the teacher and students, as well as among students alike in a more dialogic setting (Bellack, Kliebard, Hyman, & Smith, 1966; Brock, 1986; Chang, 2009; Cotton, 2001; Gall, 1984; Honea, 1982; Hsu, 2001; Hussein Ahmed Al-Muaini, 2006; Ingram & Elliott, 2014; Kaya, Kablan, & Rice, 2014; Morgan & Saxton, 1994; Rowe, 1974, 1986, 1996; Swift & Gooding, 1983; Tobin, 1984, 1986; Wragg & Brown, 2001; Wu, 1993; Yang, 2010). In this regard, are teachers using appropriate questioning practices concerning different types of questions, wait time, and reaction moves? If so, are their practices having the desired influence on classroom interaction?

Dialogism and Questioning

This study draws on Bakhtin's conception of dialogism in understanding teachers' questioning practices. Dialogism principally focuses on each unique voice and the interaction of multi-voices through dialogue (Wertsch & Smolka, 1993). Bakhtin (1984) argued that monologism, on the contrary, "denies the existence outside itself of another consciousness with equal rights and equal responsibilities" (p. 292). In dialogic classrooms, students are active participants in learning where they generally contribute and co-construct meanings alongside the teacher and other students; meanwhile in monologic classrooms, students are often thought as being in need of instruction and rendered passive reproducers of learned knowledge with their meaning-making typically happening internally in isolation and not sought as a valid source of knowledge to help advance their learning (Bakhtin, 1984; Lyle, 2008; Nystrand, 1997; Reznitskaya, 2012; Shor & Freire, 1987; Skidmore & Gallagher, 2005; Yuksel, 2009).

Good questioning is an essential indicator of dialogic classrooms (Alexander, 2008). As question-answer exchanges largely dominate teacher-student interactions, an examination of teachers' questioning practices would shed light on the quality of interactions in the classroom (Nystrand, 2004). The findings would be important in understanding, at least from the perspective of questioning and classroom interaction, the deterioration of student proficiency especially in relation to speaking.

Questioning which facilitates dialogicality ought to provide "supportive and substantive opportunities for engaged talk with content – to explore, challenge, reconsider, and extend ideas in ways that enhance student learning" (Boyd & Markarian, 2011, p. 519). In this regard, certain teachers' questioning practices have been found to be more helpful in engendering such dialogic interactions. And these practices have often revolved around three dimensions of questioning: types of questions, wait time (i.e., pauses initiated or provided by the teacher which could give rise to opportunities for thinking or contemplation of an utterance or a response), and reaction moves (i.e., what the teacher says or does other than mere evaluation succeeding students' responses or unresponsiveness to teacher questions). As identified by earlier studies, to pave way for more dialogic interactions where there are extended and syntactically as well as cognitively more complex student responses, referential questions rather than display questions (elaborated in the following paragraph) (Brock, 1986; Hussein Ahmed Al-Muaini, 2006; Yang, 2010), longer and more frequent wait time, with a proposed range of 2 to 5 seconds (Honea, 1982; Ingram & Elliott, 2014; Kaya et al., 2014; Rowe, 1974, 1986, 1996; Swift & Gooding, 1983; Tobin, 1984, 1986), and reaction moves such as 'probe', 'prompt', and 'redirect' (Bellack et al., 1966; Chang, 2009; Cotton, 2001; Gall, 1984; Hsu, 2001; Morgan & Saxton, 1994; Wragg & Brown, 2001; Wu, 1993) are encouraged in teachers' questioning practices. These practices could help improve students' participation and engagement in the classroom.

With these recommended practices as a common guideline towards dialogicality, the researchers were aware that they are not a guarantee for dialogicality. For instance, in relation to display questions which typically ask for answers that the teacher already knows and which tend to invite short and simple answers (Ho, 2005; Long & Sato, 1983), in different contexts they could also promote dialogicality (Boyd & Markarian, 2011; David, 2007; Lee, 2006). Similarly, referential questions which ask for answers that the teacher does not already know and which may invite the sharing of students' experiences and opinions (Ho, 2005; Long & Sato, 1983), may not always bring about enhanced student talk (Behnam & Pouriran, 2009; Lamb, 1976; Wu, 1993). It basically boils down to the purpose and manner of use of these questions during classroom interaction. This awareness also applies to the use of wait time and reaction moves. Thus, the advocated practices would serve as a common guideline developed from the literature, whereby given appropriate use in appropriate contexts, these practices would generally lead towards a more dialogic classroom; presumably, in the absence of the advocated practices classroom interaction would generally tend to be monologic.

Other than the recommendation of practices, the literature has also suggested teachers' questioning practices to avoid. For example, in terms of reaction moves, dialogicality would be hindered if teachers ignore or fail to provide any feedback or follow-up to student responses (Tobin, 1986; Wragg & Brown, 2001), unnecessarily interfere with student talk or mimic student responses (Tobin, 1984, 1986), answer own questions (Habsah Hussin, 2006), or simply take up just any or all student responses to the extent that the discussion is rendered messy and unproductive (Groenke & Paulus, 2007). In terms of wait time, it should not be used blindly or homogeneously for just any question asked (Carlsen, 1991; Honea, 1982). Wait time needs to be used with consideration to each question and interaction context. For instance, longer wait time may be more helpful in encouraging complex answers, while shorter wait time could be better suited for eliciting straightforward answers (Tobin, 1984). Above all, questions should be asked to stimulate thinking and generate responses, and not otherwise (Good & Brophy, 2000). This brings to attention rhetorical questions, which mostly do not genuinely seek answers (Good & Brophy, 2000). Often they are not 'real' questions, thus are not facilitative of student talk and do not contribute towards dialogic interactions.

The Malaysian Context

English is one of the main languages used and taught in Malaysian classrooms. As stated in the Curriculum Specifications document, "English is taught as a second language in all Malaysian …

schools …" (MOE Malaysia, 2003, p. 1). Despite the prominence given to the teaching and learning of English, the national standards of English proficiency have continued to decline, especially when compared in relation to the nation's early post-independence era as the general yardstick. The current situation has often been attributed to changes in language policy, including the move where English medium schools were completely phased out in the 1970s (Gaudart, 1987) (refer to Ida Fatimawati Adi Badiozaman, 2015 for brief history on Malaysian education shortly after independence). At that time, as English had already ceased to be the main language of administration and communication, this move crucially saw the further reduction in access to English-speaking environments and use of English at large. This was clearly disadvantageous as greater exposure to and use of the language have been found to be positively related to student proficiency (Jones, 2013). Continuing today, Malaysian English language teaching is struggling with issues regarding limited exposure to and use of English outside the classroom and insufficient instructional time for English in the classroom (MOE Malaysia, 2012; Sumisha Naidu, 2015, November 20). The interest of this study lies in understanding what is being done within this limitation in the classroom, where students are supposed to be provided opportunities to use the language and exhibit their use of the language. This is because with such limitations, students' use of English within the learning environment in the classroom becomes all the more important in developing their proficiency (Cambridge English Language Assessment, 2014).

In the classroom, one of the most direct and effective ways to help students think and express themselves is through the use of questioning (Alexander, 2008; Nystrand, 1997; Pandian, 2002). This aspect, however, has largely been under-researched in the Malaysian setting (Habsah Hussin, 2006). The available literature had documented findings on teachers' questioning practices which are essentially associated with monologicality (e.g., teachers tend to ask most of the questions, ask typically display/lower cognitive questions, answer own questions) (Habsah Hussin, 2006; Rosniah Mustaffa et al., 2011; Sedigheh Abbasnasab Sardareh & Mohd Rashid Mohd Saad, 2013; Sedigheh Abbasnasab Sardareh et al., 2014). In specific reference to the three important dimensions of questioning discussed earlier, as most studies concentrated primarily on investigating the types of questions teachers ask in the classroom, this study extends the research focus to look at the use of wait time and reaction moves, alongside the use of different types of questions. Therefore, through the dialogism lens, all these three dimensions formed the focus of this study in examining teachers' questioning practices with regard to the quality of classroom interaction.

The Study

This study adopted a video study design where video recordings of lessons were collected and analyzed (Janik, Seidel, & Najvar, 2009) to examine teachers' questioning practices. A total of 17 national secondary schools were randomly selected from almost 2000 national secondary schools in Malaysia, where lessons of 31 teachers teaching Form One (Year 7) English Language were recorded. Based on the 31 video recordings of lessons obtained, teachers' questioning practices were investigated in terms of three dimensions of questioning important for fostering dialogicality: types of questions, wait time, and reaction moves.

For types of questions, three types were examined, i.e. display questions, referential questions, and rhetorical questions. The description of each type as adapted from previous studies (Good & Brophy, 2000; Ho, 2005; Long & Sato, 1983) is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Types of Questions

Types of Questions	Description
Display	▪ Ask for answers which the teacher already knows
	▪ Answers can usually be evaluated as right or wrong
	▪ Invite students to display acquired knowledge
Referential	▪ Ask for answers which the teacher does not already know
	▪ Generally have no right or wrong answers
	▪ Invite students to share their experiences and opinions
Rhetorical	▪ Ask for answers cursorily/perfunctorily (answers are often unnecessary)
	▪ Sometimes answered almost immediately by the teacher

For wait time, generally a range of 2 to 5 seconds has been suggested to enhance the quality and quantity of classroom interaction, especially student talk (Rowe, 1974, 1986, 1996; Swift & Gooding, 1983). Based on these findings, wait time less than 2 seconds was considered short, wait time of 2 seconds or more but less than 5 seconds was considered moderate, and wait time of 5 seconds or more was considered prolonged. All wait time in this study were measured in seconds up to one decimal point and examined using the categorization of 0.1-0.9 seconds, 1.0-1.9 seconds, 2.0-2.9 seconds, and so on.

As for reaction moves, there were ten which were the main focus of this study. In reference to past literature (Bakhtin, 1984; Bellack et al., 1966; Chang, 2009; Cotton, 2001; Gall, 1984; Habsah Hussin, 2006; Hsu, 2001; Morgan & Saxton, 1994; Nystrand, 1997; Reznitskaya, 2012; Tobin, 1984, 1986; Wertsch & Smolka, 1993; Wragg & Brown, 2001; Wu, 1993; Yuksel, 2009) and the data from this study, the description of each reaction move was refined and is shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2
Reaction Moves

Reaction Moves	Description
Probe	To request further answers by asking another question after obtaining an answer to the initial question
Prompt	To guide students, for example, by rephrasing the question, giving clues/hints, or purposely suggesting wrong answers/examples
Redirect	To forward answers to other students for evaluation or improvement purposes
Reinitiate	To request other answers to the same question after obtaining an acceptable answer
Nudge	To give a reminder to students for them to provide answers, for example, by repeating the question completely or partially, calling the student's name, using other utterances such as "And?", "So?", "Anyone?", "Yes?", "What?", "And also?", "Answer?", or repeating obtained answers completely or partially
Nominate	To call upon students to provide answers
Wait out/Ignore	To not respond specifically to answers
Give answer	To reveal answers to students
Abandon	To move on to the next question or topic as the initiated discussion is left unconsolidated without any closing
Impose	To place on students the teacher's own ideas or ideals without further discussion

The three dimensions of questioning examined in this study are explained above. They formed the coding foci in the investigation of teachers' questioning practices in English language classrooms. Based on these coding foci, all video recordings of lessons were coded using NVivo software.

Findings

By examining the three dimensions of questioning discussed (i.e., types of questions, wait time, and

reaction moves), a broader understanding of teachers' questioning practices across Malaysian English language classrooms was made available and the opportunities provided by these practices for the facilitation of interactions were investigated in the classroom context. The findings for each dimension of questioning are discussed as follows. All the examples presented were transcribed according to the original classroom interaction from the data from this study.

Types of Questions

In this study, only content-specific questions were taken into consideration for analysis. In the 31 lessons examined, a total of 2,870 questions were asked. Table 3 shows the frequency and percentage of each question type. The frequency and percentage of display, referential, and rhetorical questions used by teachers in the classroom, in the following order, were 1,983 (69.1%), 407 (14.2%), and 480 (16.7%).

TABLE 3
Use of Questions

Types of Questions	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Display	1,983	69.1
Referential	407	14.2
Rhetorical	480	16.7
Total	2,870	100.0

Consistent with past findings, display questions made up the majority of the questions asked (Habsah Hussin, 2006; Noorizah Mohd Noor et al., 2012; Rosniah Mustaffa et al., 2011; Sedigheh Abbasnasab Sardareh & Mohd Rashid Mohd Saad, 2013; Sedigheh Abbasnasab Sardareh et al., 2014). They largely elicited only short and straightforward answers which were not used to engender further discussions in any dialogic manner. Not only so, even referential questions which should encourage extended and more complex student talk (Brock, 1986; Hussein Ahmed Al-Muaini, 2006; Yang, 2010) have also only prompted monologicality. Similarly, they generated only simple answers and discussions. The use of rhetorical questions, as expected, did not help facilitate much student talk.

In terms of display questions, they were often used to gauge students' knowledge: e.g. language – "What word that starts or has the letter 'm'?", reading comprehension – "Carpool can help in saving the environment as well as your money … this practice allows you to share the cost of travelling, 'this practice' refers to?", understanding of literary text and devices – "What is stanza one about?", "What is personification?", "[In the novel] who was arrested for the murder?", general knowledge – "Can you name me other types of transportation?", and mastery of previously taught content "What do you understand about 'healthy eating'? Last time we have discussed about this." An exemplar of the use of display questions from the data is as follows:

Excerpt 1

1   Teacher: [In the novel] who was arrested for the murder?

2   Student: ((raises hand)) James McCarthy.

3   Teacher: "James McCarthy."

4   Okay. …

As for referential questions, they were generally used to elicit, among others, students' personal details, preferences, and experiences – "Where do you come from?", "If you have RM 100.00, which item would you buy?", "How many of you have taken a ride on this ferry?", and students' opinions and reasoning – "Why [do you want to be in] Germany suddenly?", "Why do you need friends?" The following discourse is an exemplar of a referential question used in the classroom.

Excerpt 2

1	Teacher:	… Why do you need friends?
2	Student:	So that they can accompany us when we're sad.
3	Teacher:	Alright.
4		Any other reason why?
5	Students:	Because- / We can share our problems with them. / We can ask whatever we want.
6	Teacher:	Okay, good. …

The third and last type of questions (i.e., rhetorical questions) were usually used to consolidate answers – "Yes … It's compared to a wanderer because it doesn't stay in one place, okay?", as ending to teacher utterances – "Fraser's Hill is in Pahang … near Raub … so when I went to Cameron Highland … so that's why on the second day I stopped at Bukit Fraser [Fraser's Hill], yes or no?", to emphasize a point to students – "How many mobile phones are there- in the market? How many are there? A lot of mobile phone.", when expecting students' meek agreement – "So easy, right?", "See, does he look like Chris? Eh, no no no, more to Denzel, right? Is it Denzel?", "… Also good with words, right or not?", to indirectly reveal answers to students – "That looks like fish and chips, right?", or merely to develop teacher talk without the need for any answers to the questions asked. The use of rhetorical questions by teachers is shown in the following exemplar.

Excerpt 3

1	Teacher:	Good at what? …
2		Also good with words, right or not?
3	Students:	Yes.

In general, each type of questions discussed above was used for different functions with display questions being the dominant type. Using display questions, teachers typically strove for students' display of previously taught content or general knowledge, and their comprehension and information-retrieval skills based on the teaching materials and aids used (e.g., textbooks, worksheets, videos), most of which teachers already had the answers to. Meanwhile, with the use of referential questions, teachers often sought direct and specific information unknown to teachers. More open-ended referential questions which would provide room for genuine student ideas, perspectives, and reasoning were less frequent. In this study, other than the dominance of display questions and the deficiency of thought-provoking referential questions, it was also a concern that classroom interaction was to a certain extent clouded by rhetorical questions where student answers were hardly even necessary (Good & Brophy, 2000). Consequently, students were neither stimulated to think deeply nor encouraged to share and exchange their thoughts with one another.

Wait Time

The use of wait time by teachers is recorded in Table 4. As shown in the table, wait time 0.1-0.9s (38.3%) and 1.0-1.9s (32.0%) were the two shortest but most frequently used wait time ranges in the classroom. The rest of the wait time used (almost 30.0%) was in the two-seconds-and-above range. With reference to the suggested use of 2 to 5 seconds of wait time (Rowe, 1974, 1986, 1996; Swift & Gooding, 1983), the wait time used by teachers was mostly shorter than the recommended minimum, where about 70% of them were short wait time – i.e., less than 2 seconds.

TABLE 4
Use of Wait Time

Wait Time (s)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
0.1 – 0.9	407	38.3
1.0 – 1.9	340	32.0
2.0 – 2.9	145	13.6
3.0 – 3.9	67	6.3
4.0 – 4.9	43	4.0
5.0 – 5.9	21	2.0
6.0 – 6.9	16	1.5
7.0 – 7.9	9	0.8
8.0 – 8.9	2	0.2
9.0 – 9.9	4	0.4
10.0 – 10.9	4	0.4
11.0 – 11.9	4	0.4
12.0 – 12.9	0	0
13.0 – 13.9	1	0.1
Total	1,063	100.0

Seeing the smaller percentage of wait time hitting or exceeding the 2-second mark, it would be interesting to look at teachers' incorporation of longer and more frequent wait time into classroom questioning. An exemplar reflective of most of the classroom interaction observed is illustrated below.

Excerpt 4

1	Teacher:	… Okay, among all these games, which one is the most popular?
2		Which one you like most?
3	Student 1:	Don't know.
4	Teacher:	"Don't know"?
		(0.4)
5		You like all of them?
		(4.8)
6		Which activity that you like most?
		(6.0)
7	Student 1:	((unintelligible)) Swimming and cycling.
8	Teacher:	"Swimming and cycling."
9		Why?
		(9.2)
10		Because it's ___?
11	Student 1:	Because swimming is fun.
12	Teacher:	Okay, thank you.

As demonstrated, four periods of wait time were employed; one of them was a short wait time (Line 4) while the rest all exceeded 2 seconds (Lines 5-6 and 9). In spite of the inclusion of moderate and prolonged wait time, the quality and quantity of student talk was not enhanced as student answers were rather simplistic (Lines 7 and 11). Even the teacher's eventual response (Line 12) did not make for any interesting classroom interaction.

Without serious emphasis on advancing the use of language by exploring student voices, wait time alone, even when it is longer or more frequently used, is unlikely to lead to dialogicality. As a matter of fact, the quality and quantity of student talk observed in Excerpt 4 were actually similar to student talk in other interactions with wait time less than 2 seconds (i.e., short wait time). In other words, classroom interaction at large was uniformly monologic, irrespective of the length of wait time provided.

Reaction Moves

While teachers' questioning practices included both monologicality-linked reaction moves which could inhibit further or more student talk thus cutting classroom interaction short (e.g., wait out/ignore, give answer, abandon, impose) as well as dialogicality-linked reaction moves which could be facilitative of improved student talk and classroom interaction (e.g., probe, prompt, redirect, reinitiate), monologicality always prevailed in the classroom. Particularly, even when the latter set of reaction moves were used classroom interaction remained simplistic.

The excerpt below showcases the use of 'redirect' (Line 1), 'probe' (Line 3), and 'give answer' (Lines 5-6). The teacher was discussing student answers written on the whiteboard; based on a reading text students were asked to list the activities done by a young boy when he visited his hometown. The discourse in Excerpt 5 captures teacher-student interaction as they discussed one of the answers (activities).

Excerpt 5

1	Teacher:	… And then ... errr, Number Three, "holiday".
2	Students:	No. …
3	Teacher:	Why say "no"?
4	Student:	That's what-(1.0)
5	Teacher:	This is about going for holiday, so it's couldn't be a "holiday". ((erases the answer on the whiteboard))
6		So, this is wrong. …

The teacher redirected student answer "holiday" to other students (Line 1) and some students responded with "no" (Line 2). The teacher then probed the students to provide justification for their answer (Line 3). However, as a student began stringing an answer but did not finish (Line 4), the teacher went on to give her answer to the students (Lines 5-6). Basically, in the whole discussion of all answers, the students were neither involved in talking about their reading of the text nor pressed for an answer when they remained silent. The teacher dominantly took over the main speaking role in explaining most of the answers.

In the following excerpt, the use of 'prompt' (Line 2) and 'impose' (Lines 8 and 11) is observed. The topic of discussion revolved around students' travel experiences.

Excerpt 6

1	Teacher:	Okay, how many of you have travelled by air? (2.1)
2		You have travelled by air, by aeroplane?
3	Students:	No.
4	Teacher:	Never?
5	Students:	Never.
6	Teacher:	Are you sure?
7	Students:	Yes. (0.8)
8	Teacher:	So you are going to travel by aeroplane, maybe at the end of this year. (0.6)
9		Hopefully, yes or no?
10	Student:	Yes.
11	Teacher:	Maybe ... to.. errr, Sabah, yes or no?
12	Students:	Yes.
13	Teacher:	Ah, okay.

The students were unresponsive after the teacher asked the question in Line 1. Seeing this, the teacher prompted the students, in this case by rephrasing the question apparently to help the students understand and answer the question (Line 2). When the students answered "no" in Line 3, the teacher appeared to be taken aback. The teacher's slight surprise by the students' revelation that they had never taken a flight before was shown in Lines 4 and 6 where the teacher sought reconfirmation from the students. Then, though the teacher had gained the knowledge of students' inexperience in travelling by air the teacher showed no intention to make a detour to explore this direction of discussion. The teacher did not pursue the matter to allow the students to talk about their future plans for taking flights or their other travel experiences which could be related to the topic. Instead, the teacher imposed on the students what to do as their travel plan and when to do it (Lines 8 and 11). The teacher's questions which ended with "yes or no?" in Lines 9 and 11 further drove the students to just accept their teacher's ideas and say "yes" (Lines 10 and 12) to satisfy the teacher.

In the next excerpt, 'reinitiate' (Lines 7 and 15), 'nudge' (Lines 8-9), 'nominate' (Line 10), and 'wait out/ignore' (Lines 14-15) were used by the teacher as the statement 'learn to write in the sand' was being discussed with the students. When the teacher asked for volunteers, a student forwarded her answer, as shown in Excerpt 7.

Excerpt 7

1	Student 1:	… "Explain the phrase 'learn to write in the sand'."
2		Learn to forgive and forget your friends ((unintelligible)) if not our friendship will become worse or we may lose a best friend. …
3	Teacher:	Can you just say the keywords because the drumming of the- ((drumming sounds in the background))
4	Student 1:	((unintelligible)) if not our friendship will become worse or we may lose a best friend.
5	Teacher:	Oh, okay.
6		Yes, good.
7		Any other ((unintelligible)) views? (4.4)
8		Any views?
9		Any other views? (3.2)
10		How about Jinnie ((Student 2))?
11	Student 2:	((unintelligible))
12	Teacher:	Same ah, exactly the same? (0.9)
13		Is it the- exactly the same?
14		((walks over and reads aloud the student's written answer)) Okay, "the phrase 'learn to write in the sand' shows that we must learn to forgive and forget the wrongdoings of someone that had hurt us before".
15		Who has more than this? …

After accepting Student 1's answer (Lines 1-6), the teacher moved on to obtain other answers to the same question by reinitiating the question, as shown in Line 7. When the students remained unresponsive, the teacher nudged them by repeating the reinitiation question (Lines 8-9). Still, no answer was put forth by any student. Therefore, the teacher proceeded to nominate one of the students (i.e., Student 2) to try to answer the question (Line 10). Nevertheless, Student 2's answer was not specifically addressed by the teacher; the answer was ignored by the teacher as she immediately looked for other answers by reinitiating the question again (Lines 14-15). In this excerpt, while the teacher appeared to be inviting different answers/perspectives to one question, none of the answers elicited was given constructive feedback or discussed in any way with other students. Throughout this discussion, the teacher was merely

trying to elicit a variety of answers to inch toward a suitable final answer.

In addition to the reaction moves illustrated above, teachers at times also abandoned an ongoing discussion, for example, when they elicited unacceptable answers or could not induce any student talk. Excerpt 8 demonstrates the use of 'abandon' in the classroom.

Excerpt 8

1	Teacher:	… Where did you get this information? (0.6)
2		Internet? (0.8)
3		((unintelligible)) ((a student nods)) (1.3)
4		You are just smiling.
5		Smiling ((unintelligible)).
6		Okay, okay. …

As shown above, although the teacher invited the students to clarify the information presented (Line 1), she subsequently stopped pursuing alternative answers and simply moved on with the lesson. After suggesting an answer (Line 2) and not getting any clear response from the students, the teacher abandoned the entire discussion.

From the excerpts presented above, teachers' use of reaction moves could either encourage or discourage student talk. However, even when student talk was encouraged by teachers' reaction moves, their answers were mostly simple and straightforward. In-depth discussions involving different ideas or points of view almost never occurred. Teachers, in their use of reaction moves including those which are more frequently associated with dialogic classrooms were ultimately intent on keeping to their planned or desired course of talk during classroom interaction.

Discussion

All classroom interaction was persistently monologic. Surprisingly, even when teachers used practices which are more commonly linked to dialogic classrooms (e.g., the use of referential questions, longer and more frequent wait time, and reaction moves such as 'probe' and 'redirect'), the emergence of student voices and the interaction of these voices were minimal or non-existent. This situation is perplexing considering Malaysian curricular aspirations (MOE Malaysia, 2003; MOE Malaysia, 2012; Pandian, 2002) and earlier research recommendations for dialogicality (Bellack et al., 1966; Brock, 1986; Chang, 2009; Cotton, 2001; Gall, 1984; Honea, 1982; Hsu, 2001; Hussein Ahmed Al-Muaini, 2006; Ingram & Elliott, 2014; Kaya et al., 2014; Morgan & Saxton, 1994; Rowe, 1974, 1986, 1996; Swift & Gooding, 1983; Tobin, 1984, 1986; Wragg & Brown, 2001; Wu, 1993; Yang, 2010). What could possibly be feeding this persistent monologicality in the classroom?

The findings of this study suggest that teachers were not keen on expanding discussions with students. Contrary to the stated curricular goals (MOE Malaysia, 2003; MOE Malaysia, 2012; Pandian, 2002), advanced use of the language within a communicative environment did not take place in the classroom. Student voices in terms of elaborated and well-thought-out ideas were hardly sought by teachers. Students were not encouraged to build on others' ideas or to ask questions. By and large, classroom interaction contained only simple and straightforward teacher-student exchanges. This constant minimal student talk appeared to have become a habit, further hindering opportunities for a more dialogic classroom (Alexander, 2008). When teachers asked questions, the priority tended to be seeking narrow answers. This can be seen in the ways teachers gave answers (Excerpt 5), imposed on students (Excerpt 6), or abandoned discussions (Excerpt 8) when student answers were unacceptable, undesirable, or unobtainable. Even when teacher efforts seemed dialogic in nature (e.g., asking for ideas from several students in Excerpt 7), classroom interaction was always undeveloped as teachers were too honed in on extracting fragments of answers from what students said. Student answers that did not add to the final, desired

answer would be brushed aside and not discussed further. Meanwhile, teachers were quick to accept student answers even if they were insufficient as long as the lesson could move on (Excerpt 4). Therefore, dialogic classroom interaction never took place. Students seldom had the opportunity to explore different ideas or possible answers in any extended form. Classroom interaction was largely a manifestation of mere monologic teacher-student exchanges on wanted answers (Lyle, 2008; Nystrand, 1997; Shor & Freire, 1987).

The data from this study also found that teachers were unwilling to share control of classroom interaction with students (Reznitskaya, 2012; Shor & Freire, 1987). The content, the direction, and the conclusion of each discussion rested solely in the hands of teachers, as students just followed along. This is clearly seen when teachers asked rhetorical questions such as "… right or not?" (Excerpt 3) and "… yes or no?" (Excerpt 6), which funneled students into the desired course of interaction. Teachers kept classroom interaction under control by using their authority and this seemed to have become another habit in the classroom. Their constant control left little room for student voices to emerge. Students' struggle in providing an answer or continuous waiting (Chang, 2011) could heighten teachers' need for control (Excerpts 5 and 8). The push to end discussions suggests that teachers were uncomfortable with uncertainties, which presumably can result in the loss of control. The mechanism of control was also strengthened when student answers needed further discussion (Excerpts 6 and 7), which again may bring about the loss of control. Rarely had teachers explored student answers – wanted answers were absorbed into the discussion while unexpected or undesired answers were dodged. With only teacher questions and ideas dominating classroom interaction and with only teachers dictating what was to be talked about and in which manner, the role of the teacher as the all-knowing figure and the only authority in the classroom was accentuated (Bakhtin, 1984; Reznitskaya, 2012; Shor & Freire, 1987). Teacher control and authority heavily drowned out individual student voices, let alone interaction of multi-voices – leaving virtually no room for dialogicality.

In the midst of powerful teacher domination where discussions were always kept straight-to-the-point, answer-driven, and under control, what was happening to the students? Specifically, what kinds of roles were the students playing in the classroom? In nurturing dialogicality, students first and foremost have to be provided an interaction platform which enables them to be the active agents of their own learning processes (Skidmore & Gallagher, 2005). Students are supposed to be the shareholders of classroom autonomy where they can express their voices and be engaged with other voices (Bakhtin, 1984; Reznitskaya, 2012; Shor & Freire, 1987; Wertsch & Smolka, 1993). However, the aforementioned characteristics were fundamentally absent in all classrooms. Most of the time, students were observed to be dutiful responders, often trying to provide answers based on teachers' stated requirements in the questions asked or meekly accepting what teachers said. This even included situations where teachers imposed their ideas on students without further discussion (Excerpt 6). The lack of motivation and enthusiasm to dialogue using their own voices was observable among students, that they displayed little excitement even though they were given opportunities to expand their ideas (Excerpt 4). The habit of assuming a more passive role (Chang, 2011) – i.e., the role of playing along – appeared to be inherent among students, therefore complementing teacher domination on classroom interaction, and vice versa.

The discussion above explicates the persistent monologicality found in the classroom. Overall, the facilitation of student voices and interaction of different voices was found to be minimal. Regardless of the questioning practices used by teachers, even the ones generally advocated for dialogic classrooms, both teachers and students participated in classroom interaction in a monologic manner. There seemed to be mutually accepted habits in the classroom – by both teachers and students – to maintain a monologic classroom. These habits, which primarily involved not expanding discussions and not sharing autonomy, continued to offset whatever attempt at dialogicality during classroom questioning.

Conclusion and Implications

The study offers a view of teachers' questioning practices in English language classrooms through dialogism-monologism lenses. Rather than being fully occupied with the dominant use of display questions, minimal wait time, and/or reaction moves which do not encourage advanced student talk, teachers also created opportunities for dialogicality through their use of referential questions, longer wait time, and/or reaction moves which could encourage advanced student talk. The findings show both monologic- and dialogic-inclined practices which nonetheless unanimously engendered only monologic classroom interaction.

In this study, monologicality persisted amidst varying teachers' questioning practices largely due to the manner in which classroom interaction was regulated: with minimal extension of discussions, with unrelenting pursuance of narrow answers instead of exploration of possible answers, with teachers' sole control and authority in the classroom, and with extremely little emphasis placed on how much student ideas could contribute towards student learning and how dialoging among various voices could enrich students' meaning-making and shared understanding. These habits of teachers were coherent with the habit of students in being submissive and playing along with teachers' lead during classroom interaction. As such, the promotion of student voices as well as the interaction of multi-voices to cater to students' advanced use of the language would be harder to achieve. This classroom situation helps us understand the deteriorating student proficiency in the country, especially in regard to speaking (Cambridge English Language Assessment, 2014; MOE Malaysia, 2012; MOE Malaysia, 2015). Further research could zoom in on students' reticence and passivity (Chang, 2011) within classroom interaction especially in the Malaysian context as discussed in this paper.

The findings of this study also go on to suggest that classroom strategies or techniques would probably be most useful only when executed with dialogic values to encourage engaged, multi-perspective, and in-depth discussions (Boyd & Markarian, 2011). Among others, techniques such as Fish Bowl (Faust & Paulson, 1998), Jigsaw Classroom (Social Psychology Network, 2000), and Timed-Pair-Share (Kagan, 2008) used in different discussion settings (e.g., whole class, small groups, pair work) (Alexander, 2008; Nystand, Gamoran, & Heck, 1992) can provide initial ideas to teachers who want to facilitate more dialogic interactions. However, to nurture dialogicality, we need more than just classroom strategies or techniques, or endorsement by the national curriculum. In other words, it is very unlikely for teachers to facilitate meaningful dialogic interactions in the classroom if they do not believe in or have little understanding of dialogicality and its purpose and importance in terms of students' thinking, learning, and language development.

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