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Abstract
The present study aims to examine teacher questions in an English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom with a conversation analytic (CA) approach. Specifically, the study focuses on the sequential position of the teacher questions, and on their function in the management of classroom activities. Two activities in an intermediate leveled English classroom in Cambodia with students aged 20-24 were recorded and subsequently transcribed according to CA conventions. Thereafter, the teacher questions were identified and categorized. The findings showed that there were five categories of questions used by the teacher; that is, understanding checks, activity managing questions, repair regarding understanding and repair regarding accomplishment of task and lastly topic elaboration questions. Each category of question was used in a specific time in order to manage classroom activities, however, the findings also reveal that questions can interfere with the pedagogical focus when they appear out of context and can limit students’ participation in class.

Keywords
Applied linguistics, second language studies, conversation analysis, EFL, teacher questions
Contents

1 Introduction .................................................................................................................. 5
2 Literature review ........................................................................................................... 6
  2.1 Questions: A definition .......................................................................................... 6
  2.2 Teacher questions in the L2 classroom .................................................................. 7
3 Method: Conversation Analysis .................................................................................. 8
4 Data ............................................................................................................................. 9
  4.1 Setting .................................................................................................................... 9
  4.2 Participants ............................................................................................................ 10
  4.3 Data collection ....................................................................................................... 10
5 Analysis ....................................................................................................................... 11
  5.1 Understanding checks ........................................................................................... 12
  5.2 Activity managing questions ................................................................................... 15
  5.3 Repair questions .................................................................................................. 17
    5.3.1 Repair targeting troubles of understanding .................................................... 17
    5.3.2 Repair targeting troubles with task accomplishment ...................................... 19
  5.4 Topic elaboration questions .................................................................................. 20
6 Discussion and conclusion .......................................................................................... 22
  6.1 Summary of findings ............................................................................................ 22
  6.2 Discussion and pedagogical implications ............................................................... 24
  6.3 Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 25
7 References ................................................................................................................... 27
8 Appendix ....................................................................................................................... 29
Introduction

The present conversation analytic (CA) study investigates the teacher’s use of questions to manage a pedagogical activity in an EFL classroom. The rationale for this study is the apparent paucity of research that would focus on how questions are used by teachers to manage classroom activities. Instead, focus has been on dividing questions into different categories and on how questions provide learning opportunities (see for example: Fox & Thompson, 2010; Guan Eng Ho, 2005; Hayano, 2013; Lee, 2008).

As prior research has found, language teachers may ask up to 200 questions per class, where the majority of the questions can be categorized as display questions (Lee, 2006). Due to the high amount of questions in class, questions constitute an important part of classroom interaction and seem to constitute a resource that teachers use to maintain their power (Hayano, 2013). Questioning indeed realizes institutional goals in classroom interactions (Lee, 2008; Mehan, 1979).

In addition, both the pedagogical focus of questions and their functional efficiency in providing learning opportunities have been investigated (Guan Eng Ho, 2005). Previous research has also shown that it is important to promote authentic conversations in the classroom, where students receive opportunities to utilize the language as they would outside of school, by asking questions that promote authentic language use (Lee & Kinzie, 2012; Liebscher & Dailey-O’Cain, 2003).

What seems to be missing in prior studies is an analysis of how questions might be used throughout a classroom activity to manage the progressivity of such activity and its instructional goal(s). Questions might then function to lead the progress of activities or to make sure that students understand what they have to do and are on task. The present study thus intends to fill this gap, by both examining when questions appear during the unfolding of a classroom activity, and by analyzing the function the questions accomplish in the pedagogical context. Specifically, the study intends to address the following research questions:

1. When are questions used during the course of a classroom activity?
2. What kind of questions are used to manage the progressivity of a classroom activity and how are they used by the teacher?
3. Is there a connection between the type of question and the local pedagogical focus of the ongoing activity?

The study was conducted in an intermediate leveled EFL classroom in Cambodia, meaning that the six students aged 20-24 had the ability to express themselves but without fluency or grammatical correctness. English is now the most popular language to acquire and is highly valued by students in Cambodia (Neau, 2010). The findings presented here are based on the observation and recording of the first two activities of an English class in a Cambodian private school. The class consisted of six students and was held by a licensed and experienced teacher. The activities were then analyzed with a conversation analytic approach. The analysis shows that teacher questions can be divided into different categories which tend to appear in a certain sequential context and within a specific phase of the activity. Questions therefore serve various purposes and are used to manage the progressivity of the activities. However, the findings also reveal that questions can interfere with the pedagogical focus when they appear out of context and can limit students’ participation in class.
2 Literature review

2.1 Questions: A definition

Questions have been one of the major fields studied in semantics (Dayal, 2016). Also, questions are a common and vital instrument to create successful communication (Hayano, 2013). Therefore, the function and linguistic format of questions have been widely researched (e.g. Dayal, 2016; Hayano, 2013; Lee, 2008; Ruiter, 2012). Hayano (2013) has defined the term question as an utterance that requests a verbal or embodied response (p. 395). However, this definition does not include every question possible, because questions are difficult to define and their identification might be context-based. According to Dayal (2016), questions can be studied for their pragmatic, syntactic, semantic, and prosodic features. Thus, when identifying a question, it is important to specify which features are taken into account.

Similarly, Hayano (2013) suggests that questions are characterized by specific grammatical and prosodic features. However, these formal features are not sufficient to identify questions in a reliable manner. On the other hand, a classification of questions based solely on formal, linguistic features might exclude many utterances that indeed have the same function as questions. Indeed, the context plays a crucial role in identifying an utterance as a question. At the same time, epistemics also plays a role (see Hayano, 2013): questions clearly suggest that the recipient is in a knowledgeable position; in particular, referential questions (see below) indicate that the questioner orients to the epistemic asymmetry between him/herself (less knowledgeable) and the recipient of the question (more knowledgeable). In some cases, in the absence of specific formal features, it is indeed possible to identify an utterance as a question on the basis of the epistemic asymmetry between the participants (speaker/questioner and recipient).

Questions can also be classified on the basis of the function they achieve. Requesting information might just be seen as the prototype of a question but there are additional functions as well. In fact, questions are multi-functional and serve several purposes, such as introducing topics in monologues and introducing presuppositions (Ruiter, 2012). Therefore, as Ruiter (2012) implies, the best way to avoid defining questions narrowly is to focus on their function.

Even though the definition of questions is not as straightforward as it may seem, some question categories can be easily identified. Some of the most prominent categories are: wh-questions and Y/N questions, display and referential questions, as well as open and closed questions (Ruiter, 2012). Except for wh- questions, which are defined on the basis of the question linguistic format (questions beginning with wh- words, such as why, what, who, etc.), all the other question categories are identified in terms of the expected answer. For example, yes/no questions require either a yes or no answer. Display questions are questions the answer to which is already known to the questioner. Thus, the question-answer relation is emphasized since it is the answer that completes the question-act (Dayal, 2016).

To summarize, questions are a powerful tool that can put the questioner in control over the entire conversation, since a question is a first action which makes a response relevant. Furthermore, the way in which questions are designed indicates a preference for a certain format in the response (Hayano, 2013). Thereby, a speaker can lead the conversation by asking questions in a specific way, thus indicating how the response should be formulated.
2.2 Teacher questions in the L2 classroom

Several studies have focused on the pedagogical functions of questions in L2 classrooms and on teachers’ use of questions to enhance learning opportunities (e.g. Brown, 2007; Lee, 2006; Lightbown & Spada, 2013). In addition, research has showed that teachers generally dominate classroom interaction by deciding who speaks and deciding how activities will be operated by using questions (Dahlkwist, 2012). Furthermore, teachers have privileged turn-taking rights and will therefore lead classroom interaction (Markee, 1995). For example, teachers do not have to ask for the floor and get a turn-at-talk, but can interrupt the discussion at any point (Dahlkwist, 2012). Moreover, when asked a question by a student, teachers may respond with a counter-question (Markee, 1995).

Questions are a central part of classroom interaction in that the teacher can use questions to assess student performance, promote or facilitate learning and engage students to participate in classroom activities (Avdic, Artusson & Hatakka, 2016; Lee, 2006). At the same time, questions can also be regarded as a fundamental tool in order to investigate how much students have understood (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Furthermore, in L2 classrooms, students often do not have the ability to initiate a conversation or maintain conversation in the target language. Under these circumstances, teacher questions provide L2 students with the opportunity to produce language without having to risk initiating a sequence (Brown, 2007, p. 218). Therefore, teachers must be able to prompt interaction in the classroom, both at the beginning of the class as well as throughout the lesson.

In light of these observations, it is clear that the ability to produce questions for pedagogical purposes is crucial for teachers and requires a good amount of practice; specifically, teachers would benefit from learning question strategies (Brown, 2007). At the same time, teachers should be alerted to the fact that the wait time that occurs after a question (i.e., the length of silence after the issuing of a question, before the teacher undertakes an action; see Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p. 147) is important to allow for students’ participation. Indeed, teachers often experience insecurity after having asked a question when periods of silence occur (Dahlkwist, 2012). Teachers tend to wait for one or two seconds before allocating the turn to another student, or answering the question themselves. However, when students are given more time to construct their answer, students tend to produce more responses as well as longer and more complex utterances (Dahlkwist, 2012).

Display questions (or known-answer questions) have been subject to much research where different views of display questions implications have been shown. Firstly, some scholars have considered display questions to have a negative impact on student learning, since display questions typically imply that only one answer is correct (Lee, 2006). This means in other words that the student is not asked to elaborate on the answer and/or to provide alternative views. It is in this sense that display questions of such kind are deemed not to promote learning. Nevertheless, Lee (2006) has showed that display questions do have a central place in the language classroom and must be seen as a valuable and essential resource for communication. This is in line with Brown’s (2007) idea that every question has a place in the interactive classroom. Thus, display questions can be seen as important in the language classroom even though other types of questions may be needed to enhance student learning. Display questions have been contrasted with referential questions, the use of which has been recommended in classroom contexts, since the teacher does not know the answer to this type
of questions and it will not be possible to characterize an answer as correct or incorrect. However, referential questions might not be seen as appropriate for all levels of proficiency; in other words, the higher proficiency students possess, the more referential questions can be used (Brown, 2007). However, asking many questions does not ensure student learning. To promote learning, questions must not be too obvious, too complex or too vague.

In research conducted through conversation analysis, questions are often analyzed in light of the IRE-model (Initiation, Response and Evaluation; see Lee, 2008, p. 244). In this three-part model, the Initiation is done through a question, Response refers to the answer, and Evaluation constitutes the questioner’s response to the answer that s/he received. Zemel and Koschmann (2010) state that the problems in the response can become apparent not because the response is wrong, but because a misunderstanding of the initial question occurred. Therefore, correction in the evaluation sequence is important since it can ensure mutual understanding. Moreover, the activity’s direction, for example whether a discussion continues or finishes, and the teacher’s possibility to control the activity’s direction depend on the students’ answer (Dahlkwist, 2012). At the same time, it is important for the teacher to engage and motivate the entire class while also directing the continuation of the activity. If there are many students in one class, it can be challenging to engage every student and to manage the progress of the classroom activities. However, it is possible to achieve this dual goal through several methods mentioned by Dahlkwist (2012, p.73). For example, a teacher can encourage students to respond to what a student has said or can ask for a student’s opinions in a certain matter.

To summarize, teacher questions are important for classroom interaction, because they can promote student learning and student participation. There are several ways to ask questions, and thus asking questions should be properly thought through as certain categories of questions can promote learning more than others such as referential questions compared to display questions. In this paper the types of questions investigated will be further presented in section 4 but include both referential and display questions and are as follows; understanding checks, activity managing questions, repair targeting understanding but also repair targeting the accomplishment of the task and lastly topic elaboration questions. Nevertheless, there are several factors that influence learning opportunities; questions constitute just one of such factors.

3 Method: Conversation Analysis

Conversation analysis (CA) has been popular among applied linguists for many years (Groom & Littlemore, 2011). CA studies the organization of talk-in-interaction and the actions that are accomplished in and through talk-in-interaction with an emic (i.e., participant-relevant) perspective. CA has its roots in Sociology and, more specifically, in a branch of sociology called ethnomethodology (EM; see Garfinkel, 1967), which grew from the dissatisfaction with sociological theories and methodologies that focused on the macro social factors (Stivers & Sidnell, 2013). EM, instead, is concerned with how participants make sense of their everyday
activities. The founders of CA were Schegloff, Sacks and Jefferson (Stivers & Sidnell, 2013). Today, CA has grown beyond its sociological origins and is adopted in the fields of applied linguistics, communication studies, and ethnography.

Given CA’s focus on talk-in-interaction, the data investigated by conversation analysts are audio- or video-recordings of naturally occurring interactions, which are then transcribed in detail (for CA conventions see: Jefferson, 2004). CA has four methodological principles which are to be followed when analyzing interaction. The first principle is that interaction is orderly at all points. The second principle states that each contribution to the ongoing interaction is context-shaped and context-renewing, which means that every turn in interaction adds to the conversation and shapes the interaction inasmuch as it has been shaped by the prior turn. The third principle states that no order of detail can be dismissed as irrelevant; thus, every detail in interaction is important. Lastly, the fourth principle advocates that the analysis must be bottom-up and data driven (Seedhouse, 2004, pp. 14-15). This means that the analyst’s interpretation must be anchored in the data and should not be influenced by prior conclusions or from assumptions concerning the impact of the larger, ethnographic context (e.g., related to culture, gender, nationality, etc.) on the interaction itself.

These methodological principles derive from CA’s view of talk-in-interaction as systematically organized and deeply ordered in a methodic way; therefore, every action in a conversation serves a specific purpose (Seedhouse, 2004) and no detail is dismissed a priori. The central question in a CA analysis is: “why that, in that way, right now?” (Seedhouse, 2004, p.16), which clearly shows CA’s interest for the local, sequential context in which each turn is produced. In a CA perspective, the ethnographic social context is not assumed to be relevant a priori; it is however brought up in the analysis if the participants in the interaction observably orient to it and talk it into relevance. One of the main critiques against the pure CA approach has indeed concerned CA’s indifference to the social context in the conversation (Groom & Littlemore, 2011). Nevertheless, this can be seen as a strength in CA since the only data which the researcher is allowed to take into account in the analysis is the observable interaction. Therefore, CA attempts to remain true to the emic perspective by analyzing the data with an “unmotivated looking” (Seedhouse, 2004) approach. Unmotivated looking implies that the data are studied without any prior conceptions of what might be found. Another critique against CA regards the refusal to make systematic, practical use of the insights of the findings. However, the applied CA approach is interested in the potential practical implications of its findings, for example in their pedagogical implications.

CA has been chosen as the theoretical and methodological framework in this study because of its ability to investigate the actual interaction without assuming a priori the relevance of the sociocultural context in which the interaction takes place. The adoption of a CA approach to data analysis allows to examine the data with a neutral perspective that is anchored in what is observable.

4 Data

4.1 Setting

This study focuses on an EFL class that was taught in a private school in Cambodia in July 2017, at the end of the semester. The students in the classroom were studying English at the
intermediate level 7. Private schools are common in Cambodia since university studies require knowledge of English and students attend private schools in order to improve their English proficiency (Neau, 2010).

The entire class of 90 minutes was audio-recorded. During this time, the students were arranged in two rows, one facing the other, while the teacher was standing in the middle. The two activities analyzed in this study occurred during the first 15 minutes of the class and the skill in focus was speaking. The first activity consisted of the teacher asking one of the students to share his “good times and bad times” in life. This activity introduced the new chapter of the textbook American Headway (Soars & Soars, 2011) on which the teacher had planned to work; the chapter is indeed entitled “Good times and Bad times”. The second activity consisted of the Fortunately Unfortunately game presented in the textbook (Soars & Soars, 2011, p.18). The goal of the game is the collaborative construction of a story. Specifically, the first student has to produce an utterance with the word fortunately, and the next student has to continue the story with a new utterance starting with unfortunately. All students participated in both activities, while the teacher regulated the progress of the activities. Furthermore, English was used as the medium of interaction in most the exchanges. However, Khmer (the official language in Cambodia) was occasionally used by the teacher and by the students for different reasons. The code-switching patterns emerging in the interaction will not be analyzed since they are not considered to affect the findings of this study.

4.2 Participants
The class consisted of six students (four male and two female participants) who were between 20 and 24 years old. All the students had finished high school and took the English course to improve their English language skills for future university studies. The teacher was 21 years old, had taught English for 3.5 years and was licensed to teach English at private high schools. The participants attended English classes three days per week.

4.3 Data collection
Prior to the audio-recording, each student and the teacher were asked to sign a consent form which explained the aim and procedures adopted in this study (see Appendix 2). No video-recordings were made since the principal of the school advocated that no video-recordings were to be made since it was seen to disturb the students. In addition, ethical considerations must be considered in each context for recordings (Stivers & Sidnell, 2014). Thus, in order to ensure as little interference as possible, only audio-recordings were made. Furthermore, the teacher did not know which class was going to be recorded until the same day in which the recordings were made; therefore, the teacher could not prepare for the recorded class any differently than for her other classes. Thereby, the authenticity of the classroom activities is ensured. In the next paragraph, the procedure of the data collection will be explained.

Firstly, there was a brief introduction of the study in the classroom and the consent forms were explained and distributed. Thereafter, the recorders were turned on and the teacher
started the class at her own convenience. The observation was non-participant: the researcher did not take part in the instructional activities and was simply present to make sure that any problems regarding the recordings or any other unsuspected problem could immediately be handled (Groom & Littlemore, 2011, p.72). Non-participant observation was also chosen, since it is an encouraged method to investigate language teaching classrooms (Groom & Littlemore, 2011). In total, two classes were recorded at this private school; however, only one class will be used in this study, since the other class seemed influenced by the research setting. For example, it was observed that the teacher remarkably focused on the recording devices and tried to involve the researcher in the classroom interaction several times during the class.

The first classroom activities were transcribed verbatim with CA conventions (see Appendix 1). However, classic CA conventions were only partially followed, in that the transcription does not include inhalations and exhalations. Furthermore, laughter has been marked but it is not transcribed according to detailed Jeffersonian conventions. The names of the participants are changed to labels in order to preserve anonymity. The letter T is used for the teacher’s talk. The letter L for an unidentified student, and the letter L followed by a number, for example L2 for an identified student. Student names which appeared in the teacher or student speech are changed to pseudonyms in the transcripts. Finally, since the data consisted of an audio-recording, there is evidently no access to embodied actions.

During the analysis of the recorded material, the four CA principles were followed as explained in section 2. After completing the transcriptions, the audio-recording was analyzed at first with the unmotivated looking approach that is typical of CA. Then, question-answer sequences that seemed highly relevant to comprehend how the teacher managed the activities were identified; that is, questions that led to student activity and changed direction of the activities were selected. Since questions can be difficult to identify, in this study questions were identified either through the means of grammar, prosody, epistemic asymmetry or/and when a turn seemed to indicate an expectation of an answer. The questions were mainly identified by grammar and when a turn seemed to indicate an expectation of an answer. Furthermore, the identified sequences were analyzed in relation to the local pedagogical focus of the ongoing activity; some of these sequences are presented in section 5. Finally, as Markee (1995) suggests, all research based on L2 classrooms is open to several interpretations. Therefore, the extracts were closely analyzed for the observable behaviors that emerge in the interaction; potential cultural influences were not taken into account a priori.

5 Analysis

During the targeted activities (see section 4.1), the teacher asked 43 questions. The analysis focuses on 14 teacher questions that are representative of the collected sample since they appeared in a clear context which did not need to be explained further. All 43 questions can be divided into five categories, on the basis of their different functions: understanding checks, activity managing questions, repair (addressing either troubles of understanding or troubles regarding the accomplishment of the task) and, finally, topic elaboration questions. These categories were observed to be used in different situations by the teacher to accomplish
different actions at different times during the activity. Of the 43 questions, a few questions did not appear at the specific time as for the rest of the group. This could be seen when students did not answer as were expected and the teacher needed to manage the activity and the unexpected progress of it. These questions are not seen as representative for the majority of the group. A brief definition of each category is provided in the following paragraphs.

In this study, understanding checks are defined as questions which aim to verify the listeners’ comprehension. Examples of this type of questions are: did you understand? and right?. Understanding checks are often formulated as Y/N questions which make relevant either a confirmation or a negation as an answer. Upon receiving confirmation from the students, the teacher can provide new information; if, however, the response to the understanding check is negative, the teacher must repeat prior instructions. Furthermore, understanding checks can be divided into claim or display questions.

The second type of questions analyzed here consists of activity managing questions; that is, questions which distribute turn-taking in order to manage the ongoing activity. This category includes questions such as: who could answer this question? and anyone?.

Activity managing questions were used in several sequences throughout the activities.

The third category refers to repair questions; that is, questions that have to do with the mechanism that addresses the need for clarification (Koshik, 2005). Participants in conversation frequently come across troubles which are solved through repair sequences (Gafaranga, 2000) targeting troubles of speaking, hearing or understanding (Liebscher & Dailey-O’Cain, 2003, p.376). Two different types of repair could be found in the data: (a) repair targeting the teacher’s troubles of understanding the students’ talk; and (b) repair targeting troubles concerning the students’ accomplishment of the activity. Both types of repair questions were solely used when the students were engaged in the activity. The instances of repair initiation were mainly found in third position; that is, in the position usually occupied by the evaluation turn (IRE). The repair initiation opens up a space for the student to complete the repair and make her/his turn more understandable or make sure that her/his answer follows the instructions.

The fourth type of questions concerns topic elaboration questions; that is, questions that ask the recipient to provide further information regarding a prior topic. In addition, topic elaborations can often be referential questions where the teacher might not already have knowledge of the answer. Topic elaboration questions which function as referential questions promote learning and are favored in classroom activities (Lee, 2008). Furthermore, topic elaboration questions often appear in the form of wh-questions (Fox & Thompson, 2010).

5.1 Understanding checks

Understanding checks were used by the teacher either before starting the activity, while the teacher was engaged in instruction giving, or directly after. In this phase, the teacher uses this type of questions to make sure that the students are following the instructions, as extracts 1-2 illustrate.

Extract 1 picks up the talk as the teacher is providing students with instructions for the second activity, which consists of a co-constructed story-telling. She informs the students that they will each have to produce one sentence starting with fortunately or unfortunately. All sentences have to be in the past tense and the students must create a story together by taking turns. The student activity in this extract is to a minimum.

Extract 1
45 T: quick game. so the game is about fortunately and unfortunately.
46 but make sure that, all of your sentence have two (0.5) form with
47 past simple
48 L: past simple?
49 T: yeah the past tense, for example, like go (0.5) went. right?
50 (0.3)
51 is (0.3) were are were something like this. so the game start like
52 this (0.5) uhm everyone, you have to continue the; story. for
53 example, start for me, I say fortunately (0.3) and then Leakena
54 continue unfortunately and then go to Meaker turn she to say
55 fortunately so we (0.7) take turns. right? with the words
56 fortunately and unfortunately. did you get my instruction?
57 (1.5)
58 T: ;okay.
59 LL: (laughter)
60 L: ((transl. from Khmer)) I couldn’t hear the first part
61 T: alright;
62 (1)
63 did you get the instruction?
64 (1)
65 T: not yet.
66 ((transl. from Khmer)) it means to use fortunately and
67 unfortunately, when someone says fortunately it means
68 luckily.
69 fortunately means luckily and unfortunately means bad, bad
70 luck. okay. Meaker start for me I have to start the story. and
71 then Dalany have to continue ; okay? and start with the word
72 fortunately and Kunthea continue unfortunately. something
73 something like this. and then Kolab you have to, continue the
74 story from Kunthea. okay we use the different word but we change
75 with the word fortunately and unfortunately.
76 L3: (too many sentence) which sentence we use fortunately or
77 unfortunately?

In lines 45-47 the teacher provides the first instructions of the activity: the students have to create a story together by producing utterances that start with either fortunately or unfortunately; the utterances need to be formulated in the past tense. After a student’s clarification request (line 48), in line 49 the teacher provides an example of a past tense form (went) and produces an understanding check (right?). The following brief pause (line 50) suggests that the teacher gives the student time to respond. Since only audio data from the sequence is available, there could be an embodied response (such as a headnod) from the students; in any case, no oral response is produced. The teacher then provides further examples of forms in the past tense (is (0.3) were, line 51), which indicates that the teacher addresses the possibility that the students need more examples in order to fully comprehend the instructions. In the following lines (51-55) the sequence is continued by the teacher providing further detailed instructions. In line 55, the teacher uses an understanding check (right?). This understanding check is controlling the students’ understanding of the last portion of the instructions. However, there is no pause following the understanding check in line 55, which suggests that the students were not expected to answer. In line 56, after further instructions concerning the use of fortunately and unfortunately (lines 55-56), there is a new understanding check (did you get my instructions?), which seems to target the entirety of the instructions for the upcoming activity. The teacher’s turn is followed by a 1.5 second pause (line 57). The students do not reply orally, and the teacher produces an okay (line 58) that indicates an orientation to the end of the instruction-giving sequence and to the beginning of
the activity proper. In line 60, there is a response by a student in Khmer; the student mentions problems in hearing (I couldn’t hear the first part) as an account for not being able to reply to the teacher’s questions. The student’s turn could also be interpreted as a request for repeating part of the instructions. The teacher, however, produces alright in line 61. After another pause (line 62), the teacher reissues the understanding check (did you get the instruction?, in line 63), which is again followed by silence (line 64). This pause is interpreted by the teacher as a negative answer to her question as seen by her response in line 65: not yet. The teacher then repeats part of the instructions in Khmer (lines 66-68). Note that she interprets the students’ lack of understanding as a lexical problem that has to do with the words fortunately and unfortunately. She further provides a lexical explanation concerning these two words in English (lines 69-70). Then, the teacher describes how the turn-taking might be distributed among specific students. As the teacher is providing detailed instructions on how the co-construction of the story should be managed turn-by-turn, she produces an understanding check (okay?, line 71) which does not require an answer, as displayed by the continuation of the sentence. In lines 74-75, the teacher finishes the instruction sequence. However, in lines 76-77, L3 displays his difficulty in comprehending the activity, thereby indicating that the teacher’s reformulations of the instructions were not successful in ensuring this student’s understanding.

Extract 2 picks up the continuation of the instructions reproduced in Extract 1.

Extract 2

84 T: yes. okay for example. uhm fortunately I found a million dollars
85 on the road↑; and then Kunthea have to continue unfortunately what
86 happened? for example Dalany say unfortunately uhm the owner
87 came to take it BACK. alright. so you get the point?
88 L2: yes.
89 T: so you get the instruction?
90 LL: yes. ( )
91 T: yes;
92 L: passive form?

In lines 84-92, the teacher instructs the students on the next activity by providing a concrete example of how the co-constructed story might begin (fortunately I found a million dollars on the road, lines 84-85) and of how each student might contribute to it (unfortunately what happened in lines 85-86 and the owner came to get it back in lines 86-87). The teacher then produces an understanding check with so you get the point? (line 87). The question makes relevant a response from the students, a response which is necessary in order to close the instruction sequence and start the activity. However, the teacher receives oral confirmation (yes, line 88) from only one student, L2. The teacher pursues an answer from the entire class in line 89 by reformulating the question as: so you get the instruction?, indicating that she requires the entire class to confirm the comprehension of the instructions. The students provide a positive response (yes, line 90), which is repeated by the teacher in line 91. However, a student requests a clarification of the instructions in line 92 (passive form?), thus displaying that the instruction-giving sequence cannot be closed yet.

To summarize, understanding checks were used in instruction-giving sequences, before starting a new activity. In some cases, it took the teacher several attempts before she would receive an answer from the students (see Extract 1); the students’ silence was interpreted as lack of understanding and prompted the reformulation of part of the instructions. In other
cases, the students did provide confirmation, which is the preferred response of an understanding check. However, such confirmation may not be enough to display the students’ actual understanding (see Extract 2).

5.2 Activity managing questions

Activity managing questions were mainly used after instructions were given in order to get the activities started, and to moderate the activities by managing the students’ turn-taking.

Extract 3 picks up the talk once the teacher has completed the instruction-giving sequence for the first activity concerning good times and bad times.

Extract 3

5 T: and, bad times. alright so can I ask anyone (0.3) up here who would like to share about your good times, and your bad times.
6 (2)
7 T: Meaker who would like to share about your good times, and bad times?
8 L1: eight, page eighteen?
9 (4.5)
10 L1: eighteen?
11 T: eighteen. yes.
12 L1: yes
13 (1.7)
14 T: alright.
15 L2: for me, it was when I uhm finished the high school degree;

In lines 5-6, the teacher asks an open question without selecting a specific recipient: can I ask anyone who would like to share about your good times, and your bad times. This question displays that the teacher is ready to give the floor to the students and to get the activity started. The question is subsequently followed by a pause (line 7): no student takes the floor to answer the teacher’s question and thereby start the new activity. The teacher then pursues a response by naming one of the students (Meaker who would like to share about your good times and bad times, lines 8-9). In lines 10-15, the teacher does not receive a reply to the question from Meaker, but instead a clarification request concerning the page where the chapter on good times and bad times begins (page eighteen?, line 10). Such piece of information, however, is not crucial to answer the teacher's question; therefore, the request itself might be interpreted as a display of non-understanding. The teacher nevertheless provides a response. Once the side-sequence is complete, a 1.7 second pause (line 15) ensues, thereby showing that the student is not complying with the teacher’s request to start the activity. The teacher then pursues an answer from an unspecified recipient (someone?, line 16). Finally, an answer is provided by L2. In this sequence, the teacher needed to pursue an answer three times with selected and non-selected recipients in order to start the activity. Neither the first attempt (addressing the whole class in lines 5-6), nor the second attempt (selecting a specific student in lines 8-9) were successful.
Extract 4 picks up the talk as the teacher summarizes a student’s line in the co-constructed story-telling (okay so the police was your, your friend fortunately thanks!, line 184) and then opens the floor for the next student.

Extract 4

184 T: okay so the police was your, your friend fortunately thanks!
185 next one!
186 (0.5)
187 T: well↑
188 (1
189 T: unfortunately
190 L6: but everything was the change because uhm (5) uhm uhm it change
191 because
192 (3
193 L: ( )
194 L6: the leaders uhm, the leader of (1) of the police was uhm they,
195 L: (friend)
196 L6: they they, they saw me they saw me on camera. uhm a
197 camera ( ).

The managing question in Extract 4 (next one, line 185) displays the typical function and position of activity managing questions in the data: the question is formulated after a summary of the prior student’s talk and thereby shows that the student’s prior turn is over and a new student should take the floor. The question is formulated in such a way that it does not address a specific recipient, even though there is only one student who has not participated in the activity yet (L6; note that the teacher may well be looking at a specific student, but the audio recording does not make this information available). No one responds (see the pause in line 186). The teacher pursues a response in line 187 (well, delivered with upward intonation) without receiving any response. The teacher then starts formulating the next turn with unfortunately (line 189), thereby modeling the beginning of the next storyline in a further attempt to pursue a response. Finally, L6 provides an answer (lines 190-197).

Extract 5 picks up the talk after a student has provided a line for the co-constructed story-telling. The managing question in Extract 5 thus occurs in the same sequential environment as the managing question in Extract 4.

Extract 5

118 T: mm okay. (3) you got the original money back. alright okay so
119 let’s continue↑ what happened next? Kolab↓
120 (4)
121 T: right?
122: (3)
123 L2: unfortunately, (2) um, I
124 (5 seconds in khmer).
125 I got, (3) got stolen by thieves.

The teacher, in fact, summarizes the prior student’s line (you got the original money back, line 118) and then gives the floor to another student (what happened next? Kolab, line 119). After a long silence (4 seconds, line 120), the teacher pursues an answer (right?, line 121) and, after
another long pause (line 122), she receives the response from the targeted student (Kolab, that is L2).

Extract 6 picks up the talk as the teacher elaborates on L2’s response about his good times (see Extract 13).

**Extract 6**

22 T: alright, which is this, prestigious university right?
23 L2: [yes ]
24 T: [okay] but, this time is your good time how about your bad time;
25 L2: for my bad time the last the last year I lost my, my father
26 T : oh. so sad. you lost your father.

In line 24, the teacher specifies that the telling of L2’s good times is finished and pursues a response to the second question (how about your bad time). In line 25 L2 replies that he lost his father the previous year. The teacher’s question in line 24 therefore promotes the progressivity of the ongoing activity.

To summarize, activity managing questions were used both to prompt the beginning of an activity (Extract 3), but also during the activity in order to foster its progressivity (Extracts 3, 4, and 5) and to direct students to complete all the aspects of the task (Extract 6).

### 5.3 Repair questions

Repair was initiated mainly by the teacher during the ongoing activity on a student’s prior talk and the repair initiation tended to occur at the beginning of a student’s turn. The next two sections are divided into the two types of categories of repair that could be found; that is, repair targeting troubles of understanding and repair targeting the accomplishment of the task.

#### 5.3.1 Repair targeting troubles of understanding

Firstly, repair targeting troubles of understanding occurred when the teacher experienced troubles comprehending the students’ talk. Repair questions of this kind appeared throughout the class.

Extract 7 picks up the talk as Kunthea (L3) attempts to start a new storyline (fortunately (1.5) I ( ) my salary, line 132). The teacher initiates repair several times (lines 133, 135, 137, and 140).

**Extract 7**

132 L3: fortunately (1.5) I ( ) my salary
133 T: pardon?
134 L3: (stolen) salary
135 T: well pardon? ((laughter))
136 (3)
137 T: can you speak loudly?
138 (13)
In extract 7, repair is used for enhancing understanding. In line 133 the teacher initiates repair with an open-class repair initiator (pardon). That is, she simply addresses the existence of a trouble source without locating it precisely. The student, L3, repeats part of his turn (stolen salary, line 134), but the teacher initiates repair again with well pardon followed by laughter in line 135. The ensuing pause (line 136) signals that the teacher expects a response from the student, but that such response is not forthcoming. However, there could be a response not caught on the audio recording since the teacher then initiates repair again, explicitly addressing a hearing problem (can you speak loudly?, line 137). An extended pause of 13 seconds ensues (line 138): the teacher waits for the student to complete the repair. At this point, other students start to discuss in Khmer, but their talk is unintelligible. In line 140 the teacher initiates repair again (what is that?), though – given that the preceding lines are inaudible – it is impossible to determine what her repair initiation is targeting. In line 143 the teacher prompts the student to make a contribution to the story by starting with fortunately and thus continuing the formulation of the line started in line 132. L3 attempts a response in lines 146-147. The teacher then asks a topic elaboration question (what happened, when was, when the police /co/ caught you?, line 148), which makes relevant an elaboration of the student’s storyline so far. The following 6 second pause (line 149) signals that the teacher is giving L3 time to answer. Finally L3 produces an inaudible but very short answer in line 150, an answer on which the teacher initiates repair (what is that?, line 151), possibly targeting a hearing or an understanding problem. L3 provides a repair completion in line 152, but again his short turn is inaudible. At this point, the teacher seems to transition into a new phase of the repair sequence with okay so (line 153), followed by a question that aims to guide L3 to reflect upon how the problems in communication could be solved and what he needs in order to complete the task (what do you need to what do you want to say, line 153). The student replies in Khmer.
5.3.2 Repair targeting troubles with task accomplishment

Repair targeting troubles concerning the actual accomplishment of the task occurred more frequently in the beginning of the activity where the teacher would repair the student response and guide the student to provide the expected response.

Extract 8 picks up the talk as the second activity is in progress.

Extract 8
106 L4: fortunately (1.5) got, I got money from my mom;
107 L: *again, I got*
108 L4: *I got*
109 T: she got money from your mom.
110 L4: yes
111 T: uhm is it related to the first [one? (1.3) uhm ]
112 L3: [I think a little]
113 T: uhm no not really try another one. uhm yeah.
114 L: [{ ]}
115 L3: [fortunately]
116 L4: fortunately
117 LL: {(unintelligible)}
118 L4: fortunately I got (1) I got original money back.

It is L4’s turn and she produces her storyline in line 106 (fortunately (1.5) got, I got money from my mom). An unidentified student requests a repetition of her sentence in line 107 (again, I got); L4 starts to comply with the request in line 108 (I got), but in line 109 the teacher provides a candidate understanding of L4’s contribution by saying: she got money from your mom. Note that the teacher reformulates and corrects the storyline, thereby interpreting L’s repetition request as due to problems in understanding. At the same time, with her action, the teacher displays that she has comprehended L4’s answer. L4 confirms the teacher’s candidate understanding (yes, line 110). Thereafter, the teacher challenges the relation between L4’s storyline and the previous storyline, by initiating repair (is it related to the first one?, line 111). In partial overlap with the teacher’s question, L3 responds that he thinks that L4’s storyline is at least a little related to the previous one (line 112). In line 113, however, the teacher declares that the two storylines are not related (no not really) and directs L4 to produce a new storyline (try another one). L4 complies with the teacher’s request in lines 118 by saying: fortunately I got (1) I got original money back. The unfolding sequence thus reveals that the teacher’s turn in line 111 was in fact a reversed polarity question (Koshik, 2002) that aimed to correct the student’s storyline so that it followed the instructions (i.e., co-constructing a story by creating storylines that are related to each other).

Extract 9 occurs during the second activity. L3 seems uncomfortable continuing the sequence and resorts to speaking Khmer (line 169).

Extract 9
169 L3: ((transl. from Khmer)) I feel so embarrassed
170 T: okay
171 (1.5)
173 T: so fortunately, ((transl. from Khmer)) how was the luck
174 LL: ((laughter))
175 T: okay so can you speak in English?
176 (0.5)
177 okay;
178 (1.5)
179 let’s count right. he know the answer but he,
180 [doesn’t want to share];
181 LL: [doesn’t want to share];
In line 173, the teacher tries to elicit a response in English by providing the beginning of the new storyline (so fortunately), but resorts to Khmer herself. The teacher’s talk engenders laughter from the students (line 174). In line 175, the teacher’s turn does medium repair (Gafaranga, 2000, 2009) in that she asks L3 to speak English (so can you speak in English?). Note that the turn is formulated in terms of L3’s general ability to speak English. A pause follows (line 176), indicating that the teacher is giving L3 time to comply with the repair and produce the storyline in English. The teacher delivers okay (line 177) and waits for another second and a half (line 178). The teacher then engages the entire class by inviting them to start counting. This action invokes the rule that the students who do not participate in the ongoing activity within a certain amount of time have to sing or dance in front of the whole class. The teacher then provides an account for L3’s lack of response: he knows the answer but does not want to share (lines 179-180); the teacher’s turn is collaboratively completed by the students (see line 181: doesn’t want to share). In lines 182-183, the teacher reminds the students of the class rule: if no answer is forthcoming after counting to 10, the targeted student has to sing or dance. The following pause (line 184) shows that the teacher offers L3 an opportunity to answer the original question. In line 185, however, the teacher starts counting; since the students are not counting with her, she directs them to do so (count together) but the students do not comply. Finally, when the teacher has counted to three, L3 starts formulating his storyline in English, but his talk is inaudible (line 186). The teacher completes L3’s storyline on behalf of the student (okay so the police was your, your friend fortunately thanks!, line 187) and gives the floor to another student (next one, line 188).

Repair initiations were used by the teacher to manage intersubjectivity during the students’ accomplishment of the ongoing activities. Most of the repair instances seem to address understanding problems even though repair was also used to direct the students to accomplish the tasks according to the original instructions. To summarize, repairs were initiated by the teacher in order to clarify the student’s response; in the data, the repair initiations tended to occur at the beginning of students’ turns. This could be because students could have had problems comprehending the instructions of the task, thus producing sentences in need of repair. However, the displayed pauses indicate that the teacher allowed students time to respond to the repair initiation. The students’ silence might be in line with the Nguyen, Terlouw, and Pilot’s (2006) observation that students would rather remain silent than answer incorrectly.

5.4 Topic elaboration questions

This type of questions occurred only six times during the two activities and was therefore the most infrequent. Topic elaboration questions were produced during the ongoing accomplishment of the activities as the teacher prompted the students to expand their answer to the initial question.
Extract 10 picks up the talk as L2 responds to the question concerning his bad times. In his response, L2 mentions the death of his father. After producing an affiliative turn (so sad to hear that, line 29), the teacher invites L2 to explain the circumstances of the death (line 30).

Extract 10

27 L2: yes yes and he, uhm he don’t had sick plus uhm he, uhm he died very fast while ( ) for ( ) (countless) problems
29 T: okay, uhm uhm, alright so sad to hear that.
30 so could you tell us like why did he die?
31 L2: because (1.5) he have a problem with (5.5) fever.
33 T: one week later ( )
35 L2: he must change (1) the part of the body spine (the doctor say).
37 L2: one week later everything /va/, was changed
38 T: wow.
39 T: one week later everythin /va/, was changed
40 T: okay. *he died*. oh wow so sad to hear that right↑ ALRIGHT

Specifically, in line 30, the teacher asks L2 a topic elaboration question which is formulated as a Y/N question (so could you tell us like why did he die?). In lines 31, 33-35, 37 and 39, L2 produces a response, but its delivery and formulation seem rather problematic, as evidenced by the pauses that intersperse his turn. The sequence is closed by the teacher in line 40 with the upshot of the story.

Extract 11 picks up the talk as L5 provides his storyline for the co-constructed storytelling activity. L5 contributes to the story by stating that a bag which was stolen by a thief was empty (line 116).

Extract 11

116 L5: fortunately, the bag was stolen by thief is empty, was empty.
117 T: mm okay was empty.
118 L5: yes
119 T: why it was empty?
120 L5: because, I put nothing in it, in it, in it.
121 T: okay, next.

The topic elaboration question, which is also a referential question, is produced by the teacher in line 119 (why it was empty?). The question possibly has the function of contributing to the story by asking the students to provide more details. The student responds: because I put nothing in it (line 120). In line 121, the teacher closes the sequence (okay) and fosters the progressivity of the activity by giving the floor to another student (next).

Extract 12 illustrates a somewhat different case; that is, here it is the teacher who provides further elaboration on what the student had previously said and asks the student for confirmation. The extract picks up the talk as L2 provides an answer to the question concerning his good times. In his answer, he mentions the moment when he got his high school degree and was then able to apply to the institute of technology of Cambodia (lines 16-22).
In line 23, the teacher provides further information about the institute of technology mentioned by L2, thereby showing her recognition of the institute and her understanding of the institute as a prestigious university. At the same time, the teacher’s turn requires a confirmation from the student; that is, the student is not prompted to elaborate on his own answer, but rather to confirm the additional information offered by the teacher. However, the student is given little time to provide his confirmation (yes, line 24), as evidenced by the fact that the student’s answer is delivered in overlap with the teacher’s okay in line 25. The timing of the teacher’s action suggests that her turn in line 23 might also have had the function of fostering the other students’ recognition of the institute mentioned by L2 in line 22. The teacher’s okay in line 25 indicates that L2’s answer to the question concerning good times is complete and, with this action, the sequence is closed.

To summarize, topic elaboration questions occurred when students had responded to the initial question and were asked to develop their answers further. Topic elaboration questions were thus asked during the activities before the teacher indicated that the sequence was closed.

6 Discussion and conclusion

6.1 Summary of findings

The present conversation analytic study aimed to investigate how a teacher used questions to manage pedagogical activities in an EFL classroom in Cambodia. The research questions aimed to develop an empirically based categorization of the teacher questions occurring in the dataset on the basis of their function. The questions were also analyzed in relation to the pedagogical focus of the activities. Overall, each category of questions appeared at a specific point during the activities and contributed to the progress of the activities. Moreover, for some of the questions a connection could be found between the type of question and the local pedagogical focus of the ongoing activity.

In relation to the first research question (When are questions used during the course of a classroom activity?), the findings indicate that the teacher used questions during and after instruction-giving sequences, at the beginning of an activity, and during the progress of an activity.

Regarding the second research question (What kind of questions are used to manage the progressivity of a classroom activity?), four categories of questions were identified; that is,
understanding checks, activity managing questions, repair (regarding troubles of understanding as well as troubles with accomplishment of the task), and topic elaboration questions. These different types of questions were used to manage the progressivity of the classroom activities in relation to the local pedagogical focus (that is, in relation to the pedagogical focus that was relevant at the specific moment of the interaction when each question was asked).

Specifically, the third research question (Is there a connection between the type of question and the local pedagogical focus of the ongoing activity?) addressed the connection between the type of question and the local pedagogical focus of the ongoing activity. Understanding checks were produced during and after instruction-giving sequences, before the beginning of an activity. In this sequential environment, the local pedagogical focus consists of making sure that students understand the instructions, which is a prerequisite for the activity to start; hence the use of understanding checks. Activity managing questions, on the other hand, appeared at the beginning or during the ongoing accomplishment of the activities; such questions managed the students’ turn-taking and therefore ensured the accomplishment of the activity by all students. Repair regarding troubles of understanding and regarding the accomplishment of the task occurred at all times but more frequently at the beginning of students’ turns. The local pedagogical focus for the repair targeting troubles of understanding was to make students reformulate their response in a more intelligible manner, whereas the pedagogical focus of repair questions targeting the accomplishment of the task was to mold the students’ responses so that they would be in line with the activity goals (e.g., complying with the instructions). Finally, topic elaboration questions indicated that the students’ responses were not satisfying; in this case, the pedagogical focus had to do with prompting students to produce more adequate answers.

In what follows, each category will be discussed in more detail. Understanding checks appeared as the teacher was giving instructions. The students rarely produced an oral response to the understanding checks, which were then repeated or reformulated by the teacher. Even when the students did produce oral responses, such responses represented only claims of understanding. This may well have to do with the linguistic format of the questions, which were formulated as Y/N questions and indicated a preference for a positive response; at the same time, the students’ lack of response as well as their provision of positive responses may have to do with the students’ difficulties to give a response which could challenge the teacher (Guan Eng Ho, 2005). As Lightbown and Spada (2013) state, questions are necessary to investigate how much students have understood. However, the understanding checks in the data did not seem effective in having the students produce actual displays (or demonstrations) of understanding. Therefore, if the pedagogical aim of such questions was to verify the students’ understanding of the instructions, this aim was not accomplished by the understanding checks occurring in the data. Nevertheless, the teacher kept issuing such understanding checks during instruction-giving sequences.

Activity managing questions were used to start an activity or to foster its progressivity by managing the students’ turn-taking, so that each student would take a turn; such questions were also used to make sure that the students would complete all the aspects of the task. Some of these questions addressed specific recipients; other questions did not. In any case, speaker selection was not always effective in eliciting a response. The fact that the teacher led the conversation and moderated the turn-taking is in accordance with the teacher’s privileged turn-taking rights discussed by Markee (1995); such privilege is clearly in contrast with the management of turn-taking in ordinary conversation, where speakership is not pre-allocated (Walsh, 2002).
The third category consisted of repair questions, which were divided into two different types depending on the trouble sources they addressed: (a) repair questions targeting troubles of understanding (with the teacher claiming or displaying non-understanding of the students’ talk); and (b) repair questions targeting the accomplishment of the task. Repair regarding troubles of understanding occurred at all times throughout the activities. Both types of repair (a and b) were more frequent at the beginning of the activities; moreover, the teacher tended to initiate repair on the students’ talk right at the beginning of their turns. The repair regarding troubles of understanding served the purpose of enhancing the teacher’s understanding of the students’ talk, while giving the targeted student the opportunity to reformulate his/her turn in a more understandable way (see Extract 7). The second type of repair prompted the students to comply with the task instructions, so that the task could be accomplished accordingly (see Extract 8) and reminded them of the class rule to conduct the interaction in English (see Extract 9).

The last category, topic elaboration questions, appeared during the ongoing accomplishment of the activities. The use of this type of questions could be related to Brown’s (2007) observation that students need the teacher to ask questions in order to keep the conversation going. At the same time, topic elaboration questions also indicate the teacher’s orientation to the students’ answers as not fully adequate, as not sufficiently meeting the task demands (see Extracts 10 and 11). In this sense, then, topic elaboration questions can be said to target specific pedagogical goals.

Overall, the present study confirms prior findings concerning the fact that questions can have multiple functions (Ruiter, 2012). Furthermore, the research findings in this thesis confirm the view of a dominating teacher who directs the dynamics of classroom interaction through questions (Avdic et al., 2016; Dahlkwist, 2012; Lee, 2006).

6.2 Discussion and pedagogical implications

In this section, the pedagogical implications of each question category are discussed. First of all, in the present data, understanding checks were seen not to ensure the students’ comprehension of the instructions. Thus, such questions were not effective in achieving their local pedagogical focus. According to Walsh (2002), it is important that questions focus on quality instead of quantity. Indeed, the understanding checks in the data were rather frequent; however, one could argue that they were formulated in such a way that did not succeed in providing the teacher with actual information concerning the students’ understanding. It is true that, from an action-based point of view, the preferred response to an understanding check is confirmation. In addition to that, many understanding checks in the data were formulated as yes/no questions that projected a linguistic preference for a yes response. The understanding checks thus appeared to have a strong preference structure, both in terms of the expected responsive action (confirmation) and in terms of how such response would be formulated (yes). This fact clearly affected the students’ responses. Since understanding checks have been displayed to be vital in the L2 classroom, the pedagogical implication of this analysis is that understanding checks should be formulated in a way that requires more than a yes/no answer (Lee, 2006). Such formulation might allow students to challenge what the teacher says and therefore to admit that they have not understood the instructions (Koshik, 2002).

Second, activity managing questions were used frequently in order to moderate the activities and the turn-taking. However, the fact that the teacher was the only person who
moderated the classroom activities can be seen as inhibiting the students’ ability to acquire natural interaction (Walsh, 2002). At the same time, the teacher’s role in managing the students’ turn-taking may also be due to the type of activity. Both activities, in fact, were whole-class activities in which the students were instructed to talk one at a time; the teacher’s managing questions therefore supported the one-student-at-a-time structure of each activity and made sure that such activity could progress. Clearly, if one of the goals of classroom interaction is to promote the students’ ability to participate in more spontaneous interactions, then small group activities would be more adequate, in that group work generates interactive language (Brown, 2007) and a more natural interaction.

Third, repair questions targeting troubles in understanding and troubles with the accomplishment of the task seemed to enhance student activity and could therefore be a useful practice that the teacher uses to promote the local pedagogical focus. In addition, teachers should continue to use repair in order to target understanding troubles and troubles with task accomplishment since this practice could foster learning (Walsh, 2002) and student participation. In fact, the two types of repair initiations found in the data prompted students to produce more comprehensible turns and to accomplish the intended task.

Finally, topic elaboration questions did often appear as wh-questions (see Extracts 11 and 12) through which students were asked to elaborate their responses. These questions were used as referential questions; that is, questions for which the answer is not previously known to the teacher. Referential questions have been shown to promote learning (Guan Eng Ho, 2005) and could therefore be used more frequently in the classroom.

6.3 Conclusion

The present conversation analytic study has investigated: (a) which types of questions a teacher in an EFL classroom in Cambodia asked during two activities; (b) when the question types appeared; and (c) what kind of pedagogical foci the questions served. This study was based on the analysis of an audio-recording of classroom interaction. The analysis started with unmotivated looking; that is, it was not affected by any priori assumption about the Cambodian culture or by any ethnographic information about this particular group of students and their teacher.

The findings in this study suggest that teachers should be aware of their use of questions. Specifically, teachers should know which questions can be used, when, and what pedagogical focus they serve. Indeed, questions are important in the classroom and serve multiple purposes as displayed in this study. Being aware of the questions’ purposes can lead to a change in how questions are formulated (as seen in the case of understanding checks); at the same time, teachers should know that the type of questions might be related to the structure of the activity itself (as seen with the activity managing questions). In addition, questions which seem to enhance learning opportunities and student participation can be asked more frequently (as seen in the analysis of repair questions and topic elaboration questions).

This small-scale study was based on just one recording. Therefore, more data should be collected in order to draw further implications concerning the use of questions, the kind of responses they elicit, and the link between types of questions and students’ learning and participation. Further research is demanded in this domain in order to reach a deeper insight.
as to how teacher questions influence the progressivity of activities with regard to the local
pedagogical focus. Another limitation of the study concerns the lack of access to video-
recordings, which would have provided information concerning eye-gaze and other embodied
actions.

Despite the limitations due to the use of audio-recordings and to the small scale nature of
the study, this study has clearly shown that questions are a vital part of classroom interaction
and that they are important for the teacher in order to progress and manage classroom
activities. The main contribution of this study concerns the fact that here, for the first time,
specific question categories have been analyzed in relation to the timing of their occurrence
and in relation to the pedagogical purpose they serve. These findings could be of interest for
interaction researchers and practitioners (such as teacher trainers and teachers), in that they
can gather a deeper understanding of how classroom interaction works and of how classroom
activities can be managed through the use of questions that may also promote learning and
participation.
7 References


8 Appendix

1. Transcription conventions

T: Teacher
L: Unidentified student
LL: Several students speaking simultaneously
L1: Identified student
(0.5) a pause of 0.5 second
(1) a pause of one second
yes. a full stop indicates falling intonation
? a question mark indicates rising intonation
so, a comma indicates low-rising intonation, suggests continuation
↓ a downward arrow marks falling shift in intonation
so why underlined letters indicate marked stress/emphasis
WHAT capitals indicate loud volume
what lower case indicates normal conversation volume
◦ what ◦ degree signs indicate decreased volume, often a whisper
(( laughter )) verbal descriptions of actions noted in the transcripts
( word) indicates a stretch of talk which is unintelligible
unclear or probable item
[ ] squared brackets indicate simultaneous speech for example:

L1: [ yeah. ]
T: [ okay ]
Analysis of Classroom Interaction

**Purpose of this Study**

This study aims to collect data that will be used in the student investigator’s BA degree project. The study focuses on student and teacher interaction in the classroom with the purpose to investigate and further understand classroom interaction which takes place in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom.

**Procedures**

If you agree to participate, you will be video- and audio-recorded during one class which focuses on oral skills. The recordings will be watched and transcribed by the student investigator who will analyze them. Portions of these recordings and transcripts will be later shared with the supervisor and extracts from the transcripts will be included in the student investigator’s BA essay.

**Criteria**

In order to participate you need to:

- Be formally eligible to teach English in Cambodia (certified/University diploma e.g.)
- Having taught English as a second language for at least one year prior to the investigation
Confidentiality

Your confidentiality will be maintained in the following manner. First, your data and consent form will be kept separate. Second, your name will be replaced with a pseudonym for analysis; any excerpts from video and audio files will be transcribed and used with the associated pseudonym. At no time will your image be associated with your real name. Any original recordings or data files will be stored in a secured location accessed only by the student investigator.

Questions about the Study

If you have any questions about this study, you should feel free to ask them at any point in time. You can contact the student investigator or the supervisor by e-mail, at the e-mail address provided above.

Voluntary Consent

By signing below, you agree that the above information has been explained to you and all your current questions have been answered. You understand that you may ask questions about any aspect of this research study during the course of the study and in the future.

_____ I agree to participate in this study.
_____ I DO NOT agree to participate in this study.

_____ I agree to be video-recorded.
_____ I DO NOT agree to be video-recorded.

_____ I agree to be audio-recorded.
_____ I DO NOT agree to be audio-recorded.

__________________________________  __________________________
Participant printed name           Participant Signature

______________________________
Date