

МЕТОДИКА НАВЧАННЯ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ В СЕРЕДНІЙ ШКОЛІ

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INSTRUCTIONAL POTENTIAL OF QUESTIONING IN UKRAINIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS: AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

This study examines the effectiveness and implementation of questioning strategies in Ukrainian secondary school English textbooks. Through a comprehensive analysis of 315 questions from two eleventh-grade English textbooks for secondary school, this research investigates how questions function as planned scaffolding tools within educational materials. The theoretical framework draws upon established questioning taxonomies, including Bloom's revised taxonomy and contemporary scaffolding theory, to evaluate question types, cognitive complexity, and pedagogical effectiveness. The empirical analysis reveals significant limitations in current Ukrainian English textbooks, including an overemphasis on lower-order cognitive skills (such as remembering and understanding), inadequate representation of higher-order thinking questions, and the absence of opportunities for student-generated questioning. The findings indicate a lack of alignment with text-dependent questioning strategies and insufficient metacognitive guidance for learners. These results suggest the need for improved question design in Ukrainian EFL materials to foster critical thinking, authentic language use, and communicative competence. The study contributes to understanding how questioning strategies embedded in educational materials can support foreign language acquisition, providing insights for textbook developers and classroom practitioners.

Keywords: questioning strategies, English language teaching, English textbooks, secondary school, planned scaffolding, Bloom's taxonomy.

Introduction

The pedagogical effectiveness of foreign language instruction depends significantly on the strategic implementation of questioning techniques within educational materials. In the contemporary landscape of English language teaching, the ability to formulate effective questions represents a cornerstone of the professional communicative competence for 21st-century educators. In the Ukrainian context, the utilisation of questioning in English language teaching has undergone significant evolution. While traditional approaches often relied on basic comprehension questions, modern pedagogy emphasises the importance of diverse questioning strategies to promote critical thinking and authentic language use.

The pedagogical value of questioning as an educational instrument has been recognised since Socratic times. Contemporary scholarship reinforces this

understanding through extensive research that can be organised into three primary domains related to questioning: question typologies, cognitive complexity levels, and questioning methodology applications, encompassing structured and responsive support strategies, as well as learner-initiated versus educator-initiated inquiry approaches (Calık & Aksu, 2018). Through an extensive meta-analytical examination, Davoudi and Sadeghi (2015) conducted a thorough investigation of empirical research on questioning approaches spanning four decades (1974-2014). Their evaluation of more than 100 research investigations demonstrated that both teacher-led and student-generated questioning fulfil essential functions in promoting successful learning experiences.

Contemporary pedagogical practice demonstrates that educators employ questioning strategies daily to achieve

multiple instructional objectives. Research indicates that strategic questioning serves to enhance classroom discourse and interaction patterns (Harvey & Light, 2015; Sujariati et al., 2016; Wangru, 2016; Al-Zahrani & Al-Bargi, 2017) and functions as a formative assessment tool for evaluating student comprehension and academic performance (Sujariati et al., 2016). Furthermore, research findings demonstrate the efficacy of questioning techniques in fostering higher-order cognitive processes, including the development of critical thinking, written communication proficiency, reading comprehension enhancement, content mastery, and the acquisition of metacognitive skills (Davoudi & Sadeghi, 2015).

Therefore, the researchers admit that the implementation of systematic questioning significantly improves instructional quality and pedagogical effectiveness (Iksan & Daniel, 2015; Sujariati et al., 2016). Within second language acquisition contexts specifically, strategic questioning methodologies enhance learners' communicative competence and facilitate comprehensive linguistic development across multiple skill domains. However, while international research on educational questioning is extensive, Ukrainian linguistic research on the issue in pedagogical discourse remains limited. Most Ukrainian teacher training programs lack specialised courses on questioning strategies, and empirical research on questioning in Ukrainian EFL contexts is minimal (Parashchuk, 2017).

The goal of this progress report is to address the above-mentioned research gap by examining the role of questions in English language textbooks as instruments of planned scaffolding. By analysing the types, functions, and pedagogical effectiveness of textbook questions, this research aims to contribute to our understanding of how questioning strategies embedded in educational materials can support foreign language acquisition and provide insights for both textbook developers and classroom practitioners in optimising question-based learning experiences.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design to examine questioning strategies as scaffolding tools in Ukrainian secondary school English textbooks. The research began with quantitative content analysis to identify frequency patterns of question types, followed by qualitative thematic analysis to explore the pedagogical functions and scaffolding potential of these questions. This approach enabled both systematic categorisation and deeper understanding of the educational value. The analytical framework for this study relies on two theoretical foundations: (1) Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (Bloom, 1994), which is employed to categorise cognitive complexity levels of questions across six domains: remembering, understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating, and creating; 2) Planned Scaffolding Theory (Gibbons, 2015), used for examining how questions function as instructional supports that bridge students' current competence and target learning objectives. The empirical analysis encompassed a purposive sample of 315 questions extracted from exercises in two widely-used English textbooks for 11th grade: Karpyuk (2019) and Morska (2019). These textbooks were selected based on the following criteria: official approval by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine; wide distribution across Ukrainian secondary schools; representation of different proficiency levels (standard vs. specialised); availability through the official electronic repository (Institute of Education Content Modernisation, n.d.). The sampling procedure relied on the systematic extraction of questions from all skill-based sections, including Reading comprehension exercises, listening comprehension tasks, speaking activities, and Writing assignments (where questioning was employed). Questions embedded within grammar exercises and vocabulary drills were excluded to maintain focus on communicative language use.

Questions as Tools for Planned Scaffolding

Questioning as an instructional tool has a long history in educational research. In the United States, the formal study of questioning began in the early 1900s when Stevens (as cited in Marzano & Simms, 2012) surveyed teachers' questioning behaviours, establishing a foundation for ongoing debate and research. However, systematic research into effective questioning practices did not emerge until the mid-1950s, when researchers began pursuing methods to categorise and understand different types of questions. One of the most influential early contributions came from Sanders (1966) in his work, *Classroom Questions: What Kinds?* Sanders (1966) adapted Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom, 1994) to create a framework for questioning types, significantly popularising Bloom's taxonomy as a cognitive scaffold for educational questioning.

Originally, Bloom (1994) developed his taxonomy not specifically for questioning analysis but as a classification system for educational objectives and skills, designed to help university examiners create assessment materials. The initial classification system organised educational competencies across six progressive tiers: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. A substantial restructuring occurred in 2001, characterised by two fundamental modifications. Firstly, the category labels were transformed from nouns to verbs to more accurately represent dynamic learning activities. Secondly, the sequential arrangement was modified, positioning "creating" at the highest level while relocating "evaluating" to a lower position. The updated classification framework now encompasses the following: remember, understand, apply, analyse, evaluate, and create (Wilson & Smetana, 2016). Therefore, this framework distinguishes between lower-cognitive order skills (remembering, understanding, applying) and higher-cognitive order skills (analysing, evaluating, creating). Since the

mid-1960s, Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom, 1994) has served as the cognitive framework for questioning hierarchies in educational settings (Marzano & Simms, 2012).

Analysing these findings, Marzano and Simms (2012) argue that Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom, 1994) is not appropriate for classifying individual questions and framing teacher questioning. This criticism reflects growing concerns about the rigid application of hierarchical thinking models. The researchers argue that focusing on question sequences rather than individual question levels is more effective. They have developed a four-phase questioning sequence model, which includes questions about details, questions about categories, questions that require elaboration, and questions that demand evidence for elaboration (Marzano & Simms, 2012).

Ritchhart et al. (2011) offer a more balanced perspective, viewing Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom, 1994) as a practical starting point for analysing thinking processes. They challenge the assumption that understanding represents a lower-order skill, arguing that understanding is a primary goal of teaching (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). Moreover, they insist that understanding is an outcome of thinking but not a type of thinking (Ritchhart et al., 2011).

The theoretical foundation for effective questioning extends to fundamental cognitive inquiry patterns. McKenzie (2003) identifies three essential question types that drive critical thinking: "Why?" questions that analyse causal relationships and lead to problem-solving, "How?" questions that form the basis for synthesis and invention, and "Which?" questions that require reasoned choice-making based on established criteria and evidence. Among these, "Which?" questions are considered most crucial as they determine thoughtful decision-making processes.

According to McComas & Abraham (2004), questioning serves as a crucial educational tool that helps organise lesson

content, structure learning activities, and assess student comprehension. The researchers indicate that teachers use 300-400 questions per working day, making questioning one of the most frequent speech acts in teacher discourse and a tool of effective scaffolding.

The notion of scaffolding, originally proposed by Bruner (as cited in Gibbons, 2015) and initially denoting temporary structural support in construction, has been transformed within educational contexts to describe provisional assistance that progressively diminishes as students gain mastery of content. Textbook questioning functions as predetermined scaffolding, conceptualized as a pre-established support framework intended to enhance learning processes. Broadly characterised as the delivery of temporary, forward-looking, and focused assistance, scaffolding seeks to aid learners in constructing new knowledge, competencies, and comprehension (Reynolds & Goodwin, 2016). Predetermined scaffolding encompasses the support offered through educational tools and curricula that can be implemented across diverse contexts but operates independently of students' immediate requirements, thereby establishing academic textbooks as vehicles for predetermined scaffolding. In contrast to predetermined scaffolding, responsive scaffolding encompasses the assistance delivered by educators that adapts to learners' instantaneous needs throughout instruction (Reynolds & Goodwin, 2016).

Contemporary scaffolding research identifies multiple types, including sensory scaffolding (utilising visual and manipulative tools), interactive scaffolding (promoting social interaction), and graphic scaffolding (employing diagrams and graphic organisers) (Huynh, 2017). Johnson (2019) categorises interactive scaffolding tools to include questioning alongside feedback, hints, instruction, explanation, modelling, and highlighting. Further contributing to the question classification, Day and Park (2005) propose a five-level comprehension

question framework that encompasses four types of questions: *literal comprehension questions* (focus on direct textual information, facts, vocabulary, and basic details), *reorganisation questions* (require students to synthesise information from multiple text sections); *inference questions* (combine textual understanding with personal knowledge and intuition); prediction questions (use text comprehension and prior knowledge to anticipate outcomes); *evaluation questions* (require comprehensive judgments about textual aspects). Questions are also categorised by format (direct vs. indirect), response type (open vs. closed), and cognitive level. According to research, open questions encourage elaborated responses and promote critical thinking, whereas closed questions seek specific, limited answers and maintain conversational control.

To make language instruction more effective, teachers should not only utilise various types of questioning but also be flexible with their questioning techniques to promote a positive learning environment (Long et al., 2015). First, it is recommended to use a step-up questioning technique, which involves asking increasingly complex questions to simultaneously engage and challenge learners, thereby avoiding a too-challenging or intimidating atmosphere. For more advanced students, questioning can start at a higher-order thinking level and be open-ended, with a step-down to lower-level questions if learners face difficulties finding answers. Second, it is advisable that educators implement strategies to mitigate psychological discomfort while utilising questioning techniques in the classroom, as the interrogative nature of questioning necessarily positions learners in a state of cognitive vulnerability. Establishing clear pedagogical expectations through explicit communication regarding the implementation of questioning strategies serves as a foundational approach to creating psychological safety in the learning context.

Therefore, the analysed literature reveals that questions function as essential

pedagogical tools that bridge the gap between teacher intention and student response. The main functions the questioning utilises in pedagogical instruction boil down to scaffolding language development, enhancing critical thinking, facilitating learner autonomy, and supporting communicative competence.

Understanding questions as planned scaffolding tools provides a framework for analysing their role in textbook design and classroom implementation. As we have mentioned above, despite the recognised importance of questioning in language education, the systematic analysis of questions within English language textbooks, particularly their role as planned scaffolding tools, remains underexplored in educational research. This gap is particularly pronounced in contexts where textbooks serve as the primary instructional resource, making the quality and pedagogical appropriateness of embedded questions crucial for achieving effective outcomes of language learning.

Results and discussion

As mentioned above, the empirical research involved the analysis of utilising questioning as a planned scaffolding tool in two English textbooks for grade 11 of the Ukrainian secondary school. The analysis shows that the textbooks under consideration incorporate questions within sections dedicated to instructing reading comprehension, listening comprehension, and speaking. Additionally, the writing section features singular tasks that employ questioning across all surveyed textbooks.

Tasks for reading comprehension predominantly adopt a multiple-choice or "true-false-not given" format. Similarly, tasks for listening comprehension adhere to a comparable structure. Speaking tasks involving questions typically comprise 5 to 10 topically aligned questions, often lacking coherent sequencing and relying substantially on the topical vocabulary introduced in the vocabulary section of a given unit. Moreover, some questions are

formulated in a manner that may hinder student comprehension (e.g. "Do the elite in Ukraine attend universities? Do elite universities help or harm the country? What are the skills that separate good students from bad students?" (Morska, 2019, p. 149). It is imperative that well-designed questions incorporate appropriate scaffolding to facilitate student understanding of the questioning.

The activities designated as "*Answer the following questions*" are insufficiently featured in the examined textbooks and demonstrate poor correspondence with the cognitive tiers specified in Bloom's updated classification of educational goals, which organizes competencies into remembering, understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating, and creating (Calik & Aksu, 2018). This misalignment is evident across all surveyed textbooks. The above-mentioned taxonomy is widely recognised as a significant educational model for guiding instruction, assessment, curriculum development, and materials evaluation. Our examination of questioning tasks in Ukrainian English textbooks reveals a bias toward lower-order cognitive skills, such as remembering and understanding, with inconsistent inclusion of questions that require both lower and higher-order thinking skills. While lower-order questions are valuable for summarising basic facts and concepts, higher-order questions are essential for fostering critical and creative thinking skills. This discrepancy underscores the need for a more balanced approach in the cognitive skills embedded in questioning tasks.

Another feature of the analysed Ukrainian textbooks of English is that they do not utilise text-dependent question taxonomy that focuses on developing students' skills of reading deeply and responding with evidence from the text. The text-dependent questions are categorised into general understanding, key details, vocabulary and structure, author's purpose, inferences, opinions, arguments, and

intertextual connections. As evident from the text-dependent question categories above, they progress from focusing on the comprehension of individual parts of the text to the comprehension of the whole text. Text-dependent questions should be sufficiently specific to necessitate reference to the text for answers, allowing students to explore the meaning of important vocabulary in context or some aspect of the text, e.g. the author's purpose, discriminate between facts or opinions presented in the text, etc. Undoubtedly, the application of the text-dependent question taxonomy while reading informational texts, which make up the bulk of the texts in the surveyed Ukrainian textbooks, would contribute to teaching students to understand complex texts in English.

None of the English textbooks included in our survey incorporates tasks prompting students to generate their own questions, despite the widely acknowledged benefits of this activity in enhancing critical thinking and interactional competence, particularly within the framework of dialogic pedagogy. Classroom observations reveal that teachers dominate 64 per cent of the lesson time, with 80 per cent of classroom discourse dedicated to posing, answering, or responding to questions. Furthermore, teachers typically generate one to four questions per minute during question-asking, while students produce an estimated 1.3 to 4.0 questions per hour (Johnston et al., 1987).

The limitations in frequency and complexity of student-generated inquiries stem from obstacles at three distinct levels: 1) students' struggle in recognizing their own knowledge gaps, such as detecting conflicting information, identifying essential missing data for a solution, and distinguishing between superfluous and crucial information; 2) social impediments arising from the fear of appearing ignorant by failing to answer a challenging question and potentially losing face; 3) a deficiency in developing practical question-posing skills

(Reynolds & Goodwin, 2016). Integrating additional exercises for student-generated inquiries in textbooks, designed as structured support, will enable learners to navigate these barriers and ultimately acquire vital communication skills essential for their future academic and professional endeavours.

The survey findings indicate that Ukrainian English textbooks lack metacognitive guidance for learners regarding effective questioning techniques. A significant implication for the teachers that the research has explicated is that textbook developers and EFL teachers should integrate recent research on effective questioning techniques into their learning materials to enhance learning outcomes in English language instruction. Furthermore, it is recommended that pre-service education for EFL teachers prioritise the development of metacognitive knowledge and training to improve their questioning skills.

Conclusion

The analysis of questioning strategies in Ukrainian secondary school English textbooks has revealed significant gaps between current practices and contemporary pedagogical research on effective questioning methodologies. The examination of 315 questions across two eleventh-grade textbooks demonstrates that while questions are present as instructional tools, their implementation lacks the sophistication and strategic design necessary to optimise language learning outcomes. The primary findings indicate that Ukrainian English textbooks predominantly employ lower-order cognitive questions, with insufficient integration of higher-order thinking skills. This cognitive imbalance limits students' chances to cultivate analytical thinking abilities and genuine language application skills. Furthermore, the absence of text-dependent questioning strategies represents a missed opportunity to enhance reading comprehension skills and evidence-based reasoning abilities. Therefore, the

research identifies three critical areas requiring immediate attention: the need for balanced cognitive engagement through a combination of lower and higher-order questions; the incorporation of student-generated questioning opportunities to foster learner autonomy and metacognitive awareness; and the design of questions that provide appropriate scaffolding for diverse learner needs.

The implications of these findings extend beyond textbook design to encompass broader educational policy considerations. Ukrainian EFL teacher training programs must prioritise questioning methodology training to equip educators with the skills that will enable effective implementation of questioning techniques in textbooks. Additionally, collaboration between textbook developers, educational researchers, and classroom practitioners is indispensable for ensuring that future materials align with evidence-based questioning strategies.

The limitations of this study, including its focus on two textbooks and a specific grade level, suggest avenues for future research. Further studies examining the instructional potential of questioning strategies on student learning outcomes, comparative analyses across different educational levels, and investigation of teacher adaptation of textbook questions would provide valuable insights for the Ukrainian EFL context.

Ultimately, this research underscores the critical role of questioning in teaching English and highlights the urgent need for reform in English textbook design in Ukraine. By addressing the identified limitations and implementing research-informed questioning strategies, Ukrainian EFL education can better prepare secondary schoolers for the linguistic and cognitive demands of global communication. The transformation of questioning practices represents not merely a pedagogical adjustment but a fundamental shift toward learner-centered, cognitively engaging language instruction that honours the

complexity and potential of Ukrainian English language learners.

As Ukraine continues to strengthen its international connections and academic partnerships, the effectiveness of English language instruction becomes increasingly vital. This study contributes to that effort by providing a foundation for evidence-based improvements in questioning methodology, ultimately supporting the communicatively competent and critically thinking English language users who can participate effectively in global academic and professional communities.

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АНАЛІЗ ВИКОРИСТАННЯ НАВЧАЛЬНОГО ПОТЕНЦІАЛУ ЗАПИТАНЬ В ПІДРУЧНИКАХ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ ДЛЯ УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ СЕРЕДНЬОЇ ШКОЛИ

Постановка проблеми. Ефективність викладання іноземної мови значною мірою залежить від якості та стратегічної реалізації техніки запитань у навчальних матеріалах. Попри визнану важливість запитань в освіті, систематичний аналіз запитань у підручниках з англійської мови, зокрема їх роль як інструментів спланованого скафолдингу, залишається недостатньо дослідженим в українському освітньому контексті. Це особливо актуально для середньої школи, де підручники слугують основним навчальним ресурсом, що робить якість та педагогічну доцільність запитань критично важливими для досягнення ефективних результатів вивчення мови.

Методологія. У дослідженні використано якісний контент-аналіз для вивчення стратегій запитань у двох українських підручниках англійської мови для 11 класу: О. Карпюк (2019, стандартний

рівень) та Л. Морської (2019, спеціалізований рівень). Емпіричний аналіз охопив 315 запитань з вправ, проаналізованих за двома критеріями: розподіл типів запитань та рівень когнітивного залучення. Теоретична основа ґрунтується на переглянутій таксономії Блума, теорії спланованого скафолдингу та стратегіях запитань на основі тексту.

Результати та обговорення. Аналіз виявив значні обмеження в сучасних українських підручниках англійської мови, зокрема надмірний акцент на уміннях нижчого когнітивного порядку (запам'ятовування та розуміння), неадекватне представлення запитань вищого порядку мислення та відсутність опцій для створення запитань учнями. Результати дослідження також вказують на відсутність ефективних технік текстоцентричних запитань у завданнях, спрямованих на вдосконалення компетентності учнів у читанні.

Висновки. Підкреслено необхідність покращення дизайну запитань в українських підручниках англійської мови для середньої школи, що сприятиме критичному мисленню, автентичному використанню мови та розвитку комунікативної компетентності школярів. Результати надають цінні висновки для розробників підручників та практиків класної роботи, спрямовані на оптимізацію навчального досвіду на основі вдосконалення технік запитань в українському контексті навчання іноземних мов.

Ключові слова: стратегія запитань, підручник англійської мови, навчання англійської мови, середня школа, спланований скафолдинг, таксономія Блума.

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