

Hornby Educational Trust

Questioning in English Language Classrooms: A Reflection in Action

India

2022-2023 Alumni Project Report

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Hornby Alumni Projects

Project Overview

Title	Questioning in English Language Classroom: A Reflection in Action
Country	India
Dates of project	2022-2023

1. Background and rationale

What are the main issues in your English teaching and learning context? How did these issues influence your choice of project? Were there also other important contextual factors to consider?

POET, a COP of English language teachers, has been playing a key role in supporting its members' professional learning since the starting of the Covid pandemic. The proposed project aims to support POET members move towards using different types of questions as a trigger for classroom interaction and critical thinking.

A key language teaching strategy is to use questioning as a learning tool to promote classroom interaction. For example, the question "what according to you could be an appropriate title for this passage? Explain your reason for giving this title", may "trigger" critical thinking as well as generate scope for a dialogic interaction in class. So, questions have the potential to develop language skills as well as confidence of the learners. However, all questions do not achieve these. According to Myhill and Dunkin (2005) teachers often use questions to limit thinking to factual recall (e.g. Who is the poet? or From which piece is the quotation taken?).

In West Bengal English language teachers in the secondary level hardly have clear concept about different types of questions and their uses at different stages of a lesson in their classrooms. Their use of very specific, closed questions (e.g. What did Mr. Peppy sell?) only at the end of a lesson often results in relatively silent children and lack of opportunity for generating critical thinking, and dialogic interaction

Secondly, assessments being a key to understanding student learning, English language teachers also need to know how to exploit questioning for assessment purposes. For example while setting questions for assessing reading skills teachers often design questions that would assess learners' scanning skills only, with no question assessing skimming, inferring, synthesizing skills which are necessary aspects related to developing reading skills.

In POET's earlier workshops, POET members stressed on their need to know about assessment tools, among which questioning was the most important one. They also inquired about what kind of questions were to be set for formative assessment in class, and what types of questions were to be used for summative assessments.

The closure of schools during the pandemic has resulted in great learning loss of language learners. Teachers needed to assess learners' levels in English language skills to start the teaching learning process and then to continue to assess them formatively for effective teaching.

Finally, even while setting MCQ type questions English language teachers seem to be unaware of the principles of setting such questions.

Hence the proposed project will organize webinar and workshops for POET members focusing on enabling POET members to use different types of questions in English language classrooms to generate critical thinking and create scope for learners' language use. The project would also enable teachers to design appropriate questions for formative and summative assessment of language skills.

2. Project objectives

By the end of the project POET members along with a group of local English language teachers will be able to:

- i. understand the importance of questioning in English language classrooms
- ii. use different types of questioning in English language classrooms
- iii. use questioning for developing critical thinking of learners
- iii. use questioning for developing English language skills of learners
- iv. use questioning for formative assessment of ELLs in class
- v. use appropriate questions for summative assessment of ELLs

Evaluation

1. Project objectives

To what extent do you feel your objectives were met? If they were not met, or only partially met, can you explain why?

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2. Project impact

What was the impact of your project on:

- a) you
- b) your Association(s) / Institution(s)?
- c) the people involved in your project?
- d) the wider community?

What evidence do you have to demonstrate this?

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3. Sharing with a wider audience

Who did you share information about the project with? Why, when, and how did you do this?

What reactions did you get?

Do you have any further plans for sharing more widely?

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4. Overall reflections

As a result of planning, implementing, and disseminating the project, what did you learn about:

- a) organising / managing a project?
- b) the strengths / weaknesses and future needs of your TA(s) /Institution(s) and / or working context?

Would you do anything differently next time?

Would you like to suggest anything to another alumni planning to undertake a similar project?

Click or tap here to enter text.

5. Next steps

How do you plan to continue and / or build on what has been achieved through this project? Why? How might you begin?

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Permissions

This report is primarily for the Hornby Trustees and British Council internal review and records. However, we do want to promote your hard work and would like to share what you have done with other Hornby awardees and publicly via the Internet.

- Can you please tick here if you give your permission to share your report?
- Please tick here if you would like your project to be considered for presentation at the 2025 IATEFL conference (the Hornby Trust will select from reports submitted and will support one team member from each of these projects to attend the conference).

Please indicate who would give the presentation if selected:

Click or tap here to enter text. (Name of presenter)

Signature

Click or tap here to enter text.

Name

Click or tap here to enter text.

Contact email address

Click or tap here to enter text.

Date

Click or tap here to enter text.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Expenditure

Were there any **significant differences** from your planned budget? By significant we mean you spent far more than planned, or you were given a donation from a partner that was not expected, for example.

Note any costs below that exceeded the original budget by £200 (below this amount does not need including). Please also tell us what caused these changes in the *Reflection* section below the two tables.

a. local funding

Description	Breakdown	Total cost	Final cost
Venue for workshops and dissemination	2x2 =4 days (workshops) +1 day (dissemination) = 5 days	Free but would have cost – £200@x2 = £400 +£100 = £500	
Totals:		Free	

b. Hornby funding

Description	Breakdown	Total cost	Final cost
Webinar (Activity 5)	Fees for expert and technology	£100	
Food for workshops (activity 3 & 6)	25x£8 x2 days (workshop1) - £400 25x£8 x2 days (workshop 2) - £400	£800	
Conveyance for Activity 3	£150	£300	
Conveyance for activity 6	£150		

Lodging for activity 3	Lodging at Kolkata	£200	
Lodging for activity 6	Lodging at Uttar Dinajpur	£50	
Miscellaneous	Printing module, photography, stationaries etc.	£50	
Totals:		1500	

Reflections:

Please share your thoughts here:

Appendix 2: Planned activity

Review your planned activity below and then reflect on any changes that were needed and explain why these were necessary.

Dates	Description of activities	Duration
January'23-February'23	Base line survey about teachers' knowledge and use of questioning (activity 1)	2 months
March-April'23	Writing of module for workshops (activity 2)	2 months
May-June'23	1 st workshop on learning about types of questions and their use in English language classroom at Kolkata (activity 3)	2 days
July-August'23	Feedback on 1 st workshop and its implementation- group-meetings online (activity 4)	2 months
September'23	Webinar on alternative assessments (activity 5)	1 hr
September-October'23	2 nd workshop on learning about use of questions for formative and summative assessments at Uttar Dinajpur (activity 6)	2 days
November-December'23	Feedback on 2 nd workshop after classroom implementation (activity 7)	2 months
December'23	Dissemination (online) by POET members (activity 8)	1 day
January – March'24	Report writing and submission (activity 9)	3 months

Reflections:

Please share your thoughts here: