

Module 6

Supporting questioning

Introduction

Answering and asking questions is a very important part of learning. However, most questions are asked by teachers, not by students. Research tells us that teachers ask about 80% of the questions in class. Many classroom questions are mainly about recalling knowledge or getting information from a text without thinking it through. All students need to be taught how to recognise different types of questions and how to ask and answer the different types. **A special role of a bilingual teacher aide is to help students use first language to answer and ask questions.**

Good use of questioning as part of learning requires that:

- teachers ask different types questions at different levels of thinking
- students learn how to ask and answer questions of different types at different levels of thinking
- students (especially English language learners) are given plenty of **wait time** to help them think about and prepare their answers.

Questions are effective when:

- they are directed towards helping students to meet a learning goal
- they are centred on and draw out student's knowledge
- there is adequate wait time for thinking through ideas and responses
- students' responses are valued (and not just repeated by the teacher/bilingual teacher aide)
- appropriate follow-up questions are used to extend thinking.

(from *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*, MoE 2003)

Different types of questions

There are many ways to describe different types of questions.

One of these is *closed* and *open* questions.

Closed questions require only simple **Yes** or **No** or factual recall type answers e.g.

“What were the colours of the butterflies in the picture?”

“How much did the New Zealand immigration rate increase between 1990 and 2000?”

Literal, inferred and applied questions

These types of questions can sometimes be useful for a quick check on understanding, but students do not have to think very much to answer these types of questions.

Open questions help students to realise that there may be more than one answer to a question and encourage them to think through ideas e.g.

“What might be a reason for butterflies being different colours?”

“What do you think might be the factors in New Zealand's increased rate of immigration between 1990 and 2000?”

Another way of using questioning as a thinking tool is *3 level questioning*. You can use written text, a picture or diagram, or a spoken text, or a film for 3 level questioning. Pictures are very good for young and/or early stage learners. The three levels are literal, inferential and applied.

Literal questions ask for information that is stated clearly in a text e.g. “*What did the dog eat when they found him at last?*”

Inferential questions ask students to think what the text might be based on using surrounding information in the text which might be not directly stated. Inferred questions are often expressed through use of verbs like *may, might, could, should* (verbs which show modality) e.g. “*Why might the dog have been hungry?*”

Applied questions ask students to think deeply about ideas in the text and respond in some way to them. e.g. “*Should this family have been allowed to keep a dog?*”

3 level questioning is sometimes called “**reading on the lines**”, “**reading between the lines**” and “**reading beyond the lines**”.

Getting students to ask questions

Teachers and teacher aides/bilingual tutors need to use many different ways of getting students to ask questions. These can include different ways of grouping students, using question structures such as the Question Cube, Jeopardy (answer is given and students write the question) or Hot Seat for a small group. (see *ELIP Primary Resource* and *ELIP Years 7-13 Resource*).

Wait time

It is extremely important to allow a “wait time” after asking a question, to allow the student time to think. Research shows that when a student is given wait time of at least 10 seconds before answering a question, their English language develops faster and they are more involved in the learning.

Module 6 Task Asking and answering questions

Purpose: to recognise and use different levels and types of questions

Working with young learners

For young primary students, use a picture from any reading book that has enough information to ask questions about.

Individual task

Use **either** Question Stem Grid Resource 6A **or** Questioning Dice Resource 6B for this task.

For Resource 6A, choose a series of squares and write down some questions about the text (*Earthquake* Resource 6C, from *Selections 2005*) using the question stems.

For Resource 6B, throw the dice and use the stem to ask a question about the *Earthquake* text.

Check these questions with a colleague, then try the same task with a group of students

- one with literal level question starters: what, when, who, why, where, how (5W's and an H)
- one with modal verbs to support inferential level question development (choose from the following): *might, could, would, will, should, can, must*.

Workshop task

In a small group, and using Resources 6A and 6B, practise asking questions about *Earthquake* Resource 6C using the Questioning grid or Questioning dice.

- Take turns to throw the literal level dice only, and ask questions beginning with the sentence starters: what, when, who, why, where, how e.g. “*When was the earthquake?*”

- Take turns to throw both dice and ask questions using both question starters: for example: ‘Who should...’, ‘Where might...’, ‘What can...’ etc. “*Where might the people in the building have gone after their homes were destroyed?*”
- Make up applied level questions using the two question dice again, but this time, focus on asking questions that are ‘beyond the lines’ and which apply the knowledge of the text to a new or different situation, e.g. “*What could be done to help people whose homes were destroyed in the earthquake?*”

If reading a text about pollution: “*What can people do to show they care about the environment?*”, or if reading a text about wedding customs with secondary school learners: “*Why should or shouldn’t different cultural groups maintain their heritage cultures?*”

Good practice

You can encourage students to answer and ask questions in many different learning situations both in English and in first language(s) during:

- one to one reading support
- group reading support
- oral group work
- interactions in whole class learning
- homework and study support programmes.

Resources

For more ideas on questioning strategies, use the *English Language Intensive Programme (ELIP) Primary Resource* and *ELIP Years 7-13 Resource*.

Read the sections in *Effective Literacy Practice Years 1-4 pages 81-3*, *Effective Literacy Practice Years 5-8 pp 83-5*, and *Effective Literacy Strategies (ELS) Years 9-13 pp 63-5* for more information on questioning.

Next steps

1. Refer to this ESOL online link to make sure you understand how to use questioning dice:
http://www.tki.org.nz/r/esol/esolonline/classroom/teach_strats/cube_e.php
If you don’t have dice, you can make your own by using the cube template Resource 6B.
2. Refer to this ESOL online link to make sure you understand how to create ‘inferred questions’.
http://www.tki.org.nz/r/esol/esolonline/secondary_esol/classroom/ncea/fat_tax/task18_e.php
3. Use Task Template Question Grid Resource 6A to help students practise answering and asking different types of questions.
4. We can also get students to answer and ask questions by using
 - Question Dice (*ELS* p 96)
 - Hot Seat (*ELIP* p 6)
 - Give an Answer – Find the question (Jeopardy game)
 - Guessing games – 20 questions to find out *Who am I?* or *Animal, Mineral or Vegetable?*
 - Reciprocal Reading processes (with an individual or in a group)**<http://english.unitecology.ac.nz/resources/resources/reciprocal.html>**

Choose one of these that you have never used before, make sure you know what to do, and then use the strategy or game with a group you are working with. For additional information about these strategies and more, go to the ESOL online website

www.tki.org.nz/esolonline/strategies_e.php

Module 7 is about supporting reading.

Preparation:

Make a list of the programmes you are using to help students develop as readers.

List three ways you help students with their reading.

What sorts of things do you do with students before they start reading a text?

Module 6 Task Template: Question Stem Grid

Resource 6A

During every unit or topic study, you should encourage the students to ask many questions. Encourage students to use a question grid to help ask both literal and interesting or in-depth questions. You can get students to use different question stems by calling out a different letter and number each time and every student has to think about a question with the stem e.g. 3C Which _____ can.....?

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	What is...?	Where/when is...?	Which ___ is...?	Who is..?	Why is...?	How is...?
2	What did...?	Where/when did...?	Which ___ did...?	Who did..?	Why did...?	How did...?
3	What can...?	Where/when can...?	Which ___ can...?	Who can....?	Why can...?	How can...?
4	What would...?	Where/when could...?	Which ___ could...?	Who would...?	Why would...?	How would..?
5	What will...?	Where/when will...?	Which ___ will...?	Who will..?	Why will...?	How will...?
6	What might...?	Where/when might...?	Which ___ might...?	Who might?	Why might...?	How might...?

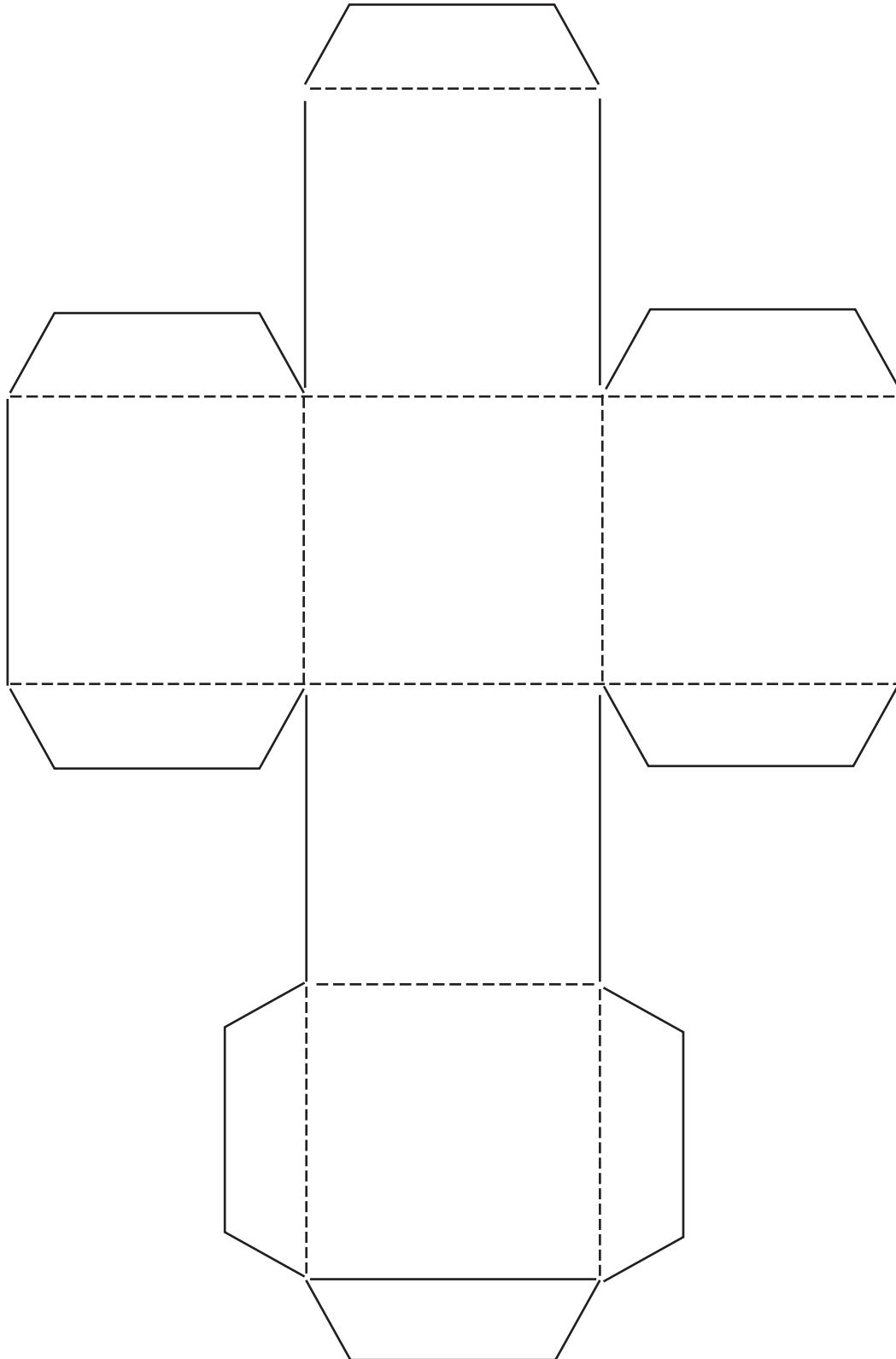
Explain that you can find answers to questions in different ways. They could be answered by:

- asking a person (*When did you arrive in New Zealand?*)
- reading some information (*Where was the first battle in World War 1?*)
- looking/observing (*Why might the child be frightened?*)
- experiencing (*What happens when you put your hand on the ice?*)

Photocopy the template twice. Make up 2 dice:

1. Using 5W's and an H
2. A model dice using 6 of might, could, would, will, should, can, must
Throw both the dice together, to create a question.
3. Variation: Use a template to make up another dice. Write a different question stem from the question grid (Resource 6A) in each square.

Cut on solid lines. Fold on dotted lines.



Earthquake

by Bartha Hill

It was 26 December 2003, and New Zealand children were busy playing with their Christmas presents or enjoying a day out at the beach.

Suddenly the ancient, walled city of Bam, in the southern part of Iran, began to shake. Most of the houses and other buildings were made of mud-bricks and wood. As the shaking increased, the buildings crumbled, and as they crumbled, they buried the people who were inside them.



Some people escaped to call for help, and it wasn't long before rescue crews arrived to start digging for survivors. At first, they were able to find many people who were hurt but still alive. As the days went on, however, the work became harder. Few people were able to survive under the rubble for long. Every now and then, there was a shout of happiness as someone was found alive. But we know now that more than thirty thousand people died.