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Model Answers for Yes/No Questions from EFL Students in Public Senior High Schools

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Abstract

This research aims to find out the typical categories of answers to Yes/No questions most used by students at selected Public Senior High Schools in Medan, Indonesia. These schools were classified into top favorite, medium favorite and non-favorite schools. Through a stratified clustered random sampling technique, six schools were chosen consisting of two schools from each classification. A number of 40 students were chosen from three class X, three class XI and three class XII at each of the six chosen schools, making a total sample of 720 students with 360 sets of dialogue scripts. Data was collected through documentation-recording dialogues. The data was transcribed and analyzed by descriptive analysis. The results of the research showed that: 1) the categories of the students' answers to the Yes/No questions were distributed variously in terms of the six models. However, the distribution of the answers was not proportionally equal amongst all the models, 2) the dominant distribution of the answers was the third model with the formula Yes/No+additional information such as confirming, supporting, etc., reaching 37% of the total answers, whilst the least common models were the sixth and fourth categories respectively, which had 1% and 3% of the answers respectively, and finally 3) there was no significant difference in the distribution of the students' answers in terms of the class of school whether top favorite, medium favorite or non-favorite. In conclusion, the ways to answer Yes/No questions need to be developed amongst students by their teachers by teaching and learning using natural, real life-like situations and in contextual ways.

Keywords: Yes/No questions, model answers, EFL students, public senior high schools.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Using questions for communication is very common and necessary in both formal conversations such as in classes, meetings, and in informal situations such as talking amongst friends outside of class. The use of questions plays a very important role and can determine whether a conversation is fluent or not. Moreover, questions can also determine how far that information or a conversation is understood (Wälchli, 2005). In the context of ESL teaching and learning processes, the use of questions also serves as a model and a design for information transmission, repetition, strengthening of information, and language manipulation exercises (Brown, 2007; Nodine, 2003). In addition, Morley (1979) and Wälchli (2005) have also asserted that the use of questions can function for:

- (1) a model and design for information transmission,
- (2) repeating and strengthening information,
- (3) a language manipulation exercise,
- (4) testing the understanding of concepts
- (5) one way to develop participation and interaction between the teacher and students in the teaching and learning processes, and
- (6) intensifying the communication processes in using language.

In trial instructional contexts in various classes, students, when tested, seemed unable to use various models of answers to Yes/No questions. They also seemed unable to use the various models of answers for Yes/No questions contextually. For instance, when they were asked “*Do you speak English every day?*” they would often only answer “*Yes*” or “*No*” or “*Yes, I do,*” or “*No, I don’t*”. Another example is when they were asked “*Do you have money?*” they mostly answered “*No, I don’t,*” or “*No, I don’t have*” or “*Yes, I do,*” or “*Yes, I do have*”. Actually, in natural-contextual responses, the answer to Yes/No questions can be answered with various model answers depending on the situation and the context of the conversation.

Referring to contextual conversations, theoretically Yes/No questions can be answered variously depending on the context of conversation. For example, a question from a teacher to her student, “*Do you understand lesson 5, John?*” John is supposed to answer it based on its context. It means that if John understands 100% of materials in lesson 5, he can answer it by model, “*Yes, I do,*” or “*Of course*”, or “*Sure*”. However, if John only understands 40% of all the material, he should answer it by saying something like, “*Not really,*” or “*not much*”. So, it is not appropriate with the context if John only understands around 75% of lesson 5 and he answers “*Yes*” or “*Of course*” (Singer, 1986).

In accordance to the background of this study, the objectives for this study are formulated as follows:

- to find the various types of answers to Yes/No questions used by students from public senior high schools in Medan.
- to find model answers to Yes/No questions from students from public senior high schools in Medan.

In line with the objectives of this study, the research questions are formulated as below:

1. What are the various types of answers to Yes/No questions from students from public senior high schools in Medan?

2. What are the model answers to Yes/No questions from students from public senior high schools in Medan?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

So what is actually the definition of a Yes/No question? Terminologically a Yes/No question is called a polar interrogative or a polar question or a bipolar question according to Nodine (2003). Related to the definition and the nature of the answer to Yes/No questions, Murphy (2004) asserts that a Yes/No question is a question which needs a 'Yes or No' answer by using an auxiliary at the beginning of the question sentence. In other words, it is a question which often produces a simple and brief answer where the questioner focuses more on his or her knowledge of existing information. A similar view was also expressed by Nodine (2003). Nordquist (2017) said that such questions are generally started with an auxiliary or modal such as *be*, *have*, *do* or a *modal verb* and are replied to by an answer such as *yes* or *no* or synonyms thereof.

In the context of how to answer Yes/No questions, numerous linguists and English practitioners have provided various different arguments. The potential answers depend on the context and the situation for both the questioner and the answerer. This means that a Yes/No question cannot only be answered by a model such as "Yes" or "No" or "Yes, I do" or "No, I don't", but can also be answered by other variations like "Of course", "I expect so", "Not much" or "Nothing" and so on. The possible variety of model answers depends on the context and the situation, where & when the conversation takes place (Wälchli, 2005).

Nevertheless, both theoretically and practically and based on the context of natural, real-life conversations, English linguists, practitioners, and also researchers agree that the answers to the Yes/No questions fall into six models of answers, which are appropriate for natural real-life situations just like those which are elaborated by Morley (1979), Murphy (2004), Napa (1995), Nodine (2003), and Richards (1985). Those six models of answers to Yes/No questions are set out below:

Model I: only a simple "Yes/No" answer. For example (E refers to Example):

- E1 A: *Is your wife an American?*
 B: *Yes.*
 A: *Do you like watching Western movies?*
 B: *No.*

Model II: the answer is derived from "Yes/No" + *repetition of the verb or auxiliary verb* from the question. For example:

- E2 A: *Did you live in Seattle last year?*
 B: *Yes, I did.*
 A: *Is there anything I can do for you sir?*
 B: *No, thank you, there is not.*

Model III: the answer derived from “Yes/No”; there is no repetition of the verb or auxiliary verb but there is additional information in the form of confirming, affirming, supporting, refusing, modifying, and or commenting on the answer given to the question. For example:

- E3 A: *Did you stop in Rome?*
 B: *Yes, I spent a week there.* [confirming, affirming]
 A: *Is English a compulsory subject in your school?*
 B: *No, it depends on the course.* [modifying]

Model IV: This model of answer uses the verb or auxiliary verb without being started by “Yes/No”. Usually the additional information is in the form of confirming, affirming, supporting, refusing, modifying, and or commenting on the question. For example:

- E4 A: *You’re not going now, Rini?*
 B: *I am.* [confirming/affirming]
 A: *Are the lecturers paid well in your school?*
 B: *The men are; the women aren’t.* [affirming]

Model V: This model of answer uses a similar expression or synonym for the “Yes/No” word or uses the answer in the form of an idiom which has a similar or the same meaning with “Yes/No” or a meaning between the two which means that the meaning is in the range between “Yes” and “No”. For example:

- E5 A: *Are you feeling alright dear?*
 B: *Of course.* [Yes]
 A: *Do you have much money now?*
 B: *I have some but not a lot.* [In between]

For clearer examples, Table 1 of answers to Model V Yes/No questions follows. The words on the left-hand side are synonyms for 100% Yes and those more to the right are lower levels of agreement with Yes until the words on the far right-hand side which are synonyms for No or antonyms for Yes.

Table 1. Synonyms for “Yes/No” answers.

<i>Synonyms</i>		<i>Antonyms of yes</i>	
Yes		No	
Uh...uh	As usual	May be	Of course not
Certainly	Rather	I know not well	Never
Of course	I think so	I don’t think so	Nothing
Sure	I believe so	I don’t believe so	Not a bit
Why not	I suppose so	Not really	Not at all
Terribly so	I expect so	Not much	Absolutely not
Very	Mostly		No way
Very much	I guess so		Not on my watch
Definitely	I hope so		Etc.
Plenty			
Perfectly			
Absolutely			

Model VI: This model of answer has a close relationship to the Modal V category of answers consisting of models of answers with positive, negative or neutral meanings. Whether the answer is positive, negative or neutral, it can be concluded based on the context and situation. In this case, positive means “Yes” and negative means “No”. Meanwhile, neutral has a meaning in the range between the positive and negative meanings. For example:

- E6 A: *Are you going home now?*
 B: *As soon as possible.* [positive]
 A: *Has something happened, mom?*
 B: *I'll be all right in a minute.* [positive]

Related to models of answer to Yes/No questions, empirically [Ginting et al. \(1999\)](#) in their research on English textbooks for senior high schools concluded that a variety of models of answers to Yes-No Questions were presented in conversations in the textbooks with relatively similar proportions amongst the six models of answers. This means that theoretically these textbooks should be sufficient as guidance and good for use as learning sources, especially the materials concerning models of answers for Yes-No questions. Furthermore, [Dirgeyasa et al. \(2000\)](#) said that the models of answers for Yes/No questions in Junior High School text books were also quite various and showed how a Yes/No question is supposed to be answered although the answers in these books were not really proportional among the six models of answers.

3. METHOD

The population of this research was students in grades X, XI, and XII from six randomly selected public senior high schools in Medan in the 2015/16 academic year. The schools were categorized into top favorite schools, medium favorite schools, and non-favorite schools. The categories of top favorite, medium favorite and non-favorite schools were determined by the following indicators:

- 1) The average National Exams scores of students after every school year,
- 2) The average National Exam scores of students entering the school,
- 3) The level of school fees, and
- 4) The school's facilities.

After all the schools were categorized into top favorite, medium favorite, and non-favorite schools, two schools from each category were then chosen at random by using a random sampling technique. Then, two classes from each of grade X, XI, and XII were chosen from each school selected. The number of classes is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The distribution of classes for each grade and each category of school.

Category of Senior High School	Grade						Total
	X		XI		XII		
	A	B	A	B	A	B	
Top favorite	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Medium favorite	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Non-favorite	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Total	3	3	3	3	3	3	18

Note: A = First school, B = Second school

The number of respondents from each class in each school depends on the existing students in that class. This study assumed that the average number of students in the public senior high schools in Medan is 40 students in each class. Thus, the total respondents came from all grades (grade X, XI, and XII) and from the three school categories (two top favorite schools, two medium favorite schools, and two non-favorite schools), so the total number of classes was 18. So, assuming there were 40 respondents in each class, the total number of respondents was 720 which was equal to 360 dialogue scripts.

Two techniques were used to collect data for this research, first the data was recorded, and then the recordings were transcribed. The data from this research was analyzed in two steps. Firstly, the data was analyzed based on the type of school i.e. top favorite school, medium favorite school, and non-favorite school. Then the data was analyzed separately based on the grades i.e. grade X, XI or XII. The result of this integrated analysis would show the models of answers to Yes/No questions from students in the public senior high schools in Medan. The technique of data analysis used in this study is a descriptive analysis technique.

4. FINDINGS

The total of Yes/No questions dialogues collected was 942 answers from 360 sets of dialogue scripts which came from the 18 classes in the six schools. It was found that a) there were 271 answers from the top favorite schools, b) 342 answers from the medium favorite schools and c) 329 answers from non-favorite schools.

From the 271 answers from the top favorite schools, 79 came from grade X, 89 from grade XI and 103 from grade XII. For the medium favorite schools, 111 answers came from grade X, 122 from grade XI and 109 from grade XII. Meanwhile, from the non-favorite schools, 101 answers came from grade X, 109 from grade XI and 119 from grade XII.

Based on the total answers from each class and school, the variety and distribution of models of answer of Yes/No questions are set out in Table 3.

Table 3. The model answers to Yes/No questions for grades at top favorite schools.

Grade	Category of answers of Yes/No questions												Totals	
	I		II		III		IV		V		VI		F	%
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
X	20	25	18	23	30	38	5	6	5	6	1	1	79	100
XI	18	20	25	28	32	36	5	6	7	8	2	2	89	100
XII	15	15	33	33	38	38	5	5	10	10	2	2	103	100
Totals	53		76		100		15		22		5		271	
Average %		21		28		37		6		8		2		100

Table 3 shows that the most frequent answers (37%) to Yes/No questions were Model III i.e. Yes/No answers, with no repetition of verb or auxiliary verb but with additional information in the form of confirming or supporting or commenting such as “Not yet, I will work this subject with...” or “No, it is no problem”. Then, 28% were in the category of Model II with the pattern of Yes/No + repetition of verb or auxiliary verb such as “Yes, I can” or “No, I don’t.”

Moreover, 21% were Model I answers with the answer pattern of Yes/No only, while answers with Models IV, V, and VI were only 6%, 8%, and 2% respectively with answer patterns using synonym or similar expression of Yes/No or answers using words/idioms/expressions referring to a Yes/No meaning or between the two. For instances: “*Of course* [Yes]”, or “*I don’t know* [No]”, or “*Maybe*” [In-between].

The distribution of model answers to Yes/No questions for the medium favorite schools was relatively similar to that for the top favorite schools as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Model answers to *yes-no* questions for grades at medium favorite schools.

Grade	Category of answers of Yes/No questions												Totals	
	I		II		III		IV		V		VI			
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
X	23	21	32	29	48	43	2	2	5	5	1	1	111	100
XI	27	24	40	36	43	38	3	3	7	6	2	2	122	100
XII	23	21	34	31	37	34	4	4	8	7	3	3	109	100
Totals	73		106		128		9		20		6		342	
Averages		22		32		39		3		6		2		100

The distribution and variety of answers to Yes/No questions from students in the medium favorite schools was generally similar to the answers from the students at the top favorite schools; for instance, the most common model of answer was Model III with 39%, which was higher than that from the students at the top favorite schools. The same thing also occurred in answers in Model I (22%) and Model II (32%). Model I answers, the simplest category of answer because they are only Yes/No answers, was in the third rank with a total of 22% of answers. Meanwhile, the least common answers were from Model VI with only 2% of the answers.

From the non-favorite schools, the students’ model answers to the Yes/No questions was slightly different from the other two school categories, for example the percentage of Models II and III answers was relatively the same with both reaching 34%. The complete distribution of model answers to the Yes/No questions from the non-favorite schools is shown in Table 5 that follows overleaf.

Referring to Table 5, the distribution of model answers from students at non-favorite schools was not spread evenly amongst the six categories or models. Models II and III each had 34% which was similar to the results from the students in the top favorite and medium favorite schools. Moreover, Model I reached 29% of answers; while Models IV, V, and VI each only reached 1%, 2%, and 0% of all the answers from the less favorite schools. When the model answers to Yes/No questions from the three categories of school are combined and the data are analyzed by grade level (X, XI and XII), the distribution of the answers in terms of model answers is not really different amongst them.

Table 5. Model answers to Yes/No questions for grades at non-favorite schools.

Grade	Category of answers of Yes/No questions												Totals	
	I		II		III		IV		V		VI			
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
X	32	32	36	36	32	31	0	0	2	2	0	0	101	100
XI	30	28	37	34	39	36	1	1	2	2	0	0	109	100
XII	33	28	38	32	42	35	2	2	3	3	1	1	119	100
Totals	95		111		113		3		7		1		329	
Averages		29		34		34		1		2		0		100

Table 6 shows the distribution of model answers for Yes/No questions from all school categories (top favorite, medium favorite and non-favorite schools) based on grade X only.

Table 6. Model answers to Yes/No questions for grade X at all schools (top favorite, medium favorite and non-favorite).

Grade X	Model answers to Yes/No questions												Totals	
	I		II		III		IV		V		VI			
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Top favorite	20	25	18	23	30	38	5	6	5	6	1	1	79	100
Medium favorite	23	21	32	29	48	43	2	2	5	5	1	1	111	100
Non-favorite	32	32	36	36	31	31	0	0	2	2	0	0	102	100
Totals	75		86		109		7		12		2		291	
Averages		26		29		37		3		4		1		100

When the results from all school categories, top favorite, medium favorite and non-favorite schools, are merged based on grade X only, the results are as shown in Table 6, in which the distribution of model answers is similar with the students' answers which were analyzed by the school category. The distribution of answers is not spread evenly.

The data above show that most students' answers (37%) were categorized as Model III with Yes/No answers in which there is no repetition of verb or auxiliary verb but there is additional information in the form of confirming or supporting, or commenting such as "Yes, My name is Asai", or "Yes, very good." Moreover, 26% and 29% of answers were categorized as Models I and II. Meanwhile, Models IV and V answers were only 3% and 4% of all answers and Model VI answers were only 1%. The distribution of the model answers for Yes/No questions from grade XI for all school categories was also not spread evenly amongst the six model answer categories, as can be seen in Table.

Table 7. Models answers for Yes/No questions from grade XI for all schools.

Grade XI	Model answers to Yes/No questions												Totals	
	I		II		III		IV		V		VI			
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Top favorite	18	20	25	28	32	36	5	6	7	8	2	2	89	100
Medium favorite	27	24	40	36	43	38	3	3	7	6	2	2	122	100
Non-favorite	30	28	37	34	39	36	1	1	2	2	0	0	109	100
Totals	75		102		114		9		16		4		320	
Average		24		33		37		3		5		1		100

From Table 7, the distribution of model answers for Yes/No questions from students from grade XI for all school categories was similar to that from the students' in grade X. Model III answers were 37% of all these answers.

This was followed by Models II and I answers with totals of 33% and 24%, respectively, of all their answers. These model answers are relatively simple in which the answer is just Yes/No followed by repetition of the verb or the auxiliary verb such as "Yes, I do." Meanwhile, Models IV, V and VI answers which are the most difficult answers were only 3%, 5% and 1% respectively.

Table 8, which follows, shows that the model answers to Yes/No questions from all school categories (top favorite, medium favorite and non-favorite schools) for grade

XII was not really much different from the results for the other two grades, X and XI. Models II and III answers to the Yes/No questions were dominant compared to the other model answers.

The distribution of model answers to Yes/No questions in grade XII is similar to the distribution in grades X and XI in which all models of answer exist but are not distributed evenly. Model III answers are still the most common with 36% overall; a bit higher than Models II and I answers with 32% and 21% respectively of all answers. Then, the smallest are Models IV, V and VI answers with 3%, 7% and 2% respectively of the answers.

Table 8. Models answers to Yes/No questions from grade XII for all schools.

Grade XII	Model answers to Yes/No questions												Total	
	I		II		III		IV		V		VI			
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Top favorite	15	15	33	33	38	38	5	5	10	10	2	2	103	100
Medium favorite	23	21	34	31	37	34	4	4	8	7	3	3	109	100
Non-favorite	33	28	38	32	42	35	2	2	3	3	1	1	119	100
Totals	71		105		117		11		21		6		331	
Average		21		32		36		3		7		2		100

When the model answers to the Yes/No questions from the three school categories (top favorite, medium favorite and non-favorite) and their grades are combined, the distribution of the model answers was not really significantly different as can be seen in Table 9.

Table 9. Percentage of model answers to Yes/No questions for all grades: x, xi and xii

Grade	Percentage of model answers to Yes-No questions						Total
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	
X	26	29	37	3	4	1	100
XI	24	33	37	3	5	1	100
XII	21	32	36	3	7	2	100
All grades	23	31	37	3	5	1	100

Generally, students' models answers still rely on Model III answers which totaled 37% of all answers and were followed by Model II answers with 31% of all answers and Model I answers with 23% of all answers. Meanwhile, Models IV and V answers were 3% and 5% of all answers and Model VI answers were only 1% of all answers.

5. DISCUSSION

Based on these results, it can be said that the students' model answers to Yes/No questions were distributed amongst all categories. When the data was analyzed for the top favorite schools only, the dominant variety of answer was Model III (37%) with the pattern of Yes/No with additional information, supporting and/or confirming the answer. Then, with the medium favorite school, Model III answer was similar at 39% and the same category was a bit lower at 34% from the non-favorite schools. The majority of answers were Model III from all students because this answer category is the most contextual answer and the most appropriate to the situations and conditions

when there is communication between students or language users (Choi, 1991; Morley, 1979; Nodine, 2003; Nunan, 1995). Besides, Model III answers are seen to be the most interesting answers to use.

Nevertheless, in the top favorite and medium favorite schools, Model III answers are a bit higher than from non-favorite schools and also the non-favorite school does not have a lot of variety with other answers such as Models IV or V. Hence, maybe the students in non-favorite schools are decelerating in getting information in the teaching-learning processes. The fact that Model III answers are in the majority is relevant and in line with what exists in the senior high school textbook (Ginting et al., 1999). Dirgeyasa et al. (2000) have also mentioned that the distribution of answers in the textbook for junior high school relies on Model III answers which total 39% from all answers in all the text books studied.

Model VI answers have the pattern of positive, negative and neutral answers, which can be concluded based on the context and situation even though those answers are not explicitly “Yes” or “No” or both. Basically, this answer to which additional information can be added such as supporting, refusing, or just affirming, was the most rarely used by the students in communication (Brown, 2007; Koshik, 2002). Model VI answers from all schools were only 1% of all answers.

The low percentage of Model VI answers is also supported by Dirgeyasa et al. (2000) where they were only 10% of all answers in the junior high school textbooks. This shows that there is similarity between the model answers in the textbooks used in the schools and the real answers given by students in communication. This implies that the teachers were not promoting innovation and variation in their teaching. They only taught what is in the text-books without using many varieties of answers which theoretically and practically exist in the language use of native speakers. Model IV answers were also relatively low, with only 3% of all answers (Richards, 1985; Wälchli, 2005; Zhu & Wu, 2011). This model of answer is very specific and cannot be answered by the other categories of answer. For instance, an example from Brown (2007) is as in E7:

- E7 For the question: “*Are the teachers here generally well paid?*”
One possible answer is: “*The men are; the women aren’t.*”

The question above can only be answered as such if the context is truly like that in which male teachers are paid better than female ones. It is not possible for it to be answered by Model V such as “*Of course*”, which would mean that all teachers are paid well. Nevertheless, based on the context in E7, male teachers are better paid than female ones. Basically, this model of answer has strength in which there is a kind of answer that cannot be generalized like Models III or V answers (Napa, 1995; Wälchli, 2005; Zhu & Wu, 2011).

If the school category is noticed, there are almost no Model VI answers from students in non-favorite schools and only 2% from medium favorite schools, and the same from top favorite schools. This shows that non-favorite schools do not have many weaknesses compared to medium and top favorite schools. It is presumed that the weaknesses they do have are lack of access to information, low resources, low learning motivation and lack of learning sources. The textbooks also have a big influence on the students’ experiences. Contextually, Model VI answers are not common in the textbooks used by the students; with only 10% of them (Dirgeyasa et al., 2000).

In fact, textbooks make a great contribution to the teaching-learning processes because they are the main source of information for the students. Napa (1995) furthermore said that textbooks are tools for providing and fulfilling the students' learning experience indirectly in big numbers and organized systematically.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results, there are some points that can be concluded from this research. First, model answers to Yes/No questions from students in public senior high schools in Medan were distributed variously amongst answers of Models I, II, III, IV, V and VI. However, if it is seen from the percentage of each model answer, the distribution of the answers amongst the categories was not proportional and even for every model. For instance, Model III answers were 37% of all answers while there were only 1% of Model VI answers from all the answers collected. Secondly, compared to the textbooks used in these schools which are relatively proportional in the distribution of model answers from the different categories of answers for Yes/No questions, the students' answers were less proportional and less appropriate compared to the textbook answers usually produced by native speakers. Thirdly, students still answered the models of Yes/No questions monotonously and they did not seem to consider the context of the communication, yet. Finally, the teachers seemed to lack innovation, creativity and variety in teaching-learning to develop model answers for Yes/No questions in natural real-life like situations and in contextual ways.

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