

# Questioning Techniques

(with examples based on NEL K2 English Language Big Book –  
My Red Packet)

The Shared Book Approach depends on the effective use of questioning techniques.

## Asking Questions

Teachers' questions are an important part in developing children's language skills because they provide opportunities to get information from the children's responses that can feed forward into the next teaching step. More specifically, teachers ask questions for the following purposes:

- provide opportunities for the children to talk
- stimulate thought and understanding
- direct the children's attention to a specific point
- provide a model for the children
- find out individual children's strengths and weaknesses

These are some types of questions that teachers ask:

### Open-ended Questions

These questions do not require just one 'right' answer. There may be several possible and appropriate answers so children are given opportunities to think and come to their conclusions, e.g.,

*How do you know? What do you think will happen? What would you do?*

### Tugging Questions

These questions challenge as well as stimulate thought. They pull additional information from the children, e.g.,

*What is another reason? Why do you think so? What might happen next? Look at his face. What do you think has just happened?*

### Closed Questions

It is necessary sometimes to ask such questions, for example, for object identification or word recognition and teaching of language structures, e.g.,

*What's this? What colour is it? Is it big or small?*

Such questions are also necessary for the beginning language learner. When you do ask this type of question requiring only a short, sometimes one-word answer, try to include other questions as well to encourage longer responses, e.g.,

*What's this? How can you tell? What makes you think so?*

When asking any question,

**DO**

- think ahead of time what questions you want to ask.
- ask the questions clearly, slowly and direct them to the whole class.
- pause long enough to allow the children time to think of their responses.
- rephrase the question only if there is no response after a suitable pause. The question may be too difficult for the children.
- try to elicit longer responses from the children by extending the questions so as to encourage them to observe, think, and make a decision, for example, *Is she crying or laughing?* (using a picture) *Why do you say so?*

### **DON'T**

- ask so many questions that the children lose all interest in the lesson.
- rephrase every question. It will confuse the children.
- use too many question tags. *That's a beautiful picture, isn't it?* requires only a yes or no response. Tag questions are also very confusing for young learners.

When the children respond to your questions,

### **DO**

- acknowledge in some way all of their responses, e.g.,  
if the response is correct – Yes, *that's right. Good.*  
If the response is wrong – *That's a good try. Who can give another response?*

Note: You may have to rephrase the question for some children.

- be firm, fair and friendly, using a balance of praise and encouragement.

### **DON'T**

- let the same few children respond to all of the questions or make fun of those who give incorrect responses. Instead, say:  
(To the class) *He is trying very hard. Let's listen to him.*  
(To the child) *That was a good try. Please continue.*
- ask the class, *Is he right or wrong, class?* (especially if the child is wrong)

### Children's Questions

Children ask questions for the following reasons:

- clarify instructions and procedures
- extend their understanding of content
- communicate with the teacher and their peers about the text and other activities

### **DO**

- encourage the children to ask questions.
- acknowledge the children's questions and answer them as best as you can.

## DON'T

- ignore or dismiss the children's questions because you may be losing important information about their understanding.

Try using these questions for the **NEL K2 English Language Big Book**:

### *My Red Packet*

- Show the children a red packet and ask them if they know what it is. Have them think about the ideas in the book by talking about their personal experiences.
  - *Have you received a red packet?*
  - *Who normally gives and who receives a red packet?*
  - *Do they come in other colours?*
  - *What do you think the story is about?*
- Read the title of the book, the author's name and the illustrator's name on the cover page while gliding the pointer from left to right, top to bottom.
- Create opportunities for the children to predict parts of the story before showing pages 3, 7, 11, 13 and 15.
- Have children look at the title and the illustration on the cover page and make predictions about the story they are about to read.
- Tell the children they are going to read a story about a boy who had received a red packet. Explain that in the first reading, you are going to read to them and that you will be asking some questions while reading the story.

### **First reading**

- Use the suggested questions below to discuss the illustrations on each page or double page as specified **before** reading the text on that page.
- Use the questions to lead discussions and also provide opportunities for the children to ask questions.

Note: There is no need to ask all the questions below. However, you may ask other questions (e.g., to relate to children's personal experiences, or build oral vocabulary by pointing at selected pictures and getting the children to name them).

- Move your pointer fluidly as you read the text aloud with rhythm and expression.

### Cover page

- Show the children the cover and ask them to look at the picture. Ask:
  - (Point to the boy) *Who is this?*
  - (Point to Grandma) *Who is this?*
  - *How does the boy feel? Why do you think he is feeling happy?*
  - *What is Grandma giving to the boy? Why?*

### Title page

- *How does the boy feel? Why do you think he is feeling sad?*
- *Why is he holding out his empty hands?*
- *Where do you think his red packet is?*

- Do you think he will find it?
Page 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Where is the boy now? How do you know?</li> <li>- How does he feel? Why does he feel this way?</li> </ul> <b>After reading:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Why do you think he has to find his red packet?</li> </ul>
Page 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (Reveal the page) What is the boy doing?</li> <li>- (Point to the vase) Where is he looking for his red packet?</li> <li>- Do you think he will find his red packet? Why or why not?</li> </ul> <b>After reading:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Where do you think he will go next to look for his red packet?</li> </ul>
Pages 4-5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Where is the boy now? How do you know?</li> <li>- (Point to the boy's facial expression) How does the boy feel? Why do you say so?</li> </ul> <b>After reading:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What do you think will happen next?</li> </ul>
Page 6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (Point to the bed) Where is the boy now? How do you know?</li> <li>- (Point to the boy pulling out toys from the box) What is he doing? Why?</li> <li>- Do you think he will find his red packet?</li> </ul> <b>After reading:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Where do you think he will look next?</li> </ul>
Page 7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (Reveal the page) Where is the boy looking for the red packet now?</li> <li>- Why are his clothes on the floor?</li> <li>- (Point to the boy's facial expression) How does he feel?</li> </ul> <b>After reading:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Where are the places that the boy has looked for his red packet so far?</li> <li>- Where do you think he will look next?</li> </ul>
Pages 8-9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Where is the boy now?</li> <li>- Do you think he will find his red packet? Why / Why not?</li> <li>- If you were the boy, would you continue to look for the red packet or would you ask for another one from Grandma? Why?</li> </ul>
Page 10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (Point to the shower) Where is the boy now? How do you know?</li> </ul>
Page 11 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (Reveal the page and point to the sink) Where is the boy looking now to find his red packet?</li> <li>- Do you think he will find his red packet? Why/Why not?</li> </ul> <b>After reading:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Where do you think the red packet is?</li> </ul>
Page 12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do you think the boy will be able to find his red packet? How do you know?</li> <li>- (Point to the boy's facial expression) How does he feel?</li> </ul>
Page 13 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (Reveal the page) What is he doing now? How do you know?</li> <li>- If you were him, would you cry too? Why/Why not?</li> </ul> <b>After reading:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What do you think he will do next?</li> </ul>
Page 14 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (Point to him putting his hand in his pocket) What is the boy doing now?</li> </ul>

- <i>What is the boy looking for in his pocket? Why does he need a tissue?</i>
Page 15 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (Reveal page and point to the boy's facial expression) <i>How does the boy feel?</i></li> <li>- <i>What do you think he will find in his pocket? Why do you say so?</i></li> </ul>
Page 16 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>How does the boy feel now? How do you know? Why is he feeling happy?</i></li> <li>- <i>What do you think he will do next?</i></li> </ul> <p><b>After reading:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Do you like the story?</i></li> <li>- <i>If you were the boy, what would you have done?</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Second reading</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reread the new Big Book without stopping and encourage the children to read with you if they are able to.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Lesson closure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extend learning by relating the story to the value of respect and being responsible for one's belongings. Ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What do you say or do when a family member gives you a special packet? How can we show respect to them?</li> <li>- Do you think the red packet was precious to the boy? Where could the boy keep his red packet safely?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Explain to the children that they must be responsible for their own belongings. Discuss with them ways in which they can take care of things which are precious to them (by keeping toys back where they belong, being gentle when using the items, etc.)</li> </ul>

**Remember:**

- Depending on your children's needs, you may need to adjust your questions or ask different/additional questions to suit the children's interest and level of understanding.
- Be selective. Choose a few questions for each page; too many questions disrupt the flow of the story.