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Some Remarks on the Questions with Modal Particles in Vietnamese as a Second Language Textbooks (VSL Textbooks)

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Abstract: Question one of the four types of sentences classified according to the purpose of speech which is commonly used in the communication process. In teaching Vietnamese as a second language, questions play a significant role. This article focuses on questions with modal particles found in VSL textbooks at intermediate and intermediate levels. The purpose of our study is to provide feedback and recommendations on the introduction and use of questions with modal particles in VSL textbooks, based on the survey results. The primary research methods used are description and comparison, along with statistical and classification techniques. The research materials are questions found in VSL textbooks. The outline of the research includes: 1. Introduction. 2. Questions and questions with interrogative modal particles in Vietnamese. 3. Survey on the use of questions with interrogative modal particles found in VSL textbooks at elementary and intermediate levels. 4. Survey on the distribution of questions with interrogative modal particles in VSL textbooks at elementary and intermediate levels. 5. Conclusion.

Keywords: questions, questions with interrogative modal particles, VSL textbooks at elementary and intermediate levels.

INTRODUCTION

Rationale for the research

Question one of the four types of sentences classified according to the purpose of speech which is commonly used in the communication process. In particular, questions with interrogative modal particles are commonly used in dialogue-based structures. So far, there have been many studies on questions; however, there has been no research specifically focusing on questions with interrogative modal particles in VSL textbooks. We aim to study questions with interrogative modal particles in VSL textbooks for elementary and intermediate levels to assess how this type of question is utilized in these materials. The research findings will enhance the teaching and learning process and aid in

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the development of VSL materials for learners at different levels. For these reasons, we have chosen to focus on the topic of questions with interrogative modal particles in VSL textbooks at elementary and intermediate levels.

Research aims and objectives

The research aims to clarify the concepts of questions, questions with interrogative modal particles, and the classification of questions in Vietnamese. From this, we will examine the sub-category of questions with interrogative modal particles in VSL textbooks to obtain an overview of their introduction and usage in VSL materials. Accordingly, we will offer feedback and recommendations for teaching and learning this type of question, as well as for the development of VSL textbooks at different levels.

Research objectives are:

- Investigate the research landscape and establish the theoretical foundation for questions and questions with interrogative modal particles.
- Provide statistics on the quantity and classification of questions with interrogative modal particles in VSL textbooks at elementary and intermediate level.
- Provide feedback, assessments, and recommendations on the introduction and use of questions with interrogative modal particles in VSL textbooks.

Research materials and methodology

Regarding research materials: We surveyed questions with interrogative modal particles in the dialogues found in 3 VSL textbook series at elementary and intermediate levels.

Table 1.

Textbook series		Elementary level		
1st series	GT1-A1	Giáo trình tiếng Việt cơ sở, Quyển 1, Nguyễn Việt Hương, NXB Đại học Quốc Gia, 2017. (Elementary Vietnamese Use For Non-Vietnamese Speakers, Pre-Elementary, Nguyen Viet Huong, Vietnam National University Publishing House, 2017)		
	GT2 -A2	Giáo trình tiếng Việt cơ sở, Quyển 1, Nguyễn Việt Hương, NXB Đại học Quốc Gia, 2017. (Elementary Vietnamese Use For Non-Vietnamese Speakers, Upper-Elementary, Nguyen Viet Huong, Vietnam National University Publishing House, 2017)		

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2nd series	GT3 -A1	Giáo trình tiếng Việt trình độ A, tập 1, Đoàn Thiện Thuật (chủ biên), NXB Thế giới, 2006 (Vietnamese A, Volume 1, Doan Thien Thuat (Editor-in-chief), World Publishing House, 2006)
	GT4 -A2	Giáo trình tiếng Việt trình độ A, tập 2, Đoàn Thiện Thuật (chủ biên), NXB Thế giới, 2006 (Vietnamese A, Volume 2, Doan Thien Thuat (Editor-in-chief), World Publishing House, 2006)
3rd series	GT5-A1	Giáo trình tiếng Việt cho người nước ngoài VSL1, Nguyễn Văn Huệ (chủ biên), NXB Giáo dục, 2004 (VSL1, Nguyen Van Hue (Editor-in-chief), Educational Publishing House, 2004).
	GT6-A2	Giáo trình tiếng Việt cho người nước ngoài VSL2, Nguyễn Văn Huệ (chủ biên), NXB Đại học Quốc gia Hồ Chí Minh, 2008 (VSL2, Nguyen Van Hue (Editor-in-chief), Educational Publishing House, 2008).
Textbook series		Intermediate level
	Vietnamese Use For Non-Vietnamese Speakers	
4th series	GT7-B	Hương, NXB Đại học Quốc Gia, 2017 (Intermediate Vietnamese Use For Non-Vietnamese Speakers, Preintermediate, National University Publishing House, 2017)
4th series 5th series	GT7-B GT8-B	Vietnamese Use For Non-Vietnamese Speakers, Pre- intermediate, National University Publishing House, 2017) Giáo trình thực hành tiếng Việt trình độ B, Đoàn Thiện Thuật (chủ biên), NXB Thế giới, 2007 (Practice Vietnamese - Level B), Doan Thien Thuat (Editor-in-chief), World Publishing House, 2007).
		Vietnamese Use For Non-Vietnamese Speakers, Pre- intermediate, National University Publishing House, 2017) Giáo trình thực hành tiếng Việt trình độ B, Đoàn Thiện Thuật (chủ biên), NXB Thế giới, 2007 (Practice Vietnamese - Level B), Doan Thien Thuat (Editor-in-chief), World Publishing

Regarding research methodologies, we employed two primary approaches: the descriptive method and the comparative method. Furthermore, this article incorporates statistical and classification techniques as well.

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Questions and questions using modal particles in Vietnamese

Question concept

Linguists study questions in both syntactic (structural) and pragmatic (functional) directions. In terms of syntactic direction, the authors consider the question as one of four types of sentences classified according to the purpose of the statement but identified according to the formal criteria. Typical representatives of this trend are scholars such as Bui Duc Tinh (1952), Nguyen Kim Than (1964), Ho Le (1979), Hoang Trong Phan (1980), and Diep Quang Ban (1989), among others. Nguyen Kim Than stated that "the purpose of ordinary questions is to raise the speaker's skepticism and generally require the listener to report on the object or its characteristics" [Nguyen Kim Than, 1964 – New Edition, 1997, p. 599]. He noted that a genuine question is "one that truly seeks to express the speaker's skepticism and require a response from the listener (only in the exceptional case of a monologue, the response is not required)" [Nguyen Kim Than, 1964 Edition, 1997, p.]. 600]. He clearly affirmed that the question necessitates a response. Additionally, he stated that "rhetorical questions are those that do not require a response from anyone." Diep Quang Ban (1989) claimed that "Questions are often used to raise unknown or doubtful things and wait for answers and explanations from the listener, and in terms of form, questions also have certain characteristic signs" [Diep Quang Ban, 1989, p. 247]. He further indicated that the request for an answer is merely the most common rather than the purpose of a question.

Regarding the pragmatic direction, the question is viewed as the typical expression of the act of asking as the speech act. Cao Xuan Hao (1991) said that "Interrogative sentences (questions) of Vietnamese as well as of many other languages, in addition to the value of asking (notification request) as its direct illocutionary value, it may have derivative illocutionary value(s) (such as negation, affirmation, doubt, challenge or argument, etc." [Cao Xuan Hao, 1991 – 2006 New Edition, p. 390]. Based on the concept of illocutionary value, he conceived of genuine questions as "Those are questions that require an answer informing a fact or a certain argument of a fact that is presupposed to be true." [Cao Xuan Hao, 1991 – 2006 New Edition, p. 391] and other questions with illocutionary values "When a sentence is in the form of a question (to some extent), but there is no request to provide a notice corresponding with the content of that question, its illocutionary values change and become another speech act. J.Searle (1979) calls it as an indirect speech act." [Cao Xuan Hao, 1991, p. 400]. In the textbook titled "Basic Linguistics and Vietnamese", Bui Tat Tuom, Nguyen Van Bang, and Hoang Xuan Tam (1997) stated that "An interrogative sentence is a question with illocutionary forces that require an answer informing a situation or part of a situation that is presupposed to be true". [Bui Tat Tam, 1997, p. 288]

In our view, a question is characterized by its form, typically indicated by a question mark at the end when written, and by the use of various means to express the question, such as question words (gì, nào, đâu, sao...), intonation, and word order. In terms of content, a question is an inquiry that seeks to address unknown or uncertain facts and requests a response.

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Types of questions in Vietnamese

In Vietnamese, questions can be classified in two distinct directions as follows: The first classification approach categorizes questions based on their structure (form of expression). The second approach categorizes questions based on their function (content).

Following the first approach, notable authors including Nguyen Kim Than (1964), Hoang Trong Phan (1980), Diep Quang Ban (1989), and Nguyen Phu Phong, etc. Nguyen Kim Than (1964) classifies interrogative sentences based on their nature and methods of expression into the following types: Genuine questions (including sub-categories such as Open-ended questions, Defining questions, Multiple-choice questions, Emphasis questions), Rhetorical questions, Interrogative -Negative questions, Interrogative - Affirmative questions, and Interrogative - Imperative questions. Based on the methods of expression, Nguyen Kim Than classified questions into sub-categories consisting of: Questions with interrogative pronouns (ai - who, gì -what, etc.), questions with conjunctions (hay - or, hay là - nor), questions with final particles (à - oh, w - huh etc.). In fact, his classification remains grounded in the form of expression. Hoang Trong Phien (1980) also based on the sentence structures to classify questions into Blank questions or simple questions (using specialized words to ask like ai - who, cái gì - what, như thế nào - how, etc.), and multiple-choice questions. Diep Quang Ban (1989) based on the form of expression to divide questions into the following sub-categories: Questions with interrogative pronouns (using different pronouns such as ai - who, gì - what, nào - which, bao nhiệu - how much - how many, bao lâu - how long, thế nào how, vì sao - why etc.), questions with adjuncts or modal particles (có...không, có phải...không (or có phải không? đã...chưa?...), questions with conjunction words "hay", questions with specialized particles (using particles such as à, u, a, hå, hů, nhí, nhé, etc.). Nguyen Phu Phong classified questions into Non-defining questions or open-ended questions (posed with indefinite elements such as "đâu - where", "sao - why", "gì - what" etc.), transitional or closed questions (means of expression such as intonation, lexical elements like hay, có...không, đã...chưa, nữa...thôi ...), Directional questions (interrogative means are ending particles such as à, u, hå, nhi, etc.)

In terms of the second direction, questions are classified based on their functions (content). The typical author is Cao Xuan Hao (1991), he based on the illocutionary force to classify questions as follows: *Genuine questions* (Special questions, General questions, Defining questions, Metalinguistic questions, questions ended with "nhi" and "nhé". *Non-genuine questions* include subcategories such as imperative questions, affirmative questions, negative questions, conjectural questions, uncertain or confused questions, and exclamatory questions. At this point, linguists have examined questions from functional perspectives, focusing on their role in communication rather than solely on fundamental and static structures. Alongside information-seeking questions, often referred to as genuine questions by some authors, there exists a type of question that does not seek information, known as non-genuine questions or rhetorical questions. Dinh Trong Lac (1994) noted that rhetorical questions "are structured in a way that does not require answers, but instead enhance the expressiveness of utterances" [Dinh Trong Lac, 1997]. Furthermore, Diep Quang Ban stated

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that rhetorical questions "are questions that do not require answers" [Diep Quang Ban, 1989]. Questions of this type take the form of questions but do not seek information.

The above illustrates the classification methods for Vietnamese questions proposed by the authors following the two aforementioned directions. In this research report, we only survey one subcategory of the legitimate question: that is the questions with interrogative modal particles in Vietnamese.

Questions with interrogative modal particles in Vietnamese

This report adopts Diep Quang Ban's classification of questions, which is based on the expression format to classify the question. Specifically, the genuine question will be classified into the following sub-categories:

- Questions with modal particles: This type of question often uses question frames as follows:
- có... không Do ... don't you? (or have you?)
- có phải... không? Isn't it? (or is it?)
- đã... chưa? Have/has already... yet?
- ...xong chua? ... done (or already) ... yet? (or ... done yet?
- Questions with interrogative pronouns: This type of question often uses interrogative pronouns such as *ai who*, *bao giò when*, *thé nào how*, *tại sao why*, *etc*.
- Multiple-choice question: This type of question uses interrogative words to show options *hay or*.
- Questions using specialized particles. This type of question often uses special particles such as à, u, chẳng, đấy à, nhỉ, nhé...

According to the opinions of Diep Quang Ban (2004), questions with interrogative modal particles use them in pairs to form general question structures as follows:

• Type 1: Inquiries about positivity/negativity include the following question structures: Subject + $c\acute{o}$ + Predicate + không? Or Subject + $c\acute{o}$ phải+ Predicate+ không?

Example: Anna: Kia *có phải* là cuốn từ điển Việt Nhật *không*? (Is that a Vietnamese - Japanese dictionary?)

Lan: Ù, đó là quyển từ điển Việt Nhật. (Yes, it is.) [GT1-A1, page 119]

• Type 2: Questions about occurrences or non-occurrences:

Subject + $d\tilde{a}$ + Predicate + *chwa*?

Example: Reporter: Bác đã bao giờ nghe nhạc rock chưa? (Have you ever listened to rock music?)

B: Chưa. (No, I haven't.) Đó là nhạc của thanh niên, chỉ thanh niên mới thích. (It is music intended for young people, and only they tend to enjoy it.)

[GT4-A2, page 53]

• Type 3: Inquire about completeness/incompleteness:

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Subject + Verb + xong + Complement + chwa?

Example: Ninh: Anh xem xong bóng đá chưa? (Have you finished watching football?)

Hoang: Chua (Not yet/No, I haven't).

[GT11-C, 286]

Survey on the use of questions with interrogative modal particles in VSL textbooks for elementary and intermediate levels

Situation of using questions with interrogative modal particles in VSL textbooks

• Survey data at the elementary textbooks

After finishing the survey, findings are as follows:

Table 2: Rate of questions with interrogative modal particles in 03 textbook series at the elementary level

No.	Textbook	Quantity		Rate (%)
1	GT1-A1	28		13
2	GT2-A2	49	77	22
3	GT3-A1	19		9
4	GT4 -A2	31	50	14
5	GT5-A1	39		18
6	GT6-A2	53	92	24
Total		219		100

According to the survey results, all the textbooks incorporate questions with interrogative modal particles, albeit in varying quantities. Speaking of each textbook individually, GT6-A2 uses the highest quantity of questions with interrogative modal particles (accounting for 24%), followed by GT2-A2 (accounting for 22%), GT5-A1 (accounting for 15%). GT3-A1 uses this type of question at the lowest rate (at only 9%). When it comes to 3 textbook series, the 3rd series use the most questions with interrogative modal particles (92 questions), followed by the 1st series (77 questions) and the 2nd series (50 questions).

Table 3: Rate of questions with interrogative modal particles in 03 textbook series at the intermediate level.

No.	Textbook	Quantity	Rate (%)
1	GT7-B	44	34
3	GT8-B	32	25
4	GT9-B1	28	22
5	GT10-B2	25	19
	Total	129	100

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According to the survey results, all 3 sets of textbooks use questions with interrogative modal particles in pretty equal quantities. GT7-B textbook uses the most (34%), followed by GT8-B (25%) and GT9-B1 (22%). GT10-B2 uses the least (19%). Among 3 series of intermediate textbooks, the 6th series uses questions with interrogative modal particles the most frequently (41 questions), followed by the 4th series (34 questions) and the 5th series (25 questions), respectively.

• Comparison between the 2 levels

Based on the survey results regarding the use of questions with interrogative modal particles in three textbook series for both elementary and intermediate levels, we found that each textbook features a different quantity of questions that include interrogative modal particles. For the elementary level, the number of questions with interrogative modal particles included in dialogues is higher (219 questions). For the intermediate level, the number of this type of questions included in the dialogues is less (129 questions).

Situation of the use of different types of questions with interrogative modal particles in elementary and intermediate textbooks

As mentioned in the theory part, questions with interrogative modal particles include 3 types of questions We will survey these 3 types of questions in the 03 elementary textbook series and the 03 intermediate textbook series.

• Survey data at the elementary textbooks

Table 4: Types of questions with interrogative modal particles in textbooks at the elementary level.

No.	Textbook	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Total
1	GT1-A1	29	0	0	28
2	GT2-A2	37	12	0	49
3	GT3-A1	14	4	1	19
4	GT4 -A2	28	3	0	31
5	GT5-A1	35	4	0	39
6	GT6-A2	44	8	1	53
	Total	187	31	2	219

The survey results indicate that the introduction of questions containing interrogative modal particles in dialogues is inconsistent, with significant discrepancies in the number of different question types. The most frequently used type of question is type 2 (187 questions), followed by type 2 (31 questions). Type 3 is the least frequently used (2 questions). All three sets of textbooks primarily use Type 1 questions, followed by Type 2 and Type 3 questions.

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Table 5: Types of questions with interrogative modal particles in the textbooks at the intermediate level

No.	Textbook	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Total
1	GT7-B	30	14	0	44
2	GT8-B	23	8	1	32
3	GT9-B1	24	3	1	28
4	GT10-B2	19	5	1	25
	Total	96	30	3	129

The survey results indicated that questions featuring interrogative modal particles are incorporated into dialogues unevenly. Type 1 is the most frequently used (96 questions), followed by Type 2 (30 questions), and Type 3 (3 questions). All three textbook series primarily utilize Type 1 questions, followed by Type 2 questions. Type 3 is either not used in the textbooks or appears very infrequently (1 questions).

• Comparison between the 2 levels

The survey results revealed that the number of questions with interrogative modal particles included in dialogues at the elementary level is higher than at the intermediate level. At both levels, the textbook series demonstrates a consistent trend of predominantly using Type 1 questions, followed by Type 2 questions. Type 3 is either not used at all or appears very infrequently.

Survey of the distribution of questions with interrogative modal particles in VSL textbooks at the elementary and intermediate levels.

The distribution of questions with interrogative modal particles based on the lesson structure of the textbook series.

• Survey data at the elementary textbooks

In each textbook, the authors provide different layouts; however, the lesson structure predominantly includes Dialogue, Vocabulary, Grammar Notes, Practice (speaking, listening, and writing practice), Readings, and Exercises. We conducted a survey of questions with interrogative modal particles within the layout of textbooks, organized into the following sections: Dialogues, Grammar Notes, Practices, Readings, and Exercises. The survey results are as follows:

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Table 6: Quantity of questions with interrogative modal particles distributed in lesson structures at the elementary level.

Textbook	Dialogues	Grammar Notes	Practice	Reading	Exercise	Total	Rate (%)
GT1-A1	28	10	242	0	27	307	26
GT2-A2	33	16	291	0	10	350	30
GT3-A1	2	4	61	2	74	143	12
GT4 -A2	2	8	52	0	33	95	8
GT5-A1	24	8	33	0	67	132	11
GT6-A2	21	4	74	2	43	144	13
Total	110	50	753	4	254	1171	100

The survey results showed that the number of questions with interrogative modal particles varies within the lesson structure of the elementary textbook series. Specifically, the first series employs questions with interrogative modal particles most frequently within the lesson structure (56%). The third textbook series ranks second in the use of questions with interrogative modal particles (24%). The second textbook series uses questions with interrogative modal particles the least frequently among the three series (20%).

Within the lesson structure, the Practice section utilizes questions with interrogative modal particles the most frequently (753 questions), followed by Exercises (254 questions), Dialogues (110 questions), Grammar Notes (50 questions), and Readings (4 questions).

Table 7: Quantity of questions with interrogative modal particles distributed in lesson structures at the intermediate level.

				Rate			
Textbook	Dialogues	Grammar Notes	Practice	Reading	Exercise	Total	(%)
GT7-B	20	11	147	0	11	189	49
GT8-B	21	1	30	1	28	81	21
GT9-B1	15	2	25	0	16	58	15
GT10-B2	14	7	26	0	13	60	15
Total	70	21	228	1	68	388	100

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According to the survey results, the number of questions with interrogative modal particles included in the lesson structure of books varies among intermediate textbooks and there are discrepancies among different series. Among the 3 intermediate textbook series, the fourth series utilizes questions with interrogative modal particles most frequently (49%), followed by the sixth series (30%). The 5th series uses questions with interrogative modal particles least frequently (21%)

In the lesson structure, the Practice section contains the highest number of questions with interrogative modal particles (228 questions), followed by Dialogue (70 questions), Exercises (68 questions), and Grammar Notes (21 questions). The Reading section uses questions with interrogative modal particles least frequently (1 question).

• Comparison between the 2 levels

The survey results indicate that a greater number of questions with interrogative modal particles are incorporated into the lesson structure of elementary textbooks compared to intermediate textbooks. At both levels, the highest number of questions with interrogative modal particles tends to be found in Practices, followed by Exercises, Dialogues, Grammar Notes, and Readings.

Distribution of types of questions with interrogative modal particles in the lesson structure of the textbook series

• Survey data at the elementary textbooks

Table 8: Number of types of questions with interrogative modal particles in lesson structures at the elementary level.

structures at the eternorum y teres.								
No.	Textbook	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Total			
1	GT1-A1	269	35	3	307			
2	GT2-A2	303	40	7	350			
3	GT3-A1	93	48	2	143			
4	GT4 -A2	80	10	5	95			
5	GT5-A1	120	10	2	132			
6	GT6-A2	136	7	1	144			
	Total	1001	150	20	1171			

According to the survey results, the number of each question type included in the lesson structure of the elementary textbooks varies significantly. Specifically, Type 1 is the most frequently used in the lesson structure (1001 questions), followed by Type 2 (150 questions). Type 3 is used the least in the lesson structure (20 questions).

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Table 9: Quantity of questions with interrogative modal particles distributed in lesson structures at the intermediate level

No.	Textbook	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Total
1	GT7-B	160	25	4	189
2	GT8-B	59	16	6	81
3	GT9-B1	50	6	2	58
4	GT10-B2	49	9	2	60
	Total	318	56	14	388

The survey results indicated that the number of questions with interrogative modal particles included in the lesson structure is lower at the intermediate level than at the elementary level. All textbooks tend to primarily utilize Type 1 questions, followed by Type 2 and Type 3 questions. Type 1 was used most frequently (318 questions), followed by Type 2 (56 questions), and Type 3 (14 questions).

• Comparison between the 2 levels

The survey results indicated that the number of questions with interrogative modal particles used in elementary textbooks is significantly higher than that in intermediate textbooks. This is a simple type of question that seeks to validate information, making it commonly used at the elementary level.

At both levels, the textbook series predominantly utilizes Type 1 questions, followed by Type 2 questions. Type 3 is rarely used in the lesson structure.

CONCLUSION

Based on the survey findings on the use of questions with interrogative modal particles in 03 textbook series at 02 levels, it is found that:

- Elementary textbook series utilize questions with interrogative modal particles more frequently than those at the intermediate level. Specifically, at the elementary level, a total of 219 questions with interrogative modal particles are used. Among them, the third series used the most (92 questions), followed by the 2nd series (77 questions), and the 2nd series (50 questions). At the intermediate level, a total of 129 questions with interrogative modal particles are utilized. In which, the 6th series uses the most (41 questions), followed by the 4th set (34 questions) and the 5th set (25 questions).
- Questions with interrogative modal particles consist of 3 sub-categories. All textbook series primarily use Type 1 questions, followed by Type 2 and Type 3 questions.

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- Regarding the distribution of questions with interrogative modal particles in the lesson structure, textbook series at both levels tend to feature these questions most frequently in Practices, followed by the Exercises, Dialogues, Grammar Notes, and Readings. We found that the inclusion of questions with interrogative modal particles varies significantly across different sections. The Grammar Notes section included very few, while the Practice section included a significant number. This presents challenges for VSL students. It is recommended that the authors thoroughly incorporate all question structures with interrogative modal particles in the Grammar Notes, enabling students to understand, fully grasp, and proficiently use this type of sentence. At the elementary level, the first series utilizes the highest proportion of questions with interrogative modal particles in the lesson structure (56%), followed by the second series (24%) and the third series (20%). At the intermediate level, the 4th series employs the highest percentage of questions with interrogative modal particles (49%), followed by the 6th series (30%) and the 5th series (21%).
- Regarding the distribution of types of questions with interrogative modal particles in the lesson structure, all textbook series utilize 3 types of questions with interrogative modal particles. However, there is a substantial discrepancy in terms of frequency among the three types of questions with interrogative modal particles. Specifically, Type 1 is the most frequently used in the lesson structure, followed by Type 2. Type 3 is rarely used in the lesson structure. We recommend that the authors pay close attention to the inclusion of the types of questions with interrogative modal particles in the lesson structure to ensure that there are no significant disparities among the three types.

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