

INTEGRATING HIGH-LEVEL QUESTIONS IN SECOND-YEAR ENGLISH DEGREE CLASSROOMS: IMPLEMENTATION AND CHALLENGES

 Meriem Kater ¹  Yasmine Boukhedimi ²

University of Abou Kacem Saad Allah Algiers 2-Algeria,
meriem.kater@univ-alger2.dz

University of Algiers 2 Abou Kacem Saad Allah-Algeria
Boukhedimi.yasmine@gmail.com

Abstract: Asking high-level questions is an effective strategy for developing learners' thinking. Despite the importance of this strategy in promoting and guiding students' thinking, it is found that a great number of teachers ask lower-level questions more than higher-level questions. This is assumed to be due to several challenges related to teachers, students, and other factors. The present research, therefore, attempts to explore the implementation of high-level questions and the challenges that face teachers in incorporating these types of questions in second-year English degree classrooms at the University of Algiers 2. To this end, a mixed-methods approach was adopted using various research methods namely: a questionnaire, an interview, and an observation checklist. The research findings revealed that lower-level questions were used more frequently than higher-level questions. The data obtained from the research tools showed that for the implementation of higher-level questions, the teacher used some techniques such as increasing wait time, repeating the same question several times, and inviting non-volunteering students. Further, it was found that students' low proficiency, lack of vocabulary, teachers may not be trained to ask high-level questions, as well as large classrooms and lengthy syllabi were the most common challenges. Based on these findings, several pedagogical implications are given. The study recommends a careful planning of questions; matching questions with their purposes; the need to reduce tuition groups; and the need to develop teachers' questioning skills.

Keywords: challenges; EFL teachers; high-level questions; low-level questions; questioning skills

How to cite the article :

Kater, M., & Boukhedimi, Y. (2024). Integrating high-level questions in second-year English degree classrooms: Implementation and challenges. *Journal of Studies in Language, Culture, and Society*, 7(3), pp. 35-51.

¹ Corresponding author : Meriem Kater ,
ORCID ID- <https://orcid.org/0009.0008-3472-5970>

1. Introduction

Improving students' thinking can be initiated and structured in several ways, and one way to do that is by asking questions, but not just any kind of questions. Guiding students' thinking is mainly correlated with asking good and high-quality questions because it is assumed by a plethora of researchers and educationalists that questioning is the first step to thinking (Beyer,1997; Bloom, 1956; King, 1995; Chuska, 1997; Elder & Paul, 2016).

According to Russell (1956, as cited by Chuska, 1997:8), skillful use of questions will guarantee that students will build up adequate knowledge for critical thinking and will increase the student's ability to see relationships. Along the same line, other researchers such as Bloom (1956), Cotton (1988), King (1995), and Elder & Paul (2016) propose that one extremely effective way of eliciting classroom discussion which has a great influence on the development of students' critical thinking is the use of higher-level questions. This suggests that High-level questioning effectively develops learners' thinking skills by encouraging them to engage in more cognitively demanding analysis and problem-solving.

Despite the importance of such a strategy in promoting and guiding students' thinking, and even though many useful articles, theses, and books do deal with the necessity of asking high-level questions, we find that nearly the majority of studies reveal that teachers are not asking enough higher-level questions that assist critical thinking and enhance students' thoughts (Henning, 2008; Gall, 1970; Shomoossi 2004; Walsh and Sattes, 2005). This is assumed to be due to several challenges that prevent teachers from integrating higher-level questions (Chamoussi,2004, Henning, 2008). These research findings have raised the need to explore the issue since it has not gained much attention, especially in the Algerian context. Therefore, four objectives have been set. The first objective is to gauge teachers' knowledge of and attitudes towards questioning. The second objective is to know whether teachers ask high-level questions, and if yes how they do so. A third objective is to find out what hinders teachers' attempts to ask high level questions, whereas the fourth objective is to probe what solutions can be deduced which in turn might help in implementing high-level questions in EFL classrooms.

We hope that the findings will be valuable for Algerian EFL students and teachers since questioning has been and continues to be one of the most common practices for teaching. This research may help university-level English teachers re-consider their questioning behavior and incorporate higher-level questions that may assist English degree students and increase their thinking skills.

The main questions underlying this study are:

1. What are teachers' knowledge of and attitudes towards questioning?
2. Do teachers ask high-level questions? If yes, how and to what extent?
3. Do teachers face challenges and difficulties that hinder them from integrating high-level questions? If yes, what are these challenges?
4. What solutions can be suggested from the insights on teachers' reflections on this issue?

2. Literature Review

2.1. *Definition of Question and Teachers' Question*

In the literature, there is little agreement on the definition of the term "question" because this term can be studied from different angles such as syntax, pragmatics, and semantics, and most of the time this term is used without a definition (Tsui 1992:89). For example, Wu (1993:51) showed that although "Would you speak louder?" is syntactically interrogative, it

functions as a "request"; whereas, "Tell me why?" is grammatically imperative, but it needs an answer and therefore can be considered as a "question".

The above examples show that a question is an expression that has an interrogative meaning which implies that when a speaker poses a question, he/she expects a response from the listener. Additionally, the form of a question is not limited to the interrogative structure, as it can also take the shape of a declarative sentence with rising intonation. Accordingly, this study defines a question as any expression, whether a direct question, indirect question, or declarative statement, that is intended to elicit an answer. Moreover, as this study focuses on teachers' questions, it is necessary to determine what the expression "teachers' question" means in teaching and learning. According to Sanders (1966), the teacher's question is an intellectual exercise that requires a response from the student, and for Cotton (1988), teachers' questions serve as instructional cues or stimuli that communicate the content students must learn, as well as the specific activities and approaches students should take.

2.2. *The Importance and Necessity of Questioning*

Asking questions is the cornerstone of all communication between teachers and students and is regarded as the most important teaching activity. Extensive research has highlighted the critical role of teachers' questioning in the learning process (Cotton, 1988; Cecil, 1995; Ellis, 1992; and Elder & Paul, 2016). More than 2,000 years ago, the Greek philosophers Socrates and Plato were the first to employ the questioning technique. Through this method of questioning, Socrates encouraged his students to examine their attitudes, reason through logical inferences, and develop more nuanced perspectives - ultimately leading them to propose novel hypotheses. Besides, according to Ellis (1992), questions require responses and therefore, they serve as a means of obliging students to contribute to the interaction. Additionally, students develop their critical thinking abilities by evaluating their progress and being asked probing questions that aid in their understanding as they process information (Van Essen, 2008, as quoted by Kheloufi, 2019). For Elder and Paul (2016:10), disciplinary thinking is driven by questioning, not by answers. In general, questions are essential probes that enhance students' critical thinking skills, challenge students to articulate their ideas, and develop more effective ways of expressing their opinions.

2.3. *Questioning Taxonomies and Levels*

There are several types of questions teachers can use to stimulate students' thinking and encourage them to be active in the classroom. In one of the earliest types and taxonomies, Bloom (1956) categorized questions into the following groups: Knowledge: the remembering of formerly-learned material (e.g. what is the special name of this triangle?). Comprehension: the ability to comprehend the meaning (e.g. Explain how you got that answer.) Application: the capability to use educated material such as rules, methods, concepts, principles, laws, and theories in new and real situations (e.g. give me an example of a situation in which you may have this experience.). Analysis: the ability to break down material into its elements so that its organizational structure may be understood. This may include the classification of parts, exploration of the association between them, and identification of organizational principles (e.g. Why did that work in this case?). Synthesis means the capability to collect different parts and put them together to create a new whole. Synthesis encourages learners to form something new and rely on advanced and creative thinking. (e.g. What would happen if you called him?). Evaluation: the ability to assess the value of materials, the explanation of problems, or the details about particular cultures (What do you think?). In Bloom's taxonomy, knowledge is the lowest cognitive level, and evaluation is considered the highest cognitive level. According to Morgan and Saxton (1991), this taxonomy advocates that giving judgment of something is not possible until one: a) knows the facts, b) comprehends the facts, c) can

apply the facts, d) can take the facts separately, and e) puts the facts jointly in such way that new perspectives are discovered.

Another taxonomy was developed by Long and Sato (1983). They classified questions into two major groups. Where a referential question is asked for information not known to the teachers while a display question is asked for known answers. According to Shomossi (2004), referential questions are those for which the teacher does not know the answers. These questions require the respondents to provide interpretations and judgments, thereby encouraging greater learner productivity. In contrast, Shomossi defines display questions as those for which the teacher already knows the answer. These are usually used for understanding, confirmation, or elucidation, and tend to promote more meaningful communication between the teacher and learner. Referential questions are classified as high-level questions; whereas, display questions are considered as low-level questions (Brown, 2001).

2.4. *Studies on Questioning*

Several studies on the types of questions have been conducted (Gall,1970); Shomossi,2004; Keskes 2006). For example, Gall (1970) reviewed teacher questions and found that 60% of them required students to recall the material in a manner similar to how it was presented, and only 20% required students to think beyond just recalling the material. The remaining 20% of teacher questions dealt with procedural issues like classroom management.

Another study that agreed with Gall's findings on the overuse of lower-level questions is a qualitative-quantitative study conducted by Shomossi (2004). He looked at how display and referential questions were used by teachers. The results demonstrated that display questions were utilized by teachers four times more frequently than referential questions. According to Shomossi (2004), there were several reasons behind the overuse of display questions. Among those reasons, he mentioned the low language capacity of the students and teachers' time restriction because of the severe program that teachers had to cover.

Considering the Algerian context, several studies related to teachers' questions revealed that teachers mostly ask lower-level questions or what is known as knowledge questions and rarely ask synthesis and evaluation questions at higher-order thinking levels in the classroom. For example, Hadjeris and Merrouche (2019) observed two classes of a native and a non-native EFL teacher at the Department of English at Constantine Teachers' College, Algeria, as part of their exploratory study into native vs. non-native English-speaking teacher talk in terms of the different elicitation techniques employed in EFL classes. The study utilized an American female teacher as the only native-speaking instructor available. This teacher had travelled from the United States to Algeria on a one-year contract as a language fellow in a program sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. The study revealed that the native English teacher used more referential questions, which encouraged students to synthesize information and evaluate concepts. In contrast, the non-native English teacher preferred display questions that simply elicited answers already known to the teacher. In another study, Hadjeris (2019) observed two English courses - Linguistics and Civilization - at the University of Oum El Bouaghi's Department of English. Hadjeris found that both teachers relied much too heavily on display questions. Conversely, in his study with a teacher whose experience is 15 years, Keskes (2006) found that there were more referential questions asked than display ones. The findings of Keskes were significant and different from those of previous studies. The teacher asked more referential questions, yet it was the teacher himself who ended up answering them. This was likely because, as Keskes (2006:104) noted, learners struggle to cope with this type of questioning. According to Henning (2008: 22),

several reasons may explain the overuse of lower-level questions. First, they are relatively easy to generate. Second, assessment practices often tend to emphasize the importance of recall knowledge over higher-level thinking skills. Third, it may be that some teachers are not sufficiently prepared to ask higher-level questions because they see that there is little elaboration of ideas on the part of students.

3. Methodology

3.1 The Participants

The current study took place in the Department of English Language at the University of Algiers 2 during the academic year 2022 /2023. The information about the participants appears in the following table:

Table 1: *Teachers' Profiles*

Participant	Gender	Years of Experience	Academic qualification	Specialism	Modules They Teach
T1	Female	6-10	MAB	Linguistics	Study Skills, Grammar, Linguistics
T2	Female	6-10	MAA	Literature	Anglo-Lit and Lit Genres
T3	Female	11-15	MAB	Linguistics	Psychology, Phonetics, and Grammar
T4	Female	11-15	MAA	Linguistics	Phonetics and Linguistics
T5	Female	0-5	MAA	Linguistics	Linguistics
T6	Female	6-10	MAA	Civilization	Reading /Writing
T7	Female	11-15	MAA	Literature	Anglo Culture and Reading Writing
T8	Female	0-5	MCB	Literature	Listening Speaking
T9	Female	0-5	MAA	Literature	Grammar
T10	Male	6-10	MAB	Linguistics	Study Skills and Reading Writing
T11	Female	0-5	MAA	Literature	Academic Writing
T12	Female	6-10	MAA	Linguistics	Linguistics and Methodology
T13	Female	11-15	MCB	Linguistics	Study Skills and Grammar, Sociolinguistics
T14	Male	11-15	MAA	Literature	Grammar and Anglo. Culture
T15	Male	11-15	MAA	Literature	Reading Writing and Grammar

This study involved fifteen teachers. Twelve female and three male teachers of English language. Their age ranges from 31 to 45 years old. The teaching experience also ranges from 4 and 15 years. As shown in Table 1, there is a relative heterogeneity in the sample involved in this study. Most of the participants have valuable experience, and their specialism and the modules they teach are also different.

3.2 Instruments

To meet the previously stated objectives of this study, a mixed-methods approach that involved qualitative and quantitative data was selected. To this end, three research tools were used: a questionnaire, an interview, and an observation checklist. The questionnaire was used as data collection to find out the most challenging factors that may face teachers in integrating high-level questions. Some of the questionnaire items were adopted from different sources including Henning (2008), Hussin (2006), Gall (1970), Shomoossi (2004), Touati (2016), and Walsh & Sattes (2005); other items were designed by the researcher according to her understanding of the subject being studied and the aims targeted.

As far as the questionnaire is concerned, its first section dealt with the background information. The objective of this section was to know teachers' gender, years of experience, qualifications, modules, and the levels they teach. The second section required teachers to rank 24 statements about the challenges on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The final section seeks to elicit teachers' solutions and suggestions. The questionnaire was checked for validity and reliability, and then it was administered via email to the participants.

The second data collection tool used was a semi-structured interview, and its purpose was to gauge teachers' knowledge of and attitudes towards questioning. It consisted of five open-ended questions. The first question was about teachers' awareness of the different types of questions. This question was followed by a second one which asked teachers about the question taxonomies they know. The third question was about how teachers decide about the type of question they ask, while the fourth one was about teachers' viewpoints on the definition of lower-level questions and giving some examples. The last question was about the teachers' views on higher-level questions. All these questions were followed by probing questions to elicit as in-depth information as possible.

An observation checklist as a research tool was used to discover whether teachers ask high-level questions, how, and to what extent. The observation form was based on Bloom's (1956) taxonomy of questions which categorizes questions into six types; it was checked for validity and reliability. The first three types of Bloom's taxonomy are knowledge, comprehension, and application questions, and they are dichotomized as lower-level questions; whereas, the last three types are analysis, synthesis, and evaluation questions which are considered as higher-level questions. The observation sessions and the interviews were recorded after the approval of the participants had been obtained.

4. Results and Discussion

The following section addresses the findings pertaining to the four research questions that form the basis of this study. It also underscores the similarities and differences between these results and the findings of prior research.

RQ1: What are teachers' knowledge of and attitudes towards questioning?

To answer this question, we relied on the interview. The data compiled using the open-ended items of the semi-structured interview were analyzed using thematic analysis. As far as the first question of the interview is concerned, the majority of teachers claimed that they

were aware of the different types of questions except for **T5** and **T13** who said that they weren't aware neither of the types of questions nor of the levels of the questions they ask in their classrooms. In addition, when teachers asked about the taxonomies they know, nine teachers mentioned Bloom's taxonomy except **T1** who added another taxonomy which was Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK). The other five teachers said they didn't know any learning taxonomy (**T6, T7, T8, T11, T14**). Here, it is worth mentioning that these five teachers usually teach literature; so, we can conclude that teachers' special academic domain may greatly influence their knowledge of the different learning taxonomies.

Concerning how teachers decide on the levels of questions, the results obtained from the interview revealed similar answers. The majority of teachers said that they decide on the types of questions depending on students' levels and abilities and according to the course objectives. The following citations have been extracted from the interviewees' responses:

- "To decide on which level I should use, the main things I consider are The module I am teaching and the types of questions that best help us reach the learning objectives; the lesson stages: beginning, middle, or end of the course; I also consider whether students are used to certain types of questions or not; whenever I feel it is necessary, I keep in mind that my questions should train and help learners think analytically and critically" (**T3**)
- "I decide on the levels of questions based on the level of students and the objectives of the course" (**T1**)
- " I decide on the level of questions according to students' cognitive abilities" (**T2**)

Concerning the types of questions teachers consider lower-level questions and higher-level questions, the results revealed also convergent answers. All teachers seem to know about the two levels of questions except for **T13** who wondered about the definition of these two levels and she said that she had never heard about these two concepts. After I explained the two concepts, the teacher recognized them, and she confirmed her acquaintance with the two levels. Below are further excerpts from the data:

- "I will answer this question as far as the module of linguistics is concerned. For me, low-level questions are those questions related to the content of different topics of the syllabus, such as: how was the study of language part of philosophy during the times of the Greeks, or who is the father of modern linguistics? Because questions like these only require readings and preparations on the part of the students. They do not engage students in high levels of learning based on Bloom's taxonomy. They just require remembering and understanding (which are the lowest levels in Bloom's taxonomy). On the other hand, high-level questions are the questions that engage students in evaluating and analyzing. For instance, this is the case when I ask them to talk about their viewpoints about which civilization in history contributed the best to the study of language. (**T5**)"
- " Lower level questions are questions teachers use to check students' understanding or their ability to recall information, whereas higher level questions are like what if questions? Or why questions and their purpose is to train learners to think critically. What relationships between notions? To train learners to synthesize and make associations between separate pieces of information. Evaluation questions such as: is what you have learned complete, is it enough?" (**T3**)
- " Lower level questions are for example direct questions as well as the ones which incite students' repetition of the content of the course being taught. Higher-level

questions are for example questions which incite students' critical thinking " (T1, T2, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10, T 11, T12, T13, T14, T15)

- "Lower level questions are used to assess students' preparation and comprehension, and they require students to remember or recall such as who? What? Higher level questions require knowledge of the subject matter" (T4)

As illustrated above, most teachers have some knowledge about the different types and levels of questions, and they are also aware of the importance of such a strategy in provoking students' thoughts and imagination. Teachers' awareness of the importance, the use, as well as the classification of question types, can help them determine easily how effectively they are doing in stimulating students in critical and active learning (Cecil, 1991).

RQ2: Do teachers ask high-level questions? If yes, how and to what extent?

To answer this question, we depended on an observation checklist as a data collection. It is to be highlighted that our initial plan was to observe two teachers of the listening speaking module, but due to hard accessibility, we changed our plan and we observed three sessions of one teacher who is teaching the module of linguistics, she was a female at the beginning of her career (T5 as illustrated in table 1). The length of each session was forty-five to fifty minutes because the teacher didn't start teaching until most students were in the classroom. The data collected from the class observations were analyzed, and the types of questions were coded into two levels using Bloom's Taxonomy and Long and Sato's (1983) taxonomy. These two levels were Lower level questions (LLQ) and Higher level questions (HLQ). In the sessions observed, the teacher used other types of questions like questions related to the classroom procedures, routines, and management; however, we didn't take them into account because our concern was to examine those academic questions that were related to the topic being taught.

The analysis done on the data collected during classroom observation showed that the teacher asked about more than fifty questions and that out of these questions, there were only seven referential questions which were categorized as high-level questions; whereas, the other questions were low-level questions (as illustrated in table 2). This shows that the distribution of the two types of questions was different and that the teacher used more lower-level questions than higher-level questions.

Table 2. *The percentages of questions asked by the teachers*

Question Types	N	%
Display question as (LLQ)	45	86.53%
Referential question (HLQ)	7	13.46%
Total	52	100%

The findings of this research match with the findings of previous studies where teachers overused display questions in their classes (Henning, 2008; Gall, 1970; Shomoossi 2004; Walsh and Sattes, 2005). For instance, the results are similar to research conducted in Algeria by Hadjeris and Merrouche (2019). They conducted their research in the Department of English at Constantine Teachers' College. They reported that most types of questions asked by English teachers were grouped into Lower-order questions and that the Algerian teacher showed preference toward using display questions which elicit answers already known by the teacher. Moreover, in another study by Hadjeris (2019) in the Department of English at the

University of Oum El Bouaghi, she found that the two teachers who were observed relied much too heavily on display questions.

Extract of **(T5)1.1** illustrates some of the display questions used by the teacher. The teacher asked several questions to test students' understanding and knowledge of some concepts as well as asking them to review information that had been studied before.

Extract (T5)1.1

T: what did we say last time about the study of language?

T: what do we mean by that? Can you name some philosophers?

T: again, who else can say why language was dealt with as a part of philosophy?

As it can be noticed from this extract, the three questions asked by the teachers are categorized as display questions (lower-level questions) because based on Bloom's Taxonomy, these types of questions are taxonomized as knowledge questions as they involve the basic cognitive process, such as remembering and regaining previously learned material. In these situations, students need only recall and recite specific definitions, facts, or previously studied materials (Anderson & Karthwohl, 2001).

Another example of display questions is found in Extract **(T5) 1.2**. The display question was used by the teacher to ask about the meaning of philology. Here, the teacher already knew the answer and she expected the students to give the same answer. In Extract **(T5) 1.2**, the teacher waited for a moment to help students give the predictable answer. As illustrated, the teacher asked about the meaning of "comparative philology", but the students remained silent, and then she asked again about the meaning of "comparative". The students said at the beginning "Similarities". After that, she waited and guided the students until they gave the predictable answer.

Extract (T5)1.2

T: What do we mean by comparative philology?

SS: silence

T: Okay, let's first know about comparative, what do we mean by comparative?

S1: similarities.

T: Again, does it just mean similarities? What do we do when we compare two things, especially two languages?

S2: When we compare two things we look for and examine the similarities and differences of the compared languages.

T: again who else?

Based on this extract, we can say that the teacher used different techniques to elicit a predictable answer. At first, she provided wait time to help the students think of the right answer. This is similar to the findings of a qualitative study conducted by Ismalinda et.al (2023) at SMKN 1 Batanghari. The study revealed that teachers allowed students an extra 1-3 seconds to respond to questions, explaining that this additional time enabled students to think through and formulate their answers. Moreover, Cecil (1991) focuses on the importance of wait time in stimulating students' thinking. She argues that critical thinking and reflection

take time, so it would be better if the teacher allows more time for questions, especially high quality questions. Furthermore, another technique used by the teacher was inviting other students to answer the same question; by doing so, the teachers enhances classroom interaction and prevents students from keeping silent (Nunan, 1990). It is also noticeable that in this classroom, the majority of students attempted to answer display questions, which only elicit single-word or brief responses rather than answering questions that call for an in-depth discussion (Boyd & Rubin, 2006). In this vein, Henning (2008) suggests that students find recall questions easy to be answered as these types of questions typically only require a concise response, giving them little chance to elaborate on their ideas, as they do not go into great detail or provide much support for their ideas.

Some of the high-level questions were also documented from the observation. Still, the findings of this study revealed that high-level questions were not frequently used in this classroom. This is because only seven out of fifty questions were classified as high-level questions and the rest were classified as low-level questions. The examples of high-level questions used by the observed teacher are presented in the following data:

T: why was language dealt with as a part of philosophy?

T: why do you think the Greeks were interested in the study of languages?

T: How can you explain that?

T: what is the nature of language?

T: What is the source of language? Why do we use language?

T: why do you think linguists compare between languages?

T: why do you think we study languages?

As it can be observed from the extract, the majority of these questions were WHY questions. These open-ended, analytical questions compel students to think critically, provide substantive responses, and defend their viewpoints. Since these high-level questions are subjective in nature, they elicit longer, more varied answers from the class. During the observation session, the teacher used several techniques to implement high-quality questions. Among the techniques used by the teacher is that she extended wait time after asking questions to obtain longer answers and to give students time to think more. Giving sufficient time to students after posing questions is a useful technique which is confirmed by Dillon (1982) and Cecil (1991) who stated that there is a positive relation between silence and the frequency of response, the length of response, and the cognitive level of response. In addition, Wu (1993) stated that questions asked by teachers may not always obtain answers successfully from students due to the insufficient wait time. Besides, another technique used by the teacher was inviting non-volunteers. According to Gall (1987:34), Posing questions to the entire class, rather than calling on individual students, is a highly effective technique to keep students engaged. What was observed also was that the teacher repeated the same question several times to get an answer from her students. For repetition, it is considered an important strategy to elicit students' answers (Wu,1993). Furthermore, the findings of the observation revealed that most of the time the same students tried to answer the higher level questions although the teacher tried to invite non-volunteers, but these students either kept silent, gave incomplete sentences, or gave wrong answers. Beyond that, the teacher was the one who sometimes answered some high-level questions because these questions remained unanswered from the part of the students. In this vein, many researchers advise teachers not to answer their questions. Cecil (1991), for example, argues that a teacher has to allow more

wait time for the students who may still be thinking. She adds that a teacher should never have to answer his question.

RQ3: Do teachers face challenges and difficulties that prevent them from integrating high-level questions? If yes, what are these challenges?

To answer this question, we used a questionnaire that required teachers to rank 24 statements about the challenges on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The results of the questionnaire revealed that teachers had varied perceptions of the challenges that may face teachers when implementing high-level questions. At first, 100% of the participants said that they face some challenges when incorporating high level questions. The first nine statements of the challenges were related to the students. In the survey, teachers agreed and strongly agreed with statements (2) 'Students lack of language knowledge and general knowledge', (3) 'Students lack of English vocabulary', (4) 'Students depend on rote memorization', (5) 'Students avoid inquiry activities', and (7) 'Students lack of confidence in their language proficiency'; whereas, teachers indicated no choice, and they were neutral with statements (8 and 9). The highest percentage was (73.33%) for statement (7), while 63.66% of the teachers disagreed with the statement (1) 'Students are not being used to being asked high-level questions'. The percentage of neutrality for statements (8) 'Students prefer activities and assignments with simple factual questions and answers', and (9) 'Silent class, no student responds to high-level questions' ranged from (40% to 60.66%).

The second eight statements were intended to investigate the challenges related to teachers. The results of the survey showed that the highest percentage where teachers strongly agreed was (73.50%), and it was assigned to the statements (13) 'Teachers are not trained on asking high-level questions' and (14) 'lack of time for preparing and planning High-level questions'; this demonstrates that the participants considered time limitation a central challenge. Teachers' training to implement high-order questions is important since several teachers may not have sufficient knowledge about the types, strategies, and techniques of asking high-quality questions. Moreover, the results showed that 13 teachers strongly disagreed (86,66%) with the statement (17) 'teaching the content is more important than improving critical thinking'. This demonstrates that teachers are aware of the importance of improving critical thinking and that it is integrated into the curriculum. The percentage of neutrality which ranged from (12.50% to 18.75%) was given to the rest of the statements (10,11,15,16).

The following statements were related to the challenge related to the environment. The results of the questionnaire indicated that teachers strongly agreed with statements (19) 'Large class size', and (20) ' A lengthy syllabus'. In addition, teachers also agreed with the statement (24) 'Curriculum stresses only the acquisition of facts, ideas, and concepts'. Reasonably, a large class is considered the most challenging factor since in the department of English language at the University of Algiers 2, the size of groups reaches more than sixty students. A lengthy syllabus is also considered another factor that increases the challenges in asking higher-order questions because it requires much time to be completed. Consequently, teachers do not have enough time to ask higher-order questions.

The results of question three, which dealt with the challenges, were in line with the findings of Shomoossi's (2004) study at Tahrán University. He stated that the low language proficiency of the students and the time constraints placed on teachers due to the severe curriculum they had to cover were the reasons for the overuse of display questions. The challenges Algerian teachers faced when implementing high-level questions coincide with the study conducted by Zainudin Vianty and Inderawati (2019), which found that the most frequent challenges faced by Indonesian teachers were students' limited vocabulary, teachers' creativity, a negative classroom environment, and students' incapacity to think at a higher

level. Given that most teachers face similar challenges worldwide; it is important to note that the study's conclusions are applicable outside of Algeria.

RQ4: What solutions can be suggested from the teachers' insights on teachers' reflections on the issue?

To answer this question, we depended on the questionnaire. The results showed that the teachers have approximately convergent suggestions that would help them ask higher-level questions. Some significant suggestions from the insights on teachers' reflections on implementing high-level questions are presented below:

- The challenges can be reduced by training teachers on the appropriate methods, techniques, and strategies for enhancing students' critical thinking as well as reducing the number of students in class. In addition, encouraging students' self-confidence and self-esteem is important too.
- I suggest to explain the concept of critical thinking and inspire creativity. Reduce the number of students in classes, and train students to ask higher-level questions.
- The first suggestion is the use of the flipped classroom technique; this strategy makes the students prepare the lesson as homework at home before they come to the class. This way students come with the necessary knowledge they need to answer high-level questions during the class. The second suggestion would be engaging students in research activities. Conducting research with students as co-researchers of their learning practice will make them think critically about both the teaching and learning processes.
- I think that one of the priorities of teaching is to help learners learn how to learn.
- Teachers should believe that they are no longer knowledge or content providers. One of the teaching priorities should be to train learners to think analytically and critically.
- Classroom time should be doubled especially for certain modules.
- Teachers should give importance to the preparation of lesson plans.
- Learning objectives should be carefully defined by teachers as this may tell the teacher about the level of questioning they should use.

These suggestions clearly state that the majority of teachers agreed on careful planning of questions and also on matching the questions with their objectives to facilitate the free flow of production. Moreover, the majority of teachers agreed on training teachers to ask high-level questions as this would help them increase their student's critical thinking and stimulate their students' imagination. In addition, teachers suggest reducing the number of students in the classrooms as the latter affects positively or negatively the production of the learners.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the integration of high-level questions and the challenges that face teachers in incorporating these types of questions in second-year English degree classrooms at the University of Algiers 2 Abou Kacem Saad Allah. It aimed to gauge teachers' knowledge of and attitudes towards questioning; to know whether teachers ask high-level questions or not, and to probe what solutions can be deduced which in turn helps in implementing high-level questions. The findings reveal that, in the observed classrooms, the teachers tend to use lower-level questions than higher-level questions.

Although some high-level questions are identified in the data, their rate is very small in comparison to lower-level questions because the latter are much easier to answer and do not necessitate creativity or critical thinking skills. We can conclude that the use of high-level

questions is limited in this classroom. When students answer only display questions, they will miss out on the creative and critical thinking benefits and cannot distance themselves in time and space (Cecil, 1991). Consequently, the overuse of low-level questions may prevent students from the chance to use oral language, elaborate their thoughts, and delve into meaningful topics.

For the implementation of higher-level questions, the teacher depends on some question strategies such as repeating the same question several times, increasing wait time, and inviting non-volunteering students. To further clarify, teachers should take into account a variety of factors and strategies that affect the effectiveness of the questions they ask (Cotton, 1988; Cecil, 1995; Ellis, 1992; Elder & Paul, 2016; Morgan & Saxton, 2006). Some of the strategies can be mentioned below:

Firstly, teachers should ask questions that are clear and concise to ensure that students will understand and remember them as they consider their answers. Secondly, teachers should also reflect different levels of the cognitive and affective taxonomies. Thirdly, teachers should ask the same question again or in a different way to increase the possibility that students will provide a different answer. Fourthly, teachers should increase wait time because extending wait times by a few seconds is a crucial strategy that can result in changing the quality of students' answers. Finally, teachers should try to engage as many students as they can and be consistent in asking the same number of questions to boys and girls, and to students of different abilities.

Although, there is limited use of high-level questions in this classroom, the observed teacher showed, in the interview, her interest in the implementation of high-level questions. Moreover, most participants showed also their awareness of the importance of high-level question; however, they faced some challenges in applying them due to the students' low proficiency levels, students' lack of vocabulary. The teachers also admitted that they may not be trained to ask high-level questions in large classes, where they have to complete lengthy syllabi. To incorporate higher-level questions in the EFL classrooms, teachers agreed on some solutions to confront the challenges. Teachers should be trained on how to use high-quality questions and should be prepared in terms of their knowledge, and knowledge of their students' proficiency levels because this determines the type of question to be asked. Teachers should give importance to the preparation of lesson plans. The learning objectives should be carefully defined by teachers as this may tell the teachers about the level of questioning they should use. In addition, the number of students in classes should be reduced.

Since questioning is the most used instructional strategy in the classroom, it is hoped the results obtained from this study will add to the existing body of knowledge around questioning behaviour, especially in the Algerian context, and help university-level English teachers re-consider their questioning behaviour and incorporate higher-level questions

References

- Anderson, L. W. & Krathwohl, D. R. (Eds.). 2001. *A Taxonomy for learning, teaching and assessing: A revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives: Complete Edition*. Longman.
- Beyer, B. K. (1997). *Improving students critical thinking: A comprehensive approach*. Allyn & Bacon.
- Bloom, B.S. (1956). *taxonomy of education objectives. Handbook 1: the cognitive domain*. David McKay.

- Boyd, M. & Rubin, D. (2006). How contingent questioning promotes extended student talk: a function of display questions. *Journal of Literacy Research*. 38(2): 141-169.
- Chuska, K.R. (1997). *Improving classroom question*. Kenneth R Chuska. Bloomington, Indiana.
- Gall, M.D. (1970). The use of questions in teaching. *Review of Educational Research*. 44, 707-721.
- Hussin, H. (2006). Dimensions of questioning: A qualitative study of current classroom Practice in Malaysia. *TESL-EJ* 10.2.
- Hadjeris, F and Merrouche, S. (2019). Whose talk is worth more? A case study into questioning. *Revue Sciences Humaines*. 30 (4), 83-94.
- Henning, J. (2008). *The art of discussion-based teaching: opening up conversation in the classroom*. Taylor & Francis: Rutledge.
- Kesskess, S. (2006). On teacher questioning: question-types in question. *Revue Sciences Humaines*. 26: 87-109.
- Kheloufi, N. (2019). A rhetorical-based view to promote EFL learners' critical thinking and problem-solving in authentic language. *Journal of Studies in Language, Culture and Society*. 1 (2), 33-40
- King, A. (1995). Inquiring minds do want to know: using questioning to teach critical thinking. *The Teaching of Psychology*, 22(1), 13-17.
- Ismalinda, S., Fortunasari, Masita, E., Hidayat, M., & Wulandari, B.A. (2023). Teachers' question types and questioning strategies: A classroom interaction analysis. *Indonesian Research Journal in Education |IRJE|*, 7(2), 336 – 350.
- Nunan, D. (1990). The Question teachers ask. *JALT Journal*. 12(2), 187-201.
- Paul, R. and Elder, L. (2016). *The art of Socratic questioning*, Dillon Beach, CA: Foundation for Critical Thinking.
- Shomoossi, N. (2004). The effect of teachers' questioning behavior on EFL classroom interaction: A classroom research study. *The Reading Matrix*. 4(2), 96-104.
- Walsh, J.A. & Sattes, B.D. (2005). *Quality questioning: Research-based practice to engage every learner*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.
- Wilen, W. W. (2001). Exploring myths about teacher questioning in the social studies Classroom. *The Social Studies*, 92(1), 26-32. doi 10.1080/00377990109603972.
- Wu, K. (1993). Classroom interaction and teacher questions revisited. *RELC Journal*, 24, 49

Appendix
Teachers' Questionnaire

Section A: Background Information

Complete the following information by marking an (x) in the appropriate response.

1. Gender: male female
2. Age in years:

2

3

3

4

4

5

3. Experience in teaching:

0

6

1

1

--
4. Academic qualification:

M

--

--

--

M

5. Specialty:

Lin

Civil

Liter

Literature

6. Modules you teach:
7. Level you teach:

1

2

3

M

M

Section B: Challenges that are faced by teachers in integrating high level questions during interaction

For each of the following statements you choose the response to which you agree with about the challenges in integrating critical thinking questions during interaction

- 1) Strongly agree 2) Agree 3) Undecided 4) Disagree 5) Strongly disagree

1. Challenges related to Students

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
B1. Students are not being used to be asked high level questions					
B2. Students lack of knowledge					
B3. Students lack of vocabulary					
B4. Students depend on rote memorization					
B5. Students avoid inquiry activities					
B7. Students lack of confidence					
B8. Students prefer activities and assignments with simple factual questions and answers.					
B9. Silent class: non of student respond to high level questions					

2. Challenges related to teachers

B10. Teachers avoid inquiry activities					
B11. Teachers habits of asking mostly factual and display questioning					
B12. Teachers traditional methods					
B13. Teachers are not trained on asking high level questions					
B14. Lack of time for preparing and planning high level questions					
B15. Understanding students' point of view requires time.					

B16. Teachers need to complete the syllabus in a certain time					
B17. teaching the content is more important than improving critical thinking					

3. Challenges related to the environment

B19. Large class size					
B20. A lengthy syllabus					
B21. Irrelevant content not related to all student's levels					
B22. Class time effects the types of questions being asked					
B23. Teaching critical thinking is not one of the university priorities					
B24. Curriculum stresses only the acquisition of facts, ideas, and concepts.					

Section C: Confronting the Challenges

C1. Do you have any suggestions to deal with such issue?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....