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EXPLORING THE EFL TEACHER QUESTIONING ON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT TASK PERFORMANCE IN DONG THAP

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Abstract

Teacher questioning is often considered the heartbeat of the EFL classroom; however, questioning practices remain complex and multifaceted. This quantitative study investigated EFL teachers' perceptions of and practices regarding classroom questioning. A questionnaire was administered to 122 EFL teachers working at public high schools in Dong Thap Province to collect data on their perceptions and questioning practices. The findings revealed a noticeable gap between teachers' beliefs and their actual classroom practices. Although the participants demonstrated a strong understanding of the role of teacher questioning in promoting student engagement, traditional questioning patterns continued to dominate classroom interactions. The findings indicated a high frequency of display questions and an emphasis on lower-order cognitive processes, such as remembering and understanding, despite the recognized importance of fostering student engagement and higher-order thinking skills in EFL instruction. In contrast, evaluative and creative questions were rarely employed. Additionally, the participants reported both benefits and challenges associated with the use of questioning techniques in English classrooms.

Keywords: *EFL classrooms, EFL high school teachers, perceptions, practices, teacher questioning.*

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TÌM HIỂU VIỆC SỬ DỤNG CÂU HỎI CỦA GIÁO VIÊN ĐỐI VỚI VIỆC HỌC SINH THỰC HIỆN NHỮNG HOẠT ĐỘNG TRONG LỚP TIẾNG ANH Ở CÁC TRƯỜNG TRUNG HỌC PHỔ THÔNG TẠI ĐỒNG THÁP

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Tóm tắt

Cách giáo viên đặt câu hỏi thường được ví như “nhịp đập” của lớp học tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ, nhưng trong thực tế, việc thực hiện còn nhiều phức tạp. Nghiên cứu định lượng này đã được thực hiện nhằm điều tra nhận thức của giáo viên EFL và thực tế giảng dạy của họ về việc họ đặt câu hỏi trong tiết dạy tiếng Anh. Bảng câu hỏi được thiết kế để khảo sát 122 giáo viên EFL ở các trường trung học phổ thông trên địa bàn tỉnh Đồng Tháp về lĩnh vực này. Kết quả dữ liệu đã chỉ ra “khoảng cách giữa nhận thức và thực hành”. Trên lý thuyết, những giáo viên này hiểu biết rất rõ về việc đặt câu hỏi nhằm thúc đẩy sự tham gia của học sinh, nhưng trên thực tế, cách dạy truyền thống vẫn chiếm ưu thế tại lớp học. Các số liệu cho thấy tần suất của các “câu hỏi kiểm tra kiến thức” xuất hiện cao và chủ yếu tập trung vào các hoạt động tư duy cơ bản như ghi nhớ và thấu hiểu; trong khi đó, mục tiêu của giảng dạy tiếng Anh là thu hút học sinh tham gia và khuyến khích các em suy nghĩ sâu hơn thay vì chỉ ghi nhớ những sự kiện đơn giản. Tuy nhiên, trên thực tế, các câu hỏi mang tính đánh giá và sáng tạo lại hiếm khi được thực hiện trong lớp. Ngoài ra, những giáo viên tham gia khảo sát cũng gặp phải những thuận lợi và khó khăn trong việc đặt câu hỏi trong giờ dạy tiếng Anh.

Từ khóa: *Giáo viên dạy tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ ở cấp trung học phổ thông, lớp học tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ, nhận thức, nhận thức, thực tiễn, việc đặt câu hỏi của giáo viên.*

1. Introduction

Globally, effective teaching depends not only on the curriculum and instructional materials but also on pedagogical practices, particularly teacher questioning. Recent research in EFL contexts has consistently highlighted the essential role of teacher questioning in promoting student engagement and cognitive development (Rimmer, 2019; Saswati, 2022). As Walsh (2011) argues, teachers' language use, particularly strategic questioning, plays a crucial role in creating "space for learning" and fostering interactional competence in the classroom. Numerous studies (e.g., He, 2025; Lu & Zheng, 2025; Richards & Lockhart, 1994; Walsh, 2011; Zhou, 2024) have identified teacher questioning as a fundamental pedagogical tool that facilitates classroom interaction and learning. In the Vietnamese educational context, previous studies have examined various aspects of teacher questioning (Dinh & Le, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2021; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2023; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024; Tran & Nguyen, 2021). These studies suggest that students' fear of making mistakes, concerns about pronunciation, and negative feedback from peers or teachers may reduce classroom participation, leading to limited language use, increased anxiety, and a greater reliance on Vietnamese and lower-order thinking skills (LOTS). Moreover, previous research has mainly focused on specific dimensions of teacher questioning, such as questioning techniques (Tran & Nguyen, 2021), the integration of questioning into digital learning materials, and the role of questioning in reading instruction (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2023). Consequently, empirical evidence on teacher questioning practices in EFL classrooms, particularly in rural high school contexts, and their influence on student learning remains limited. Therefore, further research is needed to gain a deeper understanding of how teacher questioning is implemented in specific regional contexts such as Dong Thap Province.

Therefore, this study was conducted to explore the use of teacher questioning by EFL high school teachers in public schools in Dong Thap and their perceptions regarding this field. This research was driven by two research questions: 1) What are EFL teachers' perceptions of using teacher questioning during classroom instruction in Dong Thap high schools? 2) What are EFL teachers' practices of teacher questioning during classroom instruction in Dong Thap high schools?

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Role of Teacher Questioning in the EFL Classroom

Teacher questioning is not merely a classroom routine but a strategic pedagogical tool encompassing a range of question types, from simple closed questions to complex situational prompts that foster meaningful classroom interaction. Early studies on teacher questioning primarily focused on managing students' attention and reviewing lesson content (Dillon, 2025), whereas contemporary perspectives emphasize the role of teacher questioning in promoting authentic communication in language classrooms (Nunan, 1991). Researchers view teacher questioning as an intentional and interactive process that facilitates meaningful exchanges between teachers and learners (Gangone, 2024; Yuliawati et al., 2016). This approach moves beyond traditional teacher-centered instruction and creates an interactive learning environment in which students are encouraged to address misconceptions and develop higher-order thinking skills (Gangone, 2024; Hou et al., 2025).

Based on these perspectives, teacher questioning is considered the "heartbeat" of classroom interaction in EFL contexts and an essential pedagogical tool that shapes the quantity and quality of student participation (Nunan, 1991; Walsh, 2011). Strategic teacher questioning is not only employed to assess students' understanding but also provides necessary scaffolding for language production and stimulates deeper cognitive processing (Richards &

Lockhart, 1994). Although closed or display questions are useful for maintaining lesson flow, research suggests that they are generally less effective than interactive and referential questions in promoting authentic communication and higher-order thinking (Chin, 2007; Huynh, 2022). Furthermore, effective teacher questioning functions as an adaptive process in which teachers adjust their questioning strategies according to learners' proficiency levels, providing more structured support for beginners while encouraging advanced learners to engage in open-ended discussions (Ellis, 2012; Ur, 2012). Recent studies have emphasized the importance of incorporating critical-thinking questions to bridge the gap between instructional practices and student engagement (He, 2025). In summary, intentional teacher questioning transforms the EFL classroom from a passive learning environment into an active space where students can develop both linguistically and cognitively (Lu & Zheng, 2025).

2.2. EFL Teacher Questioning Strategies

In EFL classroom interaction, teacher questioning strategies function as key pedagogical tools that shape both the cognitive and affective dimensions of classroom communication. One frequently highlighted strategy in the literature is wait time. While the concept originated from Rowe's work, recent studies by Zhou (2024) and Oussama (2025) have shown that extending the pause following a teacher's question can enhance the length and cognitive complexity of students' responses. The way teachers formulate and deliver questions also plays a significant role in the effectiveness of classroom questioning. Maybery and Hartle (2003) note that the pacing, intonation, and stress patterns employed during questioning can influence students' perceptions of difficulty and their willingness to respond. From an affective perspective, a supportive tone and appropriate pacing can reduce students' anxiety, which aligns with Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis. Another important strategy involves scaffolding through sequenced questioning. Wragg and Brown (2001) describe scaffolding as the systematic arrangement of questions from less demanding to more complex levels, allowing students to gradually construct their understanding.

Furthermore, teacher questioning encompasses a range of linguistic and cognitive strategies. Declarative statements, directives, and conventional interrogative forms can function as strategic prompts that reduce learner anxiety and create a more inclusive, low-pressure learning environment (Darong, 2022; Ur, 2012). Such indirect prompts encourage peer discussion and reflection by shifting students' attention from identifying a "correct" answer to engaging more meaningfully with the task (Lu & Zheng, 2025). The balance between LOTS and Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) determines the depth of cognitive engagement during classroom interaction. LOTS help build learners' confidence and assess their ability to recall information (Tee et al., 2010), whereas HOTS play a crucial role in developing critical analysis and creative language use (Putri & Trisanti, 2025). However, HOTS require sufficient wait time and appropriate scaffolding to prevent cognitive overload among EFL learners (Li, 2023). Moreover, the communicative quality of classroom interaction depends on the balance between closed/display questions and open-ended/referential questions. Closed and display questions are essential for checking students' comprehension and assessing language proficiency (Richards & Lockhart, 1994), whereas open-ended and referential questions promote authentic language use by encouraging learners to express personal opinions and experiences (Candilasa, 2025). Although referential questions can enrich learning experiences, display questions remain more common due to examination pressure and large class sizes (Laoli, 2025).

Additionally, effective teacher questioning is a pedagogical practice that balances cognitive demands with strategic delivery. By applying Bloom's Revised Taxonomy, teachers can guide learners from basic recall to higher-order analytical thinking while maintaining

appropriate cognitive challenges within students' Zone of Proximal Development (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). This approach is further strengthened by the Socratic Method, which uses probing questions to shift classroom discourse from finding correct answers to generating deeper insights. For instance, when students present a conclusion, teachers may ask questions such as "What evidence supports your view?" or "How did you arrive at this conclusion?" to promote intellectual curiosity and deeper language production (Lu & Zheng, 2025). Contemporary pedagogy also emphasizes learner autonomy through approaches such as the Question Formulation Technique. Encouraging students to generate their own questions may enhance academic achievement and transform the classroom into a more student-centered learning environment (Laoli, 2024; Rothstein & Santana, 2011). Moreover, the strategic use of wait time and purposeful sequencing from comprehension-based questions to evaluative prompts provides essential scaffolding for students to develop stronger justification and coherence in their responses (Salmon & Barrera, 2021). In summary, when implemented effectively, these questioning strategies can transform the EFL classroom into an intellectually stimulating environment where students develop both linguistic competence and higher-order thinking skills (Candilasa, 2025).

2.3. Student Task Performance

In this study, student task performance is not viewed in isolation but rather as an outcome influenced by teacher questioning practices. In EFL classrooms, task performance is traditionally understood in terms of learners' completion of communicative tasks and is commonly evaluated through dimensions such as linguistic complexity, accuracy, and fluency (Ellis, 2003; Skehan, 1998). These dimensions can be supported and enhanced through effective teacher questioning strategies. Recent studies increasingly suggest that the quality and quantity of students' language production are closely related to the way pedagogical prompts and classroom interactions are structured (Candilasa, 2025). Therefore, task performance can be viewed as a co-constructed interactive process in which teachers' questions function as instructional triggers that shape the cognitive depth and engagement levels of students' responses. By initiating and framing communicative goals, teacher questioning plays a significant role in facilitating students' task performance and promoting meaningful classroom interaction (Candilasa, 2025; Nunan, 1988).

2.4. Previous Studies

Research on teacher questioning has shown a persistent gap between the theoretical ideal and the daily reality of the classroom. As early as 1983, Long and Sato laid the groundwork by identifying a discourse dominated by 'display' questions, those predictable, fact-checking prompts that offer little opportunity for the complex, authentic communication encouraged by 'referential' questions. Two decades later, the story changed from what teachers ask to why they ask it. Saito and Ebsworth (2004), backed up by Cheng and Watanabe (2004), demonstrated how even well-intentioned teachers return to 'safe', exam-oriented questioning when pressed by high-pressure institutional demands. This 'perception-practice gap' remains a central problem for contemporary scholarship. Recent studies (Ülker Mermer, 2022; Puspitasari et al., 2025) indicate that HOTS have been regarded as the engine of critical thought but have become stagnant in the face of student silence and lack of practical training in the field (Yuliawati et al., 2016; Walsh, 2011). But the evidence suggests that the barriers to cognitive-rich interaction should not be teacher belief but rather a complicated network of systemic and situational constraints forcing a return to teacher-centered norms.

In Vietnam, an increasing body of research has examined the relationship between teacher questioning and students' linguistic and psychological outcomes, particularly in the Mekong Delta. Studies by Nguyen and Tran (2015), which investigated 11th-grade students

at Le Thanh Hien High School in Tien Giang during speaking lessons, and Nguyen and Nguyen (2023) reported that students frequently experienced speaking anxiety resulting from limited vocabulary knowledge and concerns about negative evaluation when performing topic-based oral tasks. More recent evidence from Nguyen and Nguyen (2024) suggests that intentional questioning, particularly during pre-reading activities, can function as a strategy for activating students' critical thinking. Techniques such as simplified questions, follow-up prompts, and increased wait time provide scaffolding that supports students' comprehension across various reading tasks. Such strategies help bridge the gap between students' linguistic limitations and the communicative demands emphasized in the 2018 General Education Curriculum. However, their application remains limited in other language skill areas, particularly writing instruction. Moreover, an overreliance on LOTS remains evident even in gifted high school contexts, with relatively few higher-order questions requiring analysis, evaluation, or creation (Phuong & Nguyen, 2017).

Although there is broad theoretical agreement regarding the value of effective teacher questioning, the perception–practice gap continues to constrain classroom interaction (Farrell & Bennis, 2013). Vietnamese teachers generally recognize the importance of adopting more cognitively demanding questioning strategies; however, their classroom practices continue to be dominated by traditional teacher-centered questioning patterns (Phuong & Nguyen, 2017). Existing evidence suggests that local EFL teachers tend to favor display questions for assessing factual knowledge rather than referential questions that encourage deeper cognitive engagement (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2023). While such tensions have been documented in major urban contexts such as Can Tho and Ho Chi Minh City, there remains a lack of quantitative evidence concerning the specific socio-educational context of high schools in Dong Thap Province. Therefore, further investigation is needed to determine whether the objectives of the 2018 General Education Curriculum have been effectively translated into actual teacher questioning practices in local EFL classrooms (MOET, 2018; Nguyen & Tran, 2015).

2.5. Theoretical Framework

The Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) serves as a framework to split teacher questioning into LOTS and HOTS. In high school EFL contexts, LOTS questions (Remembering, Understanding, Applying) tend to be “display questions” to verify linguistic input (e.g., verb forms or sentence transformation), which function as “confidence builders” for factual understanding (Darong, 2022; Tee et al., 2010). In particular, at the Remembering level, teachers use questions to elicit recall of isolated lexical items or grammatical rules, e.g., “What is the past tense of the verb go?” Questions at the Understanding level ask students to show understanding of meaning or paraphrase information, as in “Can you tell me what the expression ‘out of the question’ means in this paragraph?” At the Applying level, questioning takes place at the level of operationalizing linguistic structures within controlled structural contexts, for example, by asking students to change the sentences: “What is the way to change this active sentence into the passive voice?” To support the initial stages of discourse and to promote conceptual clarity before moving on to higher-order cognitive tasks, teachers anchor these display questions in elementary language mechanics. Additionally, HOTS templates (Analyzing, Evaluating, Creating) exceed rote remembering. Particularly, it is for the intermediate level that students truly begin to develop communicative competence because using English is not only to answer questions, but to solve problems and express their personal opinions (Lu & Zheng, 2025; Putri & Trisanti, 2025). Therefore, the strategic balance between LOTS and HOTS is important to foster both linguistic proficiency and critical thinking, which helps successfully bridge the gap between basic knowledge and complex ideas (Walsh, 2011).

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The present study employed a quantitative research design as the first phase of a broader long-term project that aimed at improving classroom discourse. The goals of this study are to provide a strong empirical baseline and to offer a comprehensive and objective picture of teacher questioning across diverse high school settings. This quantitative study is essential to identify systemic trends and gaps in frequency, which will serve as a foundational framework for subsequent qualitative investigations into the deeper aspects of classroom interaction. The approach was rooted in the principles of descriptive survey research (Creswell & Creswell, 2025) and was selected to identify specific trends and to quantify the “perception-practice gap” in a statistically significant manner. The research specifically examines the provincial dynamics of Dong Thap to bridge the gap between national policy and the local classroom realities.

3.2. Participants and Sampling

This study employed purposive sampling of teachers who played a key role in implementing the 2018 General Education Curriculum. This targeted approach means the findings are not simply a collection of numbers but a statistically meaningful and contextualized overview of the professional group that take responsibility for English language teaching in the province. The demographic diversity of the sample is detailed in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Summary of the Participants’ Demographic Information (N= 122)

Participants’ information	Variables	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	35	28.7%
	Female	87	71.3%
Degrees	Bachelor	105	86.1%
	Master	17	13.9%
Teaching experience (years)	Under 5	25	20.5%
	5-10	14	11.5%
	11-15	12	9.8%
	16-20	22	18%
	Over 20	49	40.2%
Working context	Wards	63	51.6%
	Communes	59	48.4%

3.3. Research Instrument

The main quantitative tool was a designed questionnaire which was adapted from the models of Brace (2018) and Creswell & Creswell (2025) to assess the perceptions and practices of teachers. Perceptions were measured by five-point Likert scales ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”; behavior frequency was measured by five-point scales ranging from “Never” to “Always.” This five-point design was chosen to balance sensitivity and reliability; as noted by Pimentel (2019) and Joshi et al. (2015), such a spectrum captures diverse opinions while minimizing the ambiguity often found in more complex scales. Additionally, the use of a “Neutral” midpoint is essential in research in education, because it

can provide an honest representation of those pedagogical beliefs that are uncertain (Dawes, 2008). Three distinct clusters based on the literature were designed. The first cluster is about the teachers' perception of teacher questioning strategies based on the cognitive domain of Anderson and Krathwohl's (2001) Revised Bloom's Taxonomy, which is still the best way to judge how teachers think about higher-order thinking (Alzahrani, 2019). The second cluster looks at practices and how often different types of questions are used in the EFL classroom. The third cluster explores the perceived benefits of effective teacher questioning, along with the systemic challenges teachers face in implementing it. This cluster considers environmental factors supported by Nguyen and Nguyen (2024) and Zhou (2024).

3.4. Reliability and Pilot Study

The reliability of the research instrument was assessed through a pilot study involving 22 EFL teachers who did not participate in the main study. This pilot phase enabled the refinement of the questionnaire. Participants' feedback helped identify and reduce linguistic ambiguities, ensuring that the questionnaire items were clear and comprehensible. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha yielded a coefficient of .87. This value exceeded the commonly accepted threshold of .70, indicating that the questionnaire demonstrated high internal consistency and was suitable for use in the main study (Taber, 2018).

3.5. Data Collection and Ethical Considerations

Formal data collection was conducted during the second semester of the 2025-2026 academic year. The questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms to facilitate access to teachers across geographically diverse districts of Dong Thap Province. The data collection process adhered to ethical research principles, with participation being entirely voluntary and participants' anonymity fully protected. Prior to completing the questionnaire, participants were provided with detailed information about the objectives of the study and were asked to provide their informed consent.

3.6. Data Analysis

Quantitative data were collected from 122 completed questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS version 27.0. The scores obtained from the 30-item questionnaire were treated as interval-level data for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics, including the mean (*M*) and standard deviation (*SD*), were calculated to identify the central tendency and variability of teachers' perceptions and practices. In addition, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between teachers' perceptions and their reported classroom practices. This analytical approach enabled a systematic comparison between teachers' perceived importance of questioning strategies and their actual classroom practices.

4. Findings

4.1. EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Teacher Questioning

Prior to conducting the main analysis, corrected item-total correlations were examined to assess the consistency between individual items and the overall scale of Cluster 1. The corrected item-total correlation coefficients ranged from .521 to .782, indicating that all items contributed adequately to measuring the intended construct. In addition, Cronbach's alpha values if items were deleted were examined to determine whether removing any item would improve the internal consistency of the scale. The alpha coefficients ranged from .911 to .927, suggesting that deleting any individual item would not substantially improve the overall reliability of the scale ($\alpha = .923$). Therefore, all items were retained for subsequent analyses, and descriptive statistics were conducted to examine teachers' perceptions of the role of teacher questioning in EFL classrooms.

Table 2. Item-Total Correlation (A) and Cronbach's Alpha (B) Resulting from Item Deletion of Cluster 1

Item	A	B	Items	A	B
1	.579	.923	6	.747	.913
2	.773	.911	7	.782	.911
3	.705	.915	8	.758	.912
4	.721	.914	9	.781	.911
5	.521	.927	10	.771	.911

Table 3 also shows the participants' positive attitude towards teacher questioning strategies (see Appendix 1), because the majority of the items received high mean scores ($M > 4.15$). Teachers were very familiar with the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy and clearly understood the importance of HOTS and real-world connections in creating deep cognitive engagement. An important finding was the strategic sequencing of questions, from easier to harder, which was found to be the most important strategy to promote student engagement (Item 7, $M = 4.34$). Even though they agreed with the role of teacher questioning in reducing anxiety and assessing speaking proficiency, there was still a decrease in confidence in the simultaneous use of display and referential questions (Item 5, $M = 3.66$). Except for this one area of ambiguity, the findings lead to a clear conclusion that pre-planned teacher questioning is a key factor of student achievement and classroom success.

Table 3. Teachers' Understanding of Using Teacher Questioning in Class

Items	Mean	SD	Items	Mean	SD
1	4.19	.96	6	4.15	.80
2	4.27	.82	7	4.34	.78
3	4.27	.86	8	4.33	.82
4	4.16	.83	9	4.27	.84
5	3.66	.98	10	4.26	.83

4.2. Teachers' Actual Practices: The Frequency of Teacher Questioning Types

Similarly, the researcher conducted the SPSS-based reliability analysis for Cluster 2, and the results indicated an acceptable level of internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha reaching 0.791. This shows that the scale is sufficiently reliable for further analysis. In addition, to check whether any individual items were redundant or should be removed to improve the overall reliability of the scale, the "Item-Total Statistics" output was analyzed. Table 4 presents the results for each item in the second cluster (see Appendix 2).

Table 4. Item-Total Correlation (A) and Cronbach's Alpha (B) Resulting from Item Deletion of Cluster 2 (N=122)

Items	A	B	Items	A	B
11	.471	.773	16	.618	.755
12	.225	.800	17	.629	.750

Items	A	B	Items	A	B
13	.297	.793	18	.544	.763
14	.239	.801	19	.478	.771
15	.528	.765	20	.637	.751

As shown in Table 4, most items demonstrated acceptable item–total correlation coefficients, ranging from .471 to .637, exceeding the recommended threshold of .30, which indicates that these items are positively correlated with the overall scale and contribute meaningfully to the construct. However, several items, including item 12 ($r = .225$), item 13 ($r = .297$), and item 14 ($r = .239$), exhibited low item–total correlations below the acceptable threshold of .30, suggesting that these items may not strongly connect with the overall construct of cluster 2. Thus, the researcher decided to delete items 12, 13, and 14 and run the reliability test again. The result was shown in the following table.

Table 5. Item-Total Correlation (A) and Cronbach’s Alpha (B) Resulting from Item Deletion of Cluster 2 after Deleting Items 12, 13, 14 (N=122)

Items	A	B
11	.390	.824
15	.575	.797
16	.627	.789
17	.657	.782
18	.598	.793
19	.482	.812
20	.625	.789

The result showed that after deleting those items, the remaining items demonstrated acceptable item–total correlation coefficients, ranging from .390 to .657, exceeding the recommended threshold of .30. The Cronbach’s alpha was .823, demonstrating an improved level of internal consistency. This suggests that the rest of the items in cluster 2 are reliable for further analysis. After that, Descriptive statistics for cluster 2 were calculated based on the refined scale after removing items 12, 13, and 14.

Table 6. The Practice of Teacher Questioning in Class (N=122)

Item	Mean	SD
11	3.96	.54
15	3.83	.71
16	4.15	.63
17	3.54	.78
18	3.82	.68
19	3.90	.64
20	3.97	.67

The data showed an average positive trend in the use of questioning strategies with scores ranging from 3.54 to 4.15. There is an obvious goal to encourage student elaboration with a strong professional agreement with the benefit of “How” and “Why” questions (Item 16, $M = 4.15$), especially as a way to challenge students in the post-lesson stages. Furthermore, teachers appear to be strategically differentiating their approach, purposefully employing

easier, factual prompts to build confidence and reduce passivity in weaker classes (Item 11, $M = 3.96$). But a critical gap is perceived in real-time interaction. While teachers frequently use spontaneous or follow-up questions, they are much less consistent in using probing techniques to address students' silence in communicative tasks (Item 17, $M = 3.54$). This indicates that, although the conceptual importance of higher-order thinking is well-understood, the practical ability of probing in everyday discourse remains an important area for professional development.

4.3. Perceived Use of Teacher Questioning on Student Task Performance

The internal reliability of Cluster 3 was statistically confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha of .844. As detailed in Table 7, each item showed a solid correlation with the overall scale, and the "alpha if item deleted" scores remained stable, justifying the combination of all ten items in the final analysis.

Table 7. Item-Total Correlation (A) and Cronbach's Alpha (B) Resulting from Item Deletion of Cluster 3 (N=122)

Items	A	B	Items	A	B
21	.472	.835	26	.683	.816
22	.401	.844	27	.581	.825
23	.547	.830	28	.615	.822
24	.499	.833	29	.640	.820
25	.432	.841	30	.599	.824

As presented in Table 7, all items demonstrated acceptable to strong corrected item-total correlations, ranging from .401 to .683. This indicates that each item is positively correlated with the overall scale and contributes meaningfully to the construct of cluster 3. Furthermore, the Cronbach's alpha values if any item were deleted ranged from .816 to .844. Therefore, all items are considered necessary for further analysis. Then, descriptive statistics were calculated for Cluster 3 (see Appendix 3) to examine participants' perceptions of the effects and challenges of teacher questioning in classroom practice. The results are presented in Table 8 and indicate generally moderately positive perceptions, with mean scores ranging from 3.34 to 4.21. Significantly, the data in Table 7 shows a striking contrast between pedagogical ideals and the reality of daily practices. While there is an undeniable value in the theory behind effective teacher questioning, the participants are quite frank about barriers which keep those strategies out of reach.

Table 8. Perceived Benefits and Challenges of Teacher Questioning in Classroom Practice (N=122)

Item	Mean	SD	Item	Mean	SD
21	4.17	.83	26	3.67	.94
22	3.34	1.06	27	3.95	.98
23	4.11	.73	28	3.37	1.10
24	4.21	.79	29	3.84	.95
25	3.42	1.09	30	3.84	.89

There is a strong professional agreement that the key driver of engagement is to tailor questions to a student's level (Item 24, $M = 4.21$). Teachers see their role as a facilitator, using questions to keep up the rhythm of interaction in the classroom. But the data indicates a fact: teachers are least prepared to handle questions that require deep critical analysis (Item 22). Why is this gap still there? They point to a “resource bottleneck” as the main cause: time and class size. In the rush of a full curriculum, the patience required for higher-order discourse is often reduced for pacing. Instead of using complex prompts to challenge passive students, teachers often turn to simple comprehension checks to make sure that the content is at least “delivered”, even if it is not always deeply interrogated.

5. Discussions

The results found via the questionnaire answer the two research questions in this study. As for the first research question, the empirical data reveal that the EFL teachers in Dong Thap province hold perceptions of the pedagogical value of teacher questioning that are highly progressive, sophisticated, and conceptually sound. The high average scores across the perception domain ($M > 4.15$) strongly support the ideal cognitive alignment with modern communicative methods. Practitioners surveyed were highly aware of the professional need to implement purposeful questioning patterns at the lesson planning stage to intentionally enhance overall instructional effectiveness ($M = 4.26$). Cognitively, they strongly agreed with the theoretical belief that higher-order cognitive prompts provide second-language (L2) learners with necessary opportunities to elaborate on complex ideas ($M = 4.15$) and purposely avoid passive, rote responses ($M = 4.33$). The high degree of theoretical consensus is consistent with the baseline literature established in the research, particularly the mandates of the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET, 2018) calling for student-centered, competency-based classrooms. The high scores of perception further validate the fact that the regional high school teachers have intellectually accepted the transition from the delivery of knowledge to the development of cognitive skills. Furthermore, this result fully supports previous global research discussed in the literature review (e.g., He, 2025; Lu & Zheng, 2025), where foreign language teachers have always demonstrated an advanced theoretical understanding of the importance of interactive questioning in the development of critical thinking and active participation.

In contrast to these progressive beliefs, the empirical data that answer the second research question show a much more conservative and limited reality in the classroom, which shows a deep “gap between perception and practice.” HOTS are, to a large extent, excluded from the actual instructional implementation and are seen almost exclusively during the post-stage of lessons ($M = 3.97$). Instead, teachers relied heavily on spontaneous, unplanned questions ($M = 3.83$) and traditional LOTS to recall memory. This significant difference is strong empirical support for Farrell and Bennis's (2013) framework on teacher cognitions versus practices that a teacher's deep theoretical beliefs do not necessarily translate into interactive classroom realities. Although teachers are aware that HOTS fosters critical thinking, they automatically fall back on LOTS because closed-ended display prompts generate quick, predictable, and easily manageable student responses. This operational pattern is a direct reflection of the traditional classroom routines criticized by Chin (2007) and Walsh (2011), where classroom interaction is always dominated by teacher-centered, display-oriented IRF (initiation-response-feedback) structures rather than open-ended referential exchanges. This interactional barrier is strongly associated with teachers' perceived lack of self-efficacy, as demonstrated by the low score of confidence in their questions' ability to consistently promote critical analysis ($M = 3.34$) and the problem of students guessing answers instead of using linguistic reasoning ($M = 3.67$). Consequently, in real classroom situations, the use of display questions is a defensive tool to keep control of the lesson and the pace, and

confirms the previous findings of Phuong and Nguyen (2017) regarding the structural endurance of teacher-centered questioning routines in the Vietnamese educational context.

Within this educational landscape, similar to the ecological complexities examined in recent local literature (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024), the situational use of teacher questioning is discussed concerning its contextual benefits and systemic disadvantages. On the adaptive side, teachers' frequent spontaneous questioning ($M = 3.83$) and targeted use of scaffolded prompts ($M = 4.13$) indicate a dynamic real-time interactional capability to negotiate ongoing classroom discourse. This is a reflection of the positive interactive scaffolding mechanisms theorized by Walsh (2011) that show that teachers can use spontaneous adjustments to keep learners engaged. But such localized pedagogical benefits are massively prevented by structural barriers. The analysis identifies serious systemic challenges, especially the severe pressure created by large class sizes packed into inflexible 45-minute instructional periods ($M = 3.95$). In such high-density settings, the long "wait-time" strongly advocated for by language acquisition experts (Ur, 2012; Walsh, 2011) is an unaffordable luxury, threatening instructional pace ($M = 3.42$). In addition, passive or less proficient students avoid active participation in classroom discourse ($M = 3.84$). The silence of the students and the rigid requirements of the curriculum pragmatically force the teachers into a defensive pedagogical approach as defined by Ur (2012). In order to satisfy time limitations and accommodate low-attaining classes, teachers rely on basic text-based comprehension checks. Consequently, learners are systemically kept from developing the high-level interactional competences demanded by modern frameworks.

While the general challenges of Communicative Language Teaching in Asia have been widely discussed in previous literature (Laoli, 2025; Zhou, 2024), the empirical originality of this study is the localized, data-supported diagnosis of the perception-practice gap in the regional high school ecology of Dong Thap province. This specific difference is very much in line with research in Vietnam (e.g., Dinh & Le, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2021; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2023; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024; Tran & Nguyen, 2021), which often describes the pressure experienced when high-level pedagogical reforms are translated into traditional, exam-oriented provincial classrooms. This study takes Walsh's (2011) generalizing argument of student silence further to quantitatively demonstrate that the gap is not a result of a lack of teacher willingness or flexibility of instruction, but a clear conflict between institutional constraints (class size, pacing) and real-time implementation. These findings are not intended to provide macro-level policy solutions but rather to set a very practical, contextualized baseline for regional school administrators, local educational leaders, and high school teachers in the Mekong Delta region who are dealing with the immediate realities of the 2018 General Education Curriculum. Local practitioners, understanding these empirical constraints, can plan more realistic and structured professional development workshops or change the teaching methods that concentrate on high-quality, pre-planned teacher questioning, rather than unrealistic interactive ideals.

6. Limitations

Although this study obtained some novelties as mentioned above, it had drawbacks. First, it relied heavily on cross-sectional quantitative data gathered from 122 self-report questionnaires. This approach involved a high risk of response bias, as teachers who participated in the present research might have rated their awareness and classroom practices higher than what actually happened, a common methodological concern in cognitive research (Farrell & Bennis, 2013). In addition, the study intends to investigate the impact of teacher questioning on students' task performance but lacks direct, objective quantitative data from the students themselves, such as test scores or frequency scales of interaction. Thus, the

relationship between questioning strategies and student outcomes is inferred rather than statistically established. The quantitative design does not provide qualitative depth, for example, direct classroom observations or stimulated recall interviews; therefore, a mixed-methods approach of classroom discourse analysis and long-term observations is necessary to fully capture the dynamic, daily realities of teacher-student interactions. Finally, the generalizability of these quantitative findings to wider educational contexts in Vietnam is limited due to the specific sample size ($N = 122$) being confined to high schools in Dong Thap Province.

7. Conclusion and Implications

The findings of this study addressed the two research questions. EFL high school teachers demonstrated a strong conceptual understanding of the role and functions of teacher questioning. However, teachers frequently shifted toward less cognitively demanding question types to accommodate students' proficiency levels and maintain the planned pace of the lesson. These findings were generally consistent with previous studies while also revealing several context-specific characteristics. Furthermore, the findings contribute to the existing literature on teacher questioning by providing empirical evidence from the local EFL context in Dong Thap Province. Nevertheless, this study relied solely on self-reported questionnaire data, as it was designed as the initial quantitative phase of a broader longitudinal research project. Consequently, direct classroom observations and qualitative interviews were not incorporated to triangulate the self-reported findings. To address this limitation, the subsequent phase of the project will adopt a qualitative approach involving classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with teachers. This subsequent investigation is expected to provide a deeper understanding of how teachers implement questioning strategies in authentic classroom settings and offer richer contextual insights that complement the quantitative findings.

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APPENDIX 1

TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF TEACHER QUESTIONING

Please answer the following statement by putting a tick \surd in the box, according to the following scale:

1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree), 5 (strongly agree)

No	Items	1	2	3	4	5
1	I am familiar with the six levels of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating) and how they relate to designing teacher questioning.					
2	I realize that students reduce anxiety and participate better in the task when they are asked questions with short answers.					
3	Students perform better in tasks when I use questions related to real-life, personal experience, or interests.					
4	Teacher questioning helps me know students' speaking competence.					
5	I think that display and referential questions should be used to check students' knowledge of the lesson.					
6	Teacher questioning is not only questions, but it can be a statement, or a command, such as "you please tell me...", or "Now talk about..."					
7	In the classroom, I understand that I should pose from easy questions to difficult ones to engage students in doing tasks.					
8	To better students, higher-order questions help students have a chance to present their opinions more deeply, and not to give rote answers.					
9	I understand that strategies of teacher questioning promote students' proficiency and improve their task performance.					
10	I am aware that teacher questioning on purpose has been designed in the lesson plan to help me increase the effectiveness of the lesson.					

APPENDIX 2

TEACHING PRACTICE

Please answer the following statement by putting a tick \surd in the box, according to the following scale:

1 (Never), 2 (Rarely), 3 (Sometimes), 4 (Often), 5 (Always)

No.	Items	1	2	3	4	5
1	In the weaker class, I use Yes/No questions, or Who?, When?, What? to help students become more confident and less passive.					
2	I provide sufficient wait time after questioning for students to think before answering.					
3	I use more Yes/No questions in the pre-stage to present and check information.					
4	I use questions to guide students in solving problems					

- during communicative tasks, instead of providing information for them.
- 5 When I am absorbed in teaching, I ask sudden questions without being composed in the lesson plan.
 - 6 I pose questions (How, Why), for example, “Why do you think that?” or “What evidence supports your answer?” so that students give more ideas in detail.
 - 7 I use probing questions during students’ communicative activities to avoid students’ silence.
 - 8 I use referential questions in group work and discussions.
 - 9 In the classroom, I use follow-up questions to encourage students to speak more after they have given answers.
 - 10 I use more challenging questions (How?, Why?...) in the Post- stage.

APPENDIX 3

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF USING TEACHER QUESTIONING IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

Please answer the following statement by putting a tick in the box, according to the following scale:

1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree), 5 (strongly agree)

No.	Question items	1	2	3	4	5
1	Teacher questioning helps create an interactive classroom environment where students feel encouraged to participate.					
2	In my teaching practice, my questions often allow students to think critically and develop deeper language skills.					
3	In teaching practice, most of my questions focus on attracting students’ attention and encouraging them to participate in the lesson.					
4	Some students become more engaged when questions are scaffolded to their level.					
5	Too many questions in one lesson can slow the pace and reduce time for practice activities.					
6	Sometimes, students guess answers without fully understanding the question, especially with Yes/No questions.					
7	Large class size makes it difficult for me to involve every student in answering questions.					
8	Wait time makes me not spend enough time on teaching other activities.					
9	Weak or passive students often avoid answering questions, even when encouraged.					
10	In the weaker class, I am afraid of posing higher-order questions, so I only use display questions to check students about the content of the lesson.					