



ENHANCING CRITICAL THINKING THROUGH ORAL QUESTIONING: A MIXED-METHODS APPROACH IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

Judy Anne R. Chongco

*Faculty of Graduate Studies, Mindoro State University,
Victoria, Philippines*

ABSTRACT

This study completed in December 2025 looked into how English language teachers at Nabuslot National High School employed oral questioning techniques to enhance their learners' critical thinking skills using the mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data were gathered through classroom observations and teacher logs, with descriptive statistics such as frequency and mean utilized to determine the distribution of higher-order and lower-order questions. This was complemented by qualitative data derived from interviews and focus group discussions among ten English teachers, which captured teacher intentions, perceptions, and strategies. The results revealed that teachers predominantly used lower-order, convergent questions, while higher-order, open-ended, and probing questions were less frequent. Qualitative findings highlighted challenges such as role ambiguity, curriculum demands, and limited training, but also surfaced promising practices including scaffolding, wait-time, and reflective questioning. The study concluded that while teachers recognize the importance of questioning in fostering critical thinking, there is a need for structured guidance to bridge the gap between theory and practice. In response, an instructional guide was developed to support teachers in planning, delivering, and reflecting on purposeful questioning strategies across the four macro skills of reading, listening, writing, and speaking. This guide aimed to provide practical, evidence-based recommendations for promoting higher-order thinking in English language classrooms.

Keywords: *Oral Questioning, Critical Thinking, English Language Teaching, Instructional Guide, Mixed-Methods*

INTRODUCTION

In today's world where all things are connected and fast-changing, critical thinking is a necessity. Teachers globally agree that this is a basic skill that students need to form their opinions, succeed in school, and land better career. International organizations, such as the OECD and UNESCO, highlight the importance of critical thinking in the development of students who are reflective, autonomous, and able to face the post-truth era and the challenges of the modern world. Thus, it is necessary to transition from rote learning to analysis and evaluation, enabling students to read diverse types of texts, create arguments, and make decisions in a judicious manner in all fields (Anggraeni et al., 2023; UNESCO, 2021). Evidently, questioning strategies increase students' critical thinking skills since they stimulate mental processes and engage new knowledge. Studies claim that developing students' abilities to ask the right questions is as important as teaching them to answer those questions (Favero et al., 2024).

Despite global and regional mandates, studies in Southeast Asia found out that teachers and students are more likely to use lower-order questions compared to higher-order questions (Agustina et al., 2025; Astutik et al., 2021). The extent of cognitive engagement is restricted, and deep thinking is minimized among students and teachers. On the one hand, some teachers in the Philippines uses probing, scaffolding, and wait time to elicit thinking (Garcia & Cruz, 2019; Novitaningrum et al., 2022). However, these practices remained under researched in the rural contexts as not all teachers were capacitated on oral questioning. In addition, biased towards numbers-based research is still present, counting the types of questions posed while overlooking the reasoning behind why questions are asked, students' responses, and the classroom context (Gacutan & Recillo, 2021). And hence, there is scant research into whether teachers adapt questioning to learners, accommodate local cultural beliefs, or connect questioning to curricular demands (Kholisoh & Bharati, 2021).

Meanwhile, classroom observations at Nabuslot National High School in Pinamalayan, Oriental Mindoro showed related results: teachers posed convergent questions, with few higher-order questions prompting students to reason about situational scenarios. Moreover, the K to 12 curriculum constrained the opportunities to embed question-based critical literacy into daily teaching (Muico et al., 2022). This local context highlights the discrepancy between curricular demands and actual questioning practices, as well as the pressing need for teacher training to provide teachers with tools for developing and posing questions that foster higher levels of reasoning. Hence, this study addresses this gap by investigating how English language teachers at Nabuslot National High School utilize oral questioning techniques to promote critical thinking among learners during the School Year 2024-2025.

In bridging these gaps, this study proposes an instructional guide which may serve as a practical basis for effective questioning integration during classroom interactions. With the use of an explanatory sequential mixed methods approach, the quantitative phase measures the frequency and distribution of higher-order and lower-order

questions, while the qualitative phase deals with teacher intentions, perceptions, and strategies.

Research Questions

Generally, this study probed how English language teachers utilize oral questioning techniques to promote critical thinking among the learners from Nabuslot National High School during the School Year 2024-2025.

Specifically, the study sought answers to the following:

1. What types of questions do the participants commonly employ?
2. What is the frequency and distribution of higher-order and lower-order questions employed by participants, as reflected in classroom observations and teacher logs?
3. What instructional guide may be proposed for effective employment of questioning techniques in English language teaching?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design to investigate how English teachers use oral questioning to promote critical thinking in students, an approach where “the researcher first collects and analyzes quantitative data and then follows up with qualitative data collection to explain or elaborate on the initial quantitative results for deeper understanding” (Katz-Buonincontro, 2024). To gain insight into teachers’ perceptions about their questioning techniques and motivational variables (Doyle et al., 2018), the investigation was conducted at Nabuslot National High School in the Municipality of Pinamalayan, Oriental Mindoro, during the School Year 2024-2025. On the one hand, using non-probability purposive sampling and convenience sampling based on “convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher” (Etikan, 2016), ten English language teachers were selected as participants, comprising six junior high school teachers and four senior high school teachers. The target scope was restricted to English teachers of Nabuslot National High School who were in Grade 7 to fourth-year level for the School Year 2024-2025, serving as a limitation as probability sampling was unsuitable since the intention was not to select the best possible representative, but rather specific teachers who met the criteria.

Data collection dealt with classroom observations and teacher log analysis to gather a numeric account of the frequency and distribution of higher-order and lower-order Bloom’s Taxonomy aligned questions asked by teachers (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) via a Classroom Observation Tool (COT). To capture students’ responses in real-time, detailed field notes were maintained to document instances when questioning elicits deeper thinking (Daniel & King, 2022; Moyer, 2020; Yelland & Gilbert, 2023). Qualitative data were gathered through focus group discussions (FGDs) with groups of 3 to 4 teachers to surface common issues and shared thoughts (Ahmad & Syed, 2020), alongside semi-structured interviews with a balance of predetermined open questions (Creswell & Guetterman, 2021) to explore underlying factors behind question choices

(Nguyen & Walker, 2022). The COT was validated by recording questioning behaviors in natural classroom settings, while the interview guide was validated for content and reliability by qualitative experts from the Schools Division of Oriental Mindoro. Data collection, on the one hand, spanned September and October 2025 following formal adviser approval, written permission from the principal, and informed consent detailing rights to anonymity, confidentiality, and withdrawal to secure trustworthiness and richness through data triangulation (Creswell & Poth, 2021).

The qualitative data from transcribed audio recordings and detailed field notes were evaluated using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021), applying both inductive and deductive systematic coding without software to cluster codes into themes while observing instructional interactions (Wu & Zhang, 2022). This incremental process strengthened triangulation, trustworthiness, and mixed validity legitimation by connecting both data strands to detect disconfirming cases or meta-inferences (Molina-Azorin, 2017), providing an opportunity for interpretive analysis alongside statistical generalizability (Doyle et al., 2018). Trustworthiness and interrater reliability were further reinforced by comparing self-reports with observation and lesson plan data, external observer confirmation, and member checks during follow-up interviews with 6 teachers to confirm interpretive accuracy.

RESULTS

Table 1. Types of Questions Teachers Commonly Employed to Develop Critical Thinking Skills

Theme	Category	JHS	SHS	Total
1. Scaffolding and Engagement-Oriented Questions	a. Literal to Complex Scaffolding			
	b. Open-Ended	83	52	135
	c. Probing			
2. Reflective and Real-Life Application Questions	a. Reflective			
	b. Situational/Real-World Application	18	24	42
3. Higher-Order Thinking Questions	a. Analytical			
	b. Evaluative	26	28	54
	c. Synthesis/Creation			

The table above shows the three major types of oral questioning utilized to promote critical thinking: scaffolding and engagement-oriented questions, reflective and real-world application questions, and higher-order thinking questions, identified through thematic analysis of observational notes, teacher logs, and interview responses.

Table 2. Frequency and Distribution of Higher-Order vs. Lower-Order Questions Used by Participants Based on Classroom Observations or Teacher Logs

Level of Questions	Hierarchy of Questions	JHS Classroom Observation	SHS Classroom Observation	JHS Teachers Logs/Lesson Plan	SHS Teachers Logs/Lesson Plan	Total	Percentage	Percentage
Lower Order Thinking Skills	Remembering	35	21	27	16	99	42.86%	76.63%
	Understanding	13	12	12	8	45	19.48%	
	Applying	8	10	8	7	33	14.29%	
Higher Order Thinking Skills	Analyzing	9	6	7	5	27	11.69%	23.37%
	Evaluating	4	6	2	5	17	7.36%	
	Creating	1	4	1	4	10	4.32%	
Total		70	59	57	45	231	100%	100%

Table 2 presents the frequency and distribution of oral questioning techniques employed by Junior High School (JHS) and Senior High School (SHS) teachers, classified according to Bloom's cognitive taxonomy. The data gathered from direct classroom observations and teacher lesson logs, contrasts the utilization of Lower-Order Thinking Skills (LOTS), specifically remembering, understanding, and applying, against Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), which encompass analyzing, evaluating, and creating. The tabular summary shows the overall proportion and cognitive levels ordered across both instructional levels.

DISCUSSION

1. Scaffolding and engagement-oriented questions. One of the major themes that emerged from the focus group discussions conducted among the study participants was the provision of scaffolding and engagement-oriented questions. These are questions utilized to guide thinking, encourage participation, and promote deeper classroom discussions which ranged from literal to complex scaffolding questions to open-ended and probing questions. In addition, this, according to Tosh et al. (2020) referred to questions that are aligned with learning objectives which can accurately gauge how well students understand language concepts or the literature they read. The following discussion elaborates how well English teachers used scaffolding and engagement-oriented questions in their language classrooms.

a. Literal to complex scaffolding questions. Interviews with the participants found that they asked literally complex questions. Majority of them affirmed that they asked these questions hoping to develop students' critical thinking skills. The literal questions that teachers ask learners are questions that require them to recall or identify explicit information directly stated in the text. They focused on facts, details, or straightforward comprehension than interpretation or evaluation. This was reflected in the narrative of

Teacher J who used basic questions in her language classes. She related, *“I start with literal questions. These are questions aligned with the “remember” and “understand” levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy because they check basic comprehension and factual recall.”*

The same was expressed in the shared narratives of Teacher H who related that she started asking factual questions before leveling it to the next higher level, which also provided opportunities to build confidence. She shared, *“I often begin with simple factual questions and follow them up with questions that require interpretation or justification. This scaffolding technique prepares students for more complex discussions. It builds confidence before moving into higher-order thinking.”*

Meanwhile, it was disclosed in the review of the lesson plans and classroom observations that there was clear presence of factual or literal questions, particularly during the early stages of instruction. These questions fell under lower-order thinking skills (LOTS) as classified by Bloom’s Taxonomy. These usually fell within the remembering and understanding categories. In Teacher A’s lesson, for instance, students were asked to identify whether a statement was a fact or an opinion in the “REAL or FEEL?” activity. A question like *“Is the International Criminal Court (ICC) investigating former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte?”* was a straightforward factual recall item that tests students’ recognition of concrete information from a provided video. Similarly, the question *“According to the video, what is the ICC?”* required students to retrieve specific details rather than interpret or analyze content.

This trend was also evident in Teacher C’s lesson for Grade 8 students, which included multiple-choice and comprehension questions based on the biblical story of Ruth. Questions such as *“Who is the redeemer of Ruth’s family?”* and *“What is the main problem why Naomi’s family left Judah?”* clearly reflected literal questioning. These items concentrated on identifying characters, settings, and plot elements which were assessing basic understanding rather than encouraging critical thinking. While such factual questions were essential for establishing background knowledge and scaffolding learning, they eventually limited student engagement in tasks that involve inference, judgment, or synthesis.

During classroom observations, it was also noted that teachers frequently used factual questions to initiate class discussions or gauge students’ prior knowledge. These observations align with responses gathered from focus group discussions, where teachers acknowledged that they often begin with simple factual questions to ensure students understand the basics before moving to more complex ones. As one teacher expressed, *“I often begin with simple factual questions and follow them up with questions that require interpretation or justification.”* This revealed that factual questioning served as a fundamental strategy in their instructional approach. However, the dominance of such questions also highlighted the need for greater balance, where higher-order questions were more intentionally integrated to foster deeper thinking and critical engagement with the lesson content.

On the one hand, on the number of high-order thinking skills questions asked, it was clear that the department of the teachers’ academic major also had a significant

effect. This was evidenced by 83 questions inquired by six junior high school teachers and 52 questions from four senior high school teachers. It may be attributed to the level of difficulty of the topics discussed by the teachers and the competencies being measured. On average, both Junior and Senior High School teachers asked 13 questions that belong to lower order thinking skills. This insinuates that the type of lower order thinking questions does not differ whether students are in either junior or senior high school.

Teachers can attest that learners benefit significantly from literal questions used as assessment tools for comprehension. In fact, these are at times scaffolding questions that allows learners to demonstrate their understanding in both native and target languages. This approach develops learners to check their understanding which makes language assessment more inclusive (Uriarte & Chang, 2025). Lee and Chan (2023) agree when they posited that teachers could ask questions modify them based on the learners' proficiency level. By offering a question from basic recall to complex problem-solving questions, teachers can assess multiple language aspects such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2023) suggested that scaffolding questions support learners as they progress from basic understanding to more complex language production. By providing step-by-step questions, teachers can guide learners through the language learning process.

b. Open-Ended Questions. Another evident category apart from the main theme was that of using open-ended questions. Participants elaborated that they used open-ended questions in their talks which might be evident in their lesson planning as well. Ahmed et al. (2019) stated that using open-ended questions in formative assessment situations improved learners' reflection on their language learning and promoted some deeper cognitive processes essential in learning a second language. This was manifested in the narrative of Teacher A who shared, *"I often use open-ended questions that require students to explain their reasoning or opinions in detail. These types of questions encourage multiple perspectives and allow students to elaborate freely. I find that they stimulate richer classroom discussions."* Similarly, Teacher I and Teacher J nodded in agreement when they mentioned the use of open-ended questions during their classes.

I focus on open-response questions that do not have a single correct answer to encourage diverse perspectives. I like hearing students support their arguments with personal or textual evidence. This makes the classroom more inclusive and interactive. (Teacher I)

I use a mix of literal, open-ended, and analytical questions but I give more weight to those that require students to explain or defend their answers. Students become more engaged when they realize there isn't just one 'correct' answer. It opens space for critical dialogue and peer learning. (Teacher J)

The narratives shared by Teacher I and Teacher J illustrated how they capitalized on the benefit of using open-ended questions. They gave a new perspective on the ways they employed questions that were open-ended in form. They also elaborated on their

practices and about their beliefs about the outcomes, thereby giving a detailed report of what they did and why. Their accounts described the possibilities teachers could draw on when using open-ended questions to stimulate class discussions. Intentionally shifting away from rote learning empowers students to question context, causality, and perspectives, revealing how the English curriculum could be enhanced. The advantages of such questioning should not be underestimated.

In addition, open-ended questions may contribute to the development of learners' language and thinking skills. This study also revealed that the use of open-ended questions can lead teachers to adopt a constructivist teaching approach that can help learners construct their knowledge and meaning. For instance, in Teacher C's lesson plan on argumentative writing, learners are asked to *"Write an argumentative essay using the provided topic."* This task prompted students to take a stance, provide reasons, and support claims with evidence which are considered as the hallmarks of open-ended questioning that nurture critical and independent thought.

During the class observation, the teacher posed the question: *"Why do you think this argument is stronger than the other?"* This led to an engaging discussion where learners explained their reasoning, cited sources, and respectfully debated with their peers. Field notes, on the one hand, indicated that several students raised their hands voluntarily, and others engaged in peer-to-peer dialogues, reflecting a high level of cognitive engagement. The teacher followed up with probing questions like *"What makes your evidence convincing?"* or *"How would you respond to someone who disagrees with your point?"* Questions like this effectively deepen the level of thought processing of learners.

Congruent to the focus group discussions, Teacher G shared that open-ended questions are intentionally used to *"encourage multiple perspectives," "challenge students to defend their thinking,"* and *"open the floor to more meaningful interaction."* He added that *"students become more engaged when they realize there isn't just one correct answer."* These insights were validated during observations, as open-ended questioning not only allowed learners to think critically but also empowered them to articulate their viewpoints confidently. The use of open-ended questions in these lessons demonstrates a strong instructional practice aimed at developing learners' critical thinking skills.

c. Probing Questions. It is important to note that teachers employed probing questions in English lesson, their accounts revealed that they followed up with students or offered a clarification, inquired about the reasons behind students choosing a particular option, and asked students to provide more evidence or further explanations. Rather than simply asking students to put their hands up if they agreed with an answer, another participant reported that they enquired about their peers' reasoning if someone had chosen the opposite view. Later, another further probed the students to explain why they believed the character was acting out of duty. One of the participants clarified this when she shared: *I use probing questions to encourage students to expand on their initial responses and think deeper. When a student answers briefly, I follow up with questions like 'Can you explain further?' or 'What makes you say that?'. This keeps the conversation dynamic and reflective.*

Similarly, Teacher H added: *"I use debate-style questions or probing ones where my students must argue one side of a controversial issue found in the reading. I even use devil's to see their values. This requires evaluation, reasoning, and the use of supporting details. It keeps students engaged and teaches them to defend their claims respectfully."* This narrative underscored how teachers use probing questions to develop students' critical thinking skills. This is supported by Rahman et al. (2023) who analyzed how probing and factual questioning strategies attracted learner activeness and curiosity in classroom interaction. Through observations and interviews, they found that prompting probing questions (e.g., clarifying, switching) increased student engagement and peer interaction, while factual questions supported basic recall.

In alignment with these narratives, the analysis of the reviewed lesson plans revealed the intentional use of probing questions designed to deepen students' understanding and clarify their thinking. In particular, the lesson plans demonstrate follow-up questioning that builds upon students' initial responses. For example, in Teacher D's lesson on oral communication, the teacher includes prompts such as *"Can you elaborate on your answer?"*, *"What made you say that?"*, and *"Can you give another example?"* These types of questions signal a purposeful strategy to encourage learners to expand and refine their thoughts, which is characteristic of probing.

Meanwhile, the SOLO Taxonomy (Structure of Observed Learning Outcomes) was created by Biggs and Collis (1982), and it provided a progressive model of student understanding that can guide teachers in structuring their questioning. In junior high school (JHS) English classes, teachers may start with the uni-structural and multi-structural levels and lower-order thinking questions (LOTS) are used, e.g., asking learners to identify main ideas or recall details, to build their comprehension.

As students develop, teachers can progress to a higher level of relational and extended abstract questioning in senior high school (SHS), where HOTS (e.g. analyzing author's intent, evaluating arguments, creating alternative endings) elicit more reasoning and imagination. It is important for teachers to root their questioning on the SOLO taxonomy to systematically scaffold learning by ensuring that the questions are not only at the right level for the current cognitive stage of the learners but also designed to advance them towards a more complex and critical level of questions.

During classroom observations, the teacher asked a student to define conciseness as one of the elements of communication. When the student responded briefly, the teacher followed up with, *"Why is that important in communication?"* and *"How can we see that in real-life conversations?"* These probing questions elicited longer, more reflective responses from the students, revealing a deeper engagement with the content. Field notes documented moments where the teacher paused strategically to wait for thoughtful responses, and learners appeared to reflect more deeply before answering. In one instance, a student initially gave a vague answer, but when prompted with, *"Can you explain that further using your own experience?"*, the response became more detailed and personal.

These observations affiliated with insights shared during the focus group discussion, where teachers reported that they *“ask follow-up questions to help students think more critically about what they’re saying.”* One teacher mentioned that probing questions *“help students clarify their ideas and sometimes correct themselves in the process.”* The triangulated data from lesson plans, classroom observations, and teacher reflections affirm that probing questions are actively used as a scaffolding tool to foster critical thinking and promote richer student discourse.

2. Reflective and Real-Life Application Questions. Another emerging theme from the excerpts of the participants includes the use of reflective and real-life application questions. These are questions that invite students to look inward, think about their own experiences, and connect them to what they are learning in class. These questions prompt learners to analyze how a text, theme, or character relates to their personal beliefs, values, or past experiences. They encourage self-awareness and deeper understanding of how literature or language concepts apply to one’s own life.

a. Reflective Questions. After the interviews with the language teachers, it was disclosed that they asked their learners reflective questions. They added that these questions help students understand that there are often multiple ways of looking at a situation or a concept and encourage creative thinking because there are no right or wrong answers. Teachers should motivate pupils to incorporate knowledge by relating what’s taught in class to their experiences and opinions, and helping them develop abilities like self-reflection, and thinking for themselves (Kurnia, 2021). Teacher E pointed this when she expressed, *“I employ reflective questions to help students connect the lesson to real-life situations or personal experiences. This allows them to see the relevance of the lesson in their daily lives. It also fosters engagement and emotional involvement in the topic.”* When asked to go into details, she added, *“I usually assign tasks that require students to write reflections or journal entries from the point of view of a character. This promotes empathy and the ability to synthesize emotional and contextual understanding. It also enhances perspective-taking. I feel like my students understand empathy through reflective questions as they try to wear the shoes of another person.”*

Her narratives align with Salih and Omar’s (2024) study that indicated that reflective questions help students to connect the new information to their prior knowledge and personal experiences. This finding also relates with the reflective learning stage of Mezirow’s transformative learning theory where learners conduct a self-appraisal of their beliefs, attitudes, and feelings to generate appropriate alternative perspectives and integration of new information. In this line, her narratives are consistent with the studies of Salmon et al. (2008) learners’ before, during, and after reflection is a recurrent practice of expert language teachers that lead students to pool related information for the purpose of understanding the text. Reflective questions mold critical and independent thinkers making them an essential teaching tool to develop a full range of cognitive, intrapersonal and interpersonal thinking skills.

Gasmi and Al Nadabi’s (2023) findings also supported that active learning techniques should be supplemented by real-world applications and critical thinking inquiry

to offer a comprehensive skill set. Performance in reading introductory courses likely improved with real-world application because reading and predicting consequences in problem-solving or scenarios are interactive processes.

In addition, real-world questions led to greater active engagement with texts, oral and written argument building, and higher overall performance. This indicates that real-world questions not only help students to make sense of what they are reading but also enhances their ability to apply their reading to produce written or verbal outputs (Phillips et al., 2022).

In this note, the lesson plans that have been turned in were reviewed and it was found that reflective questions were purposely added in to the plan. For instance, in the lesson plan of Teacher D, the teacher prompts students to relate their learning to personal experiences through questions such as *“Have you ever experienced something similar?”* and *“How would you feel if you were in the character’s position?”* These questions encourage students to connect the content with their own lives, promoting not just comprehension but personal insight, a core goal of reflective questioning (Pallangyo & Isangula, 2023).

During classroom observations, reflective questioning was evident when the teacher, after discussing a poem, asked, *“How does this theme relate to something you’ve experienced in your own life?”* Students took a moment to process the question before sharing personal reflections, indicating a deeper level of engagement. Field notes also captured a moment when the teacher asked, *“What did you learn about yourself from the character’s decision?”*—prompting a rich discussion that revealed students’ ability to internalize and evaluate literary themes emotionally and cognitively. This aligns with the notion that reflective questions help bridge academic content and personal growth (Ryan et al., 2021).

Teacher F supported these classroom practices when she commented during the focus group discussion, *“I use reflective questions to help students connect lessons to their values and experiences—it makes learning more meaningful.”* During the discussion, Teacher H added, *“When students reflect, they take ownership of the lesson.”* These insights, triangulated with the lesson plans and observations, confirm that reflective questions are actively employed as a strategy to develop critical thinking and emotional intelligence in English language learning.

b. Situational/Real-World Application Questions. Interviews also led to the second new theme that included situational questions in which lesson content is linked to real and true-to-life situations that students may face outside the classroom. Participants shared that they included application questions that they saw as applicable to their everyday teaching practice. Responses from students when using such questions in an interview were programmed and fed to a machine learning algorithm. This carried out the interview and provided feedback on useful categories or distributions to machine learning about questions used for an interview with students on applications of language skills including all categories used in each interview or all answers to a specific question. Teacher B, one of the participants, highlighted this in her narrative when she shared, *“I*

give situational questions where students must apply a concept or theme to a real-world issue. For example, I ask how a character's choices would play out in today's society. It develops critical thinking and moral reasoning." Real-world application questions encourage learners to synthesize ideas from different texts, form reasoned judgments and see the relevance of English to real-life decision-making and problem-solving (Phillips & More, 2022). In short, they transformed English lessons from mere language exercises into platforms for critical inquiry and reflective engagement with the world. The same was expressed in the shared narrative of Teacher I where she drew attention to the use of literature in promoting real life situations when she said, *"I challenge students to relate themes from literature to historical or current events. It promotes ability to analyze relevance. Students often see how literature mirrors society. This happens when we provide them with real life context."*

Their narratives were manifestations of asking situational questions which allowed learners to be more realistic and think of providing solutions to problems. Instead of recalling facts, students must transfer knowledge from the classroom to meaningful, practical situations like writing a persuasive speech for a community issue or debating the ethics of a character's actions in relation to current events. As Wang et al. (2023) put it, these are questions that require learners to think and express themselves creatively. Rather than having a single correct answer, they prompt learners to use their imagination and think outside the box. This type of question stimulates learners to go beyond simple grammar and vocabulary towards a more creative use of the language. A close examination of the submitted lesson plans clearly demonstrated the presence of situational or real-world application questions, which served as effective tools for connecting classroom learning to students' everyday experiences. The lesson plan of Teacher B includes a question such as, *"What would you do if you were in the character's position facing a similar situation today?"* This type of questioning allowed students to apply literary themes to modern-day contexts, reinforcing critical thinking and relevance, as supported by Ünal (2021), who emphasized that real-world application questions deepen understanding by linking content to lived experiences.

During class observations, the teacher integrated a situational task asking students, *"Imagine this issue happened in our community—how would you address it?"* This prompted students to discuss current social issues reflected in the text, such as discrimination or peer pressure. Field notes captured that students were actively engaged, offering diverse solutions that blended textual evidence with present-day reasoning indicating the successful activation of higher-order thinking skills through application (Brookhart, 2010).

The focus group discussion echoed this instructional approach. Teacher C participant explained, *"Real-world questions help students realize literature isn't just a story. It's a mirror of real life. When they make that connection, they think more deeply."* She added, *"It also prepares them to use what they learn in the classroom beyond school."* These observations, together with evidence from the lesson plans and class interactions, affirmed that situational or real-world questions are consciously used to develop students' ability to analyze, evaluate, and apply learning in practical contexts.

It is interesting to note that junior and senior high school teachers asked several higher order thinking skills questions like analytical, evaluative, and creation questions. This is reflected as evidenced in the table where JHS teachers asked 26 questions and SHS teachers asked 28 questions totaling 54 questions. This is presented in detail in the discussion below.

In view of this, the SOLO Taxonomy (Biggs & Collis, 1982) provided teachers a useful lens for understanding how reflective and real-life application questions function in English language classes. At the relational level, learners are expected to integrate ideas and connect them to broader contexts, while at the extended abstract level, they generalize knowledge to new situations. Teachers' use of reflective questions, such as *"Why do you think the character acted this way?"* or real-life application prompts like *"How would you apply this lesson in your community?"* align with these higher SOLO levels. Such questioning encourages students to move beyond recall and comprehension toward deeper reasoning, personal reflection, and transfer of learning to authentic contexts. By anchoring these practices on SOLO, teachers can intentionally design questions that not only meet curriculum competencies but also cultivate critical engagement and real-world relevance in both JHS and SHS classrooms.

3. Higher-Order Thinking Questions. Participants made clear that they asked questions that go beyond simple recall and require learners to analyze, evaluate, and create, which correspond to the upper levels of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy (Wilson, 2016). Instead of asking for facts or definitions like who the main character is, HOTQs challenge learners to interpret meaning, critique ideas, or construct new insights like asking why learners think the author chose that ending or how the story would change if it were set in another culture. This is made evident by asking learners with analytical, evaluative, and synthesis or creation questions.

a. Analytical Questions. One specific category which arose from the narratives of the participants is the use of analytical questions which are designed to help learners break down texts, ideas, or concepts into their component parts to better understand how they work. Participants believed that analytical questions deepened students' understanding as evidenced by their narratives during their interviews.

Rather than focusing on memorization or simple comprehension, these questions push learners to examine relationships, identify patterns, and explore cause-and-effect connections within the material (Brookhart, 2010). Teacher B has this in mind during the FGD. *"My questions usually ask students to infer, analyze, or interpret what they have read, especially in literature discussions. I believe such questions deepen students' understanding of texts beyond the surface level. They also enhance students' ability to think critically. In asking these questions, I am confident that they are learning."*

He shared his experiences on the use of analytical questions in language class. He added, *"I often ask students to compare and contrast characters, themes, or perspectives. This type of question develops analytical thinking. It also helps students recognize nuances in the text. My love for literature is transferred to my students, and it made me fulfilled as a teacher."* This response reflects the teachers' ability to use

analytical questions which encourage learners to look beneath the surface of a text and think about why and how something is expressed, rather than just what is being stated. By asking students to analyze characters' motivations, authorial techniques, or thematic structures, teachers cultivate skills such as inference-making, interpretation, and reasoning (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2020).

The process described above helps grasp and remember the texts they study, giving equal weight to both affected and unaffected students. This is in accordance with Anderson and Krathwohl's (2001) classification of levels of questions. They contend that while integrating questions of remembering, understanding, and analyzing, teachers can help all students to achieve a proper reading level. It is easier for them to come up with what to read to memorize the text, what to read to understand the text, and what to read to analyze the text.

Corollary to this, an analysis of the reviewed lesson plans revealed the integration of analytical questions that aim to develop students' critical thinking by encouraging them to break down texts and examine components such as character motivation, cause-and-effect relationships, and thematic elements. For example, in the LP of Teacher F questions like *"What factors influenced the character's decision?"* or *"How does the setting contribute to the conflict in the story?"* invite students to dissect narrative elements, identify patterns, and understand underlying meanings.

During classroom observation, the teacher posed the question: *"Can you identify the turning point in the story and explain how it changed the direction of the plot?"* Students were observed reviewing the text closely, highlighting portions of dialogue and narrative cues that supported their analysis. Several students were able to pinpoint the climax and articulate its significance using textual evidence, demonstrating a deepened understanding of structure and character development. Field notes captured high engagement levels, with students justifying their answers and offering alternative interpretations, a clear indication of analytical skill application.

These instructional strategies were also supported in the focus group discussion. Teacher J, one of the teacher-participants noted, *"When I ask students to analyze a character's decision, I notice they start making connections they wouldn't otherwise make."* She added, *"It's one thing to know what happened; it's another to explain why it happened and how it affects everything else."* These insights confirm that analytical questioning is consciously and effectively employed to help students engage in deeper, text-based inquiry and enhance their critical thinking abilities in English language learning.

b. Evaluative Questions. Another interesting type of question asked by participants to develop learners' critical thinking skills was evaluative questions. They affirmed that these questions helped learners to express deeper understanding as evidenced by their narratives, lesson plans, and the class observations. Teachers asked hypothetical questions which aimed at eliciting ideas that go beyond surface level.

In English language teaching, these are questions that require students to make judgments, assess quality, or justify opinions based on evidence. These questions go

beyond recalling facts or analyzing parts of a text. They push learners to weigh arguments, critique ideas, and determine the value or effectiveness of something (Brookhart, 2021). These are questions that demand critical judgment supported by reasoning. This is reflected in the narratives of Teacher D as presented below:

“I ask evaluative questions that push students to judge ideas or character decisions based on textual evidence. These questions often lead to debates and deeper appreciation of the author’s intent. Students learn to back up their claims with solid reasoning.”

When asked for a follow up question, she added that:

“I sometimes use ‘what if’ questions, like ‘What if this event didn’t happen in the story?’ These questions challenge students to explore alternate outcomes and consequences. It sharpens their prediction and inference skills. They can do this if they can evaluate.”

Evaluative questions foster students’ ability to consider multiple perspectives, apply criteria, and form well-supported conclusions. They encourage learners to back up their judgments with textual evidence, logical reasoning, and personal insights, leading to more sophisticated discussions (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2020). This also assists students in understanding that judgments are not merely opinions but must be justified with evidence and logical reasoning. This is vital if we are to develop students from passive consumers of information into critical appraisers. If students are regularly required to assess the quality of a character, an argument, or a stylistic decision, they are pushed down the path of acquiring skills related to that kind of judgment, such as deliberation, discrimination, and critique (King, Goodson, & Rohani, 2022).

Meanwhile, a thorough review of the lesson plans reveals the use of evaluative questions that prompt learners to make judgments based on criteria, evidence, or personal values. These questions were designed to engage students in higher-order thinking, particularly through activities such as critiquing an author’s intent, assessing the actions of characters, or forming opinions about moral decisions within texts. For instance, questions like *“Do you agree with the character’s decision? Why or why not?”* or *“How effective was the ending of the story?”* require students to provide justifications, using textual or experiential evidence.

During the classroom observation, a teacher asked: *“Was the protagonist justified in choosing to leave his family behind? Support your answer with events from the story.”* This prompted active discussion among students, where they weighed different perspectives and cited various parts of the text to defend their positions. Some students referenced specific dialogue or actions to support their evaluations, while others compared the character’s choice to real-life moral dilemmas. Field notes captured students’ engagement, facial cues of thinking, and respectful dissent, all rich evidence of evaluative processing.

Finally, the focus group discussion triangulated with these findings. Teacher A shared that evaluative questions help students *“own their opinions”* and *“understand that literature is not about right or wrong answers, but about how you defend your stance.”* Another teacher, Teacher C commented, *“These kinds of questions make students think deeply and reflect on what they value—beyond just comprehension.”* This supports the observation that evaluative questioning strategies in English classes foster judgment, ethical reasoning, and deeper literary appreciation which are key components of critical thinking development.

c. Synthesis/Creation Questions. One of the questions that elicited students’ understanding and capabilities was synthesis or creation questions. Participants attested, through their narratives, that synthesis questions helped them to gauge if learners can put their ideas together to create a meaningful whole. This category arose as they repeatedly mentioned synthesizing questions that they employed in class.

Synthesis or creation questions in English language teaching are questions that ask students to combine ideas, concepts, or information from multiple sources or even from their own experiences to produce something new. These questions represent the highest level in Bloom’s revised taxonomy (create) because they go beyond understanding or analyzing; they require students to design, invent, or propose original ideas (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2020). Teacher J has these narratives to share.

“I ask questions that require students to design something—like a campaign, a speech, or a multimedia presentation—based on what they learned. It activates the ‘create’ level of Bloom’s taxonomy. This kind of task shows me how well they can apply and extend their learning.”

In view of the narratives of the participants, they related that they asked synthesis or creation questions which challenge students to integrate knowledge and think flexibly. They foster learning transfer by inviting scholars to apply what they have learned to new situations and contexts. This transfers learning from one situation to another; if this has not been achieved, the success of the learning situation will not be transfer—a lack of learning that will improve the performance of those who have been learning and a problem in the learning situation is created by using a simple question tone.

In connection with this, an analysis of the lesson plans disclosed the presence of synthesis or creation-level questions which encourage learners to combine ideas, produce original outputs, and extend their understanding creatively. These questions align with the highest level of Bloom’s Taxonomy, prompting students to go beyond analysis and evaluation to generate new and meaningful responses. For example, one lesson instructed students to *“create a modern adaptation of the story using a short script or a digital presentation,”* while another asked learner to *“compose an open letter from the character’s point of view reflecting on the outcome of the story.”*

Throughout multiple classroom observations, it was evident that students were engaged in collaborative small group conceptualization of their products. In one cluster, students began to sketch out a dramatic production that would portray an alternative

conclusion to the narrative. In another cluster, students outlined a multimedia slide show that would contrast the theme of the reading selection with contemporary social concerns. Field notes revealed students in the process of brainstorming, negotiating concepts, and using technology tools to draft their designs. Teachers facilitated the process by guiding students with prompts like: *“How can you express the theme in today’s context?”* or *“What would this character do if placed in our society now?”*

Triangulated with the focus group discussions, one teacher, Teacher I affirmed that these tasks allow students to *“extend learning beyond the text”* and *“apply higher-order thinking to real-world or imaginative tasks.”* One teacher, teacher H remarked, *“Creation tasks help my students own the learning because they get to design, innovate, and communicate their interpretations.”* This supports the conclusion that synthesis and creation-level questioning fosters critical thinking by pushing learners to produce original work that integrates both textual knowledge and personal insight. Such responses reflect a shift from passive recall to active meaning-making, where learners engage in deeper cognitive processes. These findings affirm that when teachers incorporate creation-level tasks, they cultivate a classroom environment that values autonomy, innovation, and reflective thinking.

Teachers’ use of higher-order thinking questions (HOTS) is often shaped by their intent to meet specific learning competencies, particularly those that emphasize analysis, evaluation, and synthesis. In senior high school (SHS) settings, teachers reported using HOTS questions to deepen students’ understanding of argumentative texts, literary themes, and real-world issues aligned with competencies in the English curriculum such as EN11/12RC-IVa-1 (analyzing text structures) and EN11/12LC-IVa-4 (evaluating viewpoints).

One teacher shared that asking, *“How would you change the character’s decision to reflect a different moral outcome?”* helped students engage with ethical reasoning and narrative structure. However, teachers also noted that the success of HOTS questioning depends on students’ readiness and prior knowledge. In junior high school (JHS), HOTS questions were used more sparingly, often during enrichment activities or performance tasks, where students had already built foundational understanding through LOTS.

Although teachers were fully aware of the necessity of HOTS questions, many still had to face some realistic difficulties using them. For instance, concerning students’ lack of vocabulary, poor reading abilities, and inability to express abstract thoughts, teachers usually preferred to use LOTS questions as a warm-up. Additionally, the limitations of teaching time and the large number of students in a class tended to push them to choose LOTS questions as well, since HOTS required more time and effort for discussion and feedback.

In addition, some teachers noted that they tended to avoid asking students to evaluate or synthesize their learning during the process when they perceived learners as disengaged or not confident, for example in mixed-ability classes. Rather than evaluating the level of questions asked, it is evident that teachers adapt their questioning approach to consider the cognitive demand of the competency, the language level of the learners,

and the context of the classroom. This finely balanced decision-making process highlights how teachers constantly adapt their practices to reconcile theoretical aspirations with the practical realities of teaching.

The triangulated data obtained from lesson plans, observations, and focus group interviews confirmed the prevalence of lower order and higher order thinking skills questions in the English language teaching classroom, as students are provided opportunities to respond, reason out, and synthesize or create original output or even give alternative endings, character-based letters, or multimedia presentations.

The data showed that students were highly engaged during the activities, engaging in collaborative problem-solving and the use of digital resources. Furthermore, in the focus group interviews, teachers indicated that these types of questions lead students to internalize the content learning and implement the content in creative ways causing critical thinking abilities to improve. This data triangulation indicates that creation-based questioning promotes critical thinking and learner independence in the English classroom.

On the second research question, and as shown in Table 2, the study revealed a predominant reliance on Lower-Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) questions, which comprise a substantial 76.63percent of all questions recorded (99 for remembering, 45 for understanding, and 33 for applying). Among these, remembering questions or those that ask students to recall facts, terms, or basic concepts were the most frequently used as it registered 42.86percent. This suggests that many classroom interactions still center on factual recall rather than stimulating deeper cognitive engagement. Studies such as those by Brookhart (2021) and Anderson and Krathwohl (2020) emphasized that while LOTS questions have value in establishing foundational knowledge, an over-reliance on them can limit opportunities for students to practice critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

On the other hand, Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) questions accounted for only 23.37percent of the total questions recorded, divided into analyzing (11.69percent), evaluating (7.36percent), and creating (4.32percent). These question types are crucial for prompting learners to break down information, assess perspectives, and generate new ideas (Moore & Stanley, 2022). The relatively low frequency of creating questions, which were the least used at only 4.32percent, highlights a missed opportunity for fostering innovation and synthesis, skills that are central to 21st-century education (King et al., 2021). Such findings echo Lewis and Smith's (2020) claim that teachers often default to questions that feel "safe," resulting in fewer chances for students to grapple with open-ended, thought-provoking tasks.

Comparing the data from classroom observations (114) and teacher logs/lesson plans (102) shows a relatively consistent pattern across both sources, indicating that teachers' questioning practices largely reflect their planned strategies. However, the disproportionate use of LOTS questions across both settings suggests a systemic tendency to prioritize rote learning and procedural questioning rather than consistently embedding HOTS into classroom dialogue (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). In conclusion, though HOTS questions were found at almost the same frequency as LOTS

questions, the results of this study suggest that teachers need support and guidance to effectively implement inquiry teaching in a way that will foster critical thinking.

The study also found that over 95 percent of the questions were asked by teachers, serving as a reminder that many classroom interactions are traditionally dominated by teacher talk (Hattie et al., 2021). This is problematic because it signals an imbalance in power within the classroom and a passive approach to student learning. Research has demonstrated that traditional teacher-dominated settings lead to decreased motivation and disengagement among learners (Reeve et al., 2004). The constant stream of teacher questions gives students the message that the teacher is in control of what to learn and how to demonstrate learning. Teachers might require specialized teaching and formal instruction in incorporating and structuring Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) problems within their daily session, notably in areas such as English that demand interpretation and synthesis.

At the same time, strengthening teachers' capacity to ask higher-order questions is vital. Higher-order questions are often more complex than lower-order ones and, somewhat intuitively, provoke deeper thought and more varied, nuanced responses (Walsh & Sattes, 2010). Consequently, teacher training programs should provide ample, explicit guidance and repeated practice in designing and asking higher-order questions, so that teachers become adept at naturally using these in instruction and skillfully incorporating the answers into lesson flow (Cruikshank et al., 2006).

This study suggests several implications for future research. Intervention-based studies, for instance, may further establish in what ways and to what extent teachers can be trained on HOTS questioning to improve student outcomes. Longitudinal studies may investigate how teacher questioning influences students' long-term development of specific cognitive abilities, such as critical thinking, and related academic achievement. Finally, additional research may also focus on comparing questioning practices across different subjects or grade levels, or on investigating the utility of technology (e.g., artificial intelligence for designing richer questions) in helping teachers pose and implement more challenging questions, with the goal of promoting the desired improvements in students' thinking and learning.

This lack of a balance has several consequences in the teaching and learning process. For instance, an excessive number of LOTS questions may lead to the reinforcement of superficial learning since students do not have regular opportunities to use their higher-order thinking skills of analyzing, evaluating, or creating, skills that are crucial for developing critical thinking and 21st-century competencies (Lewis & Smith, 2020). Therefore, teachers may require specific professional development to learn how to formulate HOTS questions and how to incorporate them into their teaching on a more frequent basis. Furthermore, HOTS might be more systematically integrated into teaching if lesson plan templates, as well as assessment and evaluation instruments, anchored in questioning, could be provided by the Ministry of Education and school leaders (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

The study's results open a variety of potential avenues to pursue, including intervention-based investigations that might examine the effects of teacher training in designing and posing HOTS questions to students on student performance. Longitudinal research could further explore how questioning practices can have an impact on the development of students' critical thinking. Comparative studies could also examine differences between teachers in the types of questions they pose in terms of grade level or subject taught. Finally, future research, given the recent developments in the field of educational technologies, could focus on the potential role that AI-based support tools for lesson planning could play in helping teachers to develop and use LOTS and HOTS questions. In the end, these are the strategies that attempt to change the types of questions teachers ask from questions leaning heavily on students' memory to questions that encourage an inquiry-oriented environment where students acquire higher-order thinking and reasoning skills necessary for success in school and life.

Based on the data gathered from these observations, over 85 percent of the questions posed by teachers were LOTS questions, while less than 15 percent of the questions were HOTS questions. The same pattern of question use emerged from the video-taped lessons, with most questions of all three types—LOTS, HOTS, and EXT questions—being asked during the discussion and dialogue phase of the lesson. This imbalance suggests that although HOTS are included in the questioning by teachers, the focus is more on questioning at the remember and understand levels. The current study, therefore, provides the evidence which clearly indicates the need for explicit and careful incorporation of HOTS via classroom questioning for engaging students' / pupils' minds at deeper cognitive levels.

Indeed, when comparing the use of higher-order and lower-order questions across the pre- and post-observations, the proportions of both question types decreased in the post-observation phase. Despite this balanced reduction, a higher proportion of lower-order questions to higher-order questions remained in the post-observation phase. Certainly, language arts classes in Nabuslot National High School elicited significant evidence of a low employment of higher order questions, warranting teacher education and preparation to embed analytical, evaluative, and creative questioning within English language instruction, in response to critical thinking objectives, particularly in the context of this study. This emphasizes the necessity for teachers to gradually escalate questioning to evoke higher-level thinking.

Teachers' use of higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) questions was often intentional and anchored on target competencies that required analysis, evaluation, and creation. For example, in senior high school (SHS) classes, teachers shared that they asked evaluative questions such as *"Do you agree with the author's argument? Why or why not?"* to meet competencies in critical reading and viewing (EN11/12RC-IVa-1). These questions encouraged learners to justify reasoning and connect ideas across contexts.

However, teachers admitted that HOTS questions were more challenging to sustain in large classes, where students' varying proficiency levels and limited vocabulary sometimes hindered deeper responses. As one teacher noted, "I ask evaluative

questions, but many students struggle to explain their answers beyond one sentence.” This illustrates how HOTS questioning, while aligned with curriculum goals, is shaped by learners’ readiness and classroom realities.

At the same time, teachers explained why they often relied on lower-order thinking skills (LOTS) questions. LOTS questions such as “*What is the main idea of the passage?*” or “*Who is the character in the story?*” were used to scaffold comprehension and ensure that learners had the foundational knowledge required before moving to HOTS. In junior high school (JHS), teachers emphasized that LOTS questions were necessary to meet competencies in understanding and applying language structures, especially for students who struggled with reading comprehension. They viewed LOTS not as a limitation but as a preparatory step toward higher-order engagement. The choice of LOTS or HOTS was therefore not a matter of preference but a response to the demands of the learning competency, the linguistic capacity of students, and the instructional context.

The SOLO Taxonomy (Biggs & Collis, 1982) gives an organized method to see how students advance from surface to deep learning, thus being a helpful reference for formulating higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) questions in language classrooms. At the relational level, teachers can pose analytical questions demanding students to relate ideas within or about different texts.

Conversely, structured abstracts composed of encouragements, such as evaluative and creative questions, which get students to generalize knowledge and apply it to new situations (e.g., by rewriting endings or arguing for or against alternative opinions). Results from classroom observations often aim to develop competencies in critical reading, viewing and writing where students are called. Hence, teachers can gradually guide learners from the tendency to remember and understand information to the ability to reason and creatively apply knowledge.

3. Proposed Instructional Guide to Effectively Employ Teachers’ Questioning Techniques in English Language Teaching

After the examining and combining quantitative and qualitative results, the researcher concluded that teachers need structured questioning techniques that this instructional guide may offer. The instructional guide has been designed as a pragmatic instrument to attain the implantation of purposeful, varied, and cognitively demanding questions along the entire instructional process. This guide specifically aims at helping teachers with better plans, implement, and reflect on their questioning strategies to enhance classroom dialogue and foster higher-order thinking skills.

The said instructional guide was developed in direct reference to the results of statistical analyses and thematic insights from teacher narratives, the guide reflects both empirical evidence and lived classroom experiences. It identifies the factors or reasons why questions are asked, to activate prior knowledge, scaffold understanding, probe deeper thinking, encourage reflection, connect learning to real-world contexts, and stimulate analysis, evaluation, and creativity.

It is also good to note that by aligning these purposes with effective questioning techniques in English Language Teaching (ELT), the guide provides teachers with a structured framework to transform questioning from routine practice into a strategy aimed at fostering critical and engaged learners. The proposed instructional guide includes samples for the four macro skills: reading, listening, writing, and speaking.

A more detailed presentation of the instructional guide is presented in the recommendations part of this paper.

Conclusions

Given the results, the following conclusions were derived:

1. English teachers use various types of questions to improve the critical thinking abilities of students and keep them engaged during lessons.
2. English teachers still mainly use lower-order questioning despite the variety of question types they use to facilitate critical thinking.
3. The use of a detailed instructional manual can improve how teachers ask questions and, as a result, support students in thinking more critically to create a better educational atmosphere.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following were recommended:

1. Teachers are encouraged to continue using a variety of questions to improve the critical thinking skills of different students while intentionally equilibrating lower- and higher-order questions and using the suggested instructional guide for mapping prompts on curriculum competencies and critical thinking.
2. Teachers are advised to balance lower order thinking skills questions and higher order thinking skills questions through capacity building activities like training, workshops, and peer reflections.
3. School administrators and instructional supervisors are advised to assess the suggested teaching manual for enhancements and the implementation of the guide in classroom instruction.
4. Further research should be undertaken to replicate the findings and to address the limitations of the present study. Emphasis in the replication study should be placed on randomization should be stressed, the insufficient detail for the control of oral questioning techniques should be corrected, and additional studies should be conducted.

Based on the findings derived from the conduct of quantitative and qualitative research, which combined statistical analyses with teacher narratives, an instructional guide was developed to provide teachers with structured questioning techniques. This guide helps educators plan, implement, and reflect on asking purposeful, varied, and cognitively demanding questions that enhance classroom dialogue and foster higher-order thinking. It also identifies key functions of classroom questioning, such as activating prior knowledge, scaffolding understanding, probing deeper thinking, connecting learning

to real-world contexts, and stimulating analysis, evaluation, and creativity. Lastly, this output turns routine questioning into a deliberate strategy for developing critical learners, complete with practical samples across all macro skills which include reading, listening, writing, and speaking.

Output of the Study:

Instructional Guide: Effective Questioning Techniques in ELT

Introduction

Questioning is recognized as a powerful tool in English Language Teaching (ELT). Language teachers believe that purposeful questions scaffold learners from literal understanding to higher-order thinking, fostering critical thinking, creativity, and real-world application. This guide provides an overview of questioning techniques, illustrated through a sample lesson the four macro skills such as reading, listening, writing, and speaking.

In the context of English Language Teaching, questioning is not merely a classroom routine but a deliberate pedagogical strategy that shapes the quality of interaction and learning. Effective questioning requires teachers to design prompts that move beyond recall, guiding learners toward analysis, evaluation, and synthesis. By integrating varied question types across the four macro skills such as reading, listening, writing, and speaking. Teachers can cultivate deeper comprehension, encourage reflective dialogue, and promote authentic language use.

Moreover, purposeful questioning serves as a bridge between theory and practice, enabling students to connect textual or auditory input with personal experiences and real-world applications. The instructional guide presented here is grounded in both empirical findings and teacher insights, offering a structured framework that empowers educators to plan, deliver, and reflect on their questioning strategies with clarity and intention.

Macro Skill: Reading

Sample Lesson: Reading a Short Story

Topic: “The Necklace” by Guy de Maupassant

Objective: Students will demonstrate comprehension, critical analysis, and personal reflection on the text through varied questioning techniques.

Sample Questions Aligned to Questioning Techniques

1. Literal to Complex Scaffolding (Lower Order Thinking Skills to Higher Order Thinking Skills)

The teacher may ask literal question like: “Who are the main characters in the story?” It may be followed by a complex question such as: “What events led to Madame Loisel’s downfall?” It begins with recall to establish understanding, then scaffolds toward cause-effect reasoning.

2. Open-Ended

In this level, teacher may ask an open-ended question like “How would you describe Madame Loisel’s attitude toward wealth and social status?” This question encourages diverse perspectives and personal interpretation, fostering richer classroom dialogue.

3. Probing

In this level, teacher may ask a probing question like “You said Madame Loisel was careless—can you explain why you think so? What evidence supports your view?” This question deepens responses, pushes students to justify claims with textual evidence.

4. Reflective

In this level, the teacher may ask a reflective question such as “If you were in Madame Loisel’s position, how would you have handled the situation differently?” This type of question promotes empathy, self-awareness, and personal connection to the text.

5. Situational/Real-World Application

In this level, the teacher may ask situational question like “What lessons from the story can be applied to modern issues of materialism and financial responsibility?” This question bridges literature with real-life contexts, enhancing relevance and transfer of learning.

6. Analytical

In this level, the teacher may ask “How does the author use irony to highlight the theme of vanity and pride?” This question develops critical reading skills by examining literary devices and their impact.

7. Evaluative

In this level, the teacher may ask “Do you think Madame Loisel deserved her fate? Why or why not?” This question encourages judgment based on evidence, values, and moral reasoning.

8. Synthesis/Creation

In this level, the teacher may ask “Rewrite the ending of the story to show a more hopeful resolution. How would this change the overall message?” This question stimulates creativity, allowing learners to reconstruct meaning and explore alternative perspectives.

Significance

By integrating literal, open-ended, probing, reflective, situational, analytical, evaluative, and synthesis questions, teachers scaffold students from basic comprehension to higher-order thinking. This questioning framework transforms reading lessons into opportunities for critical inquiry, personal reflection, and creative expression, ensuring that learners not only understand texts but also connect them to broader life contexts.

Macro Skill: Listening

Sample Lesson: Listening to a News Report

Topic: A short audio clip about climate change and its impact on communities

Objective: Students will demonstrate comprehension, analysis, and reflection on the listening text through purposeful questioning.

Sample Questions Aligned to Questioning Techniques

1. Literal to Complex Scaffolding (LOTS to HOTS)

In this level, the teacher may ask literal question such as: “What was the main issue discussed in the report?” This may be followed by a complex question like: “How did the speaker explain the effects of climate change on local communities?” These questions move from recall to cause-effect reasoning, ensuring comprehension before deeper inquiry.

2. Open-Ended

In this level, the teacher may ask “What part of the report stood out to you the most, and why?” This question encourages personal interpretation and diverse perspectives.

3. Probing

In this level, the teacher may ask “You mentioned that the report was alarming. Can you explain which details made you feel that way?” This question pushes learners to justify opinions with evidence from the audio.

4. Reflective

In this level, the teacher may ask “If you were part of the community mentioned, how would you respond to the challenges described?” This question promotes empathy and personal connection to the listening text.

5. Situational/Real-World Application

In this level, the teacher may ask “How can the information in the report guide us in making better environmental decisions today?” This question bridges listening with real-world relevance, fostering applied learning.

6. Analytical

In this level, the teacher may ask “What strategies did the speaker use to emphasize urgency in the report?” This question develops critical listening by examining tone, emphasis, and rhetorical devices.

7. Evaluative

In this level, the teacher may ask “Do you think the report presented a balanced view of climate change? Why or why not?” This question encourages judgment based on evidence and critical evaluation of bias.

8. Synthesis/Creation

In this level, the teacher may ask “Imagine you are a journalist—create a short follow-up report that offers solutions to the issues raised.” This question stimulates creativity and allows learners to reconstruct meaning into actionable ideas.

Significance

By integrating literal, open-ended, probing, reflective, situational, analytical, evaluative, and synthesis questions, listening lessons evolve from passive reception into active inquiry and critical engagement. Learners not only understand spoken texts but also connect them to personal experiences and global issues, strengthening both language proficiency and civic awareness.

Macro Skill: Writing

Sample Lesson: Essay Writing

Topic: “The Role of Technology in Education”

Objective: Students will develop a structured essay that demonstrates comprehension, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of ideas.

Sample Questions Aligned to Questioning Techniques

1. Literal to Complex Scaffolding (LOTS to HOTS)

In this level, the teacher may ask a literal question like: “What examples of technology are commonly used in classrooms today?” It is followed by a complex: “How

do these technologies influence student engagement and learning outcomes?" These questions move from listing examples to exploring cause-effect relationships.

2. Open-Ended

In this level, the teacher may ask "In your opinion, what is the most significant benefit of technology in education?" This question encourages diverse perspectives and personal voice in writing.

3. Probing

In this level, the teacher may ask "You mentioned that technology improves collaboration. Can you explain how, and provide a specific example?" It pushes learners to expand ideas with evidence, strengthening essay arguments.

4. Reflective

In this level, the teacher may ask "How has technology influenced your own learning experience?" This question promotes personal connection and authentic writing.

5. Situational/Real-World Application

In this level, the teacher may ask "If you were a school leader, how would you integrate technology to improve teaching and learning?" This question bridges writing with practical application, fostering problem-solving skills.

6. Analytical

In this level, the teacher may ask "What challenges do schools face in adopting technology, and how do these affect equity in education?" This question develops critical thinking by examining barriers and implications.

7. Evaluative

In this level, the teacher may ask "Do you think technology should replace traditional teaching methods? Why or why not?" This question encourages judgment based on evidence and values, sharpening argumentative writing.

8. Synthesis/Creation

In this level, the teacher may ask students to "Propose a model of a 'future classroom' that integrates technology effectively. How would it transform learning?" It stimulates creativity, allowing learners to design innovative solutions and articulate vision.

Significance

By integrating literal, open-ended, probing, reflective, situational, analytical, evaluative, and synthesis questions, writing lessons evolve into structured pathways for learners to generate ideas, critically examine issues, and create original texts. This questioning framework ensures that students not only produce essays but also develop the intellectual habits of inquiry, reflection, and innovation essential for lifelong learning.

Macro Skill: Speaking

Sample Lesson: Debate/Oral Presentation

Topic: “Should Social Media Be Regulated in Schools?”

Objective: Students will demonstrate fluency, critical reasoning, and persuasive speaking through scaffolded questioning.

Sample Questions Aligned to Questioning Techniques

1. Literal to Complex Scaffolding (LOTS to HOTS)

In this level, the teacher may ask a literal: “What are the common uses of social media among students?” The teacher may provide a follow up complex question like “How do these uses affect academic performance and social relationships?” These questions move from factual recall to exploring cause-effect relationships in spoken discourse.

2. Open-Ended

In this level, the teacher may ask “What is your personal stance on regulating social media in schools?” This question encourages diverse perspectives and authentic expression.

3. Probing

In this level, the teacher may ask “You said regulation is necessary. Can you explain why, and provide specific examples?” This question pushes learners to expand and justify arguments, strengthening persuasive speaking.

4. Reflective

In this level, the teacher may ask “How has social media influenced your own learning or communication habits?” This question promotes self-awareness and personal connection to the topic

5. Situational/Real-World Application

In this level, the teacher may ask “If you were a school administrator, how would you implement social media policies fairly?” This question bridges oral communication with practical problem-solving.

6. Analytical

In this level, the teacher may ask “What are the potential risks and benefits of banning social media during school hours?” This question develops critical reasoning by weighing pros and cons.

7. Evaluative

In this level, the teacher may ask “Do you think regulating social media infringes on student rights? Why or why not?” It encourages judgment based on evidence and values, sharpening debate skills.

8. Synthesis/Creation

In this level, the teacher may ask students to “Propose a balanced policy that allows social media use but minimizes its negative effects. How would you present this to stakeholders?” This question stimulates creativity, requiring learners to design solutions and articulate them persuasively.

Significance

By integrating literal, open-ended, probing, reflective, situational, analytical, evaluative, and synthesis questions, speaking lessons evolve into platforms for critical dialogue, persuasive communication, and creative problem-solving. This questioning framework ensures that learners not only practice fluency but also develop the intellectual and rhetorical skills necessary for effective oral communication in academic and real-world contexts.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

As the researcher strictly adhered to ethical standards, the latter was observed from the conceptualization to the accomplishment of the paper. Hence, prior the data gathering procedure, the researcher obtained the permission from the Offices of the Schools Division Superintendent, Schools District Supervisor, School Principal of the locale, as well classroom teachers or advisers. It was noted that their utmost consent in participation to the study, thus they were given full disclosure on the purpose of the study, the specific procedures, and their rights as participants, among others, in line with ethical research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher also ensured that their participation would remain anonymous and that they may withdraw from participating without any adverse implications. In addition, to safeguard the confidentiality of the subjects, all information was kept confidential and all personal identifiers of the participants were excluded during the data analysis phases, as well as in the final report.

The researcher also employed measures to reduce potential bias such as maintaining neutrality during interviews and focus group discussions, using multiple data sources for triangulation, and practicing reflexivity throughout the research process (Patton, 2023). Lastly, the study guaranteed academic integrity since plagiarism detection

tools were used to verify originality and proper citation of all references of the final manuscript.

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judyann.chongco@deped.gov.ph