Students' Perspectives on the Use of Teacher Questions to Promote Critical Thinking in EFL Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

In the age of AI, critical thinking skills have proven indispensable for students to achieve a competitive edge and high employability. Theoretically, teacher questions play an important role in fostering this thinking ability during classroom interaction. In reality, nevertheless, classroom questions are predominantly low-cognitive, rarely paying way for any development of critical thinking. In this regard, the purpose of the study is to shed light on how students view the use of questions in developing critical thinking, and their perspectives on useful support to answer high-ordered questions. The study involved seventy English-majored students at Van Lang University. Given the purpose of the study, quantitative research was used to collect data about students' perspectives through a questionnaire. The results showed that most students held positive attitudes toward using high-ordered questions, and they acknowledged the benefits these questions offer. In terms of suggestions, they highly valued a comfortable learning environment and group discussion as the most useful support.

Keywords: critical thinking skills , teacher questions, students' perspectives

Introduction

Against the backdrop of rising automation and an unpredictable world, critical thinking is perceived as a desirable characteristic for academic success (Fong et al., 2017; Huynh, 2022; Veliz & Veliz-Campos, 2019; Wallace & Wray, 2021) and bright career prospects (Jafarigohar et al., 2016; Pithers & Soden, 2000). In this light, it comes as no surprise that contemporary educators unanimously placed a great value on this cognitive skill as one of the 21st-century skills for learners, along with creativity, communication and collaboration.

The notion of critical thinking can trace its roots back to the time of Socrates when it was given credit for enhancing learners' ability to profoundly construct their own knowledge through the complex processes involving analysis, evaluation, inference, observation, reflection, and

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reasoning. Center to Socratic Method for nurturing critical thinking is productive discussions between teachers and students prompted by thought-provoking questions. Compared to the traditional teacher-dominated dialogue, which notoriously restricts students' role to the passive recipients of knowledge, a shared discussion driven by continual probing inquiries puts students at the forefront of constructing and internalizing new knowledge, while teachers lean back toward the role of facilitators.

In the field of language learning and teaching, critical thinking is indispensable in the acquisition of second language (Esparrago-Kalidas et al., 2023; Larsson, 2017; Li, 2016; Norton, 2020; Wilson, 2016) Despite its influential role, fostering critical thinking has presented a challenge for many teachers in foreign language instruction since probing questions are still secondary to those targeting at memorization and understanding of knowledge (Khan & Inamullah, 2011; Kurniawati & Fitriati, 2017; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2023; Phuong & Nguyen, 2017). Indeed, reflecting upon the researcher's personal teaching experiences, many students in my EFL classes still grapple with cognitively- demanding questions, although they can pass with flying colors once questions primarily focus on memorization and surface understanding of knowledge. For learners to keep pace with the rapid development of AI, the latter achievement will serve as a hindrance rather than a competitive advantage in an increasingly automated world. Certainly, it is not because teachers fail to recognize the significance of critical thinking in academic and professional achievement. One of the underlying causes probably lies in the effectiveness of our questioning strategies. Despite the huge number of research into the role of questions in promoting critical thinking (Khan & Inamullah, 2011; Kurniawati & Fitriati, 2017; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2023; Phuong & Nguyen, 2017), most of which mainly discuss this topic through the lens of teachers, and barely through the view of students, especially on questioning strategies and supports they gravitate toward. As students are now the heart of everything we do in the field of education, a desire to nurture a critically-thinking generation may be just wishful thinking when their voices are not included. Furthermore, the suggestions on how high-cognitive questions should be supported will be particularly useful for EFL teachers at Van Lang University (VLU) to successfully integrate critical thinking skills into their teaching practices. In all consideration, the study aims to gain insight into VLU students' views on how questions should be employed to promote critical thinking in EFL classrooms.

Literature Review

Nature of critical thinking

Given the overlapping nature of its definition, critical thinking is perceived as cross-disciplinary with its roots in philosophy and psychology (Lewis & Smith, 1993). Elder and Paul (1994) suggested that this cognitive ability is "the ability to reach sound conclusions based on observations and information", highlighting the importance of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation in this process (p. 50). Halpern (2013) broadly defines it as "the use of cognitive skills or strategies that increase the probability of a desirable outcome" (p.8). Based on this strand of thought, critical thinkers are believed to be purposeful and goal-oriented since Halpern

(2013) argued that critical thinkers "use these skills appropriately, without prompting, and usually with conscious intent, in a variety of settings" (p.8). Another often-cited definition by Ennis (2015) defines critical thinking as 'reasonable, reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do' (p.2).

In the field of language learning, Li (2016), drawn on teachers' perspective toward critical thinking, claims that it involves higher-order thinking skills and the ability to make appropriate arguments and to solve problems (p. 278). Marin and de la Pava (2017) highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of critical thinking as it is "a set of conceptual, methodological, criteriological and contextual considerations that integrates thinking skills, dispositions, attitudes, intellectual resources and pedagogical assistance" (p.86). Notably, they also discussed the role of teaching methodologies in nurturing this intellectual ability for EFL learners since "it is oriented through a communicative approach, including task-based and project-based instruction" (p.86).

Despite the diverse perspectives on the term "critical thinking", these definitions converge on one point: critical thinking is manifested in the effective use of higher-order thinking skills, including analysis, analysis, evaluation, inference, observation, reflection, and reasoning.

Teacher Questions and critical thinking

Functions of teacher questions

Using questions in the classroom is well-received as a common instructional technique to initiate a teacher-student interaction. While questions are crucial, asking the right kinds can profoundly impact learners' acquisition of knowledge (Khan & Inamullah, 2011). Indeed, poorly-formed questions can be a hindrance to learning as they lead to confusion, an intimidating environment, and therefore, limit on creative thinking (Chin, 2008). By contrast, appropriately-formed questions play an essential role in promoting critical thinking (Christenbury & Kelly, 1983; Elder & Paul, 1998). This view lends itself to the long-held consensus among EFL researchers that questions have the potential to elicit students' responses which can range from the simple recall of prior knowledge to more complicated cognitive processes of applying, synthesizing, and evaluating information. (Stobaugh, 2013; Zepeda, 2014)

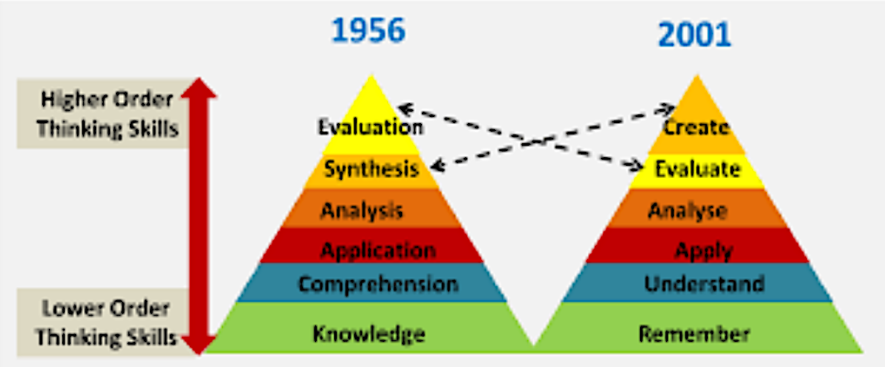
Classification of teacher questions

Teacher questions can be classified into different categories. Display and referential questions traditionally gain popularity in the use of this technique in classroom's interaction (Wangru, 2016). While the former aims to ask for information familiar with teachers, the latter is useful for eliciting information unknown to teachers. Additionally, teacher questions can be procedural, convergent or divergent, depending on the characteristics of students' responses (Richards & Lockhart, 1994). Procedural questions involve inquiries about a lesson's procedure and classroom management. In comparison, the other types of questions focus more on evaluating students' comprehension, ranging from simple to more complicated responses. When raising convergent questions, teachers expect a single or narrow list of best responses from students, as opposed to divergent questions, which are purposefully used to draw a wide range of possible ideas from students.

Another widely adopted categorization of teacher questions is low-order and high-order types. This dichotomy organically draws its theoretical background on the cognitive domain of Bloom's taxonomy (1956), and subsequently being adjusted to the revised version of Anderson and Krathwohl (2001). According to the revised taxonomy, cognitive processes are categorized into 6 levels including remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating. In this regard, teacher questions are classified along this cognitive continuum ranging from asking students to simply recall prior knowledge to requiring them to create an original product (Figure 1). For creating an environment conducive to the development of critical thinking skills, teachers should focus on questions that require students to perform analysis, evaluation or create an original product based on existing knowledge. Given the scope of this study, the researchers would like to base the classification of questions on the revised version of Bloom's Taxonomy.

Figure 1

A revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives



(Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001)

Questioning strategies

Phrasing and clarity

A well-phrased question should be succinct, concise, and appropriate for students' different cognitive levels and knowledge backgrounds (Burden & Byrd, 2018; Wragg & Brown, 2001). The reason for this is that ambiguous ones can serve as a hindrance to students' acquisition of new knowledge (Burden & Byrd, 2018; Christenbury & Kelly, 1983). Furthermore, posing compound questions which require multiple answers could put a strain on learners' cognitive ability, hence being counterproductive to nurturing their critical thinking skills (Kauchak, 2007)

Positive environment

Learners' affective filters, a concept popularized by Krashen (1986) through his "affective filters hypothesis", can create a psychological barrier to their language acquisition. Many studies (Dislen, 2013; Grant & Dweck, 2003) show a positive correlation between classroom atmosphere and learners anxiety. In this light, when learning environment is perceived as psychologically safe, learners might find higher-order questions less intimidating and discouraging (Christenbury & Kelly, 1983). To facilitate a non-threatening environment for

greater learners' engagement in high-order question, teachers should impose neither pressure nor contempt for incorrect responses (Brualdi Timmins, 1998). Alternatively, responses from different perspectives should be given greater preference. Furthermore, teachers can ensure an emotionally comfortable environment through verbal and non-verbal encouragement such as maintaining eye-contact, nodding or providing positive comments.

Wait time

Responding to higher-order questions deems cognitively demanding, and therefore, requires a period of time for the preparation on ideas and target languages (Rowe, 1986). Defined as a pause between a teacher-initiated question and a student's response, wait time can influence the quantity and quality of student responses, and the beginning of a subsequent discussion (Orlich et al., 2010). The increase in wait time is attributed to fewer incorrect answers and questions, more logically supported conclusions, wider variety of students' verbal behavior and longer student responses.

Pimping questions

The term "pimping" refers to the act of posing several cognitively-demanding questions in the sole interest of question initiators boasting about their superior knowledge (Brancati, 1989). This questioning technique comes under heavy criticism for imposing unnecessary pressure and discomfort on students. In this regard, it could hinder teachers' effort to engage students in a thought-provoking discussion, and may fuel students' hostile attitude toward difficult questions (Detsky, 2009)

Previous studies on the use of questions to promote critical thinking skills in EFL context

Served as a highly-anticipated instrument to instill critical thinking skills in students, high-order questions are paradoxically less dominant than low-order types, according to many studies exploring this area of interest.

A study by Khan and Inamullah (2011) revealed that most teacher questions leaned toward the low-order thinking end. This finding resulted from the analysis of 262 questions in which 67% of them were knowledge-based, 23% focused on checking students' comprehension as opposed to 7% being application-based, only 2% being analysis -based and synthesis-based. Similarly, (Shen, 2012) investigated the effects of teacher questions on developing students' critical thinking. The study employed classroom observation of teachers' questioning behaviors and the interview of students. The findings showed that Chinese teachers asked more low-cognitive questions mainly for students recalling old knowledge and checking their understanding of new ones. Furthermore, the study also identified the reasons behind the unsuccessful use of high-ordered questions, which were derived from the lack of explicit instruction, and the way they phrased a difficult question.

In addition, many studies tap into both the perspectives and their questioning strategies to develop students' critical thinking. The teachers' questioning skills were explored in Kurniawati and Fitriati (2017)'s discourse study. Based on the analysis of teacher talks and the follow-up interview, the findings gave insight into teachers' ability to use a wide range of questioning strategies to maintain the active engagement of students, namely redirection, probing,

prompting, wait-time and rephrasing. Despite the understanding of both questioning techniques and the cognitive hierarchy of questions, low-level questions were once again predominant. On the same interest of research, Yuliawati et al. (2016) delved into the role of teacher's questioning in students' ability to think critically. Through classroom observation, field notes and interview, the results suggested that the teachers frequently asked four out of six levels, and rarely used those targeting at synthesis and evaluation. Contrasting to the teacher's questioning behavior, the interview showed that the students expected more use of high-ordered questions. Besides, the results also indicated the importance of joking as a useful technique in asking difficult questions, in addition to other questioning techniques proposed by Turney, namely structuring, focusing, redirecting, distributing, pausing, teacher reacting, prompting and changing the level of cognitive demand.

In the Vietnamese context, studies in this research area of interest still account for a minority. However, most of the findings align with those conducted elsewhere, highlighting the dominance of low-order questions. According to a study conducted by Ho and To (2022) , most of the teachers made use of a variety of question levels during their lessons, with particular emphasis on those asking students to apply their knowledge. Similarly, (Phuong & Nguyen, 2017) conducted a study on the use of teacher questions in a reading classroom at high school level. The results, obtained from classroom observations showed that low-cognitive questions gained higher level of frequency than high-cognitive questions since most teachers placed greater significance on students' understanding and remembering newly-acquired knowledge. However, it was also interesting to highlight that evaluation questions were asked more regularly than the other high- cognitive questions (2017). (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2023) investigated the effects of questioning as a pre-reading activity on grade 12 students' critical thinking in EFL reading classes. The results obtained from pre-test, post-test, and questionnaires revealed that the use of questions in pre-reading stage can positively affect different aspects of reading performance including level of reading comprehension, synthesis and analysis, and hence foster their critical thinking skills. The interviews showed that students hold positive attitudes toward this pre-reading activity since these questions enable students to activate their prior knowledge, and stimulate their curiosity and interest in reading passages.

Research questions

To fulfill the purpose of this study, two research questions were employed:

1. What are VLU students' perspectives on teachers' use of questions to promote critical thinking in EFL classrooms?
2. What are VLU students' suggestions on promoting the use of high-ordered questions to promote critical thinking?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants.

The study involved the participation of 70 English- majored students at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Van Lang University. The Purposive Sampling technique was utilized to select

relevant participants for the research. After the first year, they had been familiar with the instructional methods at the tertiary level which essentially puts a strong emphasis on learners' learning autonomy, and their active engagement in a lesson to construct knowledge.

Design of the Study

The study primarily employed the quantitative research approach to collect data about the students' perspectives on the use of teacher questions in fostering critical thinking. Regarding the strengths and weakenesses of the research method, it is true that findings from quantitative research may be less detailed due to the pre-designed options for the participants to select, yet this method would enable the researcher to make more accurate generalizations given the huge number of participants. Additionally, the justification for this research method also lends itself to the participants' background. They have neither specialized knowledge about the research topic nor the teaching experiences. Therefore, a list of suggested options would be more suitable in this research context.

The quantitative data from the surveys were processed using SPSS descriptive analysis, version 20. Descriptive statistics like Means and Standard Deviations were used to analyze the participant responses.

Data collection & analysis

For the convenience of collecting data, the Google-form, close-ended questionnaire was designed to collect the participants' views on two research questions. The researcher designed the questionnaire, drawing on the literature review about the strategies of asking questions and the level of questions. To elicit the participants' perception on the use of questions in an EFL classroom, the first part of the questionnaire focused on their views on the importance of developing critical thinking skills for EFL students, the frequency of each level of questions and the use of high-order questions. The five-point Likert scale for importance, frequency and agreement were created for the participants to express viewpoints. The second part aimed to explore their attitude toward a number of given suggestions on how teachers can support students to answer high-order questions. In this part, the participants voiced their opinions through the 5-point Likert scale for usefulness.

Reliability statistics

To ensure internal consistency in the questionnaire, the researcher employed Cronbach's Alpha to evaluate the reliability of the five-point Likert scale used to collect data for two research questions. As the table 1 shows, each section of the survey demonstrated Cronbach's Alpha higher than 0.7, which is an acceptable benchmark for determining response reliability. Specifically, the first section, comprising 6 items has the Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.88. The second highest reliability score is observed for the third variable, which consists of eleven items, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.86. The second variable receives the Cronbach's Alpha of 0.76. Overall, these Cronbach's Alpha results affirm the high reliability of the questionnaire items for the research purposes.

Table 1
Cronbach's Alpha

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	N of items
1. VLU students' perspective on the frequency of using different question types	0.88	6
2. VLU students' perspective on how teachers use high-ordered questions	0.78	6
3. VLU students' perspective on suggestions on how teachers should support students to answer high-ordered questions	0.86	11

Results/Findings

Table 2
VLU students' perspectives on the important of critical thinking skills (N=70)

How important are critical thinking skills for EFL students?	The number of responds (N=70)	Percentages (%)
Not important at all	0	0
Unimportant	0	0
Neutral	3	4.3
Important	10	14.3
Very important	57	81.4

Table 2 reveals the participants' viewpoint on the role of critical thinking skills. As the figures showed, the overwhelming majority of them attached a great significance to the skills, with 81.4% of them claiming its indispensable role. Therefore, it is undeniable that there is a strong demand for developing the ability to think critically among students who major in language acquisition.

Table 3
VLU students' perspectives on frequency of using different question types

Types of questions	Percentage (%)					Mean	SD
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always		
1.Questions which require students to remember prior knowledge to give an answer Ex: What is the past tense of "go" ?	1.4	1.4	18.6	51.4	27.2	3.71	0.97
2.Questions which require students to understand new knowledge to give an answer Ex: What are the differences betwen simple past tense and present perfect?	1.4	1.4	20.1	44.3	32.8	3.72	0.97
3. Questions which require students to apply their new knowledge Ex: Can you use present perfect to make 3 sentences?	0	2.8	22.8	40.2	34.2	3.81	0.98
4.Questions which require students to analyze a topic Ex What is the writer's attitude toward organic food? (students read a passage about organic food?	0	2.8	14.3	42.8	40	3.88	1.01
5.Questions which require students to make an evaluation Ex: Which given suggestions are most practical reduce traffic jams in Ho Chi Minh City?	1.4	4.3	24.3	40	30	3.62	1
6.Questions which require students to create a product Ex: How would you use social media to raise public awareness on an social issue?	4,2	8,5	28,6	31,5	27,2	3.50	1.12

Table 3 shows the participants' view on the frequency of different question types during a lesson. As can be seen, the majority of them believed that teachers should frequently use two types of higher-order questions which focus on analyzing and applying new knowlegde (M=3.88 and 3.81 respectively). Notably , the participants expected the greater use of question types targeting at remembering and understanding new knowledge (M = 3.7) while the opposite viewpoint was observed for those at the other end of the critical thinking spectrum (M < 3.7). Given the findings, the participants could possibly either downgrade the importance of questions focusing on evalutaing and creating ability or they may misunderstand the role of remembering and understanding in fostering critical thinking.

Table 4
VLU students' perspective on the use of high-ordered questions in EFL classrooms

The use of high-ordered questions	Percentage (%)					Mean	SD
	Strongly disagree	disagree	Neutral	agree	Strongly agree		
1. Asking high-ordered questions is time-consuming because most tests use low-level questions.	5.9	5.7	4.2	42.8	41.4	4.02	1.15
2. Asking high-ordered questions can put more pressure on low-level students	15.7	30	20	25.8	8.5	2.90	1.24
3. Asking high-ordered questions make a lesson more interesting	5.7	4.3	2.8	32.9	54.3	4.28	1.09
4.Asking high-ordered questions helps students gain deeper understanding of knowledge	4.3	5.8	11.4	35.7	42.8	4.18	0.95
5. Asking high-ordered questions offers students a chance to use more grammar structures	5.7	5.7	17.1	44.3	27.2	3.82	1.07
6. Asking high-ordered questions give students a chance to learn more new words to express their ideas	4.2	5.7	8.6	38.6	42.9	4.14	1.12

Table 4 indicates how the participants perceive the use of high-ordered questions. On the positive side, over half of the respondents strongly believed that these questions infused a lesson with greater sense of excitement (M=4.28). Nearly 43% of them credited high-ordered questions for their acquisition of new knowledge. By contrast, the majority of the respondents viewed these questions unnecessary due to their low frequency in a test. Notably , contrary to the common assumption that challenging questions may stress low-level students out, many respondents expressed the opposite viewpoint, with the lowest mean score being only 2.9. Given the results, it seems that the respondents may have conflicted attitudes toward the use of high-ordered questions in class. While recognizing the merits, they also questioned its usefulness once the evalution primarily focused on low-level thinking.

Table 5
VLU students'perspectives on how EFL teachers should support answers to high-ordered questions

Suggestions	Percentage (%)					Mean	SD
	Not useful at all	slightly useful	Moderately useful	useful	very useful		
1.Teachers should give students more time to prepare an answer to a difficult question	4.3	8.6	4.2	37.1	45.8	4.14	1.03
2. Teachers should let students discuss in group.	4.2	10	4.3	41.5	40	4.12	0.97
3. Teachers should accept many possible answers.	5.7	11.5	4.3	34.2	44.3	4.07	1.10
4. Teachers should create a comfortable learning environment	5.8	7.1	2.8	20	64.3	4.17	1.14
5. Teachers should consider students' knowledge level when making a difficult question	7.5	24.2	18.5	32.7	17.1	3.05	1.17
6. Teachers should phrase difficult questions based on students' English level.	5.7	5.7	11.4	34.4	42.8	4.02	1.06
7. Teachers should avoid asking series of difficult questions at a time	5.7	2.8	17.1	27.2	47.2	4.04	1.14
8. Teachers should focus on an idea rather than English grammar or vocabulary students use to answer a difficult question	8.7	10%	25.7	37.1	18.5	3.47	1.05
9. Teachers should let students use AI techonologies (such as chat GPT) to search for an answer.	5.8	18.5	34.2	20	21.5	3.32	1.17
10. Teachers should allow students to answer a difficult question in Vietnamese	14.2	14.2	41.4	18.5	11.4	3.01	1.17
11. Teachers should out greater weight on high-ordered questions in a test	14.4	20	11.4	22.8	31.4	3.4	1.4

Table 5 presents the participants' view on different kinds of supports for students to answer high-ordered questions. As can be seen, creating a psychologically- safe environment was highly valued by the overwhelming majority of the respondents (M=4.17). Additionally, preparation time and group discussion were considered no less important as scaffolding for responding to difficult questions (M=4.14 and 4.12, respectively). Regarding less -useful suggestions, giving answers in Vietnamese (M=3.01) astonishingly received not as much respondents' agreement as using chat GPT to search for information (M=3.32). Moreover, giving more weight on difficult questions in a test also saw a divergence on the respondents'

opinions, with half of them supporting it and the other doubting about its usefulness. In light of the results, although it appears that most of the suggestions are favored by the respondents, they may be confused about the benefits of each support given their conflicted viewpoints.

Discussion

The study sets aim to delve into how students at Van Lang University view the use of questions to develop critical thinking in EFL classrooms. In this regard, two research questions were employed to elicit relevant opinion from 70 students. Drawn on the findings section, the discussion section provides an interpretation of data and implication for the study

Question 1: What are VLU students' perspectives on EFL teachers' use of questions to promote critical thinking?

It is not surprising that the majority of the students (over 80%) highly value the crucial role of critical thinking skills. Therefore, fostering these skills is not only aligned with the 21st century learning skills, but also fulfills the students' great needs.

In terms of the frequency, most of the students generally expected the frequent use of various questions types ranging from easy to cognitively-challenging ones, with no question types receiving the mean score lower than 3.5. Notably, the students largely agreed that greater frequency should be given to questions designed to develop the first four levels of thinking skills, namely: remembering, understanding, applying and analyzing. The preference for these question types could possibly lend itself to the fact that EFL teachers tended to prioritize them. The assumption was supported by a number of previous studies both in local context and elsewhere, and they which consistently pointed out their dominance over questions targeting at evaluating and creating skills (Ho & To, 2022; Khan & Inamullah, 2011; Kurihara, 2017; Phuong & Nguyen, 2017). Another interesting point worth mentioning is the students' high expectation on the regular use of analysis questions (M=88), but these high-cognitive questions were normally underused by teachers, according to previous studies (Ho & To, 2022; Khan & Inamullah, 2011; Kurihara, 2017; Phuong & Nguyen, 2017). In this regard, new generation of students may not prefer playing safe but rather challenging themselves cognitively; hence teachers should spare more room for this question type during classroom interaction.

Question 2: What are VLU students' perspectives on promoting the use of high-ordered questions to promote critical thinking?

As for the participants' view on the use of high-ordered questions, the attitudes were mostly positive. Specifically, they strongly believed that high-cognitive questions were critical for exciting a lesson, deepening their comprehension and facilitating their vocabulary learning (M=4.28, 4.18 and 4.14, respectively). While this perspective on high-ordered questions is not new, as it is consistent with what found in the studies by Nguyen & Nguyen (2023) and Yuliawati et al. (2016), this finding notably brought many new features to the table. Firstly, the result revealed the main reasons why the participants found difficult questions interesting. Secondly, even though acknowledging the benefits, they also questioned the usefulness of high-ordered questions since application is usually the highest cognitive challenge in most

assessments. Therefore, it appears that the teach-to-test method still gets in the way of positive teaching and learning changes.

Regarding the participants' perspectives on teachers' support, creating a psychologically safe environment was the most-anticipated support (M=4.17). Theoretically, this anticipation reflects the "affective filters hypothesis" (Stephen Krashen,1981), highlighting the profound impact of learning environment on learning and teaching. Additionally, the strong preference for this support may explain why the teacher previously praised "joking" as one of the useful techniques dealing with difficult questions, according to the study by (Yuliawati et al., 2016) .

In addition, preparation time and group discussion were well-received, with mean scores being 4.14 and 4.12, respectively. Theoretically supported by Orlich, Harder, Callahan, Trevisan, & Brown (2010), wait time has found itself support from previous studies as an effective scaffolding (Kurniawati & Fitriati, 2017; Yuliawati et al., 2016), yet group discussion also deserves teachers' attention from now on. Another suggestion perceived as useful was appropriately phrasing difficult questions (M=4.02), which was also the underlying reason for the unsuccessful use of high-ordered questions in the study by Shen (2012). Interestingly, the participants did not value the idea of using Vietnamese to answer difficult questions (M=3.05) as they credited answering high-cognitive questions for the improvement of not only critical thinking but also vocabulary expansion (M= 14). It would be shortsighted if we neglected the participants' conflicted view on the use of high-ordered question in test. Considering these questions a waste of time due to the low occurrence in a test (N=4.02), yet half of the participants were reluctant to give more weight for testing them (N=4).

Conclusion

The purpose of this quantitative study is to explore VLU students' perspectives on how teachers use different question types to develop critical thinking. The result demonstrated that most of the participants viewed the ability to think critically as indispensable in this day and age. Specifically, they expected the greater use of high-ordered questions for more interesting lessons, deeper understanding and wider vocabulary expansion. In this light, the decision to prioritize low-ordered questions hardly pleases the hearts of the students. Therefore, teachers should create more opportunities for high-ordered questions, especially those targeting at analyzing, evaluating and creating skills to thrive during classroom interaction.

In addition, the findings also suggest a number of supports for high-cognitive questions. For difficult questions typically entailing a risk of wrong answers, psychological aspects should be taken into account, first and foremost. In this regard, creating a comfortable learning environment, having group discussions, and having appropriate preparation time were considered most useful by the participants. Secondly, consideration should be given to the language teachers use to make a difficult question and too many challenging questions can backfire. Therefore, these questions should contain familiar words and share a fair space with low-ordered questions. Finally, the students also have different viewpoints on the use of chat GPT and Vietnamese. The former were well-received, whereas more opposition was found for the latter.

Limitation

The current study still holds worth-mentioning constraint. The results can not provide a strong generalization for the viewpoints of all the students at Van Lang University on the research topic, given the sample only consisting of 70 students who were majored in English learning.

Recommendation

Despite the limited number of the participants, the findings indicate a predominantely positive attitudes of students toward the use of high-ordered questions. In this regard, teachers who share the same interest in promoting students' critical thinking through classroom questions should put more emphasis on the high-cognitive ones. Furthermore, how the studens view each support for answering difficult questions could lend a hand for teachers to consider which suggestions are appropriate for their teaching context. Finally, further empirical research on these suggestions will defintely bring insight into the strength and challenges once being implemented in various teaching and learning contexts.

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