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VOICES BEHIND THE QUESTIONS: EXPLORING HOW EXPERIENCED AND NOVICE EFL TEACHERS USE QUESTIONING TO ENGAGE LEARNERS

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Abstract: In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, teachers' questioning skills play a crucial role in fostering classroom interaction and promoting students' critical thinking. Effective questioning strategies not only reflect teachers' pedagogical competence but also determine the extent of students' engagement in the learning process. This study aims to analyze the use of questioning strategies among English teachers based on their teaching experience and students' perceptions in EFL classrooms. Employing a descriptive quantitative approach, data were collected through classroom observations and student questionnaires. The participants consisted of six senior high school English teachers (three experienced and three less experienced) and 180 eleventh-grade students from SMAN 6, SMAN 7, and SMAN 10 Padang. The observational data were analyzed using (Niza, 2024; Rahayu & Suharti, 2023) indicators of questioning strategies, namely structuring, phrasing, focusing, re-directing, distributing, pausing, reacting, prompting, changing, and probing. The findings reveal that teachers employed a variety of strategies to enhance interaction and critical thinking among students. The highest strategy used by less and experienced teacher was distributing strategy. Experienced teachers used 44 times (57%), while less experienced teachers used 33 times (43%), indicating a 11 times difference in effectiveness. Furthermore, questionnaire results indicated that students held positive perceptions of teachers' questioning strategies, with an overall percentage 94% (agree). The highest-rated aspects were engagement and motivation, whereas wait time and distribution of questions received lower percentage. Overall, this study underscores the pivotal role of questioning strategies in creating interactive, reflective, and critical-thinking-oriented learning environments in EFL classrooms.
Keywords: *questioning strategies; teaching experience; students' perceptions; EFL classroom.*

INTRODUCTION

Questioning is one of the most powerful pedagogical tools in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. Through questioning, teachers not only assess comprehension but also facilitate communication, stimulate critical thinking, and guide learners toward deeper understanding (Aeni & Ariyani, 2025; Fatmawati et al., 2020; He, 2025; Pan, 2026; Pan et al., 2024; Rahman et al., 2024; Sun, 2024). In interactive language classrooms, effective questioning creates opportunities for students to participate actively and construct meaning through dialogue. It serves as both a linguistic and cognitive scaffold, bridging the gap between teacher input and learner output (Nashruddin & Ningtyas, 2020).

However, the effectiveness of questioning depends greatly on the teacher's competence, awareness, and teaching experience. Previous studies (Artini et al., 2025; Shiau et al., 2024) have shown that experienced teachers tend to use questions more strategically, with greater control of wait time, more varied questioning types, and a stronger orientation toward fostering interaction. In contrast, novice teachers often rely on display questions that test knowledge rather than promote thinking (Hamdan et al., 2024; Pattison-Meek, 2024). While these studies have enriched our understanding of teacher questioning behavior, they primarily focus on the types or functions of questions, leaving a gap in the literature regarding how teaching experience shapes the intentional use

of questioning strategies as tools for engagement in real classroom contexts.

In Indonesia's EFL context, classroom interaction remains largely teacher-dominated, with students often hesitant to speak or respond spontaneously in English (Kholisoh & Bharati, 2021; Nasir & Hossain, 2024; Ode et al., 2025; Peng, 2024; Putri et al., 2026; Zhou, 2024). Teachers' questions thus play a crucial role in breaking this silence and stimulating participation. Yet, despite the centrality of questioning in the local curriculum and teacher professional standards, few studies in the Indonesian context have explored the voices, beliefs, and strategic differences between experienced and novice EFL teachers in using questioning to engage learners. Addressing this gap is essential for understanding how teachers' professional experience influences their classroom discourse practices and, ultimately, student engagement.

The present study was conducted at three public senior high schools in Padang, Indonesia: SMAN 6, SMAN 7, and SMAN 10 Padang, where English is taught as a compulsory subject under the national curriculum. These schools were chosen because they represent varied teaching experiences within comparable instructional contexts. By examining classroom questioning among teachers with different levels of experience, this study seeks to capture how professional growth translates into practical pedagogical choices in authentic EFL classrooms.

The purpose of this study is therefore to explore how experienced and novice EFL teachers use questioning strategies to engage learners during classroom interaction. It aims to identify the types of questioning strategies applied, examine how they differ across levels of teaching experience, and interpret what these differences reveal about teachers' pedagogical awareness and classroom decision-making.

Based on this purpose, the study is guided by the following research questions: (1) What types of questioning strategies are used by experienced and novice EFL teachers in classroom interaction? (2) How does teaching experience influence the use and variety of questioning strategies in the EFL classroom? (3) In what ways do questioning practices reflect teachers' awareness and pedagogical intentions in engaging learners?

By addressing these questions, this study contributes to the understanding of how teacher experience and questioning competence interact in shaping classroom discourse. The findings are expected to provide pedagogical insights for teacher education and professional development, particularly in helping novice teachers develop reflective and interactive questioning skills that promote active learning in EFL contexts.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design aimed at exploring how experienced and novice EFL teachers use questioning strategies to engage learners during classroom interaction. The quantitative approach was chosen because it allows for a detailed and contextual understanding of teachers' instructional behaviors and their underlying pedagogical reasoning (DeJonckheere et al., 2024). Rather than quantifying the frequency of questions, this study focused on interpreting how questions were used, adapted, and responded to in authentic classroom settings.

The descriptive design enabled the researcher to document the natural occurrence of questioning practices without experimental manipulation, thus capturing the authentic patterns of teacher-student interaction. The primary objective was to describe and compare the types of questioning strategies used by both experienced and novice teachers as they occurred in real teaching contexts.

Data were gathered through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews to gain both behavioral and reflective insights into teachers' questioning practices. Observations were conducted to identify and categorize questioning strategies, while interviews explored the teachers' reflections and intentions behind their questioning choices. The use of semi -structured interviews was appropriate because this type of interview allows researchers to obtain detailed accounts of participants' experiences while maintaining a consistent focus across interviews (Do Carmo et al., 2024; Silva & Barros, 2024).

The analysis followed framework of ten questioning strategies (structuring, phrasing, focusing, redirecting, distributing, pausing, prompting, reacting, changing, and probing). These categories provided a systematic lens through which the questioning behaviors of both groups could be compared (Aeni & Ariyani, 2025; Astrid et al., 2019; Niza, 2024; Rahayu & Suharti, 2023).

By using a descriptive quantitative design, this study sought to capture the richness and complexity of classroom questioning, emphasizing how teaching experience influences the way teachers structure their questions, manage classroom discourse, and engage learners in

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English language learning.

This study was conducted at three public senior high schools in Padang, West Sumatra, Indonesia: SMAN 6 Padang, SMAN 7 Padang, and SMAN 10 Padang. These schools were selected because they share similar English curriculum standards yet have teachers with varied levels of teaching experience. The participants consisted of six English teachers, comprising three experienced teachers with more than ten years of teaching experience and professional certification, and three novice teachers with less than three years of teaching experience. All participants taught Grade XI students during the 2024/2025 academic year, with class sizes ranging from 30 to 35 learners. The selection was based on purposive sampling to ensure diversity in teaching experience while maintaining comparable teaching contexts. Each teacher's classroom was observed twice, and follow-up semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain deeper insights into their questioning strategies and pedagogical reflections.

Data Collection and Instruments

The data for this study were collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews to obtain both behavioral and reflective evidence of teachers' questioning strategies. Classroom observations were conducted twice for each teacher, with each session lasting approximately 90 minutes. During the observations, the researcher used an observation checklist adapted from (Aeni & Ariyani, 2025; Astrid et al., 2019; Niza, 2024; Rahayu & Suharti, 2023) framework of questioning strategies, which includes structuring, phrasing, focusing, redirecting, distributing, pausing, prompting, reacting, changing, and probing. The checklist helped identify the frequency and variety of questioning strategies used by both experienced and novice teachers in natural classroom contexts (Woreta Haile et al., 2024).

To complement the observational data, semi-structured interviews were carried out with all six teachers after the classroom sessions. The interview questions aimed to explore the teachers' reasoning, awareness, and reflections behind their use of particular questioning strategies. Each interview lasted around 30–45 minutes and was conducted in a mix of English and Bahasa Indonesia to ensure clarity and depth of response. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for thematic analysis (DeJonckheere et al., 2024; Kiger & Varpio, 2020) (Do Carmo et al., 2024; Silva & Barros, 2024).

Both instruments—classroom observation and interview—were piloted with one non-participating teacher to ensure clarity and reliability. The use of multiple instruments provided data triangulation, enhancing the credibility and validity of the findings.

The collected data were analyzed using quantitative thematic analysis to identify patterns in the use of questioning strategies among experienced and novice teachers. The analysis followed three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, as proposed by DeJonckheere et al. (2024).

During data reduction, observation notes and interview transcripts were carefully reviewed to select relevant segments related to teachers' questioning behaviors, such as how questions were phrased, sequenced, and responded to. These data were then coded by Astrid et al. (2019), supplemented by the questioning-strategy frameworks of Niza (2024) and Rahayu and Suharti (2023) namely structuring, phrasing, focusing, redirecting, distributing, pausing, prompting, reacting, changing, and probing.

In the second stage, data display was carried out by organizing coded data into tables and descriptive summaries, allowing for comparison between experienced and novice teachers. Patterns and contrasts in questioning frequency, purpose, and effectiveness were highlighted to capture the teachers' pedagogical tendencies. Finally, conclusion drawing and verification were conducted to interpret the findings and link them to theoretical perspectives on teacher cognition and classroom interaction.

To enhance trustworthiness, the researcher applied triangulation by comparing observation and interview results, conducted member checking to validate the interpretations with participants, and maintained a research diary to record analytical reflections throughout the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are based on data collected from classroom observations and semi-structured interviews involving three experienced and three novice EFL teachers from public senior high schools in Padang, Indonesia. The analysis revealed significant differences in the variety, purpose, and awareness of questioning strategies used by the two groups. The results are presented in two main parts: (1) findings from classroom observations and (2) insights from teacher interviews.

The classroom observations revealed that both experienced and novice teachers frequently used

questioning as a core component of their instructional routines; however, the range and depth of questioning strategies differed noticeably. Using the questioning-strategy framework proposed by Astrid et al. (2019), with support from Niza (2024) and Rahayu and Suharti (2023), ten types of questioning strategies were identified (Putri & Trisanti, 2025): structuring, phrasing, focusing, redirecting, distributing, pausing, prompting, reacting, changing and probing.

Experienced teachers demonstrated more deliberate and flexible use of these strategies. They frequently employed distributing and phrasing to extend students' responses and stimulate critical thinking. For example, when students provided short or incomplete answers, experienced teachers followed up with questions such as "Can you explain why?" or "What do you think will happen next?", which encouraged elaboration and reasoning. They also practiced effective, giving students sufficient wait time before expecting an answer—an average of 3–5 seconds—allowing learners to process the question and formulate a response. Similar attention to questioning variation and wait time has been identified in previous research on teacher questioning (Kater, 2024; Niza, 2024; Shiau et al., 2024; Yahya & Kaniadewi, 2024).

In contrast, novice teachers tended to rely heavily on display questions and demonstrated limited variation in questioning types. Their questions often focused on factual recall (e.g., vocabulary meaning or grammar rules) and were typically followed by immediate evaluation without additional scaffolding. Observation data also indicated that novice teachers provided shorter wait times and fewer follow-up prompts, often moving quickly to the next question. The use of redirecting and distributing strategies was minimal, resulting in limited classroom interaction dominated by teacher talk (Astrid et al., 2019; He, 2025; Ode et al., 2025; Rahman et al., 2024)

A comparative summary of observed frequencies showed that experienced teachers used *probing* and *prompting* questions approximately two to three times more frequently than novice teachers, while *pausing* and *redirecting* strategies were also considerably higher among experienced teachers. These results indicate that teaching experience enhances not only the quantity but also the quality of questioning strategies, enabling teachers to engage students cognitively and emotionally during classroom interaction.

The data obtained from classroom observations and transcripts revealed that all six EFL teachers: three less experienced teachers and three experienced teachers, used various questioning strategies during classroom interactions. However, there were significant differences in both the frequency and quality of these strategies. The analysis was based on ten types of questioning strategies identified by (Aeni & Ariyani, 2025; Astrid et al., 2019; Niza, 2024; Nuryanti et al., 2024): structuring (ST), phrasing (PH), focusing (FC), re-directing (RD), distributing (DT), pausing (PS), reacting (RC), prompting (PR), changing (CH), and probing (PB).

Structuring refers to the teacher's ability to organize questions that guide students to understand the objectives and flow of the lesson (Astrid et al., 2019; Niza, 2024; Nuryanti et al., 2024; Syaripudin, 2025). It helps students connect prior knowledge with new material. T1 demonstrates the lowest usage with frequency of 1 occurrence, while T6 with frequency of 4 occurrence. T2 and T3 used structuring strategy 2 times, while T4 and T5 reported a frequency of 3 times. The frequency appears relatively low, as the highest number of uses by any teacher is only four times. However, this may be because this type of strategy is typically applied at the beginning of class or lesson. For instance, in the transcript experienced teacher began the lesson with:

> Teacher: "This afternoon we are going to continue our lesson about hortatory exposition. Okay, do you still remember about the lesson??"
> Student A: "yes we still mam"
> Teacher: "What do you still remember?"
> Student B: "the generic structure mam"
> Teacher: "nah yaa, what is the generic structure of hortatory exposition?

The teacher used a structuring question to recall previous material and connect it to the new topic. This approach not only activates prior knowledge but also establishes a logical flow for the lesson. The teacher's opening question served as a cognitive bridge, guiding students toward the day's objective. The experienced teacher, demonstrating a clear awareness of lesson coherence and progression, ensuring students understand the learning focus from the beginning.

Additionally, the less experience teacher typically introduces topics as:

> Teacher: "What is our topic in the previous meeting? What we have learnt before? What is our topic in the previous meeting? Sebelumnya kita belajar tentang apa?"

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Student A: "I'm not sure ms"
Teacher: "okay, today we continue the lesson about hope and wish."

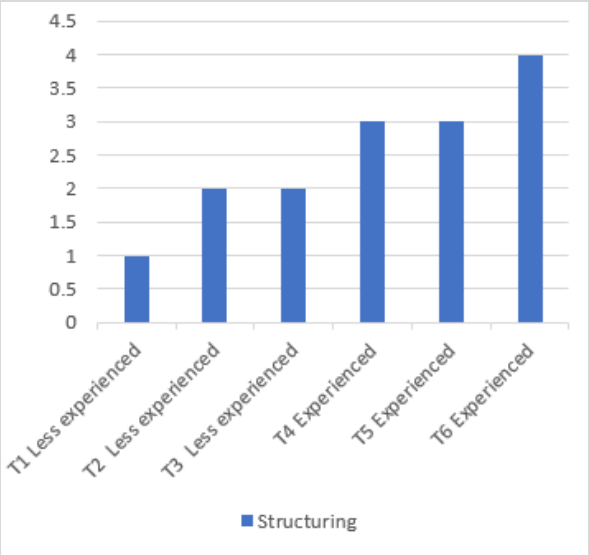


Figure 1. *Percentage of two groups of teachers in using the structuring strategy*

Phrasing

Phrasing focuses on how teachers formulate and express questions clearly and unambiguously. Well-phrased questions avoid confusion and allow students to respond accurately (Niza, 2024; Rahayu & Suharti, 2023; Woreta Haile et al., 2024). Among the six teachers, T5 demonstrates the highest frequency of phrasing strategy use at 14 times, indicating a greater reliance on this strategy compared to the others. This may suggest that T5 places stronger emphasis on clarifying, rewording, or simplifying instructional language to support student understanding. In contrast, T1&T2 shows the lowest frequency at 6 times, implying relatively less frequent use of phrasing strategies in their teaching practice.

The remaining teachers T6 (10 times), T4 (11 times) and T3 (9 times) display moderate levels of phrasing strategy use. These figures show a very balance distribution, with the exception of a slight fluctuation at the top T5 and bottom T2&T1.

Overall, the findings suggest that while all teachers incorporate phrasing strategies in their classroom, the extent of use varies. This variation may be influenced by factors such as teaching experience, individual teaching style, or awareness of the importance of language clarity in facilitating student comprehension. For instance, an experienced teacher phrased a question as:

Teacher: "so can you mention? can you give example to your classmate here, how to save your money? If your parents, give you money"

The teacher's phrasing is simple, direct, and logically sequenced. By starting with *'Can you mention…'* and following up with *'can you give example to your classmate…'*, the teacher guides students from factual recall to interpretive reasoning. The use of clear and concise language prevents misunderstanding and encourages participation. This shows high phrasing awareness, typical of experienced teachers who can adjust language complexity to students' proficiency level.

The teacher's phrasing is grammatically clear, which may not confuse students. The question was well-structured, leading to maximal response and a brief, surface-level exchange. In EFL classrooms, phrasing can hinder comprehension and reduce the opportunity for meaningful interaction.

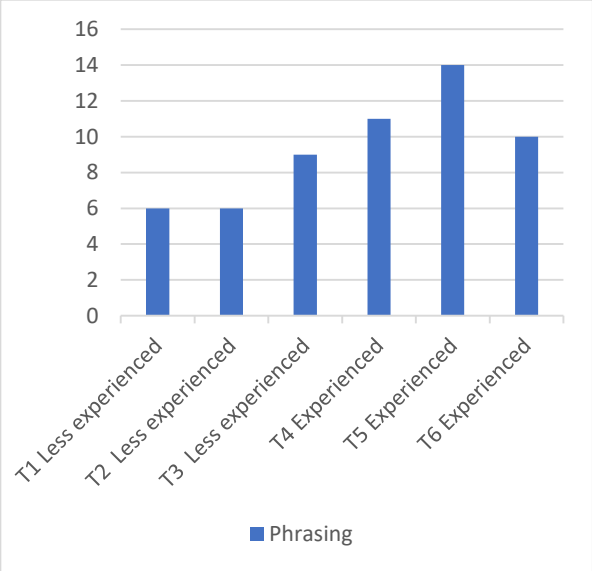


Figure 2. *Comparison of two groups of teachers in using the phrasing strategy*

Focusing

Focusing involves directing students' attention to a specific topic or aspect of the discussion. It helps narrow down broad topics into more manageable parts (Syaripudin, 2025). The highest frequency was recorder by T5 with 10 occurrences, followed by T2 with 5 occurrences. However, even these figures do not indicate a dominant or consistent integration of the focusing strategy in classroom practice (Astrid et al., 2019; Niza, 2024).

On the other hand, several teachers demonstrated minimal engagement with the strategy. T3 for instance, applied the focusing strategy only once, while T1 and T4 also showed limited use, with 2 and 4 occurrences respectively.

Such low frequencies suggest that the focusing strategy is not yet a central component of instructional practice for these teachers.

Furthermore, the inconsistency in percentages and frequencies across participants indicates a lack of standardized implementation. This may point to differences in teacher's understanding of the focusing strategy, insufficient training, or varying levels of pedagogical competence. It also raises concern about the effectiveness of instructional guidance or professional development programs related to this strategy. For example, the used of focusing strategy by teachers:

Teacher: "social function nya apa tu? Persuade. apa itu persuade? Persuade artinya apa?
Student 1: "Mengajak"
Student 2: "meyakinkan"
Student 3: "membujuk"
Teacher: "so we want to persuade someone, kita ingin meyakinkan seseorang. if we want to persuade someone, of course we have to give? What we have to give?"

The teacher used focusing strategy to narrow a broad theme into a manageable, specific subtopic. This structured guidance helps maintain classroom direction and enables students to engage deeply with one aspect of the issue. The teacher's strategic use of focusing indicates clear lesson management and cognitive scaffolding, characteristics often found in experienced teachers.

Besides, less experienced teacher asked:

Student: "Hallo everybody, let me introduce myself. My name is Muhammad Yusuf Mahendra and I will my answer of the question number one. Which picture best describe the place where you live"
Student: "picture that describe where I live is point C"
Teacher: "can you say why? the reason why you choose point C"

The students try to answer the question by "picture that describe where I love is point C", teacher try focusing the answer to know the reason of that point "C" and asked the question *"Can you say why?"* to make it specific, causing students to respond with simple, general answers.

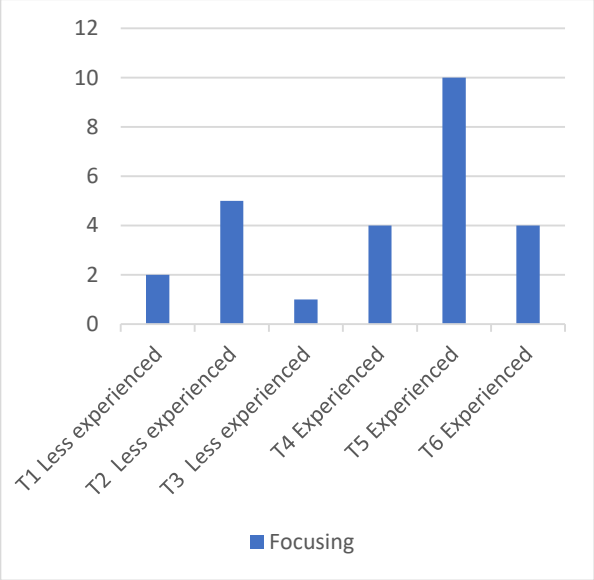


Figure 3. *Comparison of two groups of teachers in using the focusing strategy*

Re-directing

Re-directing occurs when a teacher repeats or rephrases a question and directs it to another student, particularly when the initial student does not respond. This encourages wider participation (Niza, 2024; Putri & Trisanti, 2025; Rahayu & Suharti, 2023). At first, the relatively high frequencies across all teacher-particularly T5 with 11 occurrences and T3 with 10 occurrences – may suggest that the re-directing strategy is well-integrated into classroom practices. However, a deeper examination indicates that his frequent use may not necessarily reflect effective pedagogical practice. Experienced teacher used "re-directing" to involve more students, such as:

Teacher: "okay, thesis. What does it mean thesis? Apa maksudnya thesis?"
Student: "introduction"
Teacher: "selain thesis as an introduction apa satu lagi Lani?
Lani: "selain introduction ada menjelaskan topic mam
Teacher: "okay menjelaskan topic. Jadi thesis ini sama dengan topik yang mau kita bahas untuk meyakinkan orang. Bisa ga judul ini kita jadikan topik? Apa bisa rahma? Bisa ga kita menjadikannya topik?"

The teacher demonstrated effective re-directing by maintaining the same question but assigning it to another student instead of answering it themselves. As this case in the conversation above teacher asked the question by "*What does it mean thesis?"* it is randomly answer by student, then teacher re-direct the question by mentioning the

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name of student *"Selain thesis as an introduction apa satu lagi Lani"* and the next teacher re-direct the question to "Bisa ga judul ini kita jadikan topik? Apa bisa Rahma?" This sustained class engagement and encouraged participation from multiple students. Such skill indicates flexibility and awareness of how to handle silence productively.

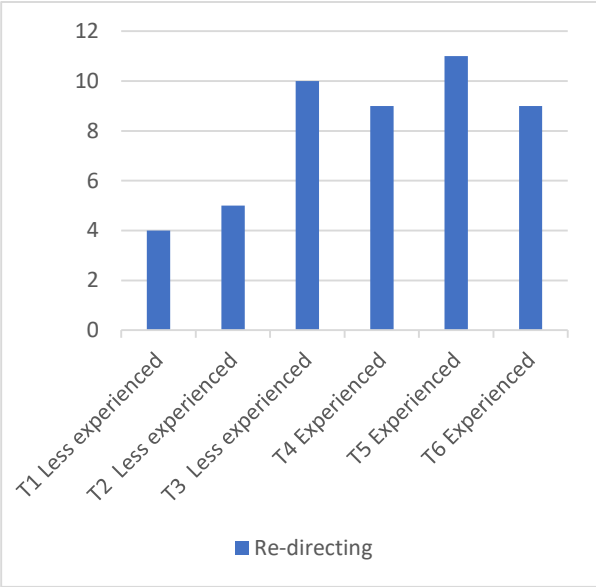


Figure 4. *Comparison of two groups of teachers in using the re-directing strategy*

Distributing

Distributing refers to spreading questions evenly among students rather than focusing on a few active ones. It promotes equitable participation in class (Putri et al., 2026; Zhou, 2024) (Aeni & Ariyani, 2025; Putri et al., 2026; Zhou, 2024). The results might indicate that all teachers actively and broadly use the distributing strategy, the high frequency may indicate that teachers often give students chances to participate. This does not always mean it is used effectively while the distributing strategy is commonly used, it may be overused without strong support from other strategies. Therefore, teachers need to use this strategy more carefully and combine it with other strategies to support better learning. For example, Experienced teacher spread questions evenly, as in:

> Teacher: "okay by reading, contohnya reading is important because of several reason. Membaca sangat penting karna ada beberapa alasan. Alasan yang pertama, itu nanti kita sebut dengan , kita sebut dengan apa?
> Student: "arguments"
> Teacher: "nah itu nanti kita sebut dengan argument 1, contohnya apa? by reading, we can get knowledge. Dengan membaca kita bisa mendapatkan ilmu pengetahuan. Itu alasan argument yang pertama. Argument keduanya nanti kalian kasih ini kan kalimat intinya ni, lalu nanti kalian kasi kalimat penjelas. Ya kan? Udah jadi dia satu paragraph. Udah jadi dia paragraph 2, yang kita sebut dengan argument.?"

The teacher distributed questions among several students *"kita sebut denga n apa?"* ensuring that each had an opportunity to speak "*arguments"*. This approach created an equitable and engaging classroom environment. It demonstrates a strong awareness of student participation balance.

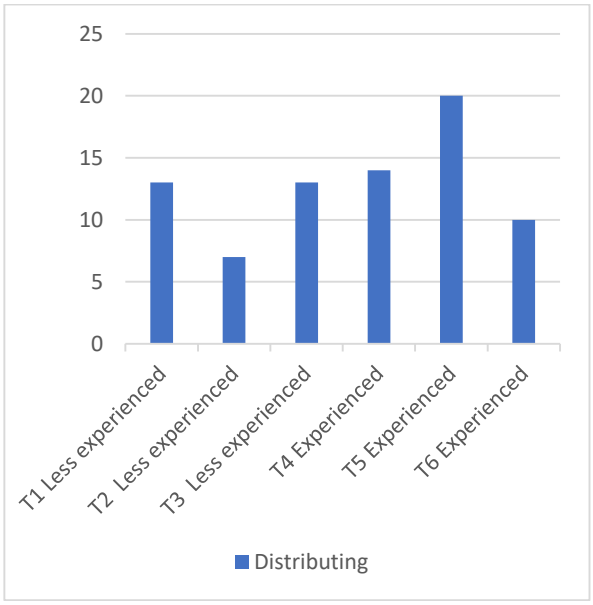


Figure 5. *Comparison of two groups of teachers in using the distributing strategy*

Pausing (wait time)

Pausing, also known as wait time, is the teacher's deliberate silence after asking a question, allowing students to think before answering (Kater, 2024; Shiau et al., 2024). The low frequency suggests that the pausing strategy is not commonly used in classroom interaction. This is important because pausing gives students time to think before responding without enough wait-time, students may not have the opportunity to develop their answer properly (Kater, 2024; Peng, 2024; Shiau et al., 2024).

In addition, the small differences among teachers indicate that most of them use pausing in a similar but limited way. This may show a lack of awareness or understanding of the importance of

wait-time in supporting student thinking.

Overall, the findings suggest that the pausing strategy is underused. As a result, student may have fewer chances to think critically and respond more effectively. Therefore, teachers need to pay more attention to using pauses during questioning to improve quality of classroom interaction and student learning. The example of pausing strategy used, such as:

Teacher: "nah, itu disebut dengan modal verb. Selain dari should apa lagi yang ada? (teacher wait for 5 second)"
Student 1 "should"
Student 2:"should atau should not"

The teacher used a deliberate pause to give students sufficient time to think, leading to a meaningful response. The extended wait time encouraged reflective answers and demonstrated patience and confidence in managing silence. As in the case of conversation above more students have time think the answer and give their response to the teacher's question.

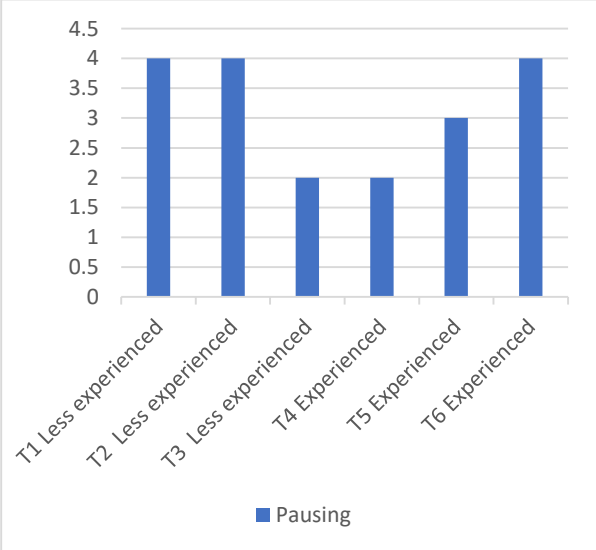


Figure 5. *Comparison of two groups of teachers in using the pausing strategy*

Reacting

Reacting is how teachers respond to students' answers, either verbally (e.g., praise, clarification) or nonverbally (e.g., nodding, smiling) (Dalia & Putra, 2024; Jwa, 2025; Myers & Buchanan, 2025; Zhang et al., 2024). The low frequency indicates that the reacting strategy is not widely used in classroom interaction. This is a concern because reacting is important for giving feedback, encouraging students and responding to their answers. Without enough reaction from teacher, student may not know whether their responses are correct or how to improve them (Niza, 2024; Rahayu & Suharti, 2023).

Overall, the reacting strategy appears to be underused. This may limit students' motivation and understanding, as teachers' feedback plays an important role in the learning process. Therefore, teachers need to increase and improve their use of reacting strategies to support more effective classroom interaction. Teacher provided elaborative feedback, such as:

Teacher: "Silahkan. Oke, kita ada Siti. Right, siti please…"
Student: "I ever visit to Singapore with my mom and dad"
Teacher: "Waw, you also travelling to another country?"

The teacher responded with positive reinforcement ("Waww!") and followed up with an encouraging question. This reacting strategy validated the student's response and maintained active engagement. It also showed that feedback was used to deepen learning rather than merely evaluate correctness.

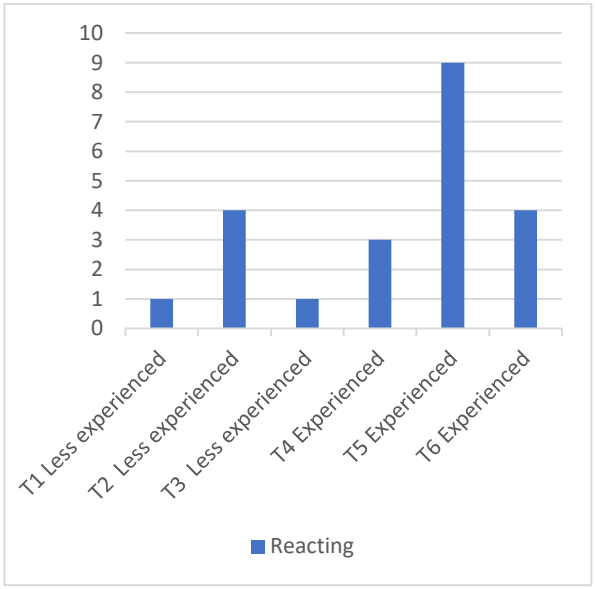


Figure 6. *Comparison of two groups of teachers in using the reacting strategy*

Prompting

Prompting involves giving clues or hints to help students recall or construct answers when they struggle (Alghamdi, 2025). The low frequency suggests that prompting is not commonly applied by teachers during instruction. This is important because prompting helps guide students to think more deeply and supports them in developing their

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answers. Without sufficient prompting, students may struggle to expand or improve their responses during classroom interaction (Astrid et al., 2019; Niza, 2024).

Overall, the findings show that the prompting strategy is underused in classroom practice. This may reduce opportunities for students to think critically and develop more complete answers. Therefore, teachers should improve their use of prompting to support better student engagement and learning quality.

For example, a teacher gave clues when students hesitated, e.g.,

Teacher: "let's do together cemetry yang E kemana?"
(*Student hesitates)*
Student: "Cemetery?"
Teacher: "yaa, do you know cemetry? It is kind of noun ya."

The teacher provided a subtle prompt by directing attention to textual evidence *"It is kind of noun"*. This guided the student toward discovering the answer independently. The strategy reflects deep pedagogical awareness of scaffolding and learner support.

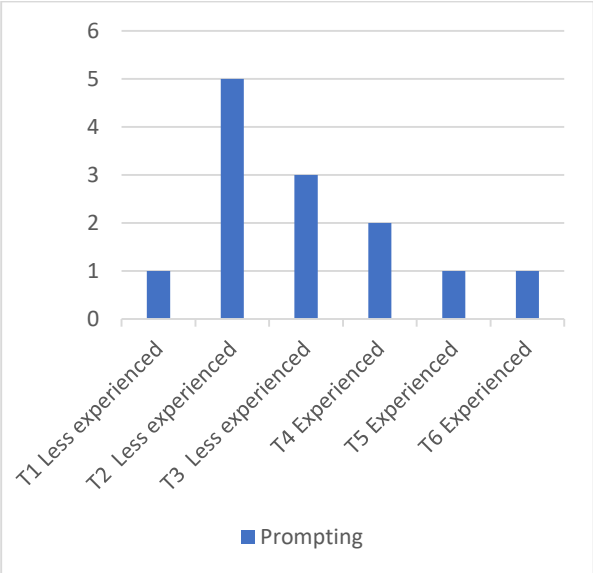


Figure 7. *Comparison of two groups of teachers in using the prompting strategy*

Changing

Changing refers to the teacher's ability to modify question types, from factual or recall-based to analytical and evaluative, to stimulate higher-order thinking (AlBadi et al., 2025; Baddane, 2025; Barseghyan & Hovakimyan, 2024; Niza, 2024; Paudel, 2025).

The very low frequency indicates that the changing strategy is rarely applied in classroom interaction. This suggests that most teachers do not often shift or modify their questioning or teaching direction during lessons. As a result, classroom interaction may become less flexible and responsive to students' needs or unexpected answers.

Overall, the findings show that the changing strategy is underused and not consistently applied. This may limit the flexibility of teaching and reduce opportunities for more dynamic classroom interaction. Therefore, teachers should improve their ability to adjust and vary their strategies to support more effective and responsive teaching.

Teacher skillfully shifted from factual to inferential questions, for example:

Teacher: "What is recommendation?"
Student 1: "Kesimpulan"
Student 2: "Saran"
Teacher: "apa kemaren bedanya analytical dengan hortatory? Yang namannya recommendation itu rekomendasi bahasa kita, kamu harus begini. Kamu harus begini. Kamu tidak boleh begini kamu harus begitu tidak boleh begitu. Itu namanya rekomendasi, nah kira-kira rekomendasinya apa nih?"

The teacher smoothly changed from a factual (what) question "What is recommendation?" then teacher move to "apa bedanya analytical dengan hortatory" and move to another This reflects the teacher's ability to scaffold critical thinking progressively, following Bloom's Taxonomy (Larsen et al., 2022).

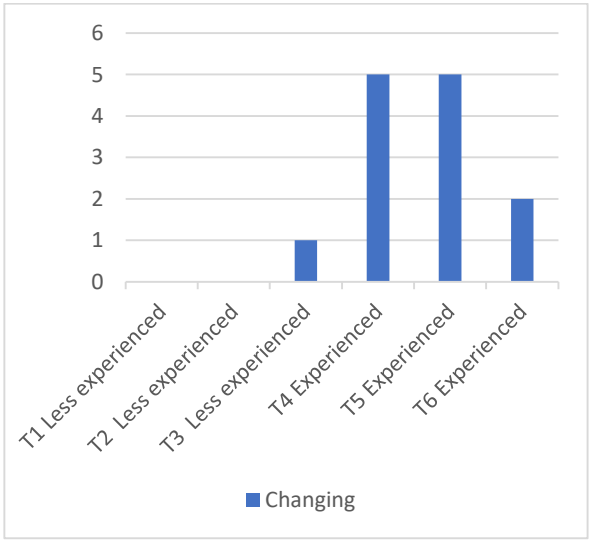


Figure 8. *Comparison of two groups of teachers in using the changing strategy*

Probing

Probing refers to asking follow-up questions that encourage students to elaborate or justify their answers (Anjali & Viju, 2025). The findings that the probing strategy is used more by certain teachers, particularly T5, while most teachers apply it at a relatively low level. This suggests that probing is not consistently integrated into classroom questioning practices. Since probing is important for encouraging students to explain, clarify and expand their answers, limited use of this strategy may reduce opportunities for deeper student thinking (Aeni & Ariyani, 2025; Alghamdi, 2025; Anjali & Viju, 2025; Rahayu & Suharti, 2023).

In addition, the variation among teachers reflects differences in instructional skill and questioning strategy. Some teachers appear more capable of extending student responses through follow-up questions, while others may stop at initial answers without further exploration.

Overall, although the probing strategy is used in all classrooms, its application is uneven and generally limited. This indicates a need for teachers to strengthen their use of probing in order to promote more critical thinking and deeper classroom interaction. Probing was common among teachers who asked follow-up questions like:

> Teacher: "Ola do you know opinion is?"
> Student: "pendapat?"
> Teacher: "di pendapat apa aja kita bisa tanya oh, pendapat apa aja??"
> Student: "pemikiran orang lain ms."
> Teacher: "pemikiran orang lain kan? People's idea. Perspective orang, tiap-tiap orang pasti punya pendapatnya masing-masing. Biasanya kalau didalam asking and giving opinion, kita akan membandingkan opini kita sendiri dengan opini orang lain. Isn't it?"

The teacher used consecutive *probing* questions to deepen the student's reasoning, the interaction moved from *"do you know opinion is"* to *"pendapat apa aja?"* following up the question to *"pemikiran orang lain kan?"*

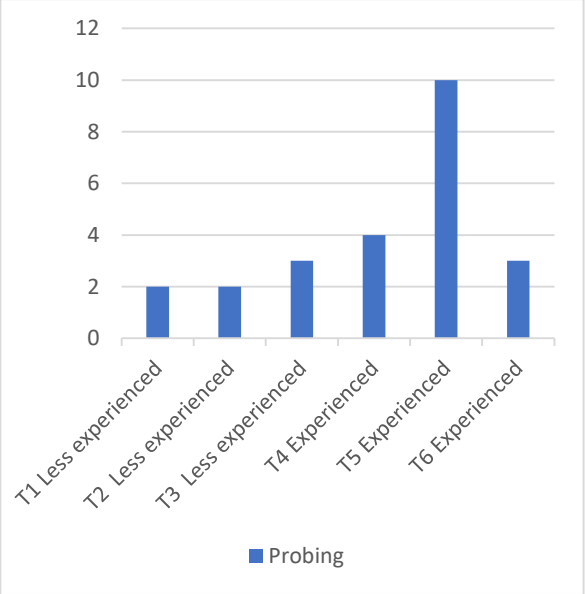


Figure 9. *Comparison of two groups of teachers in using the probing strategy*

Findings from Semi-Structured Interviews

The interview data provided deeper insight into the teachers' awareness, beliefs, and decision-making processes behind their questioning practices. Thematic analysis revealed contrasting perspectives between experienced and novice teachers on the role and purpose of questioning in the classroom.

Experienced teachers described questioning as an interactive process aimed at promoting students' thinking and communication. They viewed questions as tools for encouraging participation, diagnosing understanding, and stimulating reasoning. One teacher explained,

"I use questions not just to check answers, but to make students think — I want them to explore ideas, not only memorize."

They also emphasized the importance of *pausing* and *probing*, noting that silence after a question should be seen as "thinking time" rather than a lack of knowledge. Experienced teachers reported that years of classroom experience helped them recognize when to rephrase, redirect, or simplify questions depending on students' proficiency and engagement levels.

In contrast, novice teachers tended to view questioning primarily as an assessment or classroom management tool. Their focus was on ensuring students' understanding of lesson content rather than fostering dialogue. One novice teacher stated,

"Sometimes I ask questions to make sure students are listening, or to check if they understand the material."

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They also admitted feeling uncomfortable with silence after asking a question, often interpreting it as disengagement or misunderstanding, which led them to shorten wait time or answer their own questions. Most novice teachers relied on textbook-based or pre-prepared questions and expressed uncertainty about how to formulate spontaneous or open-ended ones.

Integrating the results from both data sources shows that teaching experience shapes not only teachers' questioning behavior but also their pedagogical awareness. Experienced teachers demonstrated a more reflective and student-centered questioning approach, characterized by varied strategies, longer wait time, and a focus on cognitive engagement. In contrast, novice teachers exhibited limited flexibility, relying on structured lesson plans and closed questions that prioritized correctness over communication.

Overall, the combination of observational and interview data reveals that questioning in EFL classrooms is both a behavioral and reflective practice. While all teachers recognized the importance of asking questions, only experienced teachers demonstrated the ability to use them strategically to enhance interaction and learning outcomes. These findings suggest that questioning competence evolves through professional reflection, classroom experience, and exposure to interactive teaching practices.

Table 1. *Summary of findings from classroom observation and semi-structured interview*

Aspect	Experienced Teachers	Novice Teachers	Data Source
Questioning Range	Used a wide range of questioning strategies based on the Astrid et al. (2019) framework (distributing, re-directing, phrasing, focusing).	Used limited strategies, mostly *pausing* and *prompting* questioning strategies.	Observation
Purpose of Questioning	Viewed questioning as a tool to stimulate students' thinking, encourage participation, and construct meaning.	Viewed questioning mainly as a tool for checking comprehension or managing class behavior.	Interview
Questioning Flexibility	Adjusted questions according to students' proficiency and responses; frequently reformulated questions.	Relied on pre-planned or textbook-based questions; rarely modified questions.	Observation & Interview
Wait Time (Pausing)	Practiced appropriate wait time (3–5 seconds) before expecting responses, allowing cognitive processing.	Provided very short wait time (1–2 seconds), often answering their own questions when students hesitated.	Observation
Follow-Up Questions (Probing/Prompting)	Frequently used follow-up prompts to extend student answers and promote reasoning.	Limited use of follow-up questions; usually accepted short or one-word answers.	Observation
Feedback and Reaction	Provided constructive feedback and clarification to maintain interaction and motivation.	Focused mainly on evaluating correctness ("Yes, right" / "No, wrong").	Observation
Perception of Silence	Considered silence after a question as "thinking time" and encouraged further elaboration.	Considered silence as lack of understanding or disengagement, quickly moving to next question.	Interview
Teacher–Student Interaction	Encouraged multi-directional interaction; redirected questions to multiple students.	Predominantly teacher-centered; limited student-student interaction.	Observation
Pedagogical Awareness	Reflected on questioning as part of teaching philosophy and learner engagement.	Saw questioning as a requirement within lesson delivery.	Interview
Professional Reflection	Demonstrated awareness of questioning as a reflective practice that improves classroom communication.	Acknowledged the importance of questioning but lacked confidence to implement complex strategies.	Interview

The integrated analysis indicates that experienced teachers possess higher pedagogical awareness and strategic control in their use of questioning, treating it as a reflective and interactive process. Meanwhile, novice teachers tend to use questioning primarily for information checking, with limited variation and flexibility. Both groups recognized the importance of questioning, but only experienced teachers demonstrated an ability to transform questions into opportunities for cognitive engagement and dialogue.

The findings from both classroom observations and semi-structured interviews highlight how teaching experience strongly shapes teachers' use of questioning strategies and their underlying pedagogical awareness in EFL classrooms. Overall, the results confirm that experienced teachers demonstrate a more strategic, flexible, and reflective use of questioning, while novice teachers tend to rely on surface-level questioning patterns primarily aimed at assessing knowledge rather than promoting deeper engagement.

The classroom observations revealed that experienced teachers employed a greater variety of strategies such as probing, prompting, pausing, redirecting, and distributing. These questioning behaviors encouraged students to elaborate on their answers, think critically, and engage in extended classroom dialogue. This supports the framework described by Aeni and Ariyani (2025), Astrid et al. (2019), Niza (2024), and Rahayu and Suharti (2023), which emphasizes that effective questioning is not only about the quantity of questions but also about the quality and timing of their delivery. For instance, the experienced teachers' consistent use of pausing or wait time allowed students to process the question and formulate meaningful responses, who found that longer wait times significantly improve the quality of student responses (Aeni & Ariyani, 2025; Pan et al., 2024; Putri et al., 2026). This perspective is consistent with research emphasizing the relationship between teacher cognition, reflective practice, and classroom decision-making (Farrell, 2026; Pandey et al., 2025; Xerri, 2025).

In contrast, novice teachers' questioning tended to remain teacher-centered and evaluative. They frequently used display questions to check comprehension and provided minimal feedback or follow-up prompts (Artini et al., 2025; Hamdan et al., 2024; Isnaini & Trisanti, 2025; Ningsih et al., 2021). Their limited use of probing and redirecting strategies suggests a developing awareness of questioning as a pedagogical skill. This finding aligns with Artini et al. (2025) and Hamdan et al. (2024), who argue that novice teachers often focus more on managing classroom order and completing lesson objectives rather than fostering exploratory communication. The short wait time and immediate evaluation observed among novice teachers indicate that they have not yet developed sensitivity to classroom discourse dynamics, a trait that often develops through teaching experience (He, 2025; Ode et al., 2025).

The interviews further revealed that experienced teachers viewed questioning as an opportunity to stimulate student thinking and interaction, while novice teachers perceived it as a means of maintaining control or assessing comprehension. This divergence in teacher cognition echoes Niza's (2024) assertion that teacher beliefs strongly influence questioning practices (Priajana & Umaemah, 2025; Woreta Haile et al., 2024). Experienced teachers in this study demonstrated reflective decision-making: they were aware of when to rephrase questions, when to pause, and how to provide prompts to support student participation. Novice teachers, however, often expressed uncertainty about handling silence or unexpected student answers, leading them to abandon open-ended questioning prematurely.

The integration of classroom observation and interview data thus provides a clearer picture of teacher cognition in action, how teachers' mental models of teaching are manifested through their questioning behavior (Artini et al., 2025; Farrell, 2026; Pattison-Meek, 2024). Experienced teachers' awareness of questioning as a reflective and dialogic tool reflects a more advanced level of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). They not only know what to ask but also why and how to ask, tailoring their questions to support learners' linguistic and cognitive development.

Furthermore, the findings highlight that questioning in EFL classrooms is not a static or mechanical skill, but rather a reflective, experience-driven practice. Teachers' ability to interpret student responses, adjust their questions dynamically, and foster interactive learning evolves through ongoing classroom exposure and reflection (Farrell, 2026; Pandey et al., 2025; Xerri, 2025).

In the Indonesian EFL context, where students are often hesitant to speak or participate in English (Isnata, 2025; Ode et al., 2025; Peng, 2024; Sagimin, 2025), the role of questioning becomes even more critical. Experienced teachers' ability to use questions as a dialogic and motivational tool is

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key to breaking student silence and encouraging language use. This echoes Walsh's (2013) notion of interactional competence, where effective teachers create dialogic space for learners to express themselves and negotiate meaning. Novice teachers, who tended to dominate classroom talk, limited such opportunities.

Overall, the findings confirm that teaching experience contributes to the development of questioning competence, both in the range of strategies used and the awareness behind their use. The transition from mechanical questioning (typical of novice teachers) to reflective questioning (seen in experienced teachers) represents a crucial aspect of professional growth in language teaching (Pattison-Meek, 2024). As such, questioning should be emphasized in teacher education and professional development programs, not only as a technique but also as a reflective practice that supports learner-centered interaction and critical thinking in EFL classrooms (Hamdan et al., 2024; Pattison-Meek, 2024; Priajana & Umaemah, 2025; Xerri, 2025).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that teaching experience plays a crucial role in shaping the way EFL teachers use questioning strategies to engage learners in classroom interaction. The findings demon

state that experienced teachers employ a broader and more reflective range of questioning strategies—particularly *distributing, phrasing, re-directing, focusing*—to stimulate students' thinking, maintain interaction, and promote learner autonomy. Their questions are not merely designed to check comprehension but to encourage critical thinking and negotiation of meaning. In contrast, novice teachers tend to rely predominantly on *display questions* and short-answer exchanges, showing limited flexibility in adapting questions to students' needs and providing insufficient *wait time* or follow-up prompts. These differences reflect the influence of professional experience in developing pedagogical awareness, interactional competence, and classroom sensitivity.

From a pedagogical perspective, questioning should be recognized not only as an instructional technique but also as a reflective and cognitive tool that supports active learning and higher-order thinking. Teacher education programs should integrate systematic training in questioning strategies, including modeling, peer observation, and reflective feedback. Such training would help novice teachers understand how to design, deliver, and follow up questions effectively to engage students in communicative and critical tasks. Additionally, mentorship and professional learning communities are recommended to allow novice teachers to learn from experienced practitioners through classroom-based reflection and collaborative dialogue.

For future research, it is suggested that similar studies explore questioning practices across different educational levels or disciplines to gain broader insights into how experience and context influence teacher discourse. Further investigation into students' perceptions of teacher questioning could also provide valuable information about how questions affect motivation and participation. Ultimately, fostering reflective and strategic questioning practices among teachers is essential for building interactive, student-centered EFL classrooms that nurture both linguistic competence and critical thinking skills.

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