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## Questioning Techniques and Wait Time in EFL Classrooms: Teachers' Perceptions and Practices

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### Abstract

This study scrutinized English language teachers' perceptions and actual practices regarding questioning techniques and wait time. Using a qualitative approach, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews and classroom observations with teachers from the Department of English Language at Algiers 2 University. The interview results revealed that the majority of teachers were aware of the importance of wait time and questioning and they use questions to stimulate students' critical thinking. The classroom observation findings showed the opposite— teachers primarily use low-level questions to check their students' understanding. Additionally, while teachers reported allocating 1-3 minutes of wait time, the observations showed that they rarely reached the recommended 3-5 seconds. Moreover, teachers frequently interrupted wait times by engaging in various verbal habits that might interfere with the beneficial effects of wait time. These findings highlight significant differences between the teachers' perceived and actual practices regarding questioning techniques and wait time. Based on these findings, the study put forward some recommendations for question planning, training teachers on asking higher-level questions, and use of extended wait times commensurate with the complexity of the questions posed.

**Keywords:** Algerian context, EFL classroom, questioning techniques, wait time

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## Introduction

At all educational stages, questions serve as the focal point of communication between teachers and students. Because of their vital role in fostering students' learning and critical thinking, teachers' oral questions are an essential teaching tool (Chuska, 1997; Elder & Paul, 2016; Haile et al., 2024). Simply being familiar with the importance, classifications, and types of oral questions is not enough for teachers. This knowledge alone does not ensure that these questions are effectively used in teaching. Several researchers asserted that for questions to be effective, teachers need to consider not only the types of questions but also to consider the strategies for posing those questions (An & Childs, 2023; Blosser, 2000; Cecil, 1991; Chuska, 1997; Haile et al., 2024; Fusco, 2012; Wilberding, 2014). Among the strategies is 'wait time', which is defined as the amount of time the teachers wait after asking their learners a question, before they respond, or before the teacher asks another question (Rowe, 1976; Walsh & Sattes, 2017).

An array of researchers confirmed that wait time is effective when used accurately, showing a correlation between students' answers and wait time (Cecil, 1995; Dillon, 1982; Fenstermacher & Soltis, 2004; Rowe, 1976; Walsh & Sattes, 2017; Wu, 1993; Zainil, et al., 2023). In his review of the practice of questioning in the classroom, Dillon (1982) determined that there is a positive relation between silence and the frequency of response, the length of response, and the cognitive level of response. Dillon claimed that teacher silence has also a positive effect on participation and interaction. In the same line with Dillon, Walsh and Sattes (2017) stated that increases in thinking time seem to result in teachers' and students' thinking at higher levels.

Furthermore, other researchers confirm the centrality of wait time and its relation to questions. For instance, Wu (1993) stated that questions asked by teachers may not always elicit answers successfully from the parts of students due to the insufficient wait time. In the same line, Fenstermacher, and Soltis (2004) stated that too often teachers struggle to give students adequate time to wait, particularly when they are asked questions that call for in-depth analysis. According to the previous debate, wait time appears to be a significant variable associated with questions, and a discussion about questions would not be complete without a discussion about the centrality of wait time. As a result, it appears that waiting time and asking questions are inextricably linked.

Although authors and researchers have strongly advocated for longer wait times to improve both the quantity and quality of students' responses, the majority of studies' findings indicate that teachers have not implemented this technique appropriately, leading them to conclude that teachers are inherently prone to acting quickly and ignoring wait times (Bilaloğlu et al., 2017; Fenstermacher & Soltis 2004; Rowe, 1986; Walsh & Sattes, 2017; Wu 1993; Wubante, 2019). Given the lack of clarity surrounding teachers' actual and perceived performance on questioning and wait time, especially in EFL classrooms, studies examining wait times and teachers' questions in EFL classrooms are urgently needed. This is particularly important since most of the existing research on these topics has been carried out mostly in science classrooms, rather than in EFL contexts. Additionally, according to Chewprecha et al. (1980, as cited in Duell, 1995) and Jegede & Olajide (1989) in literature, the available research on wait time in developing nations can be easily counted on a single hand. For this reason, it is highly required to conduct further research on wait time and teachers' questioning practices in other parts of the world. This can be done by either replicating the methods used in previous studies or exploring the topic in alternative ways.

In this regard, it is crucial to investigate the reality of Algerian EFL classrooms, specifically teachers' behaviors and attitudes towards wait time and questioning. It is important to determine whether the tendency towards short wait time observed in other contexts also exists in the Algerian setting. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there appear to be limited or no studies conducted in Algerian universities specifically addressing teachers' perspectives on questioning and wait time. Two objectives have been set for this study. The first objective is to discover the teachers' perceptions of wait

time strategy and questioning. The second objective is to ascertain differences between EFL teachers' perceived and actual practices on questioning and wait time.

### Research Questions:

The main questions underlying this study are the following:

1. What are teachers' perceptions on the importance of wait time and questioning and the relation between both of them?
2. Is there any difference between EFL teachers' perceived and actual practices on questioning and wait time?

### Teachers Questioning and its Importance

The questioning concept has become an important aspect of the research on teaching (Haile et al., 2024). Even in the twentieth century, this issue received ample attention. Sanders (1966) defines a teacher's oral question as any intellectual activity that calls for a response. Cotton (1988) also defines it as an instructional cue that conveys the content elements to be learned and directions for what the students are to do and how they are to do it. In other words, teacher questioning is an activity that calls for students' responses. It is a teaching device used by teachers to transform their teaching. Various scholars classified questions according to their levels and categories. Bloom (1956), for example, divided questions into two levels. Lower-order questions comprise the initial level of questions and come in three different categories: knowledge questions are used to help recall previously taught topics; Comprehension questions are asked to seek the students' ability to understand the meaning. Application questions are those that are used to check students' ability to use learned material such as rules, methods, concepts, principles, laws, and theories in new and real situations. Because they don't necessitate in-depth thought, the three questions indicated above are regarded as lower-level questions; nonetheless, as Bloom noted, they simply elicit fundamental and less complicated thinking skills.

Higher-order questions, which form the second level of Bloom's taxonomy, come in three distinguished categories. Analysis questions aim to reveal the capacity to divide a piece of content into its constituent parts to comprehend its organizational structure. The ability to piece together disparate elements to form a new whole is known as synthesis questions (e.g. What would happen if you phoned him?). Evaluation questions are designed to test a student's ability to evaluate the importance of the information, the solutions to issues, or the specifics of a culture (What do you think?). Synthesis, analysis, and evaluation questions, as they are explained, demand critical thinking from students and spark their imaginations. As per Bloom's taxonomy- and provoke students' imagination. In Bloom's taxonomy, knowledge is the lowest cognitive level, and evaluation is considered the highest cognitive level.

The literature on teachers' questioning is extensive and insightful. Numerous studies, theses, and books have examined teachers' questions as a crucial component of teaching methodology (Cecil, 1995; Ellis, 1992; Elder & Paul, 2016; Morgan & Saxton, 2006; An & Childs, 2023). Questioning students is vital and central to teaching, as it elicits vivid ideas, and stimulates imagination and critical thinking. Taba (1966, as cited in Wilen, 1987) agreed on the usefulness of questioning describing it as "the single most influential teaching act". Besides, research suggests that questions are significant because they require a response, which then prompts students to engage in the discussion (Ellis, 1992). Furthermore, Elder and Paul (2007) posit that posing questions may potentially stimulate cognitive abilities. They state that "Thinking within academic disciplines is guided by questions, not by answers" (p. 10). Thus, questions are basic strategies for increasing thinking abilities in students. Moreover, Cecil (1995) pointed out that teacher questions are effective for different reasons. Among these reasons is that the question involves the students in the learning process; it also requires students to distance themselves in time and space from the present. In this vein, Cecil (1995) elucidates:

When responding to questions about past or future events, the child shifts from the present to another, distant mode of thought, rather than simply basing a response on currently observable events. Thinking about past or future events requires an abstract mental representation of what has happened or what may soon happen to the child. (p.3)

### **Wait Time and its Effect**

Wait time is an important variable associated with questioning. When asking a question, teachers usually allocate time for students to think about their answers. This pause is called wait time. In literature, researchers give different labels to the pause a teacher gives either after asking a question to the students or after the students' answers, these labels are "wait time", "pausing", "thinking time", and "deliberate time". Mary Rowe (1987) is one of the prominent figures who worked extensively on wait time. She differentiates between "wait time 1" and "wait time 2". She defines "wait time 1" as the duration of pause given by the teacher after asking a question, whereas "wait time 2" is the period of silence given by the teacher after the student answers the question and before another student's elaboration or before the teacher's explanations. According to Rowe (1987), "wait time 1" provides students with the opportunity to think about the question and to formulate an answer; whereas, "wait time 2" gives the student the chance to improve, modify the answer, add new ideas, or react to the first student's response.

Several studies have revealed that wait time is an important questioning strategy and that increasing wait time is correlated with high-level questions. Starting with Rowe's (1987) experiments which began when she listened to hundreds of recorded lessons, Rowe found that the average wait time between the teacher's question and the student's answer was less than 1 second, and only on a few occasions, the teacher allocated longer wait time. She also noticed that longer pauses resulted in a change in the answers of the students. Therefore, Rowe recommended teachers to increase wait time to 3 seconds or more before students would respond to questions because extended wait time according to Rowe led to lengthier and higher quality in students' answers and led to more active participation. She asserted that, in some cases, the length of students' responses increased between 300 and 700 %. Moreover, Rowe suggested that by increasing wait time teachers "move to Bloom's taxonomy naturally" (Rowe, 1986, p. 99). A part from Rowe, Tobin (1987) argued that the extended wait time incites higher cognitive skills and provokes students to think about materials and formulate original answers rather than simply regain previously learned materials.

Additionally, Morgan and Saxton (1991) stated that the teacher's capacity to wait serenely while students reflect on the question and formulate the answer can:

- Build trust in the relationship between teacher and students;
  - Give time for students to look at the question from many angles;
  - Free them to provide answers and substance;
  - Press them to respond by speaking what is on and in their minds; and
  - Increase student-to-student interaction and student-to-teacher responses.
- In a nutshell, wait times have a positive impact on learning, student behavior, teachers' behavior, and the development of higher cognitive thinking skills. (p.82)

### **Studies on the Relationship between Wait Time and Teacher Questions**

Apart from Rowe's (1987) study, some studies on teachers' questions and wait time have been conducted. For instance, Tobin (1987) conducted a study where he compared classes in which teachers consistently used the two wait times (average wait time =3.3 seconds) with classes where teachers did not use wait times (average wait time is less than 1s) (cited in Walsh & Sattes, 2017). Tobin (1987) examined that teachers who were able to learn and increase their wait time altered their behaviors. These behavioral changes included teachers decreasing the amount of talking time during the lesson and permitting different learners to answer the same questions. Other researchers have built upon the

work of Rowe and Tobin. They suggest that teachers often struggle with implementing appropriate wait time for various reasons, such as the discomfort of silence, fear of embarrassing students, and the pressure of a packed curriculum. (Walsh & Sattes, 2005, p. 18).

Bilaloğlu, Arnas, and Yaşar (2017) conducted an intriguing qualitative study with six teachers who worked with six-year-old children in a preschool institution in Turkey. They found that the teachers tended to ask lower-level questions more than higher-level questions, and they did not effectively use the wait-time strategy. The researchers' analyses also showed that the teachers' wait time, for both types, did not reach the preferred level of 3-5 seconds. The average wait time the teachers provided for students to respond was 1.15 seconds. Similarly, the wait time after a student answered a question and the wait time before the teacher restarted the conversation was approximately 0.58 seconds.

Moreover, another study was carried out by Wubante in 2019. The study investigated the discrepancy between teachers' perceived and actual practices regarding using questions and wait time in EFL classrooms. Five senior high schools in Ethiopia were selected, and 42 teachers were randomly chosen as participants. Wubante (2019) employed three research instruments: a questionnaire, an interview, and an observation checklist. The findings revealed a significant difference between the teachers' perceived and actual practices in terms of questioning techniques and wait time. Even though the teachers believed they had a good understanding of the importance of questioning and wait time, their actual classroom behaviors contradicted this perception. Ultimately, Wubante (2019) concluded that the teachers' beliefs about their practices did not align with their real-world implementation in EFL classes.

Furthermore, another qualitative study was conducted by Zainil et al. (2023). The researchers scrutinized the application of wait time and its problems by the EFL teachers of SMPN Kota Padang, Indonesia. The participants were Eighteen English teachers at junior high schools Padang with their respective classes. Zainal et al. (2023) depended on conversation analysis to look at the amount of 'wait time' the teacher allocates for their students as well as on stimulated recall interviews to explore the problems of using wait time. The findings revealed that the majority of teachers gave their students 1–2 s of wait time to answer the teachers' questions without reaching the recommended 3–5 s of wait time. Moreover, the findings of the interviews revealed that teachers were unaware of their wait time practice.

Finally, An and Childs (2023) conducted a mixed-method study in China. The participants were 15 NSTs and 308 Chinese students from seven EMI foreign high school programs throughout China. The objective of the study was to explore how pedagogical moves such as the use of higher-order thinking questions and wait time influence student output in EMI science classes. The researchers recorded 30 lessons and analyzed them using NVIVO 11 software. The results of this study revealed that when there was more wait time after a teacher question, the learners made longer and more complex answers, their talk time increased, and asked more questions. Moreover, the findings revealed a lack of correlation between wait time and higher-order thinking questions which indicates that the teachers did not coordinate the use of wait time with the types of questions they asked.

The previous studies have shown varying results. Therefore, it is crucial to conduct a study in the Algerian context to understand the reality of our EFL university classrooms, as no research has been done on this topic. The following sections will discuss the research design, participants, and the methodology employed by the researcher to investigate teachers' perceptions and their actual practices regarding wait time and questioning.

### Method

The present study took place during the academic year 2022 /2023 to explore the teachers' perceptions and real practices of questioning and wait time. Towards this purpose, a qualitative approach was employed. The qualitative research paradigm



matches with the current study because the researcher uses observation and interviews to get in-depth data on teachers' practices on classroom questions and wait times.

The study involved six teachers of the Department of English Language at the University of Algiers 2. Two Second year English degree classrooms were observed to meet the objectives of this study. The information about the participants appears in Table 1. As shown in the table, two male and four female teachers. Their teaching experience varied from one to fifteen years signifying a relatively heterogeneous sample. Out of the teachers, three fall under category "A" as assistant professors, two fall under category "B" as assistant professors, and one is a lecturer professor. Furthermore, the participants teach different modules.

**Table 1.** The Participating Teachers' Profile

participan t	Gender	Years of Experience	qualification	Specialism	Modules they teach
T1	Male	6-10	MAB	linguistics	Study skills, grammar, linguistics
T2	Female	6-10	MAA	literature	Anglo-lit and lit genres
T3	Female	0-5	MAB	Applied linguistics	phonetics, ESP, and grammar, list /Speaking
T4	Female	11-15	MAA	Linguistics	Phonetics and linguistics, list/Speaking
T5	Female	6-10	MAA	literature	Reading /writing and literature
T6	Male	11-15	MCB	Applied linguistics	Cognitive psychology, grammar, didactics

Two research instruments were used: an interview and a classroom observation. The interview questions used in this study were adapted from a variety of sources, including those ideas used by Bilaloğlu et al., (2017), Cecil (1991), Fenstermacher and Soltis (2004), Rowe (1986), and Wubante, (2019). The semi-structured interviewing technique was used to get the teachers' thoughts and opinions regarding the value of wait times and questioning in EFL classes. The interview included, in addition to the background information questions, six primary closed-ended questions along with one open-ended question to delve deeper into the informants' responses. Teachers' opinions were sought out in the first interview question regarding the definition of lower-level and high-level questions and which type is mostly used in their classrooms. The second question asked teachers how they choose the questions they ask, and the third question inquired about the opinions of teachers regarding the use of various question types and which questioning types are mostly used. The interview's fourth and fifth questions focused on teachers' perceptions of the amount of time they allot before and after students respond to a question, while the final question was about teachers' opinions on the value of questioning and wait time.

The observation instrument was used to examine the actual implementation of both techniques, namely wait time and questioning, and to determine if teachers' perceptions and opinions aligned with their practices. The researchers employed two cameras to record what happened in the classroom, and to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the classroom, one of the cameras was focused on the teacher, while the other was focused on the students. The researcher also employed a stopwatch to measure the amount of wait time teachers provided to students after asking a question. Concerning the measurement of wait time, the researcher utilized the same method of measurement that was employed in previous studies conducted by Duell (1994), Bilaloğlu et al. (2017), and Zainil, et al. (2023). The stopwatch was stopped when the teacher broke the silence to rephrase the original question, as this was treated as a new question. Conversely, if the teacher merely repeated the same question, it was considered part of the wait time, and the stopwatch was not stopped.

## Results and Discussion

This section addresses the results of the two research questions that underline this study. It also highlights the similarities and differences between these results and the findings of prior research.

**RO1:** What are teachers' opinions and perceptions toward the importance of wait time and questioning and the relation between both of them?

To answer this research question, the researcher depended on interviews. The data collected from the interview were analyzed using thematic analysis. As far as the first question of the interview is concerned, all of the teachers (100%) seemed to be aware of the different types of questions. Similar responses were found in the interview results regarding how teachers choose the difficulty levels of the questions. Interviews revealed that teachers typically select question difficulty based on their students' competencies and course goals. As evidenced by the interviewees' responses, teachers adapt the types of questions to match their students' abilities and align with the objectives of the curriculum. Citations for the following have been taken from the answers provided by the interviewees:

"When determining which level to use, I primarily take into account the module I'm teaching and the types of questions that will help us achieve the learning objectives; I take into consideration the lesson stages—beginning, middle, or end of the course—as well as whether or not students are accustomed to answering particular types of questions. Whenever I feel it's necessary, I also keep in mind that my questions should foster critical and analytical thinking in students." **T3**

"I choose the question levels based on the proficiency of the students and the course objectives." **T6, T5, T1**

"I choose the difficulty of the questions based on the cognitive ability of the students." **T4, T2**

Moreover, when teachers were asked to give their definitions of high and low-level questions, the results revealed that teachers have a shared understanding of the distinction between lower-level and higher-level questions. All the teachers demonstrated familiarity with these two levels of questions. To elaborate further excerpts from the interview are given:

"I consider lower-level questions to be those focused on recalling factual information such as "what" or "who", and they only require students to remember and understand the content." **T2, T3, T6**

"low-level questions are direct questions as well as the ones which incite students' repetition of the content of the course being taught; they are the lowest levels of Bloom's taxonomy of learning objectives." **T1**

"Lower-level questions are used to assess students' preparation and comprehension." **T5**

"Lower cognitive questions related to simple details in a text". **T4**

"Higher-level questions are those that challenge students to engage in more complex cognitive processes like evaluation and analysis. For instance, asking students to discuss their viewpoints on which civilization made the greatest contributions to the study of language would be considered a higher-level question, as it requires them to go beyond simple recall and demonstrate deeper understanding and critical thinking." **T3**

Higher-level questions are for example questions which incite students' critical thinking and train them to evaluate and synthesise" **T1, T2, T4, T5, T6**.

The six participant teachers demonstrated reasonable knowledge about different types of questioning. Additionally, when asked to discuss the value and questioning and for what purposes they ask questions, all of the participants agreed that questioning helps stimulate students' imagination, creativity, critical thinking, and active participation. The teachers listed the following purposes of questioning:

"Questions lie at the very heart of developing critical thinking abilities in students, and I mostly ask high-level questions since the module I teach requires students to talk and share their thoughts." **(T3)**

"Questions motivate students by encouraging active participation." **(T4)**

"I ask questions because they lead students to consider new ideas and use ideas already learned." **(T2)**

"Questions are important because they help students clarify their ideas and learn things that interest them." **(T1, T5)**

"Questions are important because they help teachers assess the effectiveness of their teaching." **(T6)**

As shown by the expectations of the participants, all teachers seemed to understand the different types and levels of questions and recognized the importance of using questioning to stimulate students' critical thinking and imagination (Cecil, 1991). This awareness of question types and their impact can help teachers evaluate how effectively they are engaging their students in active and critical learning.

When teachers were asked about the importance of wait time after asking questions, the majority (5 out of 6, or 100%) agreed that it is a crucial strategy. They showed that it helps develop students' thinking, elicits longer and better responses, and gives students time to remember and analyze their ideas **(T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6)**.

The final three interview questions explored teachers' beliefs and practices regarding how much time they allocate to students after asking questions. The responses revealed divergent approaches, as teachers provided varying estimates of the wait time they typically give.

Three teachers out of six (50%) reported allocating 2-3 minutes (wait time 1) for low-level questions focused on recall, knowledge, and comprehension while giving 2-5 minutes for higher-level evaluative and critical thinking questions. Two teachers **(T3 and T2)** (33.33%) considered wait time a vital strategy, as it stimulates good answers from students. They reported allowing a one-minute "wait time 1" to avoid student distractions and misbehaviour. One teacher **(T5)** (16.66%) expressed uncertainty about the specific wait time he allocated, explaining that he was unaware of this strategy and didn't know about the second type of wait time (wait time 2), though he acknowledged its crucial role in EFL classrooms. From the participants' opinions, it can be concluded that the majority of teachers agreed on the crucial role of "wait time 1" for students in provoking critical thinking and increasing the length of students' responses. They also agreed that wait time is related to the type and the level of questions being asked. However, it was also noticed that all the teachers were unaware of the second type of "wait time 2".

**RQ2:** Is there any difference between EFL teachers' perceived and actual practices on questioning and wait time?

The researcher relied on classroom observation as the primary data collection method to answer this research question. Two of the six participating teachers, **T3 and T4**, agreed to be observed and recorded during their listening and speaking courses. In each classroom, two cameras were set up - one focused on the teacher and the other on the students. The analysis of the recorded observation data revealed that the two teachers



asked numerous questions, most of which were aimed at comprehension, checking understanding, and defining concepts. This contradicted the teachers' own beliefs about questioning, as expressed in their interviews. During the interviews, **T4** and **T3** emphasized the importance of using questions to motivate student participation, enhance critical thinking, and inspire synthesis and evaluation of ideas. However, the classroom observations demonstrated that the teachers primarily used low-level, recall-based questions, rather than higher-order, thought-provoking questions.

The results are consistent with research conducted in Algeria by Hadjeris and Merrouche (2019) at the Department of English, Constantine Teachers' College. The authors reported that the majority of questions posed by English teachers fell into the Lower-order question category and that the Algerian teacher preferred to use display questions, which elicit answers that the teacher already knew. Similarly, in a separate study by Hadjeris (2019) in the University of Oum El Bouaghi's English Department, Hadjeris discovered that the two teachers who were observed relied excessively on display questions.

Moreover, the classroom observation showed that, contrary to what the two teachers (T3 and T4) had expressed in the earlier interview, they did not provide enough wait time for students. While the teachers believed that increased wait time helps students think more analytically, their actual classroom practices did not reflect this belief. This mismatch between the teachers' perceived importance of wait time and their real-world implementation is similar to the findings of a study by Wubante (2019). The mixed-method approach study revealed a key difference between teachers' perceived practices and their actual classroom behaviours regarding questioning techniques and wait time. Even though Wubante's research found that teachers claimed they recognized the importance of wait time and questioning, their classroom actions contradicted this perception. In other words, the teachers' stated beliefs about their practices did not correlate with how they were implemented in their EFL classes.

When the teachers were asked about the wait time they allot after asking questions to students, they stated that they believe they wait 1-3 minutes. However, classroom observations revealed this was not the case - the teachers actually waited only 1-2 seconds before continuing. This suggests the teachers either misjudged the duration of one minute or were unaware of the amount of wait times they actually provided. It is to be highlighted that the researcher used a stopwatch to precisely measure the teachers' wait times, employing the same methodology as prior studies by Duell (1994) and Bilaloğlu et al. (2017). The data showed that no teacher consistently provided the recommended 3-5 seconds of wait time after asking a question, with both averaging just 1-3 seconds for "wait time 1" and less than 1 second for "wait time 2." These findings align with Bilaloğlu et al.'s (2017) and Zainal et al. (2023) results, which found average wait times of 1.15 seconds after a teacher question and 0.58 seconds after a student response. Similarly, Wubante's (2019) study observed teachers waiting only 0.32 seconds on average, despite their reports of providing at least 3 seconds. In summary, the classroom observations revealed a clear mismatch between the teachers' perceptions of their wait times and the actual practices observed by the researcher. It can be explained that teachers may feel uncomfortable during periods of silence after a question has been asked.

Furthermore, the observations revealed that both teachers frequently interrupted the wait times by engaging in various verbal habits. They often repeated the same question, echoed the students' answers, or simply told the students to "think." Rowe (1978) noted that teachers' eagerness to prompt responses from students can lead them to use verbal signals that undermine the intended purpose of wait time 1 and wait time 2. Rowe identified several problematic verbal habits: First, teachers sometimes rushed in with commands before the recommended minimum 3-second wait time, with vague directives like "think!" or "Put on your thinking cap!" often reflecting the teachers' impatience. Second, the habit of mimicry, where teachers repeated students' answers, frequently began before the desirable 3-second wait time 2, cutting short the opportunity for elaboration and diminishing the quality of student discourse. Third, phrases like "Don't you

think that..." made it difficult for students to voice contrary opinions, as the implicit message was that the "correct" answer was "yes," even if that wasn't the teachers' intent. Overall, Rowe argued that these verbal habits conveyed unintended messages to students, interfering with the beneficial effects of wait time. In this respect, Morgan and Saxton (1991) reasoned that the nature of social discourse lacks silence and in many conversations, we remember the old social convention "keep the conversational ball rolling". Morgan and Saxton (1991) further contended that since humans are not accustomed to constructive and productive silence in daily discourse; therefore, teachers' default response in the classroom when silence occurs is discomfort.

Finally, it was found that students often answered questions right away after being asked them, and those same students enthusiastically and quickly raised their hands when they knew the answer, and shouted out responses without taking into consideration wait time. Students frequently reply without authorization from their teachers. In the observed classrooms, when teachers asked display or other low-level questions, students usually responded in choir with brief, one-word or irrelevant answers. Notably, only two or three students provided longer responses, and these were the same students who regularly participated. This pattern can be attributed to the fact that low-level questions do not necessitate extended wait times, and students aren't accustomed to such wait times.

The findings of this study are significant for EFL students and teachers; the study is valued for students because by extending wait time, students will have the opportunity to think carefully and the length of their answers will be increased since both critical thinking and reflection take time. This research may help university-level English teachers reconsider their questioning behaviour and make them aware that giving their students more time to think can increase their willingness to communicate using the target language.

### **Implications**

According to the participant teachers, oral questioning serves several important purposes in the classroom. It can be used to introduce a new topic, assess students' prior knowledge, generate interest, develop attitudes and values, and promote critical thinking. To this end, to effectively accomplish these goals, teachers should consider various factors that can influence the impact of their questioning and facilitate productive discussions. One key factor that teachers should take into consideration is providing sufficient wait time. Teachers are recommended to extend thinking time to allow students to reflect and think on their answers because allowing students 3-10 seconds to think before responding can lead to longer, more analytical, and more creative answers, and also allows all students to formulate thoughtful responses. Furthermore, another important factor is the use of different types of questions. Teachers are recommended to carefully plan their questions to match the instructional purposes so as to help students learn decision-making and promote critical thinking. Posing more high-level, open-ended questions can increase students' curiosity, motivation, and critical thinking abilities. By thoughtfully managing factors like wait time and question types, teachers can optimize the benefits of oral questioning to support student learning and engagement.

### **Conclusion**

This study examined wait time and questioning behaviour in the Algerian context, with a primary focus on teachers' perceptions and practices. The findings revealed that teachers in the observed classrooms predominantly used lower-level questions. The findings showed a significant discrepancy between teachers' beliefs and practices. Although teachers thought they asked more high-level questions to stimulate students' creativity, observations revealed a higher frequency of lower-level questions due to their simplicity. Additionally, teachers showed limited understanding of the distinction between wait time 1 and wait time 2, often interrupting wait time, which was observed to be much shorter than reported. Overall, the study highlighted a notable gap between teachers' perceptions and actual classroom practices in terms of questioning and wait time. Hence,

this study encourages English teachers to reconsider their questioning and wait time practices. Despite the significant results, the researcher admits some limitations, including a small sample size, participants from a single university, and reliance on qualitative methods. To address these issues, future research should include larger sample sizes and investigate the impact of extended wait times on student responses through experimental studies.

#### Disclosure Statement:

I, the author of this paper, declare that research ethics and citing principles have been considered at all stages of this paper. I take full responsibility for the content of the paper in case of a dispute. I confirm that the manuscript has been created by the author(s) and not an AI tool/ Large Language Model (LLM).

#### Conflict of interest:

I know of no conflict of interest associated with this publication.

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