

EFL Teachers' Beliefs and Practices on the Use of Questions in Mozambican Secondary Schools¹

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Abstract

In this study, the use of questions in a Mozambican English as a Foreign Language context is explored as a technique to develop communicative and critical thinking skills in secondary school students. Therefore, a qualitative approach was adopted using a phenomenological design which allowed the use of classroom audio recordings and semi-structured online interviews for data collection, based on Lowery's (2005) questioning framework. The results revealed that English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers in Mozambican public secondary schools are aware of open and closed questions, which they claim to use for checking understanding. However, in practice, they often use open-ended, rhetorical, and procedural questions found in Lowery's framework. These teachers ignore the relevance of using integrating, confirming, valuing, as well as feeling questions, which foster learners' communicative skills. These results have strong implications for the decision EFL teachers make on the selection of questions for their classes, as well as the impact of such practices on the students' outcome at the end of the course or year. Therefore, further studies should be conducted to understand the students' abilities in the use of English as a result of such practices. In addition, similar studies in Mozambican higher education should examine whether EFL teachers under training are prepared to use questions in class.

Resumen

En este estudio, se explora el uso de preguntas en un contexto de inglés mozambiqueño como lengua extranjera como técnica para desarrollar habilidades comunicativas y de pensamiento crítico en estudiantes de secundaria. Por lo tanto, se adoptó un enfoque cualitativo utilizando un diseño fenomenológico que permitió el uso de grabaciones de audio en el aula y entrevistas en línea semiestructuradas para la recolección de datos, basado en el marco de preguntas de Lowery (2005). Los resultados revelaron que los profesores del inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) en las escuelas secundarias públicas de Mozambique conocen las preguntas abiertas y cerradas, que afirman utilizar para comprobar la comprensión. Sin embargo, en la práctica, a menudo utilizan preguntas abiertas, retóricas y de procedimiento que se encuentran en el marco de Lowery. Estos profesores ignoran la relevancia de utilizar preguntas de integración, confirmación, valoración y sentimiento, que fomentan las habilidades comunicativas de los alumnos. Estos resultados tienen fuertes implicaciones para la decisión que toman los profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera sobre la selección de preguntas para sus clases, así como el impacto de dichas prácticas en el resultado de los estudiantes al final del curso o año. Por lo tanto, se deben realizar más estudios para comprender las habilidades de los estudiantes en el uso del inglés como resultado de tales prácticas. Además, estudios similares en la educación superior de Mozambique deberían examinar si los profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera en formación están preparados para utilizar preguntas en clase.

Introduction

The main purpose of teaching English at different levels is to equip students with knowledge of the language so that they can actively participate in different communicative settings. The students are not only expected to ask and answer questions, but also to understand and critically evaluate the context throughout the conversation (Chen & Brown, 2022; Kaya & Ahi, 2022; Scotto, 2022). Hence, the use of questions in English classes is one of the key strategies that can aid students develop critical thinking. At the same time, they can engage in conversations and develop the necessary language skills which are useful in real life communication.

Consequently, using questions in the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) is a fundamental requisite for the development of learners' communication and critical thinking skills. According to Fusco

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(2012), questioning in foreign language classes aims at constructing and applying knowledge instead of passively receiving unquestioned information, and that has many further results. Supporting this view, Pandey (2022) states that questioning is a great way to get students talking in class. He adds that classroom conversations have always been centred on questions. Westwood (2008) asserts that "in both teacher-directed and student-centred" (p. 62) methods, questioning students is a fundamental characteristic of effective teaching and plays a significant role in encouraging learning. All these authors understand that a successful language class will be the one in which students' participation is fostered through the use of questions. To become an effective EFL teacher, therefore, one needs to develop and correctly use questioning skills in the classroom. Westwood (2008) summarises what he considers as an effective teacher by providing a list which, among other characteristics, includes the teacher's use of increased number of questions to engage students and check for learning outcome. These questions are differentiated based on students' ability and considerable time is spent "in interactive whole-class" instruction (p. 59).

With the purpose of understanding the role of questions in teaching, several scholars from various countries conducted studies with different purposes (see Jacques et. al., 2019; Pandey, 2022; Sardareh et. al., 2014). In one of the most recent of these studies, Pandey (2022) conducted his study in Nepal where he investigated the use of questioning strategies in English Language Teaching classroom. His main findings showed that the employment of the "questioning strategy" in the class was not limited to a specific period of time or stage, but teachers mostly asked questions, "in while-teaching stage" (p. 801). He also concluded that divergent questions were mostly used since they increase students' creativity. This differs from the conclusion drawn in Sardareh et. al.'s (2014) study, where "classroom questioning did not seem to fulfil the promise of enhancing learner autonomy" since the teachers did not encourage "students to ask questions and engage in self-reflection", as a result, "many of them were silent often times" (p. 161).

In different studies, some scholars have looked at the type of questions used in English language classes (Farahian & Rezaee, 2012; Fusco, 2012) while others have concentrated on the effectiveness of the use of questions in teaching (Hamel et al., 2021; Sujariati et al., 2016; Valverde Caravaca, 2019). In general, the studies so far conducted were in the context of English as native language, English as an official language, English as a second language, and a few have taken place in an EFL context.

Despite the inclusion of English at primary, secondary and university levels, current research in the literature related to the Mozambican context suggests that teaching and learning of English is not at the expected levels (Adriano & Nkamta, 2018; Alexandre & Tsvara, 2022; Joel, 2022; Luis, 2020; 2021; Nhapulo, 2013). Based on their findings, Adriano and Nkamta (2018) argue that the development and practice of strategies which can benefit "language teachers and students" in improving the language skills is fundamental in Mozambican EFL teaching (p. 11324). Corroborating with these authors, in a different study, Alexandre and Tsvara (2022) indicate that "the methods used to teach English were not effective" as they failed to develop the desired "teaching and learning competencies" (p. 59). These authors, however, also concluded that the participating teachers mostly used communicative language teaching methods in their classes, which to the view of some EFL scholars can be contradictory. The opposite of this result is found in Luis' (2021) study, where he identified lack of communicative activities in Mozambican EFL secondary school classes.

As can be noted, though a considerable number of studies have been conducted focusing on the use of questions in classes, studies could not be found focusing on the use of questions in Mozambican EFL context. Following these arguments, the current study aims to explore the teachers' beliefs and practices on the use of questions in English language classes in Mozambique. Therefore, the following research questions have been used to guide the researchers:

1. *What types of questions are used by EFL teachers in Mozambican secondary schools?*
2. *For what purposes do Mozambican secondary school EFL teachers use questions in their classes?*
3. *What are secondary school EFL teachers' beliefs regarding the use of questions in fostering students' active participation in the Mozambican context?*

Literature Review

The role of questions in EFL classes

The use of questions in EFL classrooms creates several advantages for learning. EFL teachers can use questions to examine students' comprehension of the lesson, assess the lesson's efficacy, improve higher-

order thinking, control student behaviour, manage the pace and direction of the lesson, bridge exercises, and increase student engagement (Freiberg & Driscoll, 1996; Fusco, 2012; Westwood, 2008). Apart from these roles, Pandey (2022) highlights that questioning allows pupils to “not only be effective in listening and speaking, but also to think critically” (p. 792) and express their opinions with their classmates; it is also an excellent method for encouraging interactions. In addition, he states that thoughtful classroom questions “help students become more creative”, inventive, and smart (p. 792).

Although questions are pointed out to be a great source for active learning in EFL classrooms, Fusco (2012) argues that “not all questions posed by a teacher are useful” (p. 1). The usefulness of the questions, as defended by Fusco, is linked to the way they can stimulate students’ deeper thinking regarding beliefs, concepts, ideas, as well as foster a safe environment for varied viewpoints in classroom discussions. Thus, he warns English language teachers on the need to understand that “their questions should not feel like a quiz” (p. 42). Instead, they should use good questions which can “build memory, focus attention, create emotions, hook the learning, and foster imagination” (p. 1). As Pandey summarises, “only good questions make the classroom discussion lively and meaningful” (p. 793).

As a way of contributing to the strategies used in EFL teaching, Mauliddiyah et al. (2020) said EFL teachers and students tend to rely on code-switching when making comments and asking and answering questions. Of course, in similar studies, scholars have mentioned that EFL teachers can code-switch to achieve their aim of fostering their students’ communicative skills in English language (Adriosh & Razi, 2019; Banitz, 2022; Koşar, 2022). According to Adriosh and Razi, when EFL teachers use “L1 with purpose and awareness for particular functions, it facilitates learning” (p. 9). These views were challenged by Chowdhury (2013) who warned EFL teachers to recall that English is their “medium of instruction,” hence code-switching as a questioning strategy “should be kept to an effective minimum (p. 57).

The use of questions in the classroom has been related with the future of students as citizens in their communities. This is grounded on the fact that the use of questions in classrooms fosters discussions which will teach students to become citizens who are prepared to listen to others and give their contributions to the discussions in an acceptable way (Adriano & Nkamta, 2018; Fusco, 2012; Pandey, 2022; Westwood, 2008). Of course, EFL teachers need to prepare students not only for classroom activities, but also for meaningful daily communication. Furthermore, the purpose of communicative competence can only be achieved through question-and-answer techniques (Huda, 2024; Sada & Wiranto, 2024). These techniques can also be used to assist teachers in assessing prior learning, increasing or decreasing the difficulty, and determining whether pupils are prepared to go on and acquire new knowledge (Pandey, 2022).

Regarding the previous statements, researchers have concluded that based on good classroom questions, shy students can improve their participation in different activities (Alam & Ashrafuzzaman, 2018; Yang, 2021), thus helping them to be more confident in their daily routines. Supporting this view, Fusco (2012) emphasises that questioning “stimulates confident and creative problem-solving” (p. 3), and it produces the required abilities for pupils to become educated citizens capable of developing and expressing their thoughts, as well as tolerating or incorporating conflicting perspectives. He concludes that this is a learning approach that will assist students in making decisions that are beneficial for their own lives, communities, and the larger world.

In order to achieve all the roles described above, when designing questions, teachers need to make careful decisions regarding the types of questions and strategies which they will use, they also need to “monitor them, and be willing to revise these as the lesson progresses” (Fusco, 2012, p. 43). Talking about questioning strategies, Freiberg and Driscoll (1996) and Westwood (2008) suggest that teachers should vary the way they ask their questions adopting different techniques. These authors indicate that wait-time is crucial for students to benefit from the questions. Wait-time procedure gives students time to answer the questions. Another useful technique is what Freiberg and Driscoll (1996) termed as the “Go Around System”– a strategy for increasing variety and equality in questioning. It can be used together with other strategies such as asking volunteers, demanding “choral responses, or calling on students randomly rather than in order” (p. 207). In general, it is important for teachers to vary their procedures in asking questions in class. By doing so, teachers will provide students with a diverse learning environment in which they may apply their developing knowledge across disciplines.

Types of questions

In our description of the roles of questions in the EFL classroom, it was expressed that the types of questions teachers ask play a crucial role in fostering the necessary skills questions intend to develop in students. According to Freiberg and Driscoll (1996), EFL students' achievement is directly related to the type of questions that teachers use in the classroom. Hence, the importance of linking classroom activities to the expected learning outcomes. When talking about the types of questions language teachers use in the classroom, it is important to refer to Bloom's Taxonomy which highlights the level of questions to be used in the class. These are summarised in Figure 1, following Woolfolk's (2021) explanations of "taxonomic levels" (p. 598) of questions:

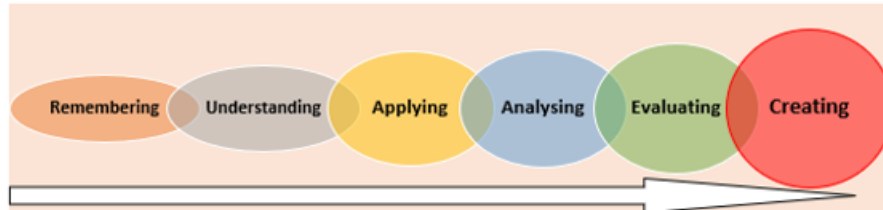


Figure 1: Bloom's taxonomy of questions

Bloom's taxonomy as explained by Woolfolk (2021) has been adapted in many other studies about the use of questions in the classroom. This model illustrates that teachers have a range of options of questions to use depending on their students' background, which will guide the choice of the appropriate level of questions, as well as the targeted learning outcomes. The first level is the easiest where the students simply need to recall or identify the aspects they learn without any changes, while in the last one, creating, teachers ask questions which demand the use of knowledge to bring about something new.

From Bloom's taxonomy of learning outcomes, different terminologies have been used to classify questions teachers use in the classroom. Freiberg and Driscoll (1996) identified six types of questions used by teachers in class, namely: "1. higher level (analytical), 2. lower level (factual), 3. convergent (one answer), 4. divergent (several possible answers), 5. valuing (clarifying student thoughts), and 6. controlling (directing student comments)" (p. 208). However, these authors stated that the use of higher-level questions "requiring students to synthesize facts, ideas, and concepts for comparison and analysis" in classrooms is reduced, since most of the questions teachers use only demand students to "recall simple facts" (p. 208).

While Freiberg and Driscoll's list seems to be more elaborated, more recent scholars, such as Westwood (2008), Pandey (2022), and Woolfolk (2021) presented some of those question types described by Freiberg and Driscoll differently. Westwood (2008) provided his question framework which included two types of questions: "1. simple and direct (lower order questions) – that focus on facts and principles, and 2. higher-order questions that require reflection, critical thinking and reasoning" (p. 62). Pandey (2022), as well as Woolfolk (2021) included two other types of questions in their discussion: convergent and divergent. In Pandey's (2022) explanation, convergent "is a closed type of question" while divergent is "an open type of question" (p. 794). For Freiberg and Driscoll (1996), divergent questions are found at "the upper levels of Bloom's Taxonomy (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation)," different from convergent questions which "tend to be at the lower levels of the taxonomy (knowledge and comprehension)" (p. 211).

In his review of frameworks related to questions used in classrooms, Fusco (2012) highlights Costa's (as cited in Fusco, 2012) framework as a prominent one, where "clarifying questions, cuing questions, probing questions, and focus questions" (p. 51) were listed. In his description of this framework, Fusco explains that clarifying questions refer to questions used when the teacher is uncertain of the meaning of what the student has said in his or her response, so he or she asks questions to encourage the student to go into details. On the other hand, cuing questions offer hints about the direction or goal of the questioning, while focus questions are used to get more accurate and thorough information from the pupils. Finally, probing questions refer to those which look for further information and boost the learners' thoughts regarding the topic under discussion.

Fusco (2012) provides three types of questions– "literal, inferential, and metacognitive" (p. 42). His classification is based on pragmatic use of language since students are encouraged to develop skills to respond to different situations. For instance, literal questions require students to "discuss, describe, and/or

respond to information they can readily perceive" (Zucker et al., 2009, p 66). In contrast, when teachers use inferential questions, they foster their students' use of "language skills in order to infer or abstract information by inferencing or analysing" (p. 66). For example, when teachers ask, 'What can you see here?' while pointing to a picture with different images and following this question by 'Can you explain?', they elicit varying answers requiring deeper thinking, thus developing students' critical thinking. This is related to metacognitive questions, which, according to Schoeffler (2012), develop students' metacognitive skills by providing regular opportunities for learners' self-evaluation and assisting them in expressing their own ideas. It can be concluded that Fusco's (2012) classification is in addition to the models he has presented.

Of all the lists of types of questions so far presented, it was observed that Lowery's (as cited in Fusco, 2012) model provides a longer list with a more comprehensive approach in eight different categories. However, the resulting model is still based on Bloom's Taxonomy as most of the explanations from Lowery's categories are similar to those of Bloom's (cited in Woolfolk, 2021). Due to its exhaustiveness and practicality, as well as its use in the similar previous research, this model was adopted in the current study. The following Table summarises each type of questions presented in the model:

Ord.	Type of question	Description
1	Confirming questions	Ask students to remember information, such as a specific name of something, a part of a definition, or a recalled fact.
2	Integrating questions	Ask a student to analyse and arrive at a particular idea or to develop particular ideas in his or her own terms. Clues may or may not be given
3	Open-ended questions	Encourage students to freely explore, analyse, and synthesize information related to a topic or problem. As students explore their thinking, they come up with novel ideas and solutions. A variety of divergent responses are expected.
4	Valuing questions	Ask students to synthesize information to develop an opinion, judgment, or evaluation. Students then state a preference.
5	Feeling questions	Ask students to describe a feeling or express an emotion. The teacher expects a variety of answers.
6	Rhetorical questions	No answer is expected.
7	Procedural questions	Deal with classroom management, not with the content of a lesson.
8	Behavioural questions	Used to control behaviour in the lesson.

Table 1: Lowery's questioning framework

Methods

Research design

Adopting a qualitative approach, this exploratory study collected qualitative data about the questions used in EFL classes and the teachers' understanding of the use of such questions in their classrooms. It was designed as a phenomenological case study based on Denscombe (2003), Denscombe (2010) and Tavakoli (2012). These scholars contend that, in such kind of studies, researchers focus on "people's perceptions or meanings; attitudes and beliefs; feelings and emotions" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 93). According to Wertz et al (2011), phenomenology is a term that is used more generally to describe any study that places a focus on the first-person experience. Tavakoli (2012) agrees with these authors when he emphasises the key aspect of phenomenological tradition, which lies in the exploration of the everyday lived experiences of the participants in focus. This is summarised by Johnson and Christensen (2014), who affirm that in phenomenological studies, researchers describe "one or more individuals' consciousness and experience of a phenomenon" (p. 2). In this kind of a design, the researchers explore participants' experience without a preconceived notion of what is happening.

Since our focus in this study is not only to understand the interactional instances where questions are employed in the classroom context, but also to explore the beliefs of EFL teachers regarding their practices, a phenomenological research design served our purpose the best. Using such a design allowed in-depth interviews with the participants to be conducted as well as the collection of audio-recordings (Denscombe, 2003; Tavakoli, 2012), which provided rich descriptions of Mozambican secondary school teachers' beliefs and practices related to the use of questions in their classes. Moreover, it was possible, through this design to highlight the individual participants' perspectives on questioning in EFL classes which are seen in this study from "multiple realities" point of view (Denscombe, 2010). Therefore, to obtain a complete view of

the EFL teachers' experience, the data collected from the participants living the phenomenon was used, a process that Tavakoli (2012) called as bracketing.

The context

This study was conducted in Mozambique, where English, Portuguese (the official language), and more than 40 local languages are used in various domains (Chimbutane, 2009; Henriksen 2015, 2010; United States Agency for International Development, 2021). In the past, English language was taught from primary school (Grade 6) onwards (Adriano & Nkamta, 2018, Maciel, 2010). However, with the change of the curriculum, 2022 was the last one for Grade 6's English classes. From 2023, English language was taught as a foreign language from Grade 7 up to university level. With this change, the number of years of English language teaching prior to university was reduced from seven to six. Regarding university level, two groups can be identified; those who take English as their major in bachelor's degree and those who take it as one of the subjects in their degrees. For the first group, four years are added to the six in terms of their exposure to English language learning, while for the later, it varies from one to three semesters, depending on their major area (Nhapulo, 2013).

It is important to note that, in general, in Mozambique English is viewed as a prestigious language which can help its speakers, not only to communicate within and outside the country, but also contribute to finding good jobs in different sectors (Henriksen, 2010, Lopes, 1998). Although Adriano and Nkamta (2018) state that many students in Mozambican schools do not take English classes seriously, thus reflecting a negative attitude, Henriksen (2015) guarantees that due to its status, "attitudes to English language are very positive in Mozambique" since it is "the most spoken foreign language taught and learned in the country" (p. 6). Secondary school EFL teachers in Mozambique face challenges regarding teaching methods, which make most of them rely largely on grammar translation method (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Mansouri & Jami, 2022). However, the students and communities' attitudes regarding English are still positive.

Participants

To collect rich data on teachers' perceptions and practices, two EFL teachers from two different Mozambican public secondary schools were invited to take part. The participants were selected purposively, on the basis of (a) the grade level they were teaching at the time of the study (Grades 10 and 12), (b) the location of their public schools in two largest districts (one in Gúruè District, and the other one in Quelimane district - Zambézia Province), (c) their experience in EFL teaching (more than five years), and (d) their training (trained in the field of English Language Teaching). These criteria were based on the fact that Grade 12 is the last one in Mozambican secondary schools. Thus, teachers are expected to prepare the students for their active participation using English in different domains, including further studies in different universities where English is the language of instruction. Grade ten, on the other hand, was the end of the first cycle in secondary school at the time the data was collected. Both grade levels were key in advancing the students' linguistic competencies and therefore, the teachers' practices at these levels were significant to the questions of the study.

In terms of their background, the two participating teachers had more than ten years of experience in teaching English. However, while Txidoko's⁴ first five years of teaching were in primary education, Txuna's experience had been completely in secondary schools. At the time of the study, Txidoko was working with Grade 10 while Txuna was working with Grade 12.

Data collection procedures

Before starting the research process, all ethical permissions were obtained from Near East Ethical Approval Board (Code: NEU/ES/2022/842). Then, the local authorities responsible for the school's administration were contacted by our research assistant and permissions to observe classes and interview teachers were obtained (Vinte et al., 2023). Following this phase, with the permission from the school representatives, all teachers from grades ten and twelve in the target schools were contacted and were provided information about the study. It was at this stage where they were informed that the interviews would be online with the researchers who were in a different country. It was made clear to them that all the data would be used only for the study and all their names would be anonymised. Then, they were given the consent form to read

⁴The teachers were assigned pseudonyms for anonymity purposes.

and if they agreed to participate in the study, they signed the form. From the target schools, only two teachers who matched our criteria accepted to take part in the study and data were collected from the classrooms of these two teachers.

To collect data for this study, as was explained in the last paragraph, all teachers participating in the study were informed beforehand that their participation was not compulsory, and it would not affect their careers in any way. In addition, all the relevant ethical principles were followed, and participants were informed about these procedures and the research process via a consent form. Afterwards, classroom audio-recordings and online interviews were used. The audio recordings were intended to be carried out in a non-structured way where recordings of natural in-class face-to-face interactions would be obtained for a linguistic analysis of classroom questioning practices of EFL teachers (Vinte et al., 2023). In both cases, the classroom interactions were recorded using mobile phones (Tecno Spark 8P in Case 1, and M9106, Android 10 - Go Edition, in Case 2) and headphone/microphone sets. The teachers were asked to put the recording devices on their desks at the beginning of their lessons while using their wireless headphones to allow for maximum capture. In order to guarantee that no interference was experienced, the assistant researcher's phone as well as the participants' mobile phones used for recording were in flight mode. This meets the arguments presented by different scholars that while recording it is important to take measures to "avoid interrupting the conversation with notifications and ringtones" from the mobile phone (Elhami & Khoshnevisan, 2022, p. 3).

In total, two lessons were recorded to analyse the types of questions teachers used and their effectiveness in fostering interaction and students' critical thinking. Although each lesson is allocated 45 minutes, the Grade 12 teacher's lesson recording lasted 32 minutes while the Grade 10 teacher's class lasted 34 minutes. Following the classroom audio recordings, semi-structured online interviews were conducted allowing the collection of data about participants' perceptions in a conversational manner (Elhami & Khoshnevisan, 2022; Knott et al., 2022; Salmons, 2015). In this process, a mobile phone (Samsung A20) as well as the facilities of the Zoom platform were used to record the interviews conducted with the two participant teachers. Each teacher was interviewed at a different time and depending on their availability. Participants were kindly asked to find a quiet and comfortable place where there would be less noise to avoid interference. Besides organizational aspects for the interviews, the linguistic background of our participants, which includes Portuguese as the official language, made it necessary to implement additional measures to guarantee that our participants communicated effectively. Consequently, following Resch and Enzenhofer's (2018) view on the need of considering the language to be used during the interviews, and taking into account that English is taught as a foreign language in the research context, the teachers were given the opportunity to choose the language that would make them feel comfortable during the interviews. Both of them preferred to have the interview in English language, hence the use of this language for this process. Therefore, each teacher was interviewed once and the online interviews lasted 11:28 minutes for Grade 12 teacher, while Grade 10 teacher's interview took 11:34 minutes.

The use of online interviews allowed the interviews to be done internationally, that is, reaching the teachers in Mozambique while the authors were in Northern Cyprus. This fact goes in hand with what Järvinen and Mik-Meyer (2020) point as the advantage of online interviews. The adoption of semi-structured interviews helped the exploration of the teachers understanding of the use of questions in EFL classes. This was achieved through some guiding questions which were used with them. Since it was a semi-structured interview, it was possible to adapt the questions based on their responses as well as ask for clarification whenever necessary (Griffiee, 2018). These questions also allowed the interviewees to elaborate more on their answers.

Data analysis

As for the analysis, the data collected from the classroom audio recordings and online interviews was transcribed with the aid of Podcastle software tool. Transcription refers to the process of transforming the recorded speech or interview into a written text (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006; Hammersley, 2010). Due to some limitations of Podcastle, such as the use and recognition of only English speech, as well as lack of identification of speakers, it was necessary to listen to the recordings and make some amendments which included the transcription of the Portuguese extracts as well as the correction of some words which were recognised differently by the software transcription tool (Davidson, 2009; Halcomb & Davidson, 2006). At

this stage, some additional transcript conventions were introduced to identify the speakers as well as other speech features. To do so, Du Bois's (1991) transcript conventions were chosen to meet our needs (see Appendix). This helped guarantee the trustworthiness of our final transcription (Davidson, 2009). Therefore, the result of all these transcript procedures was the verbatim transcription which is explained by Halcomb and Davidson (2006) quoting Poland (1995) as "the word-for-word reproduction of verbal data, where the written words are an exact replication of the audio recorded words" (p. 38).

Then, using MaxQDA 2022, for classroom audio recordings, all the identified questions were thematically presented, following Lowery's questioning framework. Similarly, following the phenomenological premises, the interview recordings were analysed descriptively, identifying the themes related to the reasons for using questions in the participants' responses, types of questions teachers claimed to use and stages of the lessons in which they used such questions, as well as the language they used to ask those questions. During this process of analysis, sometimes different interpretations of the same statements were found. In those cases, the transcripts were used and the meanings were determined based on the context. Likewise, in instances where it was not possible to find a completely clear understanding of some passages, the participants were involved (Caelli et al., 2003) by calling and discussing with them to find out whether the interpretations were in line with what they intended to transmit.

Results and Discussion

Teachers' perceptions of questioning in the EFL classrooms

Regarding the frequency in the use of question, Txuna's responses indicated that he frequently uses questions in his classes. This is attested by his answer to our question which aimed at discovering how often the teachers used questions in their classes. In response, he said that "I normally use the questions almost all along my classes". This teacher's response showed that he acknowledged the relevance of using questions in his classes. As supported by Valverde Caravaca (2019), Pandey (2022) and Westwood (2008), the use of questions is fundamental for the obtention of effective results in EFL classes, and there is no specific stage in which teachers should use questions. In contrast, Txidoko seemed not to be aware of the relevance of such questions. In his response, he clearly mentioned that he hardly used questions in his classes as demonstrated by the answer: "Normally I have not used questions when I introduced the new lesson, I introduced a new lesson and I try to explain them [sic]". Although explanations can be useful in classes, they cannot replace the need of using questions to help students actively participate in the class. When asked for details in his response, it was noticed that he contradicted himself by stating that he sometimes used questions "before or at the beginning of the lesson". This contradiction was resolved in the analysis of his class audio recording, which will be provided in a later section.

Furthermore, the kind of questions English language teachers used in their classes was explored. In response to our question, Txidoko shared the open question he used which according to him was applicable to the introduction of his lesson. This teacher said that he frequently asked his students, "What did you understand about the previous lesson?". Using open questions was seen as a booster for students' engagement in class where different responses may be provided (Fusco, 2012). However, this should be in line with the level of students. That is, there is a need of planning the questions to be used carefully, based on student's backgrounds, so that the teacher can start with simple questions and keep increasing the level of difficulty as the lesson progresses. This is what was observed in Txuna's answer. He started by saying that his questions varied according to the topic and aims of the lesson. In his explanation, it was possible to identify closed questions, and integrating questions, as can be understood from the statement "at the beginning of the lesson, I use those short answers, but while the lesson goes, they understand what we are dealing with. I tend to introduce those questions that demand more thinking". This goes along with Woolfolk's (2021) statements regarding the observations of the increasing levels of difficulty found in Bloom's taxonomy of questions that teachers should consider.

Txuna suggests that other EFL "teachers should avoid using complex questions". When asked to clarify, two aspects were identified in his response. The first is that he means that the teachers should avoid questions demanding long answers and questions where two or three questions are included in one. Furthermore, he highlighted the need of looking at the level of the students to use such questions, as they may be appropriate for advanced students. In fact, his views are in line with different studies about questioning in EFL classes (Freiberg and Driscoll, 1996). Based on his responses, he was asked whether he plans the questions to be

used in class. He clarified that there were some questions which he planned in advance but as he says, "others are made up according to the circumstance when I'm in the class". The fact that he plans for the questions shows that he considers the need to think carefully about his students before he goes to the class. At the same time, the adaptation that he makes, based on each situation, shows that he is creative enough to deal with any classroom situation.

The results from the interviews pointed out that the teachers used questions for different purposes. According to our interviewees, questions were used in order to summarise or "explain some doubts related to the previous lesson" (Txidoko). Furthermore, Txidoko included in his list of purposes the need "to understand or to collect something from the students" by exploring their knowledge about the lesson to be introduced. Indirectly, it can be inferred from his reply that he also acknowledged the relevance of questions in encouraging students to speak, as can be read in the following comment, "most of the time students answer the questions rightly or wrongly, but they have said something, they reply something." Additionally, Txidoko emphasised that using questions in class allowed students to "use the same questions to others [inside] or out of the classroom". This response shows the teacher's awareness that his questions were not only affecting students' learning in the classroom but there were possibilities for transfer of learning to contexts outside the classroom, as defended by Fusco (2012); Pandey (2022) and Westwood (2008).

After a long explanation about the role of using questions in class, Txuna summarised in the following way:

I use questions as a way of checking my students' comprehension, that is, checking understanding, as a way of giving chance to some group of students who have a word in the class, especially for those introverted students, as a way of controlling your class [sic].

All these aspects are shortly summarised as "asking questions bring, checking comprehension, giving chance to the student to speak, and time management—controlling the class in this case [sic]" as stated by Txuna. The use of questions found in this participant's response was similar to what can be read in Freiberg and Driscoll (1996), Fusco (2012) and Westwood (2008). Finally, Txuna pointed out one technique which he used in class when asking questions: "if you ask a question and invite the student to answer, you are giving an opportunity to that student to respond or to say something [sic]". Hence, he shared his agreement with the importance of questions in the EFL classrooms.

Regarding the language they used to ask questions, both participants stated that they started with the target language which is English and in case their students did not understand, they shifted to Portuguese, the official language. This was done despite the multilingual backgrounds of the students. Students answered their questions in Portuguese because according to Txidoko, "they say it is difficult from speaking[sic]." Although "some of them understand when you speak", he added that their challenge was in replying. A similar view was shared by Txuna who said that "they want to answer it in Portuguese". This supports Adriosh and Razi's (2019), and Mauliddiyah et al.'s (2020) conclusion in which they identify this procedure as code-switching, a strategy used in EFL classes to facilitate learning. In such cases, however, Txuna concluded, "I force them, I invite them, I encourage them to try at least at the first step, try it in English. If they fail, I have no way out, I allow them to answer in Portuguese". Txuna's reaction showed that he didn't view code-switching strategy in EFL positively, thus, the need for his students to answer or ask questions in the target language.

The teachers interviewed had similar beliefs regarding the use of questions in class, although based on the interviews, their descriptions of their practices in the classrooms differed. In their answers, in general, it was noted that they recognised the positive effect questions had on their students' participation. These teachers were aware of the need of using questions to "give chance students to speak" as said by Txidoko. Moreover, as they explained, the use of questions could be relevant to introducing a new topic, checking for understanding, and involving students in the activities, thus, fostering communication. In the same way, pointing to the effectiveness of questions in EFL classes, Txuna believed that the use of questions in class had a positive impact. Calling our attention to the students' answers, he said that regardless of the language they used to respond, it showed that they understood what the teacher asked. At the same time, that teacher may infer that "they understood but they can't answer". Despite these beliefs, Txidoko did not do what he believed to be relevant for his students; he did not use questions to achieve all the positive results he identified.

Teachers' questioning practices in EFL classrooms

As explained in the Methodology section, classroom audio recordings were collected from the lessons of the two participating EFL teachers to analyse their questioning practices. All the questions asked by the teachers in the classroom were identified. Regarding the questions teachers used in the EFL class, the results show that both teachers often used questions in class. The participating teachers asked more than 50 different questions per lesson. The following Table summarises the types of questions asked by our participants:

Types of questions	Teacher		Examples
	Txidoko	Txuna	
Confirming questions	9	18	"O que nos dizem os adjetivos de quantidade, eles servem para o quê?" [What do adjectives of quantity tell us, what are they for?] (Txidoko) "What are we discussing today?" (Txuna)
Integrating questions	3	8	"Se ele diz algum significa podiam ser quantos?" [If he says some it means it could be how many?] (Txidoko) "I want to write a letter to my grandparents who are there in the rural area. Yet I understand that they can't read and write. Will they understand my letter?" (Txuna)
Open-ended questions	26	27	"What do you understand by quantitative adjectives?" (Txidoko) "Who would like to read the first paragraph?" (Txuna)
Valuing questions	2	14	"E se nós estamos a falar de adjetivos de quantidade, qual é o exemplo que vocês podem dar para se encaixar com o nosso tema?" [And if we are talking about adjectives of quantity, what is an example you can give that fits with our theme?] (Txidoko) "Okay, so what do we understand here?" (Txuna)
Feeling questions	0	2	"How are you today, class?" (Txuna)
Rhetorical questions	34	3	"O termo adjetivo significa no...? Nome." [The term adjective means na...? Name] (Txidoko) "Who is present and then who is not present?" (Txuna)
Procedural questions	14	24	"Mais alguém?" [Somebody else?] (Txidoko) "May I have a volunteer, please?" (Txuna)
Behavioural questions	0	1	"What are you doing?" (Txuna)

Table 2: Summary of types of questions asked by the teachers

The classroom recordings provided rich data regarding what happens in the EFL classrooms of the participating teachers. As can be seen from the Table above, the most common types of questions used by the participating teachers were rhetorical and open-ended questions. This result is surprising because, during the interviews, rhetorical questions were not mentioned or given as examples of the questions that the teachers used in their classes. Moreover, in the previous studies similar results could not be found regarding the high frequency of rhetorical questions. On the other hand, the use of open-ended questions matches the conclusions from other studies (e.g., Pandey, 2022). However, it will be necessary to analyse to what extent those questions yielded the expected responses.

Following the rhetorical and open-ended questions are procedural and confirming questions. These questions, although important for some classroom needs, are shown to be ineffective for the main purpose of asking questions. Indeed, they did not generate much interaction in the classroom. This confirms what Fusco (2012) and Pandey (2022) stated regarding the need to select appropriate questions if the aim is to make students participate actively in the class.

The participants did not ask behavioural or feeling questions, which is problematic because feeling questions allow students to express their own emotion or feelings (Fusco, 2012). Yet, all what the students were asked in class in this respect was "How are you?". Therefore, based on Lowery's questioning framework, the use of feeling questions combined with integrating, open-ended and confirming, is crucial to develop students' communicative and critical thinking skills. These questions can be followed by procedural and behavioural questions, which are used only for classroom management.

The general idea from Table 2 illustrates that Txuna's tendency was to involve as many types of questions as possible in his class while Txidoko's focus was on rhetorical and procedural questions with little attention to those questions which foster communication. In the following sections, further descriptions of the most

frequently used question types (rhetorical and open-ended questions) can be found and their implications for classroom interaction and students' communicative possibilities are discussed.

Rhetorical Questions

For Txidoko, the highest number of questions he asked in class were rhetorical questions, which demanded no answer from the students or simply the students complete the statements with the last part of the last word in his interrogative sentences as can be observed in the extract below:

T: Sim! Quantitativa provem de quantida...? [] Quantidade.

{Yes! Quantitative derives from quanti...? [] Quantity.}

Ss: [Quantidade]. {Quantity}”.

T: Adjectives, adjectives is English, yes?

Ss: Yes. (Txidoko' class, audio-recording)

The structure above illustrates how Txidoko conducted his class. Although it is true that using questions is important in the classroom, the types of questions as defended by Freiberg and Driscoll (1996) are crucial for a successful development of student's communicative and critical thinking skills. Based on Txidoko's practices, in rhetorical questions, students often provided either one word answer, a word which had already been stated by the teacher or they simply did not respond, and the teacher himself answered his rhetorical questions. For example:

T: Se fosse em português seria como o nosso colega responde..? respondeu

{If it was in Portuguese, it would be like the way your classmate respond...? Responded.} (Txidoko's class, audio-recording)

As can be noted, it is the teacher who asked and answered the question. This is the general characteristics of rhetorical questions presented in Fusco's (2012) book. Rhetorical questions cannot be used to help students since it is the teacher who is at the stage saying almost everything and the students become passive listeners. Hence, students' chances of meaningful communication are limited. However, this does not mean that teachers cannot use rhetorical questions. Interestingly, rhetorical questions were used by Txuna with a different purpose:

T: Let's check the presence at the attendance. Who is present and then who is not present? Please, find your name and sign this list.” (Txuna, audio-recording)

In this extract, it can be seen that the context has been given for the use of such rhetorical question, which to some extent also helps students to follow the instructions the teacher had just given regarding the need of the students to sign the attendance list. Although such questions allowed further possible interactions in Txuna's class, his rhetorical questions were limited to three in the whole lesson. Hence, despite the large number of questions used in Txidoko's classroom, the majority of these were rhetorical and failed to generate any communicative interactions in a large part of the lesson. This finding reinforces Adriano and Nkamta's (2018) conclusions which seem to indicate that the teaching of English in Mozambique is still not at the expected level. Thus, the need of equipping teachers with strategies which can help their students to improve their language performance.

Open-ended questions

Both Txidoko and Txuna used open-ended questions. However, their effectiveness was different. While for Txuna, students managed to respond to most of his open-ended questions, Txidoko faced serious difficulties to get his students to answer his open questions. For instance, right at the beginning of the lesson, Txidoko asked the questions:

T: Who knows something about this quantitative adjective? What do you understand by quantitative adjectives?” (Txidoko, audio-recording)

The students did not respond, he repeated the question seven times without being able to elicit any answers. He then informed the students that they could answer the question in Portuguese. However, the students still did not give any response. This has made him ask the students the reason why they were in silence

T: What does the silence mean?” (Txidoko, audio-recording)

Then he shifted to Portuguese asking the same last question about the silence: "O que é que significa o silêncio?" This led to a complete shift from English to Portuguese for the remaining class in which the latter

language dominated the class. It is worth noting that even after shifting languages, the students did not answer his question. After several attempts in Portuguese, a student answered, as demonstrated in the following extract:

T: O que vocês entendem por aquele termo? Sim!

{What do you understand by that word? Yes!}

S1: Os adjetivos são muitos.

{The adjectives are many.} (Txidoko).

That was the only student who replied to that question after about four minutes of trying to get an answer to his question. When he tried to ask for other ideas about the same question, there was no answer, indicating a clear ineffectiveness in using questioning to increase student participation. A possible reason for this would be the teachers' inability to ask questions that were appropriate to the linguistic level of the students, both in their target and official languages (Westwood, 2008). This contrasts with Txuna, whose open-ended questions had answers from the students, though the responses were short. Nevertheless, students answered his questions and sometimes asked him questions as well, which showed that the interaction was flowing and there was attention on the part of the students:

T: Who would like to read the first paragraph?

((Students volunteered to read and the teacher chose one girl student.))

((Later))

T: A boy student to do the same activity to read the first paragraph.

S1: Boy student?

T: Yes. (Txuna, audio-recording)

T: So, if we want to communicate either in oral or writing, we need to involve with two essential people, two different sides. What are they?

Ss: Sender. Sender and receive receiver. ((in chorus))

T: Yes. (Txuna, audio-recording)

The two extracts from teacher Txuna illustrate how his use of open-ended questions was successful to either get students do something or say something. In both cases, he did not need to translate what he was saying for his students to understand. This shows that if the questions are appropriately used considering the level of students and what the teacher wants them to do, the use of questions in class can be fruitful as defended by Pandey (2022).

Conclusion and Suggestions

This study focused on identifying the teachers' beliefs and practices on the use of questions in EFL classrooms in Mozambique. The results revealed that the two teachers who participated in the study had positive beliefs towards the use of questions in class. They understood that it was significant to use questions for different purposes. However, their practices differed from their beliefs. In general, they used rhetorical questions, which hardly generated any communicative interactions in the classroom context. While for Txuna it could be concluded that, by using questions, his students were able to use the target language, for Txidoko, almost throughout his lesson, students could not use the target language and they hardly responded to his questions which were mostly in Portuguese with very few in English. In both teachers' lessons, there was a lack of use of questions that developed critical thinking.

In terms of the types of questions used, it can be concluded that open-ended questions were mostly used, followed by procedural and rhetorical questions. Behavioural questions were used even less, followed by feeling questions. These results differ from Freiberg and Driscoll (1996) remarks that open-ended questions are the least used by the teachers. Although our findings revealed a higher percentage of the use of open-ended questions, it was evident that the teachers' techniques did not foster critical thinking since most of the time students were asked questions which demanded them to give one or two words (short) responses. This goes hand in hand with Farahian and Rezaee's (2012) conclusion where they stated that "the responses of all types of questions were generally made up of single words or simple phrases" (p. 166). This may be due to the level of students' linguistic abilities where questions requiring complex answers may be difficult to be answered at this level.

These findings have strong implications for in-service teachers and teacher trainers. For the first group, there is a need to match the beliefs with the practices by selecting good questions which can foster students' communication and critical thinking skills. For the latter group, this study should raise interest to reveal their discussions about the use of questions in class so that the teachers can be fully prepared to use this tool in their classrooms correctly and effectively.

This study also has implications for the use of first language in the classroom. As has been demonstrated through the classroom recordings, when inappropriate questions were employed, they resulted in the use of first/official language by the students, therefore limiting the opportunities for communicative activities in the target language to take place. Questions in the first/official language (Portuguese), should be employed only in those extreme cases where students do not understand what the teacher is asking and there is no other strategy that the teacher can use to make them understand the question (Chowdhury, 2013).

The purpose of the current study was to examine in depth the beliefs and practices of EFL teachers in the Mozambican context regarding questioning practices. Further studies could be conducted building upon the qualitative data suggested here to examine whether the findings can be applied to other contexts within Mozambique. Quantitative explorations of whether the types of questions employed by participating teachers in this study are also applicable at other levels should be conducted. In addition, since our findings suggested that certain types of questions limited the interactional possibilities in the classroom, other studies are needed to examine the impact of the practices identified in this study on the students' foreign language abilities in the use of English communicatively.

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Appendix

Transcription Conventions Adapted from Du Bois (1991)

Speaker identity/ turn start	:
Transcriptionist comments	(())
Speech overlap	[]
Codeswitching to Portuguese	<i>italic</i>
Translation	{ }
Question	?
Pause	.
Accent and lengthening Booster	!
Teacher	T
Student 1	S1
Students	Ss
Quotations of the participants	“ ”