

“Non-Native” Teachers Teaching Content in English: A Reflective Practice Approach

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Abstract

English-medium instruction (EMI) programmes are on the upswing in universities all over the world. However, the literature indicates that EMI instructors hardly pay any attention to the language aspect, in the belief that they are content –and not language– teachers. In an attempt to make EMI teachers reflect on the paramount role that language and, in particular, teacher-fronted questions play in their classes, in this study four EMI history teachers were video-recorded during six two-hour-long sessions each. Following Gall and Acheson (2011), the three steps of clinical supervision were implemented: planning conference, classroom observation, and feedback conference. By including the teachers as active participants in the process, both the researchers and the teachers looked at the data gathered in the classroom observations and analysed them. As a result of the side-by-side supervision, decisions were made on an equal footing by the researcher and the teacher. This model of supervision provides EMI teachers with objective feedback on their instruction, while they are encouraged to reach their own conclusions. Differences in the receptiveness to the reflective practice among the teachers were observed, suggesting the need to work with teachers on the benefits of professional teaching interventions, such as the one described here.

Keywords: English-medium instruction (EMI), teachers, reflective practice, teacher-fronted questions, English, classroom observation

Language matters and reflection on classroom practices neglected in EMI

The surge of English-medium instruction (EMI) programmes can mainly be put down to the role of English as the current lingua franca in the academia. The use of English in university contexts in which local languages were previously the habitual means of instruction is labelled

as Englishization and it has become such a global trend that Block and Khan (2021) attribute it to the general feeling that there is no alternative available, what the latter authors label as TINA. As a result, an increasing number of higher education institutions have jumped on the EMI bandwagon, although some of them more willingly than others (Wilkinson & Gabriëls, 2021) and many of them without providing the necessary methodological support (Lasagabaster, 2022).

The hegemonic position of English has however brought about tensions in multilingual university settings and has often led to classroom situations in which the use of language is unregulated (Kuteeva, 2023). In fact, and strikingly, one of the most recurrent findings found in the literature (Aguilar, 2017; Airey, 2012; Costa, 2012) has to do with the fact that language is hardly paid heed to, as EMI teachers' focus lies almost exclusively on subject matter teaching, whereas language issues play second fiddle or, more often than not, none at all (Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2021).

Despite the fact that EMI teachers tend to overlook language matters and usually have no time to reflect on their teaching practices, EMI students would greatly benefit from both attention to the nuances of the language of their specialization (which is why attention to form should be an integral part of any EMI course) and a reflection process on the part of their teachers. However, EMI teachers believe that such a focus on language is beyond their remit and they usually find it hard to take time to carry out a reflective process focused on their teaching. This is where reflective teaching comes to the fore, as it may help EMI teachers to reflect on their teaching philosophy, beliefs and practices with a view to making their teaching more effective.

Clinical Supervision on EMI Teachers' Questioning Practices

Gall and Acheson (2011) point out that clinical supervision relies on teachers as active participants in the supervisory process, that is, they propose a model of supervision that is interactive, democratic and teacher-centered, the main goal being the improvement of teachers' classroom instruction. In this way, the approach is not supervisor-centered and leads to a binding of both the teacher and the supervisor or researcher that becomes intimate and collaborative and, therefore, it is a far cry from the traditional top-down supervision. The use of the term *clinical* has nothing to do with pathology but rather refers to the "face-to-face relationship between the teacher and the supervisor and a focus on the teacher's actual behavior in the classroom" (p. 6).

Clinical supervision consists of three main phases: planning conference, classroom observation, and feedback conference. In the first phase, the so-called planning conference, the supervisors (in this case the authors of the paper) meet with the EMI teachers and plan for classroom observation. The EMI teachers are given the opportunity to explain their concerns, aspirations and needs, while the supervisors gather all the information to later on reflect on the issues raised by the teachers.

During the second phase, namely the classroom observation, the supervisors observe some lessons and record them in order to later on analyse the objectives set during the initial planning conference. It has to be noted that the supervisors need to adopt a neutral stance during the data collection process. In the case of this study the focus was on teachers' questioning practices, since questions significantly affect not only classroom interaction (Chang, 2012), but also pave the way for teachers to co-construct knowledge in collaboration with students (Al-Adeimi & O'Connor, 2021; Dafouz & Sánchez-García, 2013) and to bolster classroom participation (Fortanet-Gómez & Ruiz-Madrid, 2014; Kawalkar & Vijapurkar, 2013). Interestingly, whereas the role of questions has been extensively researched at pre-university levels, the number of studies undertaken at tertiary level is much more limited (Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2023). It is

important to note that previous studies carried out in EMI settings (Guarda & Helm, 2017; Morell, 2020) reveal that the higher the degree of teacher/student(s) interaction, the better the EMI teaching quality, which is why questioning practices deserve much more attention than they have hitherto received.

Finally, in the third phase or feedback conference, the supervisors meet with the EMI teachers and jointly analyse some extracts of the data recorded by the former, interpret the gathered information from the teachers' perspective and reach decisions about the next steps to be taken: The main onus in this last phase is placed on the EMI teachers, though. The analysis of the videos thus contributes to diagnosing and solving instructional problems that may arise regarding how EMI teachers handle questions in class.

A Reflective Practice Approach

Reviews of research on reflective practice clearly demonstrate that, when reflection is cogently implemented, results are very positive because, by engaging teachers in this reflective process, its transformative potential is unleashed (Farrell, 2018). Reflective practice can turn out to be beneficial even for highly experienced in-service teachers, as is the case of the participants in our study, because the reflection on their teaching philosophy, principles and practices (Freeman, 2016) may enhance their awareness and, consequently, they can “become more empowered to not only reflect on their practice but also be transformed so that they can provide optimum learning opportunities for their students” (Farrell, 2018, p. 130).

With this in mind, this article is focused on the feedback conference, in which after watching a few video excerpts of their classroom performance, EMI teachers reflect on a number of areas related to their questioning practices that may (or may not) need to be improved. The participants may comment that they did not provide enough waiting time, that they did not ask the right question to elicit an answer from their students', or they may be happy with how they brought up a particular question in a specific classroom situation. The underlying idea is that EMI teachers approach reflective practice as a tool not only to make their teaching more effective but also as a way to identify their own best classroom practices. In this way EMI teachers can self-diagnose teaching problems in collaboration with the supervisors and ponder remedial steps that could be taken on the basis of the reflection process. As Farrell (2020, p. 278) puts it: “Reflection is a key competency for teachers as it allows them to analyze and adapt their teaching to EMI students in specific social, cultural and political contexts.”

Research Questions

Taking into account the review of the literature above, in this article we aim to address the following four research questions:

RQ1. What kind of strategies do EMI teachers think they use to ask questions?

RQ2. How do they think the questions they ask affect EMI classroom interaction?

RQ3. What reflection does watching video excerpts of their questions in class stimulate among teachers about how they ask questions and the (lack of) interaction they promote?

RQ4. Do they think that this reflection process could be useful for their teaching?

The Study

The Context

This study was carried out at the University of the Basque Country UPV/EHU in Spain, an officially bilingual institution in both Basque (the minority language) and Spanish (the majority language). Since the so-called Multilingualism Plan was established in 2005, whose aim was to

bolster the use of foreign languages as additional means of instruction, the number of courses delivered in English has steadily increased, to the extent that EMI courses are present in all the degrees. Due to its multilingual nature, the students enrolled in the UPV/EHU usually encounter three languages on campus and in their degrees, namely Basque, Spanish and English. The students enrolled in EMI courses do so on a voluntary basis, as EMI is not compulsory at the UPV/EHU. This is a factor that, in principle, would help to boost classroom interaction and participation, since students are motivated to learn in English as they are not forced to participate in EMI courses. In addition, classes are rather small in size (usually less than 15 students per class) and this should also foster participation, although previous studies reveal that this is not always the case (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2023; Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2023).

Although several EMI professional development courses are offered at this particular institution, none of them contemplates reflective practice as an integral part of EMI teachers' training. The courses available revolve around the improvement of oral and written communication and pronunciation in English, the use of technology, co-worker group tutorials, or communication across cultures, but they do not tend to include a reflective practice component, as we intend to do in our study.

The Participants

From March 16th to March 21st 2024 four individual interviews were carried out with four history teachers at the UPV/EHU. Participants were all males and held a certificate at the C1 level in English according to the European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), as required by their higher education institution in order to be allowed to teach EMI courses. The English level C1 is the fifth level out of six in the CEFR and its holders are able to function independently and with a great deal of precision on a wide variety of subjects without any prior preparation, as well as to use English flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes.

None of the participants had English as their mother tongue and they were therefore “non-native” speaker teachers. Although some authors (e.g., Dewaele, 2018) have proposed to replace the term “non-native” by alternative terms, in this article we have decided to use this label between inverted commas because it facilitates the understanding to both the general readership and EMI professionals. In fact, “non-native” is a term that is easily associated with an already-existing concept in everybody’s mind, although we do acknowledge that it is built around ideological and discriminatory ideas about language, as pointed out by Holliday (2005), Colmenero and Lasagabaster (2024), and Llurda and Calvet-Terré (2024), among others.

Table 1. Interviewees

Teacher ID	EMI subject	Years of teaching experience	Years of EMI teaching experience	Students in the class	Nr. of video-extracts shown & answered/unanswered questions
T1	<i>America in the modern age</i>	30	12	10	2 (answered questions) 2 (unanswered questions)
T2	<i>Early modern history I</i>	22	8	8+/-	3 (answered questions) 2 (unanswered questions)
T3	<i>World economic history</i>	28	12	15+/-	2 (answered questions) 3 (unanswered questions)
T4	<i>Contemporary history of the Basque Country</i>	35	7	10	2 (answered questions) 2 (unanswered questions)

The four participants had different degrees of teaching experience (see Table 1), although they could be labelled as highly experienced teachers since they had an average teaching experience of 30 years, while they had been teaching EMI courses for more than 11 years on average. Table 1 also shows the subjects taught, the size of the classes, and the number of video extracts containing questions that were answered or unanswered by the students

Method

The two authors of the present article carried out two interviews each and the language used was Spanish because it was the mother tongue of all the participants. Overall, they had a duration of 3 hours and 18 minutes, and an average duration of 50 minutes (68 minutes being the longest interview, 32 minutes the shortest). They were audio-recorded and then transcribed with the aid of the Sonix online software (<https://sonix.ai/>). The time the students and the teachers took to answer the questions (i.e., the wait time) in the recordings of the class extracts discussed was also noted in the transcriptions. All interviews were then content analysed (Dörnyei, 2007) using NVivo 14.

Inspired by Astrid et al. (2019), Dös et al. (2016), Fitriati et al. (2017), Larson and Lovelace (2013), and our own reflections as researchers and EMI teachers, a script with the questions we wanted to ask the teachers was elaborated (see Tables 2-5 in the results section). Interviews were semi-structured and were organised into three main parts. The first part focused on teachers' perceptions of the strategies they used to ask questions (research question 1) and the impact of these questions on interaction in the EMI classroom (research question 2). The second part of the interview involved showing teachers 4 or 5 short video excerpts from recordings of their lessons in which they asked questions. Each interviewee was shown two or three video excerpts with questions that were answered by students, and two or three with unanswered questions. All the excerpts contained teacher-fronted display questions and referential questions alone, as these two types of questions were the most frequently asked ones (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2023). The former refer to "those to which the answer is known by the teacher," whereas the latter to "those to which the answer is not known by the teacher" (Sánchez-García, 2020, p. 32, and see Sánchez-García, 2020, for the complete taxonomy of questions). The aim of the interviews with the teachers was to understand what reflection was sparked by the teachers' viewing of their own performance and what reactions were triggered by the way they asked questions and the interaction or lack thereof such questions promoted (research question 3). The third and final part of the interview was aimed at understanding whether the reflection carried out through watching the videos could be useful for their future teaching practices (research question 4).

In an attempt to make EMI teachers reflect on the paramount role that questions play in their classes, clinical supervision (Gall & Acheson, 2011) was implemented. As mentioned above, this model of supervision is teacher-centered rather than supervisor-centered and helps to provide EMI teachers with objective feedback on their instruction, while they are encouraged to reach their own conclusions about how to improve their questioning practices in order to make their teaching more effective. In the classroom observation step each EMI teacher was recorded during six two-hour long classes. In the feedback conference phase the supervisors' role consisted in simply putting forward other possible scenarios or drawing the EMI teachers' attention to elements that could have played a role in the effectiveness of the classroom exchanges.

Results

Research Question 1. What Kind of Strategies Do EMI Teachers Think they Use to Ask Questions?

In order to answer RQ1, eight specific questions were asked to interviewees (from a to h; see Table 2).

Table 2. What Kind of Strategies Do EMI Teachers Think They Use to Ask Questions?

a - Do you ask the class in general first or do you prefer to ask individual students? Or get volunteers to intervene?
b - Do you try to get everyone to speak? Why?
c - What kind of questions do you like to ask? Thought-provoking questions, critical thinking questions, questions about specific knowledge?
d - Does the type of questions you ask depend on the time of the class? For example, questions about the previous lesson (remembering) at the beginning of the lesson, and questions of a different type in the middle of the lesson?
e - Wait Time: Do you think that in general you give your students enough time to answer the question? Do you feel uncomfortable when the answer is not immediate?
f - Do you give students more time depending on the type and complexity of the question?
g - Some questions are more complex than others. When you ask a difficult question, what do you do when students don't answer? For example, do you give the answer yourself? Or do you rephrase the question, or do you give them more information?
h - Depending on the size of the class, do you ask different types of questions or does the size of the class have no influence?

It was found that teachers tend to address their questions to the class in general first (a); then, either they try to encourage participation from students who usually stay silent, without targeting anyone personally (T1, T2), or address the question to specific students, calling them by name (T3, T4).

When asked whether they try to get all attending students to speak (b), two teachers, T1 and T4, responded affirmatively, while T2 and T3 said that they prefer not to do that. The reasons they brought in support of their view were diverse. Character (i.e., shyness, T1, T2, T3), lack of proficiency in English, lack of interest and basic knowledge of the subject (T3) were cited in support of the negative answer. On the other hand, all the teachers agreed that everyone's participation is important as a means to receive feedback on the students' level of understanding (T1, T2), as well as being a tool to develop oral presentation skills (T1). It is interesting to compare the different opinions expressed by T1 and T2, who stated that they themselves used to be very shy and, therefore, can empathise with their students. Both cited character as a reason to justify their views, which, however, are opposite: while T2 argued that, out of respect for the students' shy character, it is not necessary to make everyone intervene in class (Extract 1), T1 stated that since his students are likely to be future (history) teachers, it is important that everyone is involved and develops skills in oral presentation (Extract 2) (The extracts have been translated from Spanish into English by the authors of this paper. We made some adjustments to the teachers' utterances to ensure comprehensibility).

[Extract 1, T2] Yes, but no, I'm not obsessed with everyone speaking and participating. Everyone, well, has their own personality and character and sometimes it's complicated, isn't it? And to break the ice later on. But well. For example, I say this from my own experience, but I was also, I have always been quite shy. So, well, sometimes it was hard for you, wasn't it, to jump in and, well, you don't want to force people.

[Extract 2, T1] I have always been a very, very shy person, all my life. So, in class I had answers for everything and I would have liked to say but I didn't dare. [...] I have always been hyper shy, but hyper. I used to flush. So I understand that it is important also for the activity that they do professionally, if many are going to be teachers, they have to handle oral skills that we have to manage. So, being able to do that I think is important. So, I think it is important that they participate.

When asked what kinds of questions they preferred to ask (c), both questions that foster reflection and critical thinking (T1, T2) (generally speaking, referential questions) and concrete questions on specific knowledge (generally speaking, display questions) (T4) were mentioned. In contrast, T3 affirmed that he favoured the combination of the two.

To the question as to whether they asked different types of questions depending on the part of the class (d), three of them (T1, T2 and T3) answered in the affirmative, explaining that they tend to ask questions about the previous lesson at the beginning of each new lesson, and questions of a different type afterwards. T1 also specified that his questions differ depending on the phase of the lesson – theoretical or practical – in which they are formulated. While practical questions generally deal with the texts students analyse in groups, theoretical ones are questions on the spot that help him gather feedback on students' understanding. Unlike T1, T2 and T3, T4 responded negatively to our question (d), stating that he was not aware of proposing different questions depending on the moment of the lesson (Extract 3).

[Extract 3, T4] No, I don't think so. At least not consciously.

The following question was about wait time (e). When asked whether they thought they gave students enough time to answer their questions, T2 and T3 responded in the affirmative, whereas T1 and T4 replied in the negative. T2 explained that giving students time to respond was also a good strategy for him to rest for a while (e.g., to drink some water), and did not mention feeling uneasy while waiting for answers. T4, on the other hand, acknowledged giving students too little time to respond, and motivated this behaviour with his feeling uncomfortable during moments of prolonged silence. It is interesting to compare the stances of T1 and T3, which, at first glance, seem contradictory. Despite the fact that T1 actually gives quite a lot of time to students to respond (as evidenced by recordings of the lessons), he affirmed not to give enough. However, his stance refers to the occasions in which students should have reflected on assigned materials at home and hence expects a quick response from the students in class when asked.

Regarding T3, on the one hand, he said that he gives students enough time to respond, just like all teachers ("It is what we need to do") and that he does not feel uncomfortable when students do not answer ("I'm used to it"). On the other hand, he stated that he usually does not wait for students to respond because waiting in vain even makes him feel awkward (Extract 4).

[Extract 4, T3] No, I almost never do it because I suspect that the class is capable of not saying anything. And at the beginning you do it, but when you see what some of the students do, you think, look, if you are going to be uncomfortable, it has to be voluntary. If you are going to be uncomfortable, forget it. Because I also find it weird to be in that situation.

As for whether teachers thought they gave students more time depending on the type and complexity of the question (f), T4 was the only one who, once again, stated that he was not aware of varying the duration of the wait time granted depending on the question asked (Extract 5). The other three teachers, however, responded affirmatively.

[Extract 5, T4] Consciously no [...] No, no, I don't think so, at least not [...] No, no, I don't think so,

When asked what they usually do when students do not answer difficult questions (g), all four responded that they guide them by providing small pieces of information ('pills' or 'breadcrumbs', see Extract 6). T1 and T2 also added that they try to support students by reformulating the question. By contrast, T4 stated that he himself begins to formulate the answer to the question asked, as a means for students to engage with the topic (Extract 7).

[Extract 6, T2] When I see that they don't, then I give them some small pills. To see if they also realise what, what we want to achieve. Yes. Normally I never give them the answer immediately, but, well, I try, I leave little crumbs for them to pick up and follow the path that I need, that, well, that I think is the right path.

[Extract 7, T4] But maybe rather than rephrase the question, start with a certain partial answer to keep them engaged.

Regarding the question about the influence of class size on the type of questions asked (h), T1 and T4 responded that they generally ask different types of questions depending on whether the group is large (80-100 students) or small (20-30 students), and recognised that with small groups – such as the EMI ones – encouraging student participation is easier (Extract 8). T2 stated that, given the relatively low number of students in his class, he likes to implement different teaching methods – such as the flipped classroom methodology – as a means to get students more actively involved and therefore receive feedback on their understanding, and they constitute a strategy for him to avoid getting bored (Extract 9).

[Extract 8, T1] It's just that you can't. I don't know how to tell you, you can't! Of course, in groups of 80-100 students, the ones we have in Basque sometimes, when I taught in Basque, one of the changes in English was that, you had groups of 25, the average I have. Of course, with 25 you can do wonders!

[Extract 9, T2]. If the classes are only master classes, at the end you don't know if you are getting to the students or not. So, yes, I vary, the truth is that this helps you not to get bored too, because if you have been giving classes for 30 years, maybe in the end you get bored, even yourself!

Research Question 2. How Do They Think the Questions They Ask Affect EMI Classroom Interaction?

In order to answer RQ2, seven specific questions were asked to interviewees (from a to g; see Table 3).

Table 3. How Do They Think the Questions They Ask Affect EMI Classroom Interaction?

a - Would they like to have more interaction with students in class?
b - If you think there is not as much interaction as you would like, how do you try to encourage them to participate?
c - What role do you think your questions play in such attempt?
d - What are you looking for in this interaction, for them to participate more by answering your questions or for them to ask more of their own questions?
e - Do you find that students respond to your questions adequately in terms of answer length? Or do they tend to be too brief?
f - Do you think that the students' level of English has something to do with it? Or is it more influenced, for example, by the size of the group?
g - How do you think interaction in class could be improved?

When asked whether they would like to have more interaction with students in class (a), three out of four answered in the affirmative; only T4 stated that he was happy with the level of interaction he had. This circumstance was confirmed by the recordings of the lessons, where it was observed that the level of student participation, of one student in particular, was rather high.

To stimulate interaction in class (b), the four interviewees declared to use various techniques: assuring students by telling them not to feel threatened by participating in class, and helping them become aware that making mistakes also aids learning (T2, Extract 10), asking questions to students (T2, T3) and giving them hints to answer them (T4), telling them anecdotes (T3), and dealing with themes that are closer to their experience and interests (T3, T4), highlighting parallelisms between the past and the present (T3).

[Extract 10, T2] Sometimes I get the feeling that they are afraid of making mistakes [...] I usually tell them, “There is no problem if you make a mistake, that’s how you are going to learn.” But they don’t like it. I don’t know if it’s because they are afraid of ridicule, rejection or comments from others, I don’t know. I don’t know. I do try to get them to participate, but it’s hard.

T1 recounted having developed a specific strategy – the ‘participation points’ strategy – to encourage students to take part in discussions. It involves giving a token to students each time they contribute by asking questions or answering the teacher’s questions, and, at the end of the lesson, tallying how many tokens they have accumulated and taking it into account for the final evaluation. T1 claimed that with this technique, he managed to increase the level of participation in class.

Despite stating that he has not yet found the perfect strategy to stimulate interaction in class, T2 was well aware of the role his questions play in class (c). He stated that not only do they encourage student participation, but they also help students overcome stage fright, gain more self-confidence, and develop critical thinking skills. Additionally, he added that questions are important for him to receive feedback on their level of understanding of the subject.

When asked what they were looking for in class interaction (d), the four interviewees provided three different but interconnected responses. T4 declared that his priority is that students answer his questions, T2 said he also appreciates when students themselves ask their own questions, T3 stated that he especially likes it when there is debate or discussion in the classroom (Extract 11). For T1, instead, the main objective was for students to be active and to use critical thinking to process the information they receive (Extract 12).

[Extract 11, T3] Let them participate more. But I don’t mind if they ask questions. Above all, what I like, as we all do, is that there is debate and discussion.

[Extract 12, T1] Let them question, let them be active in the way they are receiving the information.

To the question as to whether they found that students responded to their questions adequately in terms of length (e), all four agreed that that was not the case, meaning that students’ answers tend to be very brief. T1 also added that, in his view, this circumstance should be attributed not so much to the students but to the local educational system, which does not encourage or provide tools to foster the development of interaction and oral presentation skills (Extract 13).

[Extract 13, T1] I think that as it is, in the system we have in education, oral expression is not favoured. They are brief, but not because they are brief, simply because [...] well, let’s say that they lack tools. To make a spoken speech you have to have an experience of making a spoken speech and I think that they have never done it or it is not usual for them to do it.

When asked whether they thought that the students' level of English has something to do with the lack of interaction in class (f), all teachers responded in the affirmative, emphasising above the negative impact of their poor command of spoken English. Furthermore, T3 mentioned another problem that, in his opinion, negatively affects interaction. According to him, such problem is connected to their lack of motivation. This issue concerns students who, after failing to pass the exam in the same course taught in Basque, decide to switch to the parallel EMI course hoping for better luck (Extract 14).

[Extract 14, T3] I think that the Faculty has made an effort to offer teaching in two or even three languages. But of course, what the students do is, if I fail the subject in the Basque group, I change to the English group to see if I have better luck. One student told me. She said to me, "No, I have taken the course in the Basque group, but I failed. I'm switching to your group because I think it's going to be easier to pass here."

In response to the question as to how interaction in class could be improved (g), T2 mentioned the fact that groups should not be too small, otherwise, there would be a risk that students feel even more inhibited and "obliged" to speak. On the other hand, T3 emphasised that to make classroom interaction work it is necessary to focus primarily on students who are interested and willing to participate, by proposing topics that are of interest to them. T4 highlighted the importance of asking questions to stimulate student participation, while at the same time avoiding interrupting them to correct them (Extract 15).

[Extract 15, T4] And then, although sometimes it is difficult, not to cut them off when they intervene and, even if they have answered something that is not very very good, not to take away their reason [...] Because of course, if they intervene and you tell them, "No, that's not so!" Then the next time they won't intervene. That part is very important to me.

Research Question 3. What Reflection Does Watching Video Excerpts of Their Questions in Class Stimulate Among Teachers About How They Ask Questions and the (Lack of) Interaction They Promote?

To answer RQ3, four questions were asked to interviewees (from a to d; see Table 4), with reference to the video excerpts of the questions they asked in the recorded classes some time earlier.

Table 4. What Reflection Does Watching Video Excerpts of Their Questions in Class Stimulate Among Teachers About How They Ask Questions and the (Lack of) Interaction They Promote?

a - Why did you ask the question in this way (to a specific student or in general, open or closed)?
b - After watching the video, would you ask the question the same way? Why would you, why wouldn't you?
c - Why do you think that in this case you obtained (did not obtain) a response from the students?
d - Do you think you gave them enough time to respond or should you have allowed a little more time?

According to the interviewees, all the questions were addressed to the whole class. No student was singled out in particular. When asked why they formulated the excerpt questions in that way (a), interviewees responded either because they thought they were general questions

tapping into students' basic knowledge, and, therefore, they were within their reach (T1, T2, T4), or because they dealt with themes capturing students' interests (T3). Another reason for asking general questions was added by T4, who emphasised that doing so would prevent the embarrassment deriving from singling out individual students. On the other hand, T3 affirmed that every now and then it is important to ask specific questions to specific students, as a means to prompt them to express themselves with precision. Commenting two general questions, T1 explained that asking this type of questions belongs to his "continuity strategy", consisting in asking general questions to link the new contents to a previous class. T1 motivated his choice to ask general questions that mix expected and unexpected events to the entire group as a means to promote thought and critical thinking, consistent with what was observed earlier (Extract 12).

In response to the question as to whether, after watching the excerpts, they would change the way they formulated their questions (b), all four teachers responded that they would keep them as they were when referring to the questions that were answered by students. With reference to unanswered questions, T1 and T2 became aware that the way the questions were formulated was not the most suitable for eliciting a response from the students. Furthermore, they added that the question should be reformulated taking into greater consideration the students' world, so that they themselves could actively arrive at the answer (Extract 16).

[Extract 16, T2] I would talk to them, so, I would try to bring them closer to the case of Spain in 2017, when the famous crisis took place and when Spain had a public debt. Something closer, yes [...] I think, well, that is my point of view. In other words, they are the ones who have to come up with the answer. Yes, because in the end, when you think about things, you say, "Ah, look, this is related to this, this is related to that, this is related to that." If I give them everything, in the end no, no, they do not react, of course.

T4 also became aware that not all of his questions were always conducive to a response from the students. Therefore, he speculated that it might be appropriate to formulate them with more details, providing students with more prompts, and adopting a different modality (e.g., from general whole group question to question for a specific student, or vice versa). Furthermore, T1 and T3 recalled that it is important to consider the characteristics of the class group in order to formulate questions effectively. T3, for example, did not comment on the possibility of changing the formulation of his questions, but repeatedly emphasised that the group of students he teaches is the most important thing to consider.

When asked why they thought that they received – or did not receive – an answer from the students (c), all four interviewees acknowledged that the questions that received responses were mostly connected to the students' world, leveraging their basic knowledge and stimulating their interests. Furthermore, T2 added that incorporating more details or providing greater guidance from the teacher was the winning element in reformulating questions that initially had not received a response. All four teachers also noted that the unanswered questions were too far removed from the students' concrete experience and their basic knowledge. T3 repeatedly pointed out the students' lack of interest as the main cause of the unanswered questions (Extract 17).

[Extract 17, T3] But you see? It's the attitude they have. It's an interesting topic, it's a topic that is also what we are living, but not for the guys, they are not hooked [...]. But they should be more interested in this, because this is what is being discussed now!

Finally, in response to the question about wait time (d), T1, T2 and T3 responded that they thought they gave students enough time to answer their questions. In contrast, T4 responded in

the negative, and identified insufficient wait time as one of the reasons for the students' lack of response (Extract 18).

[Extract 18, T4] I do not think so, I would have to give some more clues, to give them a little more time, to give them more opportunity to, yes, to intervene.

Research Question 4. Do They Think That This Reflection Process Could Be Useful for Their Teaching?

To answer RQ4, two questions were asked to interviewees (a, b; see Table 5).

Table 5. Do They Think That This Reflection Process Could Be Useful for Their Teaching?

a - Through this process of reflection that we have carried out, have you been surprised by the way you ask questions or were you already aware of it?
b - Do you think that the reflection that we have carried out can be useful in your teaching and will help you to make any changes?

T1 and T4 were surprised by the way their questions were formulated in the video excerpts (a). While for T4, the language (English) was the most surprising element, in the sense that he noticed an improvement since he started teaching in English, T1 stated that the surprise effect was more related to spontaneous questions, whereas the "strategic" questions, which he has in his repertoire and knows work, did not surprise him (Extract 19).

[Extract 19, T1] Some of them. In fact, they are part of a kind of script. Others are not, they are spontaneous [...]. This question (*referring to the question shown in the video*) was planned to be asked just like this.

When asked about whether they thought that the reflection carried out in the interview could be useful in their teaching and would help them to make any changes (b), T1, T2 and T4 responded in the affirmative. Specifically, T2 recognised the interview helped him become aware of the importance of the impact of group composition, of how the effect of the strategies applied might vary depending on the group. He also suggested the interviewer that a teacher training day should be organised, as an occasion to share best EMI teaching practices and the results of the present study. T1 acknowledged that the interview served him to reflect on the importance of being aware of the impact of the age difference between students and the teacher, a factor that often complicates the choice of topics to address, and on how questioning strategies are applied (Extract 20).

[Extract 20, T1] Well, this helps to think of strategies to ask our questions. That is to say, not to ask just like that, but to be conscious of strategies, I mean.

The only teacher who did not explicitly answer the question on the impact of the interview (b) was T3. However, his point of view could be inferred from the thoughts he expressed at the end, from which it is understood that the reflection carried out had (and will have) very limited or no impact at all on his teaching. At no time does he question his teaching and questioning style, and attributes the lack of student participation to external circumstances outside his control, namely, his students' knowledge and motivation and the education system. Given that his students are attending a BA programme in Business Administration and Management, he explained that they lack both basic knowledge and interest for his subject (*World economic history*) and, as a result, are reluctant to participate in class. Furthermore, he added that today's students do not have sufficient basic historical knowledge and are not even used to taking exams, because the pre-university education system revolves around the acquisition of skills, competences and the learning to learn approach. A system that, in his view, is a "failing

educational experiment,” responsible for converting students into its “victims” who are unprepared to face the challenges presented at university, whose main role is the provision of knowledge.

Discussion

The teachers who participated in this study believe teacher-fronted questions to be an integral part of their daily teaching practices, serving multiple purposes. Yet, while some of their questions are successful at raising an answer from their students, others are not. The aim of this study is to reflect with the teachers on the matter of teacher-student interaction (i.e. their questioning practices) by subjecting them to reflective practice, inspired by Farrell (2018) and based on Gall and Acheson’s clinical procedure (2011). From the semi-guided interviews, we have learned that three out of the four teachers interviewed consciously apply some strategies in their questioning practices. They are capable of identifying the techniques employed to ask their questions (e.g., the choice of a topic, which students to direct the questions to), and comment on the strategies they adopt when no answer is provided. They are also able to identify the external factors that affect lack of student responses (e.g., the students’ level of English, the group sizes, the dynamics of the classroom, the (lack) of student motivation in the subject).

Based on the analysis of the data gathered in the discussions, we conclude that three of the four participants value their participation in the reflective practice with us. Interestingly, the benefits that are singled out by the participants differ from one participant to another, as the experience may be affected by teacher personality traits, teaching situations and personal teaching styles, revealing the powerful impact of this kind of intervention.

The main impact of the reflective practice concerns the topic under scrutiny, namely, the teachers’ questioning practices in general, and the formal and content aspects of the questions posed by the teachers themselves, more specifically. These are aspects that are not usually contemplated by EMI teachers. In particular, the viewing of the videos and the semi-guided interviews with the teachers are particularly useful in the case of the unanswered questions. This an important issue since all teachers agree on the need to increase student participation. In this regard, concerns regarding the suitability of the questions as well as ideas on the formulation of the questions for their future teaching practices are raised by the teachers. Some of the teachers stress the importance of making their questions more relevant to the contexts the students are familiar with, the need to provide more details and hints in the formulation of their questions, and the inclusion of both questions directed to the whole class and to individual students.

The reflective practice proved to be especially rewarding for one of the teachers, T4, the teacher with the lowest level of English competence. Studies (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2018) have shown that teaching in an L1 which is not their own can be the source of stress for the teaching staff. In this particular case, the teacher’s viewing of the videos in which he saw himself teach and interact with the students in English allowed him to boost his language immunity (Dörnyei & Hiver, 2017) and to strengthen his confidence to teach in English, as he became aware of his good communicative skills in English. In addition, while he was not aware of the (conscious) implementation of any teaching strategies to ask questions, he realised the need to extend the wait time for the students’ responses, for example. On his part, T1 was able to reflect on his spontaneous interactions with the students. This teacher distinguished between questions that he used every year because they work, and those that arise on the spur of the moment. It was the latter that concerned him most, as he was more uncertain about their effectiveness. The reflective practice was particularly useful in the case of these questions because it has allowed T1 to determine their suitability and appropriateness for the teaching context in question. In addition, he became aware of the importance of the age difference between the students and

himself which conditioned the choice of topics, the relevance of the dynamics and composition of the group, while reflecting on the strategies behind his questioning practices. T2 felt very strongly about the benefits of this intervention for his teaching development and voiced his desire to meet with the other colleagues to enrich the reflective process.

However, not all the teachers in our study were affected by the reflective practice to the same degree. This was the case of T3, who participated in our study willingly but was not critical of his questioning practices and did not see the need for any adjustments in his teaching practices after the intervention. We relate T3's position to his belief that the university's role is to pass knowledge onto the students and that teachers are the main authorised source of that knowledge. Thus, while he established a very good rapport with the students and was always willing to hear his students' thoughts, we believe that his traditional teacher-fronted teaching style made him less receptive to the adoption of a critical stance of this questioning strategies and teaching practices. In other words, in order for change to take place, the realisation that change is needed has to be acknowledged first. Without such recognition, interventions including the reflective practice implemented in our study may fail to have an impact on some teachers.

Conclusions

Reflective practice is recognised as a key feature of professional development programmes in many different fields and professions, including education (Farrell, 2020). However, its implementation in EMI contexts is conspicuous by its absence, as policy makers do not see it as fundamental and, as a side effect, there has been very little support to include it in professional development initiatives (Pageze & Lasagabaster, 2017). In addition, it has to be noted that Basque university lecturers are usually reluctant to take part in teacher training initiatives because these courses are not highly valued in promotion processes (Sagasta & Ipiña, 2016). In this context reflective practice could contribute to fostering both an attitudinal and a methodological change if teacher training was to be given a greater weight and more recognition when it comes to teachers' promotion processes. Last but not least, studies on the positive impact of reflective practice should provide empirical evidence of how valuable this approach may result in the implementation of more efficient EMI programmes. We believe our study which focused on teacher-student interaction through teacher-fronted questions may make a small contribution to surface the benefits that reflective practice may entail, not only as regards EMI teachers' teaching practices but also regarding EMI students, who will ultimately benefit from more effective teaching.

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