CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT IN ENHANCING LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT IN ENGLISH: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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Abstract

This article is an attempt to address the perceptions of English teachers on the roles of cognitive domains of Bloom Taxonomy in enhancing the learning achievement of learners at the secondary level. I wanted to explore the existing phenomena of the framing questions in the English classroom using phenomenological research design under a qualitative research approach in which 10 secondary-level English teachers from Kathmandu district, particularly Kirtipur municipality, were selected through a non-random purposive sampling procedure in this study. Higher-order thinking skills such as analyzing, evaluating, and creating are essential in developing the critical and creative thinking skills of learners at secondary level. The findings show fulfillment of objectives of the curricula, developing critical and creative thinking skills, developing positive thinking skills and motivation, and developing meta-cognitive and problem-solving skills through the use of the cognitive domain of Bloom Taxonomy. It is concluded that practices of framing questions based on the cognitive domain of Bloom Taxonomy are essential in enhancing the learning achievement of learners in English.

Keywords: assessment, Bloom taxonomy, cognitive domain, critical thinking skills, and creative thinking skills

Introduction

The educational system of the country should be very scientific, systematic, and universal in order to develop every aspect of the country. In this regard, Derakhshan et al. (2020) argue that no nation can be great and rise above without the quality of its education system, and likewise, no educational system can be great or rise above without the quality of its teachers. Nurturing teacher quality is the key to properly erecting the cornerstone of the educational system and society at large (Pishghadam et al., 2019). Since accountability in education has been a growing public concern in the 21st century, teachers' knowledge, skills, and competency for ensuring the reliability and validity of classroom tests remain at the bottom of the

teacher education programme (Miller, Linn, & Gronlund, 2009). Teachers' professional expertise is essential to ensuring the reliability and validity of tests. Evaluation of students' learning should be very scientific and productive through classroom assessment at the school level in order to develop the learning achievement of the learners. Evaluation and assessment are essential processes for the constant growth of teachers, learners, and the organization (Sambell, 2013).

Evaluation is a process of judging or determining one's ability or performance in a systematic manner at the workplace or in an educational institution (Rao, 2018). Assessment is a continuous process of evaluation, which is an overall judgement of the teaching and learning process. More importantly, it is also the process of improving the quality of teaching and learning. Assessing students' learning is part of teaching and learning in the school education system. Assessment influences the students most in their learning rather than teaching (Islam et al., 2021). Assessment plans are to be guided by the goals and objectives of the curriculum at any level, so there should be an appropriate alignment between the design of assessment methods, techniques, and strategies and the goals and objectives of the curriculum. There should be adequate infrastructure and human resources to enforce the planned English language assessment scheme to meet the goals and objectives of the curriculum (Islam et al., 2021).

Summative and formative assessments are both modes of assessment in school education. Generally, summative assessment is conducted near the end of the teaching and learning cycle of any educational programme; however, formative assessment is carried out from the day of the beginning of any educational programme through classroom activities. Particularly, formative assessment is essential to improving the instruction of teachers and the learning achievement of students (William, 2011). Every good assessment has the power to promote effective learning. There is reciprocity between formative and summative assessment and learning achievement to enhance students' performance in the summative assessment (Lam, 2013). In fact, teaching and assessment are intertwined in English language teaching. Teachers' assessment literacy plays a vital role in improving teaching and learning (Hakim, 2015).

The main aims of assessments are placement of student screening, identification of any issues, replacement or promotion, checking the rate of students' progress, appraisal of the existing educational programme, and diagnosing probable liabilities of program. The English language teaching (ELT) assessment opens a doorway for teachers to set new challenging standards and make serious effects to bring between teaching and the aim of the set assessment technique (Losa, 2013). The role of teachers in evaluation plays a vital role in teaching and learning. ELT teachers are not aware of using cognitive domain of Bloom Taxonomy while framing

questions in the classroom as well in formative and assessment system. If the ELT teachers are professionally sound in framing and posing questions in the language classroom, the learners can develop critical and creative thinking skills. Teachers are the agents in the assessment process (Rea-Dickens, 2004). The role of teachers holds prime importance in the assessment of students learning.

The assessment technique is a learning tool in ELT. In order to achieve the objectives of the curriculum, proper assessment of learning is very necessary. Improper assessment of learners' learning has been explained as a major cause of poor performance in English language teaching (Bayadah, 2020). The quality of English teachers plays a vital role in promoting the assessment system. Unless teachers are professionally equipped to construct the items for formative assessment, the teaching and learning of ELT cannot be enhanced effectively. In this regard, the teachers should have sound knowledge and skills regarding the cognitive domain of Bloom Taxonomy. The local level authority should be cautious to make the subject teachers very professional evaluators, good question setters, and good teachers to promote the assessment system of the school level education programme since the local level school education system is under the local level government as per the provision of the Constitution of 2015. The quality of subjective and objective question papers has to be evaluated in terms of the cognitive domains of Bloom Taxonomy to develop lower and higher-order thinking skills since Bloom Taxonomy is the benchmark for developing tests and assessments (Chandio et al., 2016).

Since accountability in education has been a growing public concern in the 21st century, teachers' knowledge, skills, and competencies for ensuring reliability and validity are essential to promoting the assessment system. Benjamin Bloom and some of his collaborators, such as Max Englehart, David Krathwohl, Edward Furst, and Water Hill, developed a framework for the categorization of education goals: a taxonomy of education objectives in 1956. The Bloom Taxonomy was developed to upgrade the teaching and learning process from the lower level of rote learning to the higher levels of analyzing, evaluating, and creating (Chandio et al., 2016). The Bloom Taxonomy consists of the cognitive domain, the affective domain, and the psychomotor domain. The cognitive domain contains six domains: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. It is known as Bloom's Taxonomy, which has been used as a base for teaching English as a second or foreign language and framing questions. Bloom's taxonomy was revised in 2001 by CLW Anderson. Bloom's taxonomy plays a vital role in learning a second language or foreign language. In addition, it helps learners develop their lower- and higher-order thinking skills, which are essential for learning and evaluation. If language teachers are sensitized to Bloom's taxonomy, they can be self-regulated to frame questions and solve any cognitively demanding tasks (Bloom, 1956). The

lower-order thinking skills are used to frame questions with the help of remembering, understanding, and applying (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

Remembering involves retrieving relevant knowledge from long-term memory. The question-setters can ask questions to recall the information, such as facts, definitions, and recalling events. The following verbs can be used to frame the questions: define, list, recite, recall, show, quote, locate, match, numerate, memorize, tell, explain, name, etc. Remembering is the lowest in the cognitive domain (Tariq et al., 2016). Understanding can be subcategorized into interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarizing, inferring, comparing, and explaining. Interpreting is a type of paraphrasing without losing the original meaning of a text. Some of the verbs can be used to frame the question in this level of cognitive domain, such as describe, paraphrase, explain, infer, compare, contrast, summarize, identify, report, discuss, classify, and order. The learners are expected to interpret in their own words in order to understand their cognitive level (Tariq et al., 2016). In the cognitive domain of applying, the learners are able to use learned skills, knowledge, methods, concepts, and theories to solve problems through already-learned knowledge and skills, use the acquired information, and develop the capacity to apply methods, procedures, and theories. The following verbs can be used while framing the questions: solve, change, relate, complete, use, sketch, teach, transfer, use, illustrate, demonstrate, calculate, predict, apply, implement, modify, examine, examine, experiment, etc.

Analyzing, evaluating, and creating are the higher order thinking skills (Mahroof & Saeed, 2021). In the analyzing, the learners are able to breakdown the problems into parts, and identify the relationship between different parts and the whole. At this level of Bloom Taxonomy, the question setters can break the entity into its constituent parts to analyze the relationship between the parts and the whole. The question setters can use the following verbs to frame the questions: classify, categorize, analyze, examine, distinguish, differentiate, arrange, deconstruct, etc. Evaluating involves testing, detecting, monitoring, and appraising the work of learners. It further subsumes judging or evaluating through the positive and negative remarks of a product or a text. There is a judgement of the merits and demerits of any work in the text. The learners are able to develop their monitoring and appraisal capacity. Some verbs are used to evaluate, such as evaluate, criticize, reframe, judge, defend, appraise, plan, grade, monitor, etc. There are three subcategories of creating, viz. generating, planning, and producing. Generating involves representing the problems and arriving at alternative solutions to the problems. Moreover, there is a scientific road map for planning to solve the problems. Producing involves carrying out a plan for solving the given problems. This study attempted to address the following research question:

- What are the perceptions of school teachers on the role of the cognitive domain of Bloom Taxonomy in enhancing the learning achievements of the learners?

Methodology

I have adopted a phenomenological research design in this study to delve into the subjective realities (Campbell, 2015) of English teachers as the participants to this study regarding the impact assessment on learning achievement. The rationale behind adopting phenomenological research design was to explore the attitudes and consciences of English teachers regarding using of cognitive domain of Bloom Taxonomy while framing questions in the classroom in this study. This is research design is very useful to find out the lived phenomenon regarding the assessment of the learning of the learners (Diaz, 2015).

Phenomenology is regarded as the "social and cultural situatedness of actions and interactions, together with participants' interpretation of actions" (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 21). I selected 10 community schools from Kirtipur Municipality through a purposive, non-random sampling procedure. Subsequently, at least one English teacher from each school was selected as a sample for this study. Thus, there were 10 participants as respondents for this study. In-depth interviews and classroom observation were employed to collect data for this research. The participants were given pseudonyms for maintaining confidentiality and anonymity as Anish, Binay, Chet, Deepak, Eila, Phadindra, Gourav, Hari, Isha, and Jeet in this study.

Results and Discussions

I have developed five global themes out of a number of organized and basic themes: fulfilment of the objectives of the curricula, developing critical and creative thinking skills; developing positive thinking skills and motivation, developing 21st century skills; and developing meta-cognitive and problem-solving skills.

Fulfilment of Objectives of the Curriculum

In order to accomplish the objectives of the curriculum, the teacher plays a pivotal role. Without an efficient and professional teacher, it is very complex to address the objectives of the curriculum. Particularly, the English teachers should be trained with the skills and knowledge regarding the classroom assessment. In this regard, the respondent Anish argued that *"in order to develop language functions such as request, offer, invitation, asking, permission, and making condolence, the classroom should be very interactive and learner-centred."* The subject teacher should ask the questions based on higher-order thinking skills such as application, analytical, evaluative, and creative. In this context, Chet asserted that *"the subject teacher's type of questions posed in the classroom determine the quality of the teaching and learning in the class. The teacher should be familiar with the objectives*

of the syllabus and lesson plan in order to achieve the objectives in the curricula." The classroom assessment, by posing questions based on higher-order thinking skills, helps to address the objectives of the curricula.

In order to achieve the objectives of the curriculum, proper assessment is essential. Improper assessment of learners is the major cause of poor performance in English language teaching (Bayadah, 2020). The cognitive domains of Bloom Taxonomy help to upgrade the teaching and learning process (Chandio et al., 2016). The subject teachers do not focus on making the language classroom interactive by posing adequate questions to broaden the knowledge of the students in the classroom due to their lack of skills and knowledge on the cognitive domains of the Bloom Taxonomy. However, they only focus on the completion of the course within the stipulated time rather than the interactive classroom discourse.

Developing Critical and Creative Thinking Skills

Critical thinking skills cannot be developed through lower order thinking skills. At the school level, the teachers use lower-order thinking skills in the cognitive domains of Bloom Taxonomy frequently in the classroom. In this context, Eila claimed that *"the majority of the teachers at the basic and secondary levels asked the question based on their knowledge, comprehension, and application level."* Due to the lack of knowledge and skills in the higher order thinking skills of the cognitive domain, most of the English teachers at the school level are not aware of the cognitive domains of Bloom Taxonomy, so they need to be provided with workshops and exposure in this regard in order to promote the critical and creative thinking skills of the learners as well as teachers.

If the teacher asks the questions based on higher order thinking skills during the formative assessment, the learners can enhance their critical and creative thinking skills. However, the formative assessments are developed based on higher order thinking skills. In this regard, Deepak asserted that "*the language teachers do not focus on the formative assessment, but they are concerned with the completion of the course by the stipulated time."* The examination usually occurs at the end of the year as a summative assessment in the curricula at the school level in Nepal. Formative assessment helps the learners to be critical and creative in the language learning classroom. Teachers' assessment literacy plays a vital role for interactive classroom teaching and learning (Hakim, 2015).

Developing Positive Thinking Skills and Motivation

The implementation of the continuous assessment system facilitates the students being positive towards learning. They can be self-motivated to participate in the question-and-answer session in the class. In this regard, Isha stated that "*if the subject teachers are trained with a formative assessment system, the students will be*

cautious regarding the classroom assessment." The objectives of each lesson plan are to be framed based on the cognitive domain of higher-order thinking skills." If the learners develop positive thinking and motivation regarding classroom assessment, this is a positive green signal of learning achievement in English as a foreign language.

In a similar vein, Phadindra argued that *"the culture of participating in the question-answer session helps the poor learners to promote their cognitive horizons in the language classroom."* Evaluation and assessment are essential processes for the constant growth of teachers, learners, and the organization (Sambell, 2013) through their positive thinking and motivation. Due to the lack of proper workshop and training for the teachers regarding the item setting and evaluative matrix, the learning and teaching at the school level are deteriorating day by day. There is an interrelationship between teaching, learning, and assessment. In fact, assessment is an important component of teaching and learning. The dominance of summative assessment culture spoils positive thinking and motivation for teachers and learners in the school evaluative system.

Developing Meta-Cognitive and Problem-Solving Skills

The learners self-monitoring skills can be developed if they are involved in a continuous assessment system at the school level. In this regard, Hari argued that the *"continuous assessment system of each subject is a ritual, so the learners problem-solving skills cannot be developed. The learners are to be made more proactive and creative through cognitive domains of higher order thinking skills."* In the course of assessment, the learners are to be given autonomy to solve the problems in the field in order to develop their cognitive and metacognitive thinking skills. The learners can develop self-monitoring, self-thinking skills if they are taught content knowledge using questions based on the cognitive domain of Bloom Taxonomy. Moreover, the learners can be smart in comprehending the questions clearly.

As a result, they can get good grades in both internal and external assessments. In this point, Jeet stated that *"the appropriate and ample use of the cognitive domain of Bloom Taxonomy, in particular the higher-order thinking skills, helps the learners to be smart, witty, and insightful to address the questions posed in the internal and external assessment."* The appropriate and ample use of the cognitive domain of Bloom Taxonomy really helps the learners broaden their cognitive and metacognitive learning strategies. Due to the absence of courses on the cognitive domain of Bloom Taxonomy in bachelor and master degrees, prospective pre-service teachers are very poor in framing questions based on the cognitive domain of higher order thinking skills of Bloom Taxonomy. More importantly, authorities of local governments should be very cautious regarding the standard questions used in the classroom to achieve the objectives of curricula of secondary level. The Bloom

Taxonomy was developed to upgrade the teaching and learning process from the lower level of rote learning to the higher levels of analyzing, evaluating, and creating (Chandio et al., 2016). Thus, the workshop on the framing of questions based on cognitive domain of Bloom Taxonomy should be scheduled on the operational calendar of local government.

Conclusions

This study helps contribute as one of the building blocks in the domain of assessment in the school evaluation system. The ELT teachers from basic to secondary levels need workshops and training to make them expert to construct items in the examinations as well as in the classroom in course of carrying out the formative assessment. In fact, they are to be trained to construct the items in the internal and external assessments based on the higher-order thinking skills of Bloom Taxonomy. The ELT teachers are to be familiar with the assessment system through collaborative research on the item analysis and item construction with the help of local government. The findings, conclusion and implication of collaborative research are to be presented in front of all of the ELT teachers of that municipality in order to develop teacher professionalism. Moreover, if they get appropriate exposure through workshops, training, and symposiums through such collaborative research funded by municipality, the ELT teachers will be very smart, skillful, and professional. This study will be very effective and fruitful for the school teachers who do not have exposure to the cognitive domain of Bloom Taxonomy.

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